# GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING NEEDED SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES OF THE ELDERLY IN THAILAND

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## ABSTRACT

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This article is part of a study on skills and competencies needed for the elderly, aiming to propose guidelines for developing the needed skills and competencies for the elderly in Thailand. Qualitative data was collected using two procedures. Firstly, a literature review was conducted, analyzed, and synthesized using a document analysis form. Secondly, the needed skills and competencies of the elderly and the guidelines for developing the skills and competencies was investigated and confirmed using focus group discussion questions. The research findings are as follows: 1) the government should form a committee to formulate laws, rules, and regulations that promote the participation of various sectors to develop the skills and competencies; 2) the government should set up the representative mechanism to develop life and work skills and competencies; 3) the government should create an elderly database system and develop a central database system; 4) the government should set the criteria and methods for motivating the elderly to develop needed skills and competencies throughout their lives; 5) an integrated working group should formulate practical guidelines for concrete development of essential skills and competencies; 6) the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society should urgently issue policies regarding digital justice for people of all ages, especially the elderly population; and 7) the Ministry of Education should formulate policies, mechanisms and measures to enhance and develop the skills and competencies that are essential, as well as prepare people of all ages to fully enter the aging society of Thailand.

**Keywords:** Elderly; competencies; skills; Thailand

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Thailand's current aging population situation is being affected by a declining mortality rate, and as a result, the elderly population is increasing. Thailand had a total population of 66.7 million, with 12.5 million elderly people, or 19% of the total population in 2021. Thailand will become a "fully aging society" in 2022 with its total population growing at a slower pace, but the aging population will increase rapidly. Thus, for the population aged 60 years and older, the average rate increase 4% per year, while seniors aged 80 and over will increase at an average rate of 7% per year. This increase in the elderly population will reflect an increase in the

dependent population, which will affect the economy, society, and quality of life of the elderly (Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Development Institute [TGRI], 2022).

To develop the essential skills and competencies for the elderly in Thailand, the government has therefore been supported to develop the fully aging society. This is reflected in the National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999) amended (No. 2) B.E. 2545 and (No. 3) B.E. 2553 (1999) regarding formal, non-formal and informal education so that individuals can continuously improve their quality of life throughout their lives. This is in accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand 2017, Article 54, which states that "the State shall ensure that the people receive education according to the needs of various systems, both to promote lifelong learning and to provide cooperation between the State, local government organizations and the private sector in the management of education at all levels," and Chapter 14, Section 250: "Local administrative organizations have the duty and authority to oversee and prepare public administration and activities. It is in the public interest of the local people by the principles of sustainable development, as well as promoting and supporting education for the local people."

The National Scheme of Education B.E. 2560–2579 (2017–2036) (Office of the Education Council, 2017) pointed out that education management for the elderly continues to be a problem caused by the country's education system that is unable to prepare and develop people of all ages, from early childhood, school age, and working age to the elderly, to have educational opportunities and lifelong learning.

The purpose of the 20-year education development clearly mentions the essential development of the elderly and their learning as "all of the population has access to quality and standard education thoroughly, especially the elderly population should have the opportunity to gain experience, practice, and develop knowledge, abilities and skills for work or a healthy and happy life after working age." The objective is to enable people of all ages to develop and to suitably empower people for each age level by setting goals and indicators for standard skills, knowledge, abilities, and competencies. Thus, several elderly people receive educational services to develop vocational and life skills, which provide them with opportunities to be encouraged to work and transfer their knowledge and experience more frequently (Office of the Education Council, 2017).

These development approaches mentioned have been used to establish the development of educational programs and training for the elderly at all levels of education, especially non-formal and informal education, to ensure quality and standards for the citizens, as seen in the *13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023–2027)* (2022), Milestone 12. Thailand has a high-performance workforce with a focus on continuous learning to meet the development of the future by seeing that seniors have the potential to work and want to improve themselves after retirement. Using lifelong learning is a valuable tool for helping older people learn and develop skills and competencies, especially multi-faceted life skills such as financial literacy, which can help older people avoid a cycle of informal or systemic debt. Working, learning, and keeping up with the times with digital literacy allows them to access basic government services, careers, and digital goods and services. This includes the ability to deal with misinformation and media literacy. In addition, the ecosystem should be conducive to the lifelong learning of the elderly. Besides, it is important that education should promote learning for people of all ages; provide people with learning skills, career skills, and life skills that are consistent and timely. Consequently, the "National Learning Encouragement Act, B.E. 2566 (2023) and its implications to community learning centres in Thailand", carries stipulations concerning lifelong learning, educational enhancement, and global competitiveness to ensure that individuals have understanding, professional, and life skills (Charungkaittikul, 2023). This creates opportunities for those who have not received formal education or for age groups other than school age to develop their potential, skills, and expertise.

Changes in technology in production and services, and the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that some of the elderly found themselves in a difficult situation with respect to the labour market as many needed to continue working. Inadequate levels of social assistance programmes, inflation and longer lifespans in some countries are leading them to stay in the workforce longer. This trend is expected to continue. New types of work include digital platform economy, flexible working system, working from home, remote working, hybrid working and meetings. Although they promote flexibility, they do not overly commit to the elderly. Therefore, the elderly need to be prepared and adapt to these new technologies and changes in their lives to have the opportunity to work according to their needs and other areas for the quality living of themselves and others (Charungkaittikul, 2023; Ratana-Ubol, 2021; Ratana-Ubol et al., 2015).

In addition, it would be nice to educate the elderly in society to know these 21st century skills, as well as to prepare other age groups to fulfil the skills and competencies required. Learning concepts in this current digital era have been developed as a framework to prepare the future working-age population to keep up with the changes. Based on the expected results for learners in the 21st century, the skills consist of one cognitive and three essential groups for learning. Learners must have a well-rounded background in core subjects, such as English, reading, linguistics, art, mathematics, economics, science, geography, history, government, and

citizenship. In addition, education must also raise awareness of global issues (global awareness), knowledge of finance, economy, business, and business ownership (financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy), good citizenship knowledge (civic literacy), health knowledge (health literacy) and environmental knowledge (environmental literacy) for learners. Learning and innovation skills are also important in dealing with the uncertainty of future changes. Furthermore, creative thinking and innovation skills (creativity and innovation), critical thinking skills (critical thinking and problem solving), communication and cooperation skills (communication and collaboration), and information, media, and technology skills are important and will enhance the lifetime learning of the population. Moreover, information knowledge (information literacy), media knowledge (media literacy), information and communication technology knowledge, life skills, and career skills are important for the livelihoods of the population. Other important skills to cope with social rapid changes include flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability skills, and leadership and responsibility (Bellanca & Brandt, 2010; Ratana-Ubol, 2021; Ratana-Ubol et al., 2015).

According to the preliminary studies and research, the rapid changes in the 21st century world include changes in population structure due to entering the aging society, as mentioned above, coupled with relocation. The age gap is widening because experiences, life contexts, and thoughts are different. The leap forward in technology has caused widespread changes in society, career structure and work style. There are both new and obsolete careers and a wider learning process.

## 2. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Based on the factors and goals of promoting learning for the elderly to have competencies and skills through various policies and development plans, as well as the essential skills of the population and workforce in the 21st century, the research team conducted research on the study of the skills and competencies necessary for the elderly. The main objective of this study is to present guidelines for developing the necessary skills and competencies for the elderly in Thailand. The framework of this study is seen in Figure 1. The information obtained was used to create proposals and guidelines for developing the skills and competencies necessary for the elderly in Thailand to be able to live in a digital world and an aging society, as well as receive benefits from government agencies in the implementation of policies related to the elderly for becoming a "completely ageing society" of Thailand.
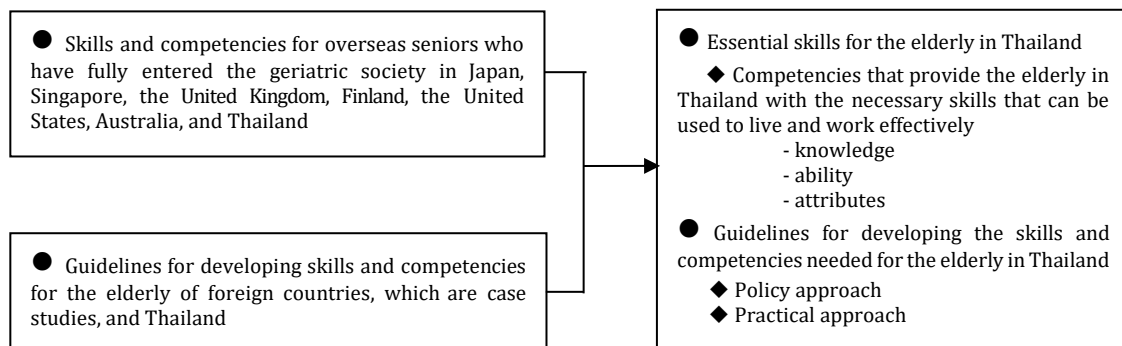
| ● Skills and competencies for overseas seniors who have fully entered the geriatric society in Japan, Singapore, the United Kingdom, Finland, the United States, Australia, and Thailand |  | ● Essential skills for the elderly in Thailand<br>◆ Competencies that provide the elderly in Thailand with the necessary skills that can be used to live and work effectively<br>    - knowledge<br>    - ability<br>    - attributes<br>● Guidelines for developing the skills and competencies needed for the elderly in Thailand<br>◆ Policy approach<br>◆ Practical approach |
|---|---|---|
| ● Guidelines for developing skills and competencies for the elderly of foreign countries, which are case studies, and Thailand |  |  |

**Figure 1:** Research Framework

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This study applied descriptive research using qualitative data collection. The research process was as follows:

1. Review and analysis of documents and research related to the skills and competencies of elderly people abroad who have fully entered the geriatric society in seven countries: Japan, Singapore, the United Kingdom, Finland, the United States, Australia, and Thailand.

The documents were studied using specific selection, which included papers, academic articles, books, and research related to skills and competencies for the elderly, as well as guidelines for the development of skills and competencies in the foreign countries and Thailand. The criteria for the selection of such documents and research are documents related to the skills and competencies for the elderly, as well as guidelines for the development of skills and competencies of such foreign countries and Thailand during the years 2012–2022.

2. Synthesis of data from documents and research related to the skills and competencies of overseas elderly people who have fully entered the geriatric society and the skills and competencies of the elderly in Thailand from Step 1 was conducted to determine the skills and competencies required for the elderly in Thailand as well as guidelines for developing these necessary skills and competencies.

3. Examination and verification of skills and competencies required and the guidelines for developing the skills and competencies needed for the elderly in Thailand through feedback from experts, government agencies, the private sector, civil society, partners working in the field of aging, and representatives of the elderly were conducted. The tools used to collect the data were group discussion of issues and completion of a report form, which was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee, the Second Allied Academic Group in Social Sciences, Humanities and Fine Arts, Chulalongkorn University.

## 4. RESULTS

Overall, it was found that 6 of the countries prioritize and develop their elderly to be able to survive in the digital age and an aging society. Self-development planning skills help older people to learn and do things in a way that is intended to learn for practical knowledge, to strive for self-awareness, to like to learn self-knowledge, and to be a lifelong learner. Wellness skills are essential due to chronic illnesses. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are important communication skills and competencies for learning and understanding, and should be developed over a lifelong period. In addition, financial literacy or financial management must be recognized because older people need money to spend on their lifestyle until the end of their life or for emergency or medical care. The presence of skills and competencies in digital technology is beneficial to the development of the power of the elderly. The skill of living in the right place and living a safe life is another skill that is necessary for the elderly; if the environment can be adjusted to a safe space suitable for daily life and does not cause harm to the elderly, the chance of accidents is reduced. The skills of democratic citizenship or awakened citizenship by being active and active citizens are often linked to media awareness. Lifelong learning skills are needed because seniors have life experience, who want and likely are their own leaders and want independence. Life skills are needed in society as most seniors need the knowledge skills needed to live in the immediate world and skills for work and occupation as elderly.

According to the research results, the skills and competencies required by the elderly in Thailand consist of 10 key skills, each of which has competencies that contribute to those skills. These include (1) planning skills for self-development, consisting of necessary competencies such as having a framework for development, and designing a plan for self-development; (2) well-being skills, consisting of essential competencies such as access to good physical and mental health, the ability to face problems and changes, having emotional intelligence, and the ability to use modern tools in healthcare; (3) basic literacy and computational skills, including essential competencies such as speaking, listening, and reading and writing in Thai and English, basic calculations used in everyday life, the ability to use various tools in everyday life and record the results correctly and accurately, day-to-day fiscal management, digital financial transactions, knowledge of the law and its benefits related to the elderly and making wills; (4) media, information, technology, and digital skills including essential competencies such as accessing information media and using digital technology securely, analysis, criticism and evaluation of media, information and digital technologies, content and information creation, application, and transformation; (5) skills to reside in an appropriate home and live a safe and secure life consisting of essential competencies, such as knowledge of the rights to rent, purchase or maintain occupancy in diverse types of housing, prevention of accidents when outside the home, and the ability to use public transport; (6) protecting oneself from abuse and knowledge of everyday law for the skills of democratic citizenship or awakened citizenship consisting of the necessary competencies, such as conducting one's good citizenship, living within the framework of good morals, volunteering or public spirit, and social responsibility; (7) lifelong learning skills, consisting of essential competencies such as having a cheerful outlook towards learning, being motivated to learn, having the ability to learn, having the ability to seek self-knowledge, and having the ability to communicate; (8) social skills including essential competencies such as life planning to prepare for retirement and to participate in interest-based activities, learning between ages and maintaining family relationships, reconciliation with the younger generations, socializing, community participation, volunteering in various areas of the community, and the ability to transfer knowledge and experience; (9) the skills for work and career consisting of essential competencies such as having a cheerful outlook towards work, ability to plan for self-development for special work, ongoing work or career change, ability to collaborate with others, basic mathematical knowledge for work, ability to solve complex problems, ability to use English or other languages for work and career, the ability to use technological tools to support working from home, ability to use technology for production, the ability to think to improve work, entrepreneurial ability, and ability to work in multiple professions and prevention of occupational risks.

The guidelines for developing the necessary skills and competencies for the elderly in Thailand are divided into policy and practical approaches as follows:

*Policy Approach*

1. The government appoints a committee to prepare the legislation, laws, rules, and regulations that promote the participation of various sectors in society to develop the necessary skills and competencies for the elderly. They should consider the collection of laws and rules on the same subject and be involved with or related to the development of the skills and competencies necessary for existing seniors. Categories should be created systematically and logically linked in order to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of those involved in developing the skills and competencies necessary for the elderly to access legislation that promotes the participation of various sectors in society and to conveniently develop the necessary skills and competencies of the elderly. This must not overlap with existing laws, rules, and regulations. The laws must be easily understood.

*Practical Approach*

1.1 The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Office of the Secretariat of the Education Council, and local related agencies require the establishment of an independent committee to conduct a study to prepare recommendations and draft laws or rules by considering the composition of the committee from the role of participation of those involved in developing the necessary skills and competencies for the elderly, namely: 1) providing education and lifelong learning; 2) defining the roles, duties, responsibilities, and benefits with the private sector or communities that carry out the development of the necessary skills and competencies for the elderly; 3) raising awareness of the value and dignity of the elderly; and 4) motivating people of all ages in society to realize the need to develop their skills and competencies throughout their lives.

*Policy Approach*

2. The government establishes representative mechanisms to develop the skills and competencies for the life and work of the elderly by integrating and linking the work of various agencies, including the public, private and civil society sectors, as well as providing funds to host the development of skills and competencies for the life and work of the elderly linked to the changes and needs of the country's labor force.

*Practical Approach*

2.1 Ministry of Social Development and Human Security should establish a work section or an integrated working group as a representative mechanism to operate under the supervision of the State.

2.2 Ministry of Education together with the Equitable Education Fund (EEF) has established a National Learning Ecosystem Development Fund to promote and develop learning resources for the development of education and competencies for people of all ages. The standards of learning facilities for the elderly are taken into account, including the production of learning materials suitable for the elderly.

*Policy Approach*

3. The government provides a database system for elderly people and a central database system for the elderly with the relevant agencies that retain such information, such as the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education. Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour, and Ministry of Digital Economy and Society. These should be integrated with the private sector in the preparation or development of a database to systematically store the basic information of the elderly and as a central database where relevant departments can use the information in various work systems that are accurate, reliable and standardized together without duplication of information. This is in accordance with the data breach prevention guidelines of the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA).

*Practical Approach*

3.1 The Ministry of Interior and other related organizations have established a specialized working group to establish a database system for the elderly as well as a central database system for the elderly that can be used for planning to support the development of the skills and competencies of each group of elderly people.

*Policy Approach*

4. The integrated working group under the cooperation of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, Ministry of Industry, Bank of Thailand, and private business agencies establishes rules and procedures to incentivize the elderly to develop the necessary skills and competencies throughout their lifetimes. By a division or an integrated working group under the cooperation of these entities, there should be

the establishment of the criteria and methods for motivating the elderly to develop the necessary skills and competencies throughout their lifetimes that are tied to wealth management, personal financial planning, and income, such as savings and income collateral in older age.

*Practical Approach*

4.1 Determine of employment criteria for the elderly.

4.2 Assess of the skills and competencies needed to stay in the labor market of the elderly.

4.3 Incentivize the elderly to be eager to develop themselves in every way.

*Policy Approach*

5. The integrated working group under the cooperation of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, Ministry of Industry, Bank of Thailand, and private business agencies should lay out guidelines for the development of the skills and competencies needed for the elderly in Thailand in the digital age.

*Practical Approach*

5.1 Develop a system and model that facilitates and supports learning activities to concretely develop the skills and competencies necessary for the elderly in Thailand including 1) promoting the development of learning cities for the elderly in different provinces, 2) promoting the development of universities of the third age to develop the skills and competencies of the elderly, 3) creating a platform for "new learning resources in the virtual world", and 4) promoting short-term training courses in various sectors.

5.2 Encourage the use of educational vouchers or credit systems to develop the skills and competencies required for the elderly.

5.3 Design the learning process to suit the development of skills and competencies for the elderly.

5.4 Promote a learning environment to develop skills and competencies for the elderly.

5.5 Promote the development of designers and management of learning to develop the skills and competencies necessary for the elderly.

5.6 Continuous assessment and adopting of lessons learned by older adults who develop their skills and competencies.

*Policy Approach*

6. The Ministry of Digital Economy and Society should accelerate the formulation of digital equity for all ages, especially among the elderly population.

*Practical Approach*

6.1 Define measures to design systems for digital fairness for people of all ages, as digital transformation has led to inequality in access to and utilization of technology between the elite and underprivileged and it is used for daily life and careers.

6.2 Provide adequate internet services and equipment for people of all ages, especially the elderly.

6.3 Establish preventive measures against the elderly being deceived by the media.

*Policy Approach*

7. The Ministry of Education and other related organizations should formulate policies, mechanisms, and measures to strengthen and develop the skills and competencies necessary for the elderly in the digital age, as well as prepare people of all ages to enter the fully aging society of Thailand.

*Practical Approach*

7.1 Formulate policies for organizing and promoting lifelong education management.

7.2 Implement a mechanism to drive policy.

7.3 Establish measures to promote the implementation of the policy, namely: 1) inserting content on the enhancement/development of skills and competencies necessary for the elderly into the curriculum, teaching, and learning, and 2) establishing "Elderly libraries" in all areas.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research team prepared the key issues in the preparation of legislation, laws, rules, and regulations that promote the participation of various sectors in society to develop the skills and competencies necessary for the elderly. It does not overlap with existing legislation, laws, rules, or regulations and establishes

representative mechanisms to develop skills and competencies for the life and work of the elderly in an integrated manner and connect the work of various agencies. Furthermore, there are funds to jointly determine the direction of the development of skills and competencies for the life and work of the elderly. This is in line with Suwanrada et al. (2022), who found that Thailand currently has several national plans related to the work of the elderly, but when looking back at the results of the assessment and follow-up, it was found that the results of achieving the goals are not satisfactory both in terms of improving the quality of life of the elderly and preparing them. Although there is a local drive by various sectors, including the private sector, civil society, and local government, many of their roles remain unclear, and there are budget constraints.

Therefore, civil society and the private sector have a role to play in closing these gaps in areas where government agencies do not operate or do not adequately respond to the problems that arise. In the future, the support should be considered more clearly and systematically, which is also in line with Sasipat's future direction of education for the elderly. Yodphet et al. (2022) proposed the development of an educational management system for the elderly in the future that gives importance to the creation of mechanisms for implementation. By assigning tasks to truly knowledgeable people, the goal is to organize ongoing learning activities and involve participation from all sectors so that they can be systematically monitored and assist in the implementation. Strong formal and informal social networks are critical to the success of learning activities for the elderly, which is in line with Dechgamhaeng (2018) and Phuttajorn (2021) who studied the limitations and solutions of educational operations for the elderly and found that there was a limitation of power. Since the operation of education for the elderly does not apply basic education, it is not covered by the laws, rules and regulations prescribed by the government. Therefore, it is merely a form of activity that each agency or locality conducts by itself, due to recognizing the importance of the development of the elderly in the area. Therefore, if there are laws, rules, regulations, and regulations that directly improve the educational work for the elderly, it will have a positive impact on the more efficient operations of this area.

In terms of determining the criteria and methods to motivate the elderly to develop the necessary skills and competencies throughout their life, the concept of educational gerontology, proposed by McClusky (1974), stated that older people undergo learning because they need the knowledge to improve themselves. This is because the elderly do not need to learn to gain a qualification or enter the workforce but learn because they want to control the environment and be able to understand and adapt to the changes that arise. Similarly, older adults' motivations to learn life skills include their changing bodies and lifestyles as they age, as well as computer skills and other skills useful for their work, and to sustain employment or gain a qualification (Formosa, 2019; Hodkinson et al., 2008; Jarvis, 2012; Ratana-Ubol, 2020; and Talmage et al., 2015).

This recommendation is based on the findings in the research that, for the competencies and skills needed for lifelong learning, older adults must be motivated to learn, which is an internal characteristic that drives individuals to demonstrate a desire to succeed in learning. They are committed to successful learning, have confidence in their abilities, a thirst for knowledge, and a passion for learning new things, and always seek opportunities to gain experience in both formal and informal learning to improve their knowledge and skills.

This is also in line with the *13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023–2027)* (2022), which prioritizes population change and proposes that the state consider incentive mechanisms for the development of people of all ages to their full potential. This is especially true for elderly people who are still healthy and are able to be self-reliant, contribute to society with dignity, and adapt to technology appropriately. The labor management policy within the context of the aging society is clear and it can reduce the risk of labor force shortages, for example, by extending the retirement age, enhancing Thai labor productivity, and attracting highly skilled workers from other countries.

Laying out guidelines for the concrete development of skills and competencies needed for the elderly should include the creation of a system and model that facilitates and supports learning activities for the development of skills and competencies in many ways, such as learning cities for the elderly. The creation of a multiverse learning space platform is in line with several studies related to improving the quality of life of the elderly through lifelong learning. There must be a variety of forms and activities according to the issues, interests, and availability of the elderly in each area, to include formal education, informal education and independent education according to changing circumstances, and in particular, adapting to the concept of living based on the new way of life by organizing online learning along with on-site learning management (Srisupan et al., 2017; Yodphet et al., 2022).

Promoting short-term training is in line with the concept of the SkillsFuture Singapore (2023), which develops lifelong learning activities by organizing the SkillsFuture credit program to equip all Singaporean citizens aged 25 years and over with SkillsFuture credits starting at the same value of S$500 or approximately 12,500 baht. The SkillsFuture website is a platform that facilitates the participation of various stakeholders involved in lifelong learning management, including Ying and Lucas (2019), which has implemented the National Silver Academy (NSA) to promote and support lifelong learning for seniors aged 50 and over. The

state provides up to 50% of the tuition fees up to $500 per course and provides short-term, affordable training courses divided into modules, with no placement tests, and opens up ad hoc learning opportunities for the elderly for work and reskilling, which is the creation of new skills needed for work, such as information technology, business, and life skills such as health, resiliency, and art.

Another important proposal is to accelerate the formulation of digital justice policies for people of all ages, especially the elderly, due to the inconvenience of accessing and using technology benefits. This is in line with Pathumcharoenwattana et al. (2018), who studied the competency of media literacy, information and digital technology to strengthen the democratic citizenship of the elderly and found that the elderly can access and use a variety of digital media and technologies in accordance with their needs, keep up-to-date and be safe, and know how to use information media and digital technology to create individual change. This shows that the elderly can be given the opportunity and benefits of technology to improve their competencies and skills.

In contrast, based on the findings of Kumhom et al. (2022) resulting from synthesized research related to educational technology and innovation suitable for the elderly, it was found that the elderly lacked knowledge and could not adapt to and access digital technologies. This leads to having difficulties in daily life, such as registering via the internet to exercise their rights according to the measures prescribed by the government. In addition, it is a barrier that prevents the elderly from living in society. This is because some of the population does not have access to internet services, especially the elderly who are least likely to be digitally connected.

This proposal is therefore a challenge for the responsible agencies to keep up with technological changes and innovations. Opening opportunities to create intelligent learning platforms will help to reduce the high inequality of the Thai population in terms of infrastructure and the availability of digital technological tools and equipment.

## 6. RECOMMENDATION

### 6.1 Suggestions based on the findings

1. Governments, through relevant operations from several ministries and government agencies, should conduct the development of skills and competencies of the elderly by using the existing roles and responsibilities of various government agencies as a mechanism. Moreover, if they are not sufficient, ways to improve need to be found.

2. Governments, through relevant operations from various ministries and government agencies, should have measures to promote lifelong learning and the role of elderly learning and continuing education to continuously enhance modern skills for the elderly. There are three forms of learning: systematic learning, which is learning to obtain an accepted qualification, such as studying at a university to obtain a degree; non-formal learning, being a course or activity that is held that does not have educational qualifications, driven by the motivation of learning of individuals or groups, such as the curriculum of the EEC, the School of the Elderly; and informal or self-learning, which is learning related to individuals or groups to improve knowledge, such as reading handbooks, attending seminars, and solving problems in the community.

3. Governments, through relevant actions from various ministries and government agencies, should support the lifelong learning of the elderly to develop existing skills and the addition of new skills, which are important for work and life as the world enters the digital age. The skills needed for the elderly to stay in the labour market and the skills needed to return to the labour market should be evaluated. The government should provide advice on the skills that are needed according to the path of the profession, with a budget system in the form of educational vouchers or credits to develop future skills, which the state can contribute to the learning of people of all ages.

4. Encouraging the skills and competencies of the elderly to live and work for a longer period can be done by government agencies involved in working with the elderly, such as the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Public Health, the Department of Elderly Affairs, and the Office of the Promotion of Non-formal and Informal Education. Society, agencies, and establishments must be encouraged to have a cheerful outlook towards being elderly and that the elderly still have potential in terms of experience. Efforts and motivation to learn about good health must be promoted reactively and preventively. Workplaces can be designed to suit the conditions of the elderly, including promoting the use of technology for the elderly. Adjustment of the human resources development system of the country and agencies should be conducted, as well as balancing management costs in promoting the development of the elderly for employment between the State, employers and elderly workers.

5. The government should encourage elderly clubs and local geriatric schools to be an important force in conducting learning activities to enhance skills and competencies for the elderly by coordinating with government agencies, private organizations, and NGOs. This reduces learning anxiety with the support of

relevant agencies and network partners to drive the activity continuously. In particular, local government organizations should be the main supporting agencies at the local level.

6. The development of skills and competencies of the elderly should begin at the age of 40 in order to have social security.

7. To develop skills and competencies for entering the elderly age level, the business sector and government agencies that are the supervisors of those who are retiring, or agencies related to the development of the elderly, such as the C.E.N. and the Senior Citizens Club, and senior schools should conduct activities before retirement or before the age of 60, which is 10 years in advance, by promoting various forms of learning for entering a career of interest or for a career change.

8. Learning managers who enhance the skills and competencies of the elderly must adjust the learning management so that the elderly can adapt to learning in a new way.

9. Managers must learn to enhance the skills and competencies for the elderly. In learning management, many issues must be considered such as the conditions in which the elderly can learn suitably, for example, the elderly aged 60–69 years old still learn well, including elderly people who are chronically ill but still able to control their potential diseases, economic status, and level of education.

10. Having received or been trained to develop skills and competencies, the elderly should have access to various rights of the elderly according to the law.

11. To promote access to skills development for the elderly workforce, 1) Adjust the role of the funds related to skills development and employment promotion of the elderly, such as the Elderly Fund, the Work-at-Home Fund, and the Skill Development Fund, so that they pay subsidies without borrowing by assessing and screening elderly workers who need to be skilled; 2) establish a counselling system, introducing training courses, and planning for the development of skills and careers after retirement for elderly workers who want to develop skills or change skills, especially those who are unemployed and looking for work; 3) establish measures to raise awareness of the value and benefits of workforce development among the elderly in order to reduce age bias and discrimination due to age, which is reflected in the determination of the skills requirements of jobs recruiting for the elderly; 4) develop of a variety of training models to meet the different conditions and needs of each group of elderly people, such as poor elderly people who work outside the system and live in slums, proactively providing vocational skills through training services; and 5) create a lifelong culture of training and learning and a workforce of all ages to be "lifelong learners", as well as creating an environment conducive to learning, will be an important basis for workers to be more open to new knowledge and skills.

12. Learning management to develop the skills and competencies of poor elderly people who are urban workers must consider the context of the lifestyle of the elderly, such as being knowledgeable about occupational health issues due to working in risky situations. For example, cutting cloth at home requires inhaling the smell and being in contact with the dye of the fabric, which can cause difficulty breathing; or there is a potential usage of drugs for working harder and for longer periods of time. In addition, the absence of a coalition of elderly workers deprives them of bargaining power. Vocational training cannot increase revenue or do so continuously because it depends on market forces. The elderly do not have time to learn, and there are costs.

13. Developing vocational skills for the elderly must have a market to support them and also use the concept of people of three ages, especially the younger generation, to help sell online.

14. From the approach to developing the necessary skills and competencies for the elderly in Thailand, it is proposed that the government expedite the preparation of legislation, laws, rules, and regulations that promote the participation of various sectors in society in order to develop the skills and competencies necessary for the elderly. It also establishes representative mechanisms to integrate skills and competencies for the life and work of the elderly and links the work of various agencies as well as funds to cooperatively determine the direction of the development of skills and competencies for the life and work of the elderly. The Office of the Secretary-General of the Education Council should present the findings to the relevant parties for their consideration and also drive concrete action for the benefit of developing the skills and competencies needed for the elderly in Thailand.

### 6.2 Suggestions for future research

1. The skills and competencies studied should be analyzed to evaluate the indicators, definitions, and explanations for the elderly to be able to understand them easily. These can be developed as a tool to measure skills and competencies, either quantitatively or qualitatively.

2. The skills and competencies of the elderly should be studied by considering several dimensions, such as age range, duties, occupations, education level, symptoms of illness, urban or rural areas, current times, and the future.

3. The gap should be studied as to how agencies developing elderly skills and competencies in various dimensions, including health, society, economy, and environment, have been implemented in addition to which specific gaps need to be developed.

4. Pilot research should be conducted on the development of learning cities where the skills and competencies of the elderly can be developed.

5. Research and development of courses should be conducted using a database related to the skills and competencies gained from the findings of this research.

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