

# The Scenario of a Learning City Model Based on the Lifelong Learning Concept to Develop the Active Aging of Thai Elderly

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## ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of qualitative research, applying the future studies concept of future research techniques. The research aimed: 1) to analyze and synthesize the phenomenon of a learning city based on the lifelong learning concept for the development of active aging both in Thailand and foreign countries; 2) to create the scenario of a learning city model based on the lifelong learning concept for the development of Thai active aging within the next decade (2013-2023) and set up the strategies to put the learning city model into practice; and 3) to examine and evaluate the learning city model. The research was conducted using document studies, good case studies, scenario planning, group discussion, and scenario evaluation using an evaluation form.

It was found that the learning city model included 5 essential elements: 1) principles of a learning city involving lifelong learning and a community based on development to support the elderly to empower themselves in terms of health promotion, social participation, and security promotion through learning activities and to integrate learning of intergenerational relations; 2) elements of a learning city including learners, learning organizers, body of knowledge, learning activities, learning atmospheres, learning networks, knowledge management, strategies, public policies and development targets, committees, and a national lifelong learning network; 3) learning processes of a learning city consisting of non-formal and informal education; 4) operational processes of a learning city based on community-based development; and 5) the strategies of putting a learning city model into practice which comprise specifying public policies and knowledge management to integrate into a national learning network and allocating resources for learning city development based on the lifelong learning concept for active Thai aging to create personnel, community, and the network at the national level.

**Keywords:** learning city, lifelong learning, active aging, Thai elderly

## บทคัดย่อ

บทความนิ่นนำเสนอผลการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ  
ประยุกต์ใช้แนวคิดอนาคตศึกษาด้วยเทคโนโลยีการวิจัย

อนาคต มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) วิเคราะห์และ  
สังเคราะห์ปรากฏการณ์ของเมืองแห่งการเรียนรู้ตาม  
แนวคิดการเรียนรู้ตลอดชีวิตเพื่อพัฒนาภาวะพุฒิพัฒ  
ของผู้สูงอายุทั้งในประเทศไทยและต่างประเทศ 2) เพื่อ

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สร้างอนาคตภาครูปแบบเมืองแห่งการเรียนรู้ตามแนวคิดการเรียนรู้ตลอดชีวิตเพื่อพัฒนาภาวะพุฒิพลังของผู้สูงอายุไทย และกำหนดยุทธศาสตร์การขับเคลื่อนเมืองแห่งการเรียนรู้เพื่อพัฒนาภาวะพุฒิพลังของผู้สูงอายุไทยไปสู่การปฏิบัติ และ 3) เพื่อตรวจสอบและประเมินอนาคตภาครูปแบบเมืองแห่งการเรียนรู้ตามแนวคิดการเรียนรู้ตลอดชีวิตเพื่อพัฒนาภาวะพุฒิพลังของผู้สูงอายุไทย ตลอดจนวิเคราะห์จัดอันดับความสำคัญของยุทธศาสตร์การขับเคลื่อนเมืองแห่งการเรียนรู้เพื่อพัฒนาภาวะพุฒิพลังของผู้สูงอายุไทยไปสู่การปฏิบัติตามความเร่งด่วนและความเป็นไปได้

ผลการวิจัย พบว่า อนาคตภาครูปแบบเมืองแห่งการเรียนรู้ตามแนวคิดการเรียนรู้ตลอดชีวิตเพื่อการพัฒนาภาวะพุฒิพลังของผู้สูงอายุไทยในอีก 10 ปีข้างหน้า (พ.ศ. 2556-2565) ประกอบด้วย 1) หลักการของเมืองแห่งการเรียนรู้ คือ การเรียนรู้ตลอดชีวิตและการใช้ชุมชนเป็นฐานในการส่งเสริมสนับสนุน พัฒนา และกระตุ้นผู้สูงอายุเกิดศักยภาพภายในการดูแลสุขภาพ ด้านการมีส่วนร่วม และด้านหลักประกันและความมั่นคงของชีวิต ผ่านกิจกรรมการศึกษาและการเรียนรู้ผ่านอิเล็กทรอนิกส์ในลักษณะเป็นพหุวัย 2) องค์ประกอบของเมืองแห่งการเรียนรู้ คือ ผู้เรียนรู้ ผู้จัดการเรียนรู้ องค์ความรู้ กิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ บรรณาธิการเรียนรู้ เครือข่ายการเรียนรู้ การจัดการความรู้ องค์กรแห่งการเรียนรู้ ยุทธศาสตร์ นโยบายสาธารณะ และเป้าหมายการพัฒนา กรรมการกลางการบริหารทรัพยากร และเครือข่ายการเรียนรู้ตลอดชีวิตระดับชาติ 3) กระบวนการจัดกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ของเมืองแห่งการเรียนรู้เป็นกิจกรรมการศึกษานอกระบบและกิจกรรมการศึกษาตามอัธยาศัย 4) วิธีดำเนินงานเมืองแห่งการเรียนรู้ เป็นการใช้ชุมชนเป็นฐานการพัฒนา และ 5) ยุทธศาสตร์การขับเคลื่อนเมืองแห่งการเรียนรู้ไปสู่การปฏิบัติ ประกอบด้วย การกำหนดคนนโยบายสาธารณะ การพัฒนาหลักสูตรการเรียนรู้ตลอดชีวิตเพื่อพัฒนาภาวะ

พุฒิพลังของผู้สูงอายุไทย การบริหารจัดการและการพัฒนาโครงสร้างพื้นฐาน การสร้างบรรยายกาศการเรียนรู้และการจัดการความรู้เพื่อการพัฒนาเครือข่ายการเรียนรู้ระดับชาติ และการจัดสรรทรัพยากรเพื่อการพัฒนาเมืองแห่งการเรียนรู้ตามแนวคิดการเรียนรู้ตลอดชีวิตเพื่อพัฒนาภาวะพุฒิพลังของผู้สูงอายุไทย เพื่อให้เกิดบุคคลแห่งการเรียนรู้ ชุมชนแห่งการเรียนรู้ และเครือข่ายการเรียนรู้ระดับชาติ

**คำสำคัญ:** เมืองแห่งการเรียนรู้ การเรียนรู้ตลอดชีวิต ภาวะพุฒิพลัง ผู้สูงอายุไทย

## INTRODUCTION

According to Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, Thailand (2013), the birth and death rates of the Thai population have continually fallen and risen, respectively. In terms of population, Thai society could be regarded as an aging society since 2005. The elderly population in Thailand has increased to more than 10 percent. According to the statistics from the Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, Thailand (2013), Thailand has the second most elderly population in Southeast Asia, after Singapore. This indicated that Thailand has had significant growth in its elderly population in comparison to other Asian countries. Accordingly, this phenomenon might result in problems of social dependency among the elderly. The Thai government is aware of the current situation regarding elderly communities and has adopted various policies regarding elderly matters in order to tackle the problems of social dependency among the elderly.

However, most policies and measures have consisted of passive, social welfare provisions. Scholars studying the elderly and who followed the Social Constructionist theory believed that these kinds of policies were employed due to the negative perspective toward the elderly community. Consequently, this impeded sustainable problem

solving (Taweesith, 2010). There was an attempt to demolish this negative perspective, which caused potential discrimination among different ages and to create a positive paradigm by enhancing the positive perspective to create a better understanding which was integrated with the knowledge, abilities, and experiences within the elderly to contribute to society (Office of National Economics and Social Development Board, 2009; Taweesith, 2010).

According to this positive paradigm, lifelong learning was necessary for elderly communication and was considered as the fundamental right for every age group. This would be an opportunity for the elderly to improve their active aging at both the individual and social level. Many countries have paid attention to lifelong learning for the elderly. One concept was to provide education and lifelong learning to the elderly under the knowledge-based society, which emphasized the latest information and communication technologies as well as the changing social structures under economic competition. These factors influenced those countries to renovate their educational provisions and human capital development in all age groups (Ministry of Education, 2010).

The major difficulty and barrier of education provision for the elderly in a non-formal educational system was the deep-rooted belief in the theory of disengagement. Theorists proposed that the elderly would continuously turn away from their social engagement. Nonetheless, many researchers showed that the elderly were capable of learning as well as other groups. However, the number of educated elderly was still minimal in comparison to that of other educated adults. Furthermore, the elderly who were educated in the institutional services generally had a mental impact, which decreased their confidence in learning. The limitation of physical abilities, services, and resource accessibility and readiness might restrain the elderly from attending an educational program at the institutional level (Manheimer, Snodgrass, & Moskow-McKenzie, 1995; Wacker & Roberto, 2008).

The statement above was in regard to the community-based approach which attempted to persuade the elderly to learn and participate in the community simultaneously. This would conform to the elderly-developmental plan at both the national and international levels, which focused on enhancing the social participation of the elderly with support from communities and the government. The key was to provide lifelong learning in order to allow the elderly to become self-reliant.

In some countries, there was a community development plan to become a learning city. This allowed people in all age groups, especially the elderly's families, communities, and social institutions, to provide the services for developing the elderly society. This would be compatible with the educational requirements at the local level by collaboration among all the partnership networks in the community. It would encourage the elderly to encounter the changing society as well as to properly develop themselves and their societies (Sangsri, 2004). With the high integration of the learning process and elderly lifestyles, the learning city was an important process to create the learning society under this knowledge-based society. It can be concluded that the development of a learning city was one paradigm of appropriate educational improvement toward our Thai elderly society since it focused on educational collaboration derived from all age groups. This also conformed to one governmental policy of reducing the generation gap between the elderly and others. Furthermore, it would strengthen national cultures and identities as well as set the elderly development mission in local awareness.

According to a case study in one foreign country, the learning city arranged a variety of activities for all generations in the city, which satisfied the needs of all targets. Such activities were associated with the problems and requirements of the community.

Although there is still no learning city, developmental plan in Thailand, many studies have

indicated that there were several missions, visions, and policies from both private and public organizations, which emphasized developing lifelong learning for the elderly. (Ratana-Ubol, Pathumchareonwattana, Kimpee, & Sajjasophon, 2011) There was one campaign of transforming Bangkok to be “the metropolis of reading and learning” which promoted a citizen’s reading culture. This campaign was established by collaboration among the relevant associations and the improvement of many educational centers. This can be a good initiative for developing the community and city to become a future learning city.

According to the literature and the problems above, the researcher was interested in studying “The Scenario of a Learning City Model Based on the Lifelong Learning Concept for the Development of Thai Active Aging” in order to enhance the lifelong learning and create the mechanism of a “Thai Active Aging Society”. This would be one of the significant factors for creating the learning society, which was in alignment with our social contexts of the Thai elderly.

## Objectives

1) To analyze and synthesize the phenomenon of a learning city based on the lifelong learning concept for the development of active aging both in Thailand and foreign countries.

2) To create the scenario of a learning city model based on the lifelong learning concept for the development of Thai active aging and set the strategies to put the learning city for the development of Thai active aging into practice.

3) To examine and evaluate the scenario of a learning city model based on the lifelong learning concept for the development of Thai active aging as well as to prioritize the strategies to put the learning city for the development of Thai active aging into practice as quickly as possible.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Step 1 Synthesis of learning city’s phenomena based on the lifelong learning concepts in both local and international contexts

#### Step 1.1 Document studies

This methodology analyzed and synthesized relevant documents such as textbooks, articles, independent studies, and theses, including information on the internet during 2004–2013. The research instrument was a document studies form, which contained 10 issues of studying: (1) relevant contexts in terms of societies, populations, educations, religions, traditions, cultures, health promotions, quality of life, technologies, economy, environments, politics, public policies, targets; (2) frameworks of the development; (3) factors of creating the learning city to develop active aging among the elderly, which was used to study their identities, similarities, differences, and successful factors of creating the learning city; (4) mechanisms of creating the learning city; (5) examples of the learning activities ranging from formal education, informal education, and non-formal education in lieu of health promotion, participation, and the security and quality of life; (6) methods of organizing activities; (7) partnership networks; (8) successful factors; (9) problems; and (10) tendencies and future directions of the development and strategies to drive the learning city forward for the development of active aging among the elderly.

#### Step 1.2 Good case studies

Researchers purposively selected good case studies. There were two good case studies in Thailand. One was in Donkaew subdistrict, Maerim district in Chiang Mai province, Thailand and the other was in Thonsamor subdistrict, Tha-Chang district in Singhaburi province, Thailand. There was also a good case study in the Kumamoto prefecture in Japan. For the three case studies, the research methods were in-depth interviews of partnership networks at every level—administrative practitioner, community leaders, and the elderly. In Donkaew

subdistrict, 17 participants were interviewed during 22–28 August, 2013. In Thonsamor subdistrict, 20 participants were interviewed during 8–9 November, 2013 and in Kumamoto prefecture, 10 participants were interviewed during 28 September–10 October, 2013.

The research instruments were in the form of in-depth interviews and a non-participant observational form. This step was used to analyze and synthesize various phenomena of learning cities to develop active aging among the elderly. This step included the same 10 issues of the document studies in both a Thai and a Japanese context. This step also applied the comparative method of studying to compare the learning societies in the Thai context with that of the Japanese context.

### **Step 2 Planning of strategies to put learning city in practice**

Scenario planning was employed by selecting expert participants from the government sector, the private sector, and the population sector. All participants brainstormed to create the scenario 10 years into the future (2013–2023). The criteria for selecting the experts to be interviewed involved their expertise in the elderly. Areas of their expertise were human resources, elderly education, and active aging. The selected 30 experts each had at least 5 year's experience from the Office of Non-formal and Informal Education, a city municipality, a town municipality, a subdistrict municipality, a subdistrict administrative organization, a provincial coordinating center for a civil society organization, a provincial social development center, the Social Development and Human Security Office, and included representatives from organizations such as the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Bureau of Empowerment for Older Persons, the Ministry of Public Health, the National Health Foundation, the Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Development Institute, the Thai Health Promotion Foundation, and elderly clubs, among others. They participated in a

brainstorming scenario planning workshop session held at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand.

The research instruments were the scenario planning guideline, which contained five future elements of creating the learning city: (1) principles and indicators of a learning city, (2) elements of a learning city, (3) methods of organizing learning activities, (4) procedures of putting learning activities into practice under the dynamicity of Thai contexts; and (5) recommendations and suggestions from the experts. After that, the researchers analyzed the data within the framework of content analysis.

### **Step 3 Re-analysis and evaluation of the learning city scenario, and prioritizing the strategies to put the learning city into practice**

#### **Step 3.1 Re-analysis by investigating the data from the scenario planning technique and prioritizing the strategies to put the learning city into practice**

The focus group discussion was employed to collect data from the participants at the practitioner level, the public level, and the administrative level. The researchers divided the 17 selected experts into three groups. They participated in the focus group discussion. They predicted the potential of the learning city and synthesized strategies to put the learning city into practice. The focus group session was held at Chulalongkorn University. This step analyzed the possibility of the learning city for the Thai elderly under the dynamicity of Thai contexts to find potential strategies to put the learning city into practice.

#### **Step 3.2 Evaluation of the analyzed data from Step 3.1**

The evaluation form was employed to collect the attitudinal data from the participants at the practitioner level, the public level, and the administrative level. There were some experts who responded immediately after the focus group discussion while some responded to the questionnaire

via letter. In total, there were 30 responses to the questionnaire, and the evaluation form used a five-point Likert scale. Then, the researchers presented the synthesis of the learning city, based on the lifelong learning concept, and the strategies of putting the learning city into practice to develop the plan for active aging among the Thai elderly. The synthesis of the learning city was presented in essays, diagrams, and descriptions.

## RESULTS

### **The learning city's phenomena, based on the lifelong learning concept to develop the active aging in both a Thai and Japanese context**

#### **1. Results of document studies**

Our world nowadays includes the society of the elderly in terms of figures and ratios. There were paradigms viewing the elderly as being valuable personnel in society through lifelong learning processes. The lifelong learning processes needed to be passed from generation to generation. In our knowledge-based societies and multicultural societies, the learning city paradigm can be one framework, applied to manage knowledge in communities and to develop for all age providing equality of knowledge accessibility. The key principle for the learning city is the awareness of people to be “world citizens”, as well as, “local citizens” in their own communities.

The objectives of the development of the learning city were mainly to develop active aging of the elderly in both the local and international context by aiming to create co-operative learning with creativity among all age groups. The learning city deals with the creation of diverse elements and factors that enhance citizens to learn as determined by public policies at the individual, community, society, and national levels. The learning city primarily supports the diversity of people by providing knowledge resources and learning opportunities, together with developing the administration and management within almost every

segment of society. The elements of the learning city were to determine the practical policies and to organize learning activities consistently with collaboration among community citizens. Social resources were the key elements of the learning city. The social resources need to be operated by experts and determined personnel. Democracy and governance were two key principles that supported the effectiveness and efficiency of operating the learning city. Diverse individuals, local wisdom, and respectful community leaders played an important role to create collaboration among social institutions such as temples, formal schools, informal schools, and families. All these elements could put the learning city concept into practice and move it forward.

The learning city applied the criteria of lifelong education to be operating mechanisms. The learning city resulted in learning activities that are compatible with local ways of life, local geography, cultures, and needs. The learning city determined to focus on the availability of resources in the community. Local citizens needed to participate in every single step of the processes. Three characteristics of local citizen participation were partner-like collaboration, co-operative collaboration, and follow-up.

Local leaders, experts of local wisdom, and the presidents of elderly clubs are important personnel who were able to push the learning activities forward. Local hospitals and colleges could initiate learning activities and share knowledge resources to create elderly volunteers. The learning city required systematic administration to run successfully. Potential groups with interest in the learning city needed to participate in the activities actively and consistently. Employers in the community were supporters of learning resources and of creating their own suitable learning styles in their own organizations.

The learning activities for the elderly required the realization of self-reliance among the elderly prior to their retirement as well as among

those who were later in their retirement. Partnership networks needed to participate and create the provision of learning activities as partner-like collaborations with one another by managing resources together within the community.

Intergenerational learning activities would play an important role in the learning city. Methods of informal group discussion would be emphasized. Media and local materials also played an important role for the individual learning of the elderly. When the learning sessions were completed, evaluation was necessary for each particular situation.

The operation consisted of four steps: determining objectives, seeking collaboration to meet the objectives, operating activities, and evaluation.

Partnership networks at the area-based level consisted of health sectors in particular provinces such as health-promoting hospitals and nursing colleges. They include the non-government sector such as elderly clubs, and health promotion volunteers. They also include the sector of “security and quality of life” such as “Saving for Production” groups, Agriculturist housewives could play their roles depending on different opportunities that could be issue- or area-based.

Successful factors of the learning city were the determination of objectives, policies, strategies, and planning with the realization of practicality. Local leaders would be the ones who had far-sighted visions. The management system needed to be organized properly. Citizens had to realize their duties. The administration must be in alignment with the principles of democracy and governance. Another essence of the learning city was to have knowledge management and a body of the local wisdom unique to each community. Knowledge passing was required from generation to generation. The administration systems needed to be integrated to fit social contexts. Knowledge management needed to seek collaboration from the government sector, the private sector, and the societal sector. The expectations were that the elderly participants

can rely on themselves with the support of the learning city processes. The learning atmosphere needed to be suitable for all age groups. Problems after studying those case studies were identified as a lack of qualified personnel and of knowledge, locations of learning organizations and even the fact that locations for providing learning activities were available but with insufficient capacity. They included lack of knowledge passing to other generations. Partnership networks did not participate consistently. The problems also included the lack of funds and practical objectives that covered the needs of the community. The solutions were to renovate directions and strategies to be more explicit in practice. Their practical objectives should be ones that developed the active aging of the elderly at every level of society. Coverage of the written objectives was the most important issue. Local administrators and organizations should be cores of change and the creation of the policies. They needed to analyze conditions, problems, and needs to elicit the strengths of each partnership network. Activity organizers needed to realize the intergenerational criteria which had to be flexible and relevant to ways of life among different age groups. The learning opportunities had to be wide open and provide equality of learning for every hierarchy of society. Follow-up was also important. There should be knowledge exchange processes among operators and intermittent publication of the effectiveness and efficiency of the operations. All solution strategies were to create the learning networks that supported within and based on past results of the operations were able to further develop the proper learning city learning activities.

## 2. Results of three good case studies

Even though the case studies dealt with diverse communities in both a city and rural context, the strengths of those communities were their homogeneity between ways of life and cultures. There were learning activities at both the primary educational and the higher educational level. There were lifelong learning resources and priorities of

knowledge sharing in each of these societies.

The policies, targets, and paradigms of those case studies were in relation to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) city strategies for lifelong learning policy in 1993. These strategies can be adapted to create annual development plans of the learning city paradigms.

The highest goal of the development of the elderly was to enhance health conditions in four aspects: physically, mentally, socially, and in wisdom. These criteria for setting the goals followed the developmental principle of active aging originally proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO). These criteria can solve problems in terms of health, security, and collaboration with the lifestyles of the elderly. Past experiences of the elderly can be beneficial in the creation of suitable learning activities within their communities.

One important element of the learning city was the clear direction of settings toward being a learning city. Findings from this research pointed out the importance of partnership networks which can influence the clarity of policy settings. In the population context, important factors were individuals in the community and local wisdom, along with local leaders, all of which could foster deeply-insightful studies to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the communities and to create co-operation among partnership networks. The networks of stakeholders could take part in the decision making of local resource management.

The operating mechanism was initiated from social institutions that brainstormed the design of learning activities suitable for individuals in the community area. There were leaders of activities and participants who could provide opinions and proposals. Employers of these groups of people were supporters of funding and resources to continue the provision of learning activities. The relationship between employers and groups of participants was in a partner-like relationship. Co-operation and follow-up were required.

In foreign countries, there are cases of formal education systems provided especially for the elderly. Formal education for the elderly was available at the university level and even at the college level. There was no curriculum for the elderly in Thailand in terms of the formal education system.

The learning systems for the elderly in Thailand were about short-term courses, long-term courses, and distance learning.

The learning activities for the elderly both in foreign countries and in Thailand were characterized as information services, educational databases, educational media, that is comprising pamphlets, manuscripts, community-based voice broadcasts, and learning atmospheric settings. The available learning resources were libraries, museums, temples, and the social media.

The objective settings to put the learning city into practice were initially derived from the stakeholders in the community, which was followed by using a focus group to find collaboration from the outside. Social contracts, schemes, strategies, or policies were required to be completed in written form to determine the roles and rights of partnership networks. The reason behind this was to assign responsibilities with clear directions. The central organization was as the coordinating organization of learning activity leaders. Examples of learning activities were short-term training, long-term training, seminars, workshops, field trips, knowledge markets, elderly schools, and lifelong learning colleges. Evaluation of the success of the learning city was -based on observations or the evaluation forms.

Partnership networks included government, public and population organizations. They were assembled depending on different opportunities and were area-based or issue-based and were any of community networks, developer networks, professional networks, government-policy networks, and non-government organizations.

A successful factor in the creation of the

learning city was the synthesis of knowledge and local wisdom which defined the identity of a particular community. The passing of valuable knowledge and local wisdom needed to be done from generation to generation.

Knowledge management needed to embrace integrative approaches. Collaboration among the aforementioned organizations was required. Finally, the learning city is one in which all age groups could rely on themselves and engage in almost every aspect of learning activities.

The problems in these good case studies involved passing knowledge to others and recruiting personnel to work on the project. These two problems might act as barricades to the working processes of the learning city.

Directions, tendencies, and strategies for driving the learning city forward were the clear determination of policies for developing the learning cities to cover almost every relevant sector of Thailand: at the national, provincial, subdistrict (tambon), and village levels. The determination should be in relation to the problems and contexts of particular areas to find the original causes of problems. The committee and the central organization were required to solve the problems. Then, the analysis needed to realize the actual conditions, problems, and needs within the elderly of the community.

### **Scenario planning and the strategies of driving learning city into practice**

According to the scenario planning, the first principle of the learning city to develop the active aging among the elderly was the city of health. The city of health needed to be integrated with the lifelong learning concept and community-based development including the creation of a learning atmosphere within the city.

Elements of the learning city during 2013–2023 were divided into internal and external elements. The internal elements were willing-to-learn people who would learn based on what they

preferred. Those people realized that their styles of learning and their experiences varied.

In addition, organizations that monitored learning activities were required. The central organization was necessary to monitor knowledge management which needed to realize the community-based needs. The knowledge resources needed to be sufficient. The external elements were government policies which supported learning continuously and consistently. The connection between the local and international-based knowledge was essential. The sponsorship and promotion of every educational organization was of the utmost importance to realize a high quality of education for the elderly.

The processes of organizing learning activities involved integration between formal and informal education, together with non-formal education. The latter two types should be strongly emphasized. The purposes were to develop knowledge and skills among the elderly in terms of health issues, collaboration issues, and security of life issues. Integrated content and activities were required.

The evaluation would be done in alignment with the capability and active aging of the elderly. The elderly had the right to choose what they needed. The schedules of activities needed to be explicit and activities should not be more than one hour long. Optionally, there should be some activities that created inspiration. The evaluation should occur by observing responses from the elderly together with follow-up evaluation.

The procedures of organizing activities needed to realize the socio-economic background, geographical, and cultural factors. Importantly, activity organizers needed to realize three characteristics of the elderly: the self-reliant elderly, the partially self-reliant elderly, and the non-self-reliant elderly.

Organizations at the national level, who drive the learning city mechanism forward, were relevant ministries and officials responsible for

designing the policies. The national-level mechanism has its function in accordance with The Act on Older Persons B.E. 2546 (2003 A.D.) and the second, revised version B.E. 2553 (2010 A.D.). Policies, strategies, and rural model schemes would be put into practice under the three-year-duration plans available at the sub-district (tambons) and village levels. The development of this mechanism will be done via the national model schemes and expanded to local administrative organizations. The elderly clubs would be the main operators. The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Securities, and the Ministry of Health were the three main driving organizations.

The running processes of learning activities involved integration with both the formal and the informal education systems. They began with setting the objectives using panel discussions or surveys. Next, a commitment to collaboration was needed to meet those synthesized objectives. Analyses of the partnership network potential were required, including seeking additional collaboration from every sector in the community. The relationships should be partner-like and co-operative and follow-up was required as well. The provided learning activities needed to be wide open and easily accessible and continuous. Evaluation should be based on actual observation. The evaluation information should be provided to the elderly to review and revise their gaining of knowledge.

The partnership networks of the operation were divided into two parts. The first was area-based partnership networks: individuals, families, communities, local administrative organizations, professional organizations, temples, and commercial organizations including other organizations which may be relevant to the roles of resource management and allotment. The second was experienced-based, involving organizations developing active aging within the elderly.

## **Evaluation of scenario planning of the learning city and the prioritizing of synthesized strategies**

### **1. Prioritizing strategies for 2013–2023 considering their necessities and possibilities**

Strategy 1: Determination of public policies. According to the findings, the foremost factor for putting the learning city into practice was to determine the public policies in alignment with Thailand's future context during 2013–2023. It found that people in communities mostly lacked overall understanding that the elderly did need to be educated. This myth resulted in the lack of lifelong educational promotions.

The determination of public policies might result in the awareness of creating the learning city to develop active aging among the Thai elderly.

Strategy 2: Lifelong-learning curriculum development for developing active aging among the Thai elderly. According to the findings, the number of Thai elderly was increasing. However, some of the Thai elderly did not know of their own rights to gain learning opportunities. Some lacked learning motivation, skills of learning, and good educational resources. As a result, educational providers, promoters, and partnership networks were lacking motivation to create suitable activities for those elderly. Moreover, the educational providers worked harder than the educational promoters. The provision of lifelong learning activities for the elderly was mediocre and not consistent. The formal educational institutions did not provide learning opportunities for the elderly; whereas the informal educational institutions also did not provide sufficient curricula that enhanced the development of the active aging among the elderly.

Strategy 3: Administration and the infrastructure development via integrative approaches. According to the findings, the development of learning cities at the level of provinces and communities required a management system and infrastructure development, both of which were essential for the ideal learning city. The ideal learning city included sufficient infrastructure,

good transportation, and resource management. The infrastructure of the city should be allocated properly. The allocation has to be compatible with daily-life activities, community professions, and self development methods in various aspects. An information technology system was required to develop the learning city as effectively as possible. Communities should consist of social structures and relationships, infrastructure, and learning environments. All these factors can increase the strengths within the community. Finally, the potential to create the learning city relies on sustainability and consistency at the base of the communities.

Strategy 4: Creation of learning atmosphere and knowledge management at the national level. According to the findings, the atmosphere of the learning city was reflected in the images of the elderly actively participating in various activities where those activities were available all the time. People in every age group should be able to participate consistently and actively. Thus, this indicator could indicate that those people saw the importance of learning. The creation of a learning atmosphere and knowledge management has to be proceeded with the realization of the dynamicity of knowledge, experiences, and bench marking. All elements could be suitable resources for revising and renovating the principles, criteria, and activities of the learning city. Finally, the renovation and application of diagnoses of learning from past errors would lead to the creation of learning networks at the provincial and national levels.

Strategy 5: Allocation of learning resources. According to the findings, opportunities to allocate the available learning resources were essential in relation to the consistency and the sustainability of operating the learning city. Smart management was needed to support the elderly. Resources to develop the learning city required the allotment of funds from various sources such as government or non-government organizations. The principles of economics had to be adapted for resource

management. As a result, the sharing of resources—personnel, materials, locations, media and technologies—will be sufficient for the people in the community, especially the elderly.

## 2. Evaluation of scenario planning

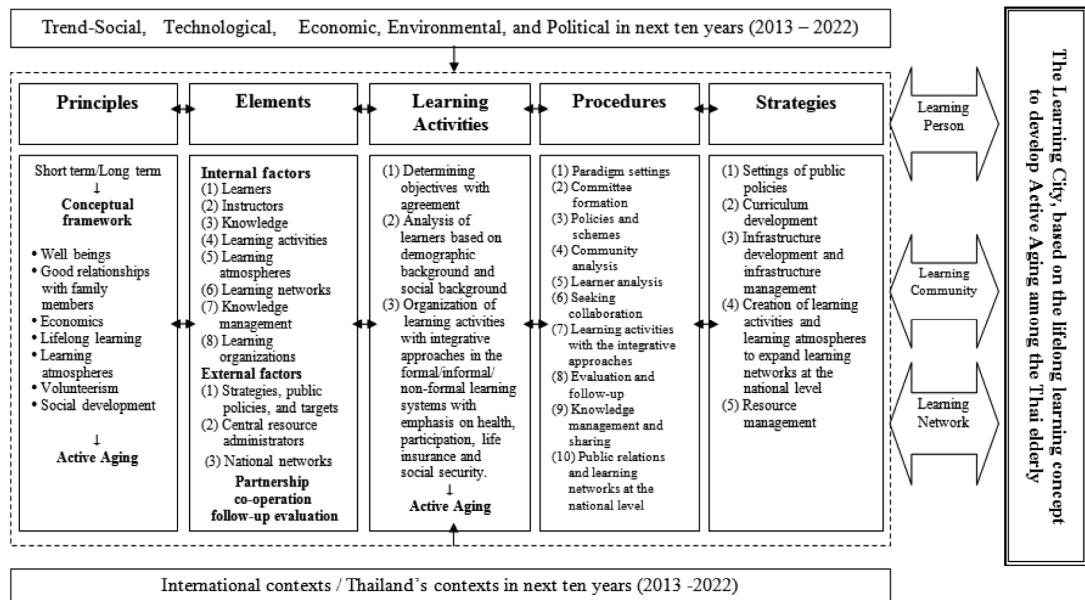
Experts viewed the scenario of the learning city as being highly proper to put into practice.

The scenario of the learning city and the strategies driving this paradigm are shown in Figure 1.

## DISCUSSION

The scenario of the learning city, based on the lifelong learning concept to develop active aging among the elderly during 2013–2023 was the crystallization of the essential elements, principles, and schemes of learning networks with the target of the elderly being able to live together longer and more happily. That target needs to realize the importance of strategic planning, based on lifelong learning, and the community-based concept. The strategic planning aims to enhance active aging to allow those involved to become self-improved developers in terms of health, social security, and life insurance. The learning city model consists of both internal and external factors. Those internal and external factors can be explained under integrative approaches with intergenerational people. The operating mechanism involves partner-like co-operation. The collaboration of stakeholders and follow-up were required to analyze the suitability, potential, strengths, and weaknesses in order to develop the ideal learning communities, and a national network that can provide beneficial learning activities. The final result would be a learning city, based on the lifelong learning concept to develop the active aging under the dynamics of Thai contexts and sustainability.

The learning city's goal is in accordance with McClusky (1975) and Moody (1990)'s Educational Gerontology in which the elderly could develop themselves throughout their lives. The Educational Gerontology focused on self-



**Figure 1** Scenario of the learning city, based on the lifelong learning concept to develop active aging among the Thai elderly in accordance with strategies of putting the learning city into practice.

development to become self-dependent. It also put an emphasis on building the learning motivations of the elderly. The educational provision is the tool of empowerment for the elderly. Education builds confidence and positive attitudes which drive the motivations within the elderly to develop themselves. Education creates positive reinforcements for the elderly and society. All the mentioned criteria of education are in accordance with creativity and the knowledge-based society based on lifelong learning. In 2050, the world will be knowledge-based which will not only help human beings to solve problems in their own daily lives conveniently, but in addition, human beings will need to integrate knowledge, skills, and attitudes to build their own creativity which could push the creative society and the knowledge-based society forward according to the Digital Agenda for Europe (The Digital Agenda for Europe, 2012). It is also in accordance with active aging that fosters self-reliance among the elderly. Therefore, the elderly would become a group in the population able to contribute beneficially to their society and potentially become a successful group of

people, in accordance with the characteristics of high-quality, elderly citizens who, according to the WHO, are healthy, actively participating in society, and are covered by social insurance and security. All these characteristics can apply from education received prior to these people becoming elderly or from education they receive once they are elderly (World Health Organization [WHO], 2002).

## SUGGESTIONS

### Policy suggestions

The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Health, and Thailand's health institutions need to co-operate to determine public policies. The results from these findings can be utilized to put the concept of the learning city into practice. The expectations are that Thailand could develop active aging among the elderly based on lifelong learning concepts. This research discussed the principles, objectives, standards, and mechanisms, including

the roles of operators, the rights of operators, and the welfare of partnership networks, which will be able to support the creation of learning activities. Every sector at every level—community, province, and national—could gain from the welfare as well as from the partnership networks.

#### **Suggestions for organizations**

The Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of Health in cooperation with the Bureau of Empowerment for Older Persons, higher-educational institutions, local-educational institutions, and the Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Development Institute (TGRI), and the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (Thaiblue) should take part in the development of the learning city in alignment with the lifelong learning concept. Basically, there should be four models of the project with one in each of the four regions of Thailand. In the future, these four paragon models can be places where visitors or foreigners could study how the mechanism of the learning city can be applied effectively and efficiently. Moreover, the four models could act as learning city models in each region for the expansion of every aspect of the learning city throughout the country. Finally, reports of the results need to be submitted to the Bureau of Empowerment for Older Persons for passing on to the Thai cabinet and government.

#### **Suggestions for local administrative sectors**

Provincial Administrative Organizations (PAOs), Provincial Social Development and Human Security Offices, and the provincial offices associated with non-formal and informal education should collaborate to develop policies for the elderly clubs and the schools for the elderly as these facilities can foster the quality of life among the elderly. The officials can prioritize the roles of the elderly to be important persons of Thailand's society through the foundation of elderly clubs in each

village, the encouragement of lifelong learning activities in terms of health, participation, social insurance and security, as well as the development of human resources to support affairs concerning the elderly. The co-operation and communication needs to prioritize familiarity and understanding with the PAOs and every concerned sector in the province.

#### **Suggestions for further studies**

The scenario findings should be presented as an innovation with step-by-step details of the processes and schemes. Relevant organizations involved with developing active aging among the elderly can apply the scenario findings to conduct workshops or to pilot the scenario findings in their real contexts.

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