Chapter 6
Knowledge-Scientific Evaluation of Social Service Systems

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ABSTRACT

This chapter proposes a new evaluation method for social service systems in order to support participants to create new knowledge and value. The main proposal is a rating scale method that can evaluate the current level (as-is) and the future desire (to-be) of participants, and with which we can analyze achievements of individuals. By using a concrete example of an education program, which is a worth living discovery seminar for retired men, the chapter reports the results of hypothetical tests on the relationships between items of evaluation and an interesting finding related to the reason of differences in attitude of participants.

INTRODUCTION

The term “service management” was proposed firstly in computer science, and now it is used in many fields such as service science (e.g., Maglio et al., 2010), service marketing (e.g., Lusch & Vargo, 2006; Lovelok & Wirtz, 2010), and service
innovation (e.g., Kosaka & Shirahada, 2013). The common idea of service systems is that “both service providers and service recipients co-create values cooperatively”.

When we talk about a service system, we always have the image of services that are primarily associated with the products in the company. In contrast, this paper focuses on the services which have the purposes of activating people in the community. We call them “social service systems”. Even if economic effect is not expected, a social service system helps the involved people act lively with a definite aim in life.

Such systems give a variety of information to the participants, who, however, have to convert the information into their own knowledge, and create values together with the service providers. Thus, the perspective of value co-creation has become a common concept in service science in recent years.

One problem which is closely related to the aging population is the decline of the local communities. Japan’s population is concentrated in some of the metropolitan areas. Especially that rural young people flow out to urban areas is a major problem to lead to rural decline. The government has implemented a number of policies along with the slogans of “regional revitalization” or “regional creation”.

These policies, however, have not raised the remarkable achievements. Therefore, it seems to be a good idea to use the power of retired men for regional activation. To that end, social service systems that can help retired men create concrete ideas to activate local communities as well as themselves are necessary. One of such efforts is the “worth living discovery seminar for retired men” which will be introduced in this paper. The seminar was conducted for three years with the support of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare of Japan. It accepted more than 50 people as students (in the following we will used the term “participants” instead of students) (Fujimori, 2012, 2014).

This paper regards this seminar as a social service system, and proposes an evaluation framework for such a system. Since its central role is to create ideas, the evaluation framework to be proposed is based on a theory of knowledge construction systems (Nakamori et al., 2011). As further new attempts, the paper will introduce the viewpoints of how the willingness of the participants has changed, and what kinds of value have been created as a service system.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. The next section introduces a “worth living discovery seminar for retired men”, including new concepts to implement action plans and traditional evaluation methods for such activities. In Section 3, we review existing evaluation techniques for education systems, for quality life, and for service systems in order to show the need for a new evaluation technique. Section 4 proposes an evaluation framework based on the theory of knowledge construction systems (Nakamori et al, 2011). Section 5 explains the questionnaire survey using the proposed evaluation framework, with some hypotheses which will be examined
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