

Educational Policies for Aging and Movements in Thailand: A Literature Review

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Abstract

According to the Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging (2002), social and policy movements to increase an educational opportunity among Thai elderly had also been established and implemented. The objective of this paper is to review the education policy for the elderly and its implementation. The secondary data employed from several resources, either Thai or International publications. The results indicated that educational empowerments and accessibilities for Thai older were obviously written in the 1st and 2nd Thailand National Plan for elderly (1982 – 2001; 2002-2021), including five strategies. During the year 2007-2011, there were several projects to increase the possibility for aging educations, which was supported by JICA. Focusing on an implementation of the projects, (1) government and private organizations for the olders and system for the aging education at community level had been established, (2) several publications toward health information and educations, religions and practices, news, etc. had been distributed (3) publications and information about elder rights, social securities, social protections, and appropriate occupations, had been done. Suggestion from this study includes (1) education for the elderly should not be concerned only literatures or publications, due to the elderly in community; especially rural areas had low education and having eye problems and (2) sustainability for education is life long-learning, new innovation for education, such as visual education, edutainment, educational technology, might be fit for this aged, long-term attention in printing resources or publications might not related to aging psychology for their educations.

Keywords: Thailand elderly education policy

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Introduction

Thailand has been becoming an aging society from 2005. Aging are physical, psychological, and social changes. Factors affecting coping skills of elderly are social support, religion and spirituality, active engagement with life, and having an internal locus of control. Lifelong learning of older people can improve the coping skills. Therefore appropriate education policy for elderly is important in helping them to cope with stressful life events in later life. The formal, non-formal and informal education can create healthy aging (or optimal aging), which has low probability of disease or disability, with high cognitive and physical function capacity and is active engagement with life.

The World Assembly on Aging endorsed the International Plan of Action on Aging in 1982. The plan drew the attention on the diversities between countries and within countries, and between individuals. Therefore the country's national policy on aging should be carefully designed from researches within the country to obtain precise policies and plans on the elderly. National program in any country is recommended to include these topics: independence, participation, care, self-fulfillment, and dignity. According to the Independence program, older persons should be able to access to all facilities necessary for living, obtain supports from all parties, have a chance to work or stop working, have access to appropriate educational and training programs, can live in safe and happy environments, and can live at home for as long as possible.

Thailand had good 1st (1982 – 2001) and 2nd National Plans (2002 – 2021) on elderly which are from evidenced-base researches supported by JICA. The policies were aiming to serve as the instrument to the entire implementation of work on the elderly. Education policy for old people is one of the future factors and government priorities that impacting the administration of Thai education. The lifelong education for older people would create healthy aging and turns senior people to be better quality workforce. The country needs to extent retirement age of Thai workforce, in order to enable the economy to keep expanding even with increasing aging population (Ministry of Education 2015).

Objective

To review Thailand's National Policies on educational and training programs for the elderly and their implementations.

Method

This documentary research is the secondary information employed from several resources, either in Thai or international publications and data based. Content analysing was used for data conclusion.

Results

Educational empowerments and accessibilities for Thai older had been found since the 1st Thailand National Plan for elderly. Focusing on an implementation of the projects, (1) government and private organizations for aging education concept at community level had been established (Fig 1), (2) health information & health educations had been distributed (3) elder rights, social securities, social protections, and appropriate occupations, had been done by several ministries (Table 1).

Educational concept (Sajjasophon, R. (2013)) consists of: (1) Extending retirement ages and give opportunities for lifelong learning (Sungsri, S. (2009)). As the number of young work-force age is decreasing compare with the increasing number of older people, extending retirement ages can help economics and social development of the country.

(2) Encourage learning of information technology. The elderly can access to information that is useful for their physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing. They also can get better knowledge to improve efficacy of their career. They can adapt and manage better in the world that is fast changing of economics, social, politics, and business competition and complication.

(3) Development of learning media for informal education. They can be people, television, movie, radio, activities, domestic media, computer, internet, or mobile phone. They should suit the old people's education back ground and physical status.

(4) Promotion learning systems that make different age groups can learn together. It can produce unity, harmony and peaceful environment. People in the community thus will have good and friendly relationship. This can improve quality of life and useful in knowledge transferring.

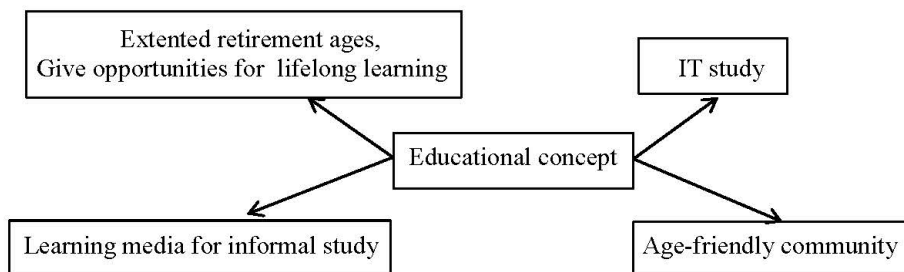


Fig 1 Educational concept.

Table 1 Ministries involve in organizing lifelong education for elderly and their responsibilities.

Ministries of	Responsibilities
Social Development and Human Security	Establishing schools for the aged in subdistricts, providing information for early preparation for aging, and creating the concept of brain bank.
Education	Promoting lifelong learning and continuous education in the form of formal, non-formal and informal education.
Public Health	Providing holistic health care for the aged.
Science and Technology	Supporting learning technology for aging population.
Ministry of Labor	Promoting of work after retirement.
Interior	Promote community learning and participation. Staff training and development to produce strong and sustainable communities.

Conclusion

1) Thai government gave the policy that non-formal and informal educational actions for old people must go to district level (Thai amphur) and subdistrict level (Thai tambon) in every provinces (76 provinces and Bangkok). Starting in the year 2015 in at least 155 subdistricts in 76 provinces. The elderly needs sustainability activities that are appropriate to their education background, their needs and physical condition (Ratana-ubon, A. et al. (2012); Semamon, W. (2014)).

Ratana-ubon, A. et al. (2012) found that most of Thailand senior education/learning best practices were learning activities and services based on the Thai way of life. They required activities to maintain healthful conditions and would like to have some ideas about effective caring systems. It can be in a form of short-term training sessions. Various geriatric clubs were expected, which can help them form partnership and collaborations. The education should be able to point out how they can enjoy solid relationship with their families and are able to happily adapt themselves to the communities and society. Personnel media acts as the main education media and learning sources. Evaluation of the course is assessed by means of observation.

The edutainment learning is very well accepted. It is the technique in which the learning at the formal education system, non-formal education system and the information education system is very well integrated. Activities should vary and are organized for multi-age learners, and learners should be able to discuss and exchange knowledge casually. The content should be applied to their daily lives, which are five aspects- sanitary, adaption to society and mental states, economy and saving, learning and the legal rights of senior citizen. Many parties should involve in managing the learning, offers some financial aids and managing all resources available in the communities.

Senior education/learning management required 4 steps of activities which are (1) the need analysis, (2) programs and activities planning, (3) program implementation, and (4) the evaluation. Each process involved experts' collaboration. The educational/learning management models could be divided into 5 main models: (1) The University of the Third Age: U3As; (2) Community Multipurpose Service Center; (3) Senior Community; (4) Senior Club; and (5) Informal Senior Group. The educational/learning guidelines consisted of 4 major guidelines which are (1) designing of curriculums/contents and activities; (2) connecting of social networks for educational/learning enhancement; (3) the setting of a learning climate and environment; and resources; and (4) developing the research and development.

2) Financial education for elderly (Suwannarong, S. (2014)) gave knowledge of pension systems. It is very important to raise awareness of the population about the necessity of money management for retirement. They have to think about the money they earn, spend, save and invest for the future.

People in rural areas they have Thailand Village Fund (TVF) for supporting microcredit scheme for villagers by collecting savings and debt replacement on a daily basis. In the future the Fund might have to plan for the benefit of old people too.

3) Law education by Chokmhor, P. et al. (2011) has found that the law for the quality of life promotion for the old age persons in Thailand does not exist. There are law about welfare management, social insurance, superannuation for the civil servants and some secondary laws that do not support or protect the quality of life of the old age persons equally and fairly. So the Government should declare law for quality of life promotion of the old age persons in the future.

Suggestions

- 1) There should be one central institution or department that can link educational works of all Ministries together.
- 2) Education for the elderly should not be concerned only literatures or publications, due to the elderly in community; especially rural areas had low education and having eye problems.
- 3) Sustainability for education is life long-learning, new innovation for education, such as visual education, edutainment, educational technology, might be supported their learning processes.
- 4) More researches are needed to find appropriated education system(s) for individual community at particular time.
- 5) Some researches are also needed for aging handicapped.
- 6) Financial education for early planning may be very important too, especially for vulnerable group.
- 7) More researches are needed to give positive attitude of Thai society toward old population.

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