

Intergenerational Learning Enhanced through Local Wisdom in Thailand

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Abstract

Lifelong learning is significant in the Thai learning society. Presently, Thailand has been aging as a society since 2005, with an aging population of 20 percent in 2021 which is expected to become 30% of the population in 2040. Lifelong learning is the continuous supportive process which stimulates and empowers Thai citizens to acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills and understanding which they will require throughout their lives. Since 2005, Thailand's elderly population has been rising and by 2021 the estimated aging population will have reached 20%. This is expected to rise to 30% of the population by 2040. The problem of profound intergenerational fragmentation is increasing. Facilitating intergenerational learning enhanced through local wisdom will promote the cultural perspectives in intergeneration communication between young people and the elderly. The transmission of local wisdom from generation to generation through informal learning, which takes place through all forms of learning as a result of an individual's life experiences.. The promotion of intergenerational learning offers people of different ages the opportunity to come together and share their expertise, experiences, knowledge and skills. Such learning can provide benefits to all involved and foster life-enhancing understanding and growth.

1. Introduction

The development of capable human capital is the crucial part of Thailand's 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan of 2017 to 2021. This plan aims to bring all Thai people towards sustainable development, to promote and support more lifelong learning activities. This can be started by engaging in the delivery of basic formal and informal education, promoting literacy and continuing education, developing educational resources and technology including a digital platform in all types of education. As well as promoting research activities in lifelong learning to further develop human potential, the goal of the plan is a sustainable development for all citizens regardless of their background which includes the disabled.

Lifelong learning is significant in the Thai learning society National Education Act and amendments (1999). The continuous supportive process which stimulates and empowers Thai citizens to acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills and understanding for which they will require throughout their lifetime and to apply these with confidence, creativity and enjoyment, in all situations and environments. According to the Commission of the European Communities (2001), lifelong learning is defined as all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal,

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civil, social and/or employment-related perspective. Thus, lifelong learning is about acquiring new knowledge, updating qualification, abilities and skills as well as exploring new interests, valuing all forms of learning, working in partnerships, insight into the demand for learning, adequate resources, facilitating access to learning opportunities, creating a learning culture and striving for excellence. Hence, lifelong learning is the process of individuals building and transforming experience into knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes, feeling, values, and beliefs for a better quality of life and a progressive learning society.

As the changing world population has led many countries to focus on their elderly population, the policy recommendations for the elderly has been raised as a key strategy for national development. Every sector, whether public or private, needs to be reviewed and re-formulated in order to improve the quality of life of the elderly, to live a comfortable, happy and safe life in society. For Thailand, the structural change of the population is likely to increase significantly. Thailand has been aging as a society since 2005, with an aging population of 20% in 2021 and expected to be 30% of the population in 2040.

The key elements that can help the elderly change from a situation crisis becomes the opportunity. Resort in policy setting, of which the government must be the driving force. The society must be motivated to cooperate to achieve these aims thorough collaborative action. Considering the policy that the government has already implemented, this is the second major update to the National Plan for Elderly People (2002 - 2564). It is clear that the plan emphasizes the "life cycle" of an individual and states that "the elderly are the bearers of the culture and wisdom of society. The elderly should be encouraged and be supported by families, communities and the state to live in dignity, and maintain the best health and well-being, providing assistance to those in need.

The problem of profound intergenerational fragmentation is increasing. The connection of mutual understanding between the aged and the younger generation is signification in Thai society. Facilitating intergenerational learning will promote the cultural perspectives in intergeneration communication between young people and society. The promotion for sustainable discourse for the intergenerational learning provides opportunities for youth and honoring elders in shared cultural values, also in consideration of present and future generations.

Thai local wisdom is transmitted through tradition and culture, which is gathered from both within and outside the local community. It is used in ways that benefit the community and in ways which it can be passed on to further generations. The basic knowledge gained by living in balance with nature and the community culture becomes local wisdom in that community. This wisdom comes from people's experiences or truth gained from life's experiences. Thailand Research Fund (2009) divided community knowledge into three categories 1) Knowledge to maintain the community, its history, important stories, main values, culture, traditions, regulations, and the important teachings of the community. 2) Knowledge for daily living is the knowledge about occupations, religion, and training for development of the potential abilities and health of the members. 3) Knowledge of establishing harmony is knowledge which comes from people's enjoyment of life, the general knowledge found in informal meeting places which includes storytelling, lullabies, harvest songs and everyday stories. It establishes harmony through close relationships, enjoyment, caring and strength among the members. (Thailand Research Fund, 2009). The Thai local wisdom covers nine areas: 1) Thai local wisdom of agriculture 2) of handicrafts and cottage

industries 3) Thai traditional medicine 4) the management and conservation of natural resources 5) of funding, and community economics 6) fine arts 7) of local languages and literature 8) of philosophy, religion, and tradition and 9) foods and nutrition (Ratana-Ubol et.al, 2007).

The transmission of local wisdom from generation to generation through informal learning occurs through all forms of learning that take place as a result of an individual's life experiences. The young will learn from incidental learning from the experience from the elderly. The importance of tacit knowledge, often embedded in the elderly's daily life activities and relationships with culture is of a kind that cannot easily be articulated and made explicit. The knowledge or wisdom from the elderly generated by practical problems is capable of application and often highly specific to a certain context of nine areas of Thai local wisdom. The local wisdom is a form of knowledge that is created by local wisdom persons and through groups rather than by isolated individuals; its origin lies in collective attempts to solve problems, and its meaning is realized through application in a community setting. The intergenerational learning happens through social relationships, which play a vital part in their capacity for learning among young and old people. Intergenerational learning is simply concerned with the acquisition of skills, attitudes and knowledge and also concerned with their mutual creation of all generations. Young people respect and admire the wisdom of the elderly, also the elderly trust the young's perspective in technology in changing world. The reciprocities that arise from intergenerational learning are valuable for achieving mutual goals among everyone.

Jitwilai and Ratana-Ubol (2018) studied the effects of organizing a local-wisdom based non-formal educational process for the elderly-youth relationship with two objectives: 1) organizing a local wisdom-based non-formal educational process for the elderly-youth relationship and 2) studying the effects of organizing a local wisdom-based non-formal educational process for the elderly-youth relationship. This study was conducted qualitatively. The participants were the elderly and youth in the district of Khon Kaen Province, Thailand. The elderly and youth had shared the local wisdom of Mudmee silk weaving. They all worked together on the Mudmee silk process: mulberry plantations and silkworm cultivation, harvesting the cocoons, silk spinning and bleaching, preparing weft yarn, preparing warp yarn, tie-dye Mudmee silk, reeling and weaving. Andragogy Knowles (1980) principles were applied as a non-formal educational process to make activity planning and to study the elderly-youth relationship. The research instruments were activity logs, observations, and interviews. Data were analyzed through content analysis. The results of the study were as follows: 1) a local wisdom-based non-formal educational process of the elderly-youth relationship, the elderly and youth planned to weave Mudmee silk together by creating a collaborative learning atmosphere, in an appropriate physical environment for collaborative learning, targeting silk activity planning, designing, and implementing silk activities including collaborative assessment of silk works. 2) a local wisdom-based non-formal educational process of the elderly-youth relationship in collaborative silk activity, promoted: (1) straightforward communication which included listening to others' opinions, acceptance of others' comments and criticisms, listening to others without interruption while others are speaking, usage of soft and polite words, avoidance of conflicts and arguments, avoidance of condescension, use of requesting words rather than directing words, avoidance of overbearing and arrogant manners and (2) assisting others by encouragement and being keen to help each other and (3) trusting

others, elderly and youth were more likely to feel trustful of each other and (4) sincerity and appreciation between elderly and youth and (5) acceptance of individual characteristics between elderly and the youth and realization of individual characteristics between the two groups. Moreover, these activities will support parts of local wisdom in the area.

A study for improving the elderly functional role in Thailand (Ratana-Ubol, 2018) concluded that the expectation of Thai society in the future will be the need for the elderly to be able to rely on themselves in the circumstances when the family transform into a single family with no children. In addition, there will be a need for continued care for the elderly when they begin to decline. Also active aging which refers to the elderly who are physically fit and healthy. Independence results in the ability to help others, being able to adjust to the environment in order to live a life of dignity, self-esteem and social acceptance until the end of life. Areas of study include: The areas where there are agencies / organizations working on the development of the potential of the elderly in the six regions of Thailand. The results related to the intergeneration activities are as follows: 1) Dissention between the various age groups and the need for a leader who is not only a strong person but also able to understand the composition of the community and its problems. 2) Promotion of physical and mental health in the diverse age group members. 3) The youth can spend time with the elderly as a service to the community and also learn from the elderly's skills. 4) The youth acquire more knowledge about their culture and environment equipping them with knowledge to share in dealing with visitors or tourists in the community. 5) The elderly and the youth learn new knowledge to challenge their own abilities and are rewarded for this which then promotes their self-esteem. 6) The youth observe the basic standards of life experience which aids in their development for the future. 7) The elderly become motivated to want to share their knowledge and gain pleasure from doing this.

2. Discussion

2.1 The intergenerational learning aims to bring people of all ages together in a purposeful and mutually beneficial understanding. According to Longworth (2003), intergenerational practices promote lifelong learning and build awareness on the direction of social and economic reform in which the focus is on all community segments. From interviews, the elderly stated the benefits of these activities in the community were improving the elderly's functional role in Thailand. This helps the elderly change their behaviors and gives them more freedom to share their needs and broaden their visions to learn. "I can know, I can see, learning from the past, and learn up to date knowledge. I will be able to bring knowledge from joining activities, to develop myself. They can plan and also teach grand-children to plan as well. This makes us have new methods for work." "My main objective for joining the group is conservation of arts, culture and local wisdom". (Ratana-Ubol, 2018)

2.2 Intergenerational learning enhanced through local wisdom supported community development. The following is a summary of the interviews. We can develop our community to be a learning resource and a venue to which tourists can come for eco-tourism. They can

learn about culture and visit the local museum. Many visitors come and this leaves us tired but very happy, also the community benefit from the financial contribution. The seniors act as guides and also give demonstrations to the visitors (Ratana-Ubol, 2018). Also, it creates equity between all the citizens, because they are interested in the same activities. New friendships develop and the more affluent members help the poor members. Thus they create unity amongst the people. The development of strong bonds between the groups and provide support to each other and the rest of the society will recognize the group and give further support and encouragement. As a group, the activities promote and further develop the abilities of the members such as weaving, drawing, painting, and pottery. They work together to add further values to their products which they sell them to the market. Local wisdom leaders are active in intergenerational learning, passing on their wisdom to the next generation.

2.3 Problems that occurred in the intergeneration activities were: 1) When the elderly advance in years, they are no longer able to share their knowledge. 2) The issues related to the youth who are not able to join the elderly because of the time and demands of their schooling. 3) Lack of documentation of the wisdom from the elderly's knowledge and experiences. 4) Lack of knowledge and innovation to develop new products. 5) Lack of support from the government, both local and central (Ratana-Ubol, 2018).

3. Conclusion and Recommendation

Intergenerational learning enhanced through local wisdom can be promoted to all communities to start their intergenerational projects and to develop their unique activities. Intergenerational learning enhanced through local wisdom will promote the development of learning communities, encouraging the youth to find employment in their own community and not look to the big cities to meet this need. When the wisdom of age is mixed with the energy of youth, it creates a powerful integration that benefits all community members. This is an area which has to depend on innovative ideas to promote development, which in turn will enhance the lives of the citizens and the appreciation of the family unit, their culture, art, skills and an environment which is safe, as well as promoting physical, social and spiritual well-being. The promotion of intergenerational projects offer people of different ages the opportunity to come together and share their expertise, experiences, knowledge and skills. Such projects can provide benefits to all involved and foster life-enhancing understanding and growth.

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