

Communication Innovation and Lifelong Learning of the Elderly

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Abstract

Thailand is reaching the Aging Society like the other countries globally. When elderly people retire from work, they will encounter many changes like Physical changes, Psychological and emotional, and social changes. These changes can cause them many problems. They will feel lonely, melancholic as well as stressful, etc. To avoid these problems they will encounter, lifelong learning seems to be questioned together with the technological world. How could we utilize technology to lead to the happiness of them? According to the literature review, many countries emphasize more the elderly and attempt to find the best way for the elderly after retirement. It can be concluded that they include Thailand reach the same goals and try on applying communication innovation with lifelong learning methodology with the elderly.

Keywords: Communication; Innovation; Lifelong Learning

Introduction

Many countries around the world are stepping into the Aging Society or a society with over 65-year-old population, more than 7 percent of the total population. Then, the world population will enter to an Aged Society in the next 35 years, with more than 14 percent of the population aged 65 years or more than 14 percent of the total population. This challenge every country has to face, but the result may be differently serious and rapid. Developed countries tend to enter the Aging Society faster than in developing countries. Most European countries have already encountered the Aging Society, followed by Asian countries, including Japan, South Korea, Singapore, as well as Thailand.

It is known that Thailand is now beginning to enter the Aged society with a population of 60 years old and above, not less than 10 percent of the entire population of the country. It is expected that Thailand will have a population of 60 years and older, not less than 20. Significantly reduced from children born in the amount of 782,129 in the year 2013, the remaining number is only 702,755 people.

From the statistics of Thailand revealed that the number of children born decreases every year with an average of 10,844 people, while the total population increases an average of 350,645 people per year. Therefore, this event will certainly affect educational management in the future. During the past 25 years, the aging population in Thailand grew by 3.7 percent per year. This rate is the highest in East Asia and Southeast Asia. This proportion increased to 11.5 percent in 2010. When compared with the United Nations designation, Thailand has entered the beginning of Aged Society. According to the estimation, the proportion of the elderly will increase to 19.1 percent in the year 2025 and to 26.4 percent in 2050. The increased rate of this elderly population is considered

faster than it has ever happened in Western countries many times. The proportion of the elderly (aged 60 years and over) will increase from 11.9 percent to 17.5 percent and 25.1 percent between 2020-2573.

Significantly, the aging process can be vital for any person because the major changes will get involved. The main factors of individuals' quality of life include these changes and the loss of control and these refer to changes in work (retirement), family, society, our bodies, and health-related problems requiring adjustments to the perceptions and structures of our lives. All of these changes are physical, psychological, and social challenges. If an individual cannot manage them as the proper way, their quality of life can be worse. Understanding the nature of the elderly is thereupon what will help to know his interests and needs, especially in learning needs as well as tools that will help improve the lifelong learning of the elderly (Escuder-Mollon and Cabedo, 2013) Therefore, this article is written with the purpose to create an understanding of the seniors in the aging society and to recommend the appropriate way to improve the seniors' quality of life when they are on the aging society.

Meaning and Changing Conditions of the Elderly

The elderly are individuals who are 60 years of age or older. However, there is a difference between some points. Some people, although aged 75-80 years, but the body is still strong and can also perform various tasks like middle age. The World Health Organization has divided the development of the elderly into 3 phases: Young old age, aged between 60-74 years, Middle old age, aged between 75-85 years old and Older old age over 85 years old (Sarinda Noisuk, 2002) and the Royal Institute Dictionary 1999, defines elderly as very old people.

In conclusion, the meaning of the elderly is the person with 60 years of age or older who has the body, mind, intellect, and changes in a way that reduces efficiency. This change is considered as a criterion for government retirement and various changes that happen to the elderly. Based on the research (Malinee Wongsit and Siriwan Siriboon 2001), it was found that the problems and needs of the elderly are important in two ways: economic problems and health problems But when considered in detail, the finding revealed that the needs of Thai seniors include:

1. Health needs such as the elderly have vision problems, hearing problems, body movement problems, etc.
2. The need for mental health is the need to be encouraged, receiving love, warmth, generosity from children from family members.
3. Economic needs: Because many elderly still need to work to earn income or some of them may have to support the family as well. They still desire to have economic needs.

4. Education and training needs: some seniors desire to have the training, skill development for taking care of physical health care, mental health, as well as skills in additional occupations.

Such research results are consistent with the study of Sumalee Sangsri (1997) about the needs of the elderly. Both from the writings of psychologists, related educators which further discussed the needs of the elderly as follows:

1. Social needs: the elderly still have the desire to participate in society, want to make themselves useful to community society, want to be respected, need to participate, contribute to the community and society may be considered from the family of the elderly to the community as a whole.

2. Needs for knowledge and information: the elderly desire to gain knowledge and information related to himself at this age. From the basic needs of the elderly, it can be seen that the need to acquire knowledge and information is one of the important needs of the elderly. The educators will see the benefits of this need to be used as a tool for the elderly to serve the other needs, such as health care, earning more, or the economy of the elderly that will cause stability in life and the subject of mental, emotional and social. In consequence, providing the elderly with additional knowledge with continuing education is the necessity and should be greatly developed.

The Importance of Lifelong Learning

Lifelong education means education in the whole picture, which covers all forms of education. It is a study for people of all ages from birth to death in each life period. A person may receive an education in one or more forms as an integration. It is also an education linking to various factors related to a person's lifestyle to develop a person potentially to have sufficient knowledge, skills, and experience to live and work and to adapt to the changing social environment appropriately in every life. Lifelong education aims to develop human beings with the ability to learn throughout life appropriately for improving their quality of life. Education is, therefore, a process of learning for the growth of individuals and society by transferring knowledge, training, workshop, cultural heritage, creation of academic progress, creation of knowledge continuously (Department of Non-Formal Education, 2000)

In contrast, lifelong learning focuses on the learners, but educational management is not managed. Learning means receiving knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can occur at all times, all places, both intentionally and unintentionally, planned, and unplanned. From the fact that people interact with the environment in their lives, lifelong learning is to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes when interacting with the environment from birth to death.

Therefore, learning can take place anywhere, not limited to time and place. Significantly, cultivating people to have a habit of learning is the basis necessary to create a learning culture. Learning should be continuous and lifelong. Creating a culture of

lifelong learning is essential for a learning society (Sanong Lohitwiset, 2001) which does not limit gender and age, even to the elderly.

It can be concluded that education for the elderly is thereupon seen as one of the important guidelines leading to the creation of an aging society. The key implications of this study are to promote lifelong education among the elderly taking part in the society so that they can interact with different parts of society, build knowledge from integrated experiences with new situations and to learn collaboratively with others worthwhile for society and able to live in society well (Jiraporn Ketpitchayawattana, 2006; Phenkae Prajonpatjanuk, 2007)

Different Countries with Different Government's Policy

Various countries have regulated different policies for the elderly with the focus of lifelong learning. The government's policy is proposed as following;

Latvia: most of the elder inhabitants having long-term living with poverty. Then, this situation brings to sharp existential problems. One solution is participation in lifelong learning activities in order to decrease risks of socialization and mental health.

Finland: education for the elderly is challenging. Consequently, there is the development of adult education centers and seniors participate actively in these institutions. Nevertheless, the government also supports them to be familiar with modern technology in adult education.

Italy: non- formal education, like municipal networks for the adult education initiatives, public cultural infrastructures, and associations, Universities of Third Age (for seniors) are proposed as non- formal adult education This kind of education has the objective to intend to support an appropriate personal growth.

However, we must remind ourselves that ageism in our societies has an influence on aged people and brings to obstacles to participating in educational activities. Consequently, we have to determine carefully about false information and attitudes for developing life-long learning for the elderly. Lifelong learning is essential to the people of all age groups for keeping pace with the changing world even the elderly have to keep up with the changes in living and lifestyle, they should be able to remain intact by others and can adapt appropriately to the current society.

Comparison of Latvia Thai national educational standards

In Thailand, the concept of lifelong learning was formalized in the National Education Plan in 1977 (Office of National Education Commission, 1999). After that, life-long education became well- known again in 1999 when the National Education Act 1999 (Office of National Education Commission, 1999) was introduced, the Act proposed a lifelong education philosophy as a principle and framework in the management of education throughout the country system. According to this Act, the educational system is being reformed towards life-long learning processes and goals. Recently, the Promotion of Non-Formal and Informal Education Act 2008 (Office of Non-formal and Informal

Education Promotion, 2008) and the Reform National Education Plan 2009-2016 (Office of National Education Commission, 2010) emphasizes quality lifelong learning for everyone.

The concept of lifelong education in Thailand is similar to famous educators such as Cropley (1977), and Dave (1975) which Accepted in many countries. The National Education Act of 1999 defines lifelong education as a combination of non-formal education and informal education to continually improve people's quality of life (Office of National Education Commission, 1999). Definitions of life-long education, systematic education, non-formal education, and informal education have been published to education providers and prospective recipients.

The adopted approach in Latvia's lifelong learning strategy has similarity to Thailand and is applied for promoting individual personal growth, individual self-development at all stages of life and in all lifetimes. It strengthens initiative and people's ability including access to society, civilian involvement, employment, and integration. Moreover, it emphasizes the growing importance of non-formal education and informal learning alongside complementary education. The strategy defines lifelong learning to be 'An individual's lifelong educational process, which is based on changing needs to gain education, skills, experience, to enhance or change their qualifications to serve the needs of the labor market and their own.

It can be concluded that the lifelong learning concept of Thailand and Latvia is similar: life-long learning is interpreted as lifelong learning, consisting of formal and informal education as well as informal learning. In both countries, there has recently been a shift towards bridging lifelong learning with the learning process but it is only formal education. Lifelong learning includes educational, economic, and social objectives. In order to apply this practice, it is essential to more deeply and thoroughly understand the problems and advantages of lifelong learning at the individual, group, corporate and social level, and conduct coordinated activities to facilitate actual lifelong learning.

The Learning Needs of the Elderly

The elderly still need to learn all the time. This statement is supported by the research results by the study of post-retirement education needs of Thai civil servants and create a model of educational management after retirement for Thai civil servants, the findings showed that;

- 1) Thai civil servants require post-retirement education as a whole at a high level,
- 2) A model of post-retirement education for Thai civil servants has the principles/concepts: education is necessary: the fundamental right of human beings. It helps to increase the potential and development according to age.

Additionally, Phenkae Prajonpatjanuk (2001) studied and researched on Management of Education and Lifelong Learning to Prepare the Active Aging of the Elderly;

The findings were as follows;

1. It is essential to continuously provide education and learning for the Thai elderly throughout life.
2. The third university (U3A or UTA) that are held in other countries should be used as a guideline to manage education for the Thai elderly.
3. Policies and practices for preparing for elderly development should have both short and long term policies.
4. Short-term policies and practices should be a campaign for society to realize the importance of the need to develop the potential of the Thai elderly.

According to the research of according the opinions of the Elderly and Faculty of Universities in the United States about the Educational Factors of the Elderly from Data Analysis, the results indicated as followed:

1. The elderly attend classes with internal motivation and they are interested in subjects related to humanities and Liberal Arts. Moreover, they do not have a problem studying at university.
2. The faculty of the have opinion that the elderly study due to the need for professional skills. This is for changing a new job and believe that students have problems in studying at university.
3. The elderly are enthusiastic in studying and interested in learning, the university should, therefore, consider the curriculum content and teachers that are more suitable regarding the venue and tuition fees. Moreover, teachers should also understand that elderly learners can study like other learners. Therefore, they should receive equal attention.

Leung & Liu (2011) mentioned that the participation of educational activities among elderly has the relationships with positive outcomes ie. reduction of psychosomatic complaints as well as an increase in quality of life. Nevertheless, the World Health Organization supported that the seniors have truly been active with learning potential and development of themselves and society. Significantly, it is essential that society must provide them with freedom space and support them to enter the aging society actively. Therefore, it can be concluded that the elderly desire to learn all the time and also have the same ability as other group learners.

Communication Innovation with the Elderly

Innovation is a concept, a method of practice or new things that are not yet widely distributed or have been used before and come to change existing processes or things through new inventions or developing from the existing ones to be up to date including improve it to be effective (Watcharapol Viboonsarin, 2013) It is "something new arisen from the application of knowledge, experience, skills, and creativity in development. It may look like a new product, a new service, or a new process that will bring economic and social benefits. New communication innovation resulting from the

development of communication technology such as the internet, website, social media is beneficial to society and the economy. For education, it will help spread knowledge everywhere, anytime allowing educators and knowledge recipients to communicate more efficiently and effectively.

Communication technology determines the Communication Technological Determinism Theory of Toronto School for analysis. The principle of this theory is the development of information technology. It will act as an independent variable. If there is a change in technology, it will affect other factors in society (Kanchana Kaewthep and Nikom Chaiyaphon, 2012) As Worawut Phakdiburuth (2017) said that communication technology has evolved from the traditional media into a new media, it is a "communication innovation" that people in the society use to communicate or connect to a social network online with various interesting uses.

Many studies have highlighted elderly behavior towards communication innovations, such as Raweewan Sap-in and researched on Elderly and Media in Thailand have said that the Electronic Transactions Development Agency (Public Organization) or ETDA found that Gen B (Baby Boomer) spends 31.8 hours/week. The popular activity the Baby Boomer era is the use of social media to send and receive the email, to read electronic books, to use YouTube. Significantly, Line is a popular application among the Baby Boomer group for communication, followed by YouTube, and Facebook, respectively.

Kirana Somwatsan and Kulthip Sadtrarujee (2016) also added that the behavior of communication through Line Application among the elderly, most of them use it to communicate with their children and friends including the working group. They send video clips, news, alarm events, funny pictures, or sharing clips from others like. They believe that the use of Line Applications will make themselves modern and is also updating news faster than before.

Communication innovation with online social networks, such as Facebook, is a medium that can create awareness and enable people to get to know each other and lead to community building and engagement. Facebook will have a profile to show the identity of the account owner. The users can connect with known and unknown people who are online to make friends and send messages either private or public. When using social networking technology as a supplement to the website content, the features of social networking technology that is conducive to connecting and building relationships will make the elderly learners have exchange communication and easily share information and experiences. Members of the network as both a writer and a reader can interact with each other to help to communicate faster. An online social network that is considered a new media with two-way communication brings interactive with information all the time, makes the users understand (cognitive) in that information. Therefore, new media has the potential to create continuous learning (Kanchana Kaewthep and Nikom Chaiyaphon, 2012)

In consequence, lifelong learning management for the elderly, instructors, or knowledge managers must be aware of and understand various communication innovations. From the technology that is the original media, changed to new media, internet, website, and social media, Facebook so that they can choose to use these communication technologies under the learning management objectives to reach the elderly. The design of knowledge content must be appropriate in accordance with the needs of the elderly. In addition to the design of the presentation with characters, pictures, and sound must take into account the physical characteristics of the elderly. The communication method is a tool to encourage the elderly to quickly access information and knowledge anytime, anywhere.

Conclusion and Discussion

Lifelong learning means a formal, 'non-formal' and informal learning from childhood to old age involving the formation of knowledge, skills and the ability to use them in private, civic, and professional life. Subject all persons as actors - this highlights the importance of genuine equality of opportunity and quality in learning.

Interestingly, Nattanun Siricharoen (2015) A Case Study of the Use of New Media through Social Media on Smartphone to improve quality of life for elderly with Family Members in New Zealand Case studies to be used as a guideline for further comparative research in Thailand The results of the research concluded that Most informant groups use the device for communication with most mobile phones. By using communication channels through the new media that is the most important application of Viper, followed by Facebook, Skype, email, snap chat, Instagram and lines for general communication Go with a group of friends and use health communication methods with the elderly in the family by sending information from social media to share news or information That is seen as related to care Preventing and solving health problems that may occur to the elderly The sample group saw that if using new media to provide information about health care to the elderly Must give knowledge and practice skills until The elderly have sufficient understanding of new media. Therefore, it will result in efficiency and effectiveness as targeted.

Therefore, learning new things around and lifelong learning then will be a current tool that will help people, especially the elderly who are ready or immune to face the changing world today. Managing lifelong learning for the elderly should use various forms of communication innovations such as the internet, websites, and social media, Facebook, for him to know and use according to the purpose and have access to general knowledge as well as content that will be useful and used in daily life. As the elderly education, the elderly are as a group full of learning exchange experience's ability with others in society, experiences, and potential. Thereupon, all societies must provide a freedom space

among the elderly to learn about the new society and the world with others in society. As a result, they can live with dignity (Ath-Um, 2010).

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