eLearning to Increase the Quality of Life for Senior Citizens

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Abstract - The seniors have realized the usefulness of learning via new communication devices. The Electronic Learning (eLearning) is a learning by using electronic computing as a medium of digital contents, and can be one of the major components for long distance communication. The seniors can search and learn much helpful senior care knowledge to improve their quality of life, making them happy. Both healthy seniors and ones who suffer from aging illness can learn by using advance eLearning information system features of motivation enhancement, exciting learning, engaging learning community, enjoyable knowledge materials, edutainment, embedding good learning environment, empowered learner, effective learning with less time and cost, clear knowledge content and structure, and extensibility of sustainable learning from knowledge management center. Therefore, the outcomes are very positive. The senior care knowledge management center can be developed with the electronic information technology via the Internet to provide the useful senior patient care knowledge for the family members and other interesting stakeholders in the society. It is critical to the health of elders in Thailand as well as global society, providing the high quality senior care knowledge-based center of Thai aging society. In addition, the seniors should concern about the accuracy of data that can be reliable. If there is any information related to the financial data of seniors, the data security is the most important aspect. The seniors should be careful when providing their financial data to the third party. Furthermore, the seniors should carefully explore, learn and choose ones with appropriate or good to high quality.

Keywords – eLearning, Quality of Life, Senior Citizens

I. INTRODUCTION

Many countries in the world have an increasing number of aging populations. Most significant increasing number of aging populations is in the developing countries, including Thailand. In Thailand, the life expectation of females is greater than the life expectancy of males. Many elders in Thai society have aging illness with physical limitation; as a result, it is necessary to provide a good care for elders. Therefore, Thai government should support the elders in the society to have a good health according to the senior care principles of the United Nations, and the social and quality of life per the policy of the Ministry of Public Health.

This research was focused on eLearning of both healthy aging seniors and ones who suffer from aging illness. In order to improve the quality of their life, eLearning helps transform the classic way of paper-based learning to electronic knowledge-based center. eLearning via the Internet or wireless communication has become significantly important in today’s society. At the same time, the learning of new senior care knowledge greatly increases the quality of life for both healthy seniors to live happily, and the ones who suffer from aging illness to afford a quality care and treatment.
II. THEORIES RELATED TO THE KEY VARIABLES

A. Transformation from Traditional Learning to eLearning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Learning Changes</th>
<th>Changes</th>
<th>Tradition</th>
<th>Transition</th>
<th>Transformation</th>
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<td>Motivation for Change</td>
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<td>Solve a problem</td>
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<td>Degree of Change</td>
<td>Incremental improvements</td>
<td>Transition from old to new</td>
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<td>Actions</td>
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<td>Destination</td>
<td>Limited to improving wrong things</td>
<td>To complete project</td>
<td>Continually transforming, No end state</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change Requirement</td>
<td>Improvement of skills, practices and performance; often limited to focusing on individual performance rather than whole system</td>
<td>Controlled process</td>
<td>Senior leadership committed to new thinking, Learning and actions; Coaching from outside</td>
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<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Improvements limited</td>
<td>Changes limited</td>
<td>Sustainable change (with leadership and continual learning of new action/system)</td>
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Fig. 2.1 Three Types of Learning Changes


As shown in Figure 2.1, the transformation of information technology aimed to change from “Traditional Learning” such as reading articles, journals, or books to “Transformational Learning” such as reading from telecommunication devices such as reading an electronic book in the interactive format from laptop, iPad, iPod, or Smartphone. The progress of changes from traditional to transformational ones is linked by the “Transitional Changes,” that progressively solve a problem of out-to-date knowledge.

The reason of change from traditional to eLearning is that the outcomes of eLearning are sustainable and most up-to-date knowledge information. The seniors can develop a leadership skill of continual new learning system.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON RELATED TOPICS

A. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) of eLearning

AI is the study and exploration of what gives life to human systems when they function at their best. This approach to personal change is based on the assumption that questions and dialogs about strengths, successes, values, hopes and dreams are themselves transformational. (Cooperider and Srivastva, 1980) The results are more than rendering the positive problem-solving, since the inspiration and appreciation of individual are implemented. AI utilizes the Four-D cycle processes on the discover to identify and appreciate what is, dream to envision of process that works in the future, design to plan and prioritize process that works well, and destiny or deliver to implement or execute of the proposed design.

The concept of building the organization of what works, rather than trying to fix what does not. AI is focused on how to create more the exceptional performance occurring when the core strengths are aligned. It opens the doors to the new opportunities or possibilities. AI has been used extensively to foster change in the health care systems.

Sharing what has changed, what is going to be better and/or what could do more to reach our desire future. All these factors help sustain a positive change.

The main reason of AI application is that eLearning is more productive to the seniors, and they can choose any knowledge topics that they want/need to learn the most as well as suitable for their learning skills. The cost of eLearning is much lower than traditional way of learning i.e. traveling to attend a seminar, or cost of purchased hardcopy books. Additionally, they can learn anywhere and anytime that they want.

The outcomes of appreciative inquiry-based eLearning are more than expected for
many new perspectives of senior care knowledge to choose from. The best thing is that the eLearning supports the appreciative inquiry-based problem solving. In stead of disregarding those problems, they can learn and have a new vision of turning the current identified problems into challenges, the current identified strengths into sustainable competitive advantages or competencies, the current identified weaknesses and threats into new potential opportunities, and the current identified opportunities into new aspirations.

B. Transformation
Transformation is the creation and change of a whole new form, function, or structure. To transform is to create something new that has never existed before, and could not be predicted from the past. Transformation is also a “change” in mindset that is based on learning a system of profound knowledge, and taking actions based on leading with knowledge and courage.

To achieve a successful transformation, it begins with the “Awakening” by individuals within the organization, or it may come from the outside with challenges or questions. Secondly, there is a creation of “Vision” for the better future, and everybody in the organization must cooperate and collaborate. Thirdly, the “Method” of transformation includes the specific thinking such as fourteen points, the elimination of deadly diseases, and plan-do-study-act (PDSA) cycles. Fourthly, “Learning” and using of the system of profound knowledge as the lens through beliefs, paradigms, systems, processes, language, and tools developed and evaluated, is the core of creating eLearning to Increase the Quality of Life for Senior Citizens transformation. Fifthly, transformation has to be integrated throughout the organization, and the feedback and reflection loop is critical and represents a progressive and iterative process. Lastly, transformation occurs with “Intention.” Without intention, there can be no transformation at all. Once there is a transformation, there will be a continual learning for endless sustainable development.

Moreover, the theory of transformation is a profound change in structure that creates something new of knowledge-based society. It occurs through a system of continual questioning, challenging, exploration, discovery, evaluation, testing, and creation of organization management theory.

The critical reason of transformation for eLearning of senior is that there are an increasing number of seniors in Thailand, since Thailand has become the aging society.

IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

A. Conceptual Framework of Senior Patient Care
There are three types of learning: (1.) Formal Learning, (2.) Non-formal Learning, and (3.) Informal Learning. Firstly, the formal learning is the actual formal learning of academic curriculum in the education institutions. Secondly, the non-formal learning is more flexible in terms of the study materials and academic curriculum adapted per needs, problems, and conditions of each individual. Thirdly, the informal learning is the most flexible ways of learning by themselves outside the education facility, since each individual can learn by themselves at any time or anywhere they want to learn, and they can choose their preferred learning topics.

As shown in Figure 4.1 (next page), the seniors can choose many ways of their learning. The informal learning is the best suitable one that they can learn about the topics of how to improve their physical body, mind, and soul/spirit related the total human society system as well as global system.
The ways of learning can be categorized as the Distance Learning (dLearning) that is learning from long distance. The Electronic Learning (eLearning), a subset of dLearning, is learning by using electronic computing contents as a medium. The Mobile Learning (mLearning), a subset eLearning and dLearning, is similar to eLearning, but the difference of mLearning is that the learners can learn from their personal portable devices (e.g. iPad, iPod, mobile phone) while they are travelling (e.g. on the bus or airplane), and they can choose to learn at anytime and anywhere they want.

**B. Research Methodology**

The article is mainly based on qualitative methodology of the eLearning studies of Poonsri Vate-U-Lan, Ph.D., a graduate level lecturer of Assumption University for College of Internet Distance Education. The quantitative data was supported by focus group discussion with participatory action research primarily based on the study of “Elderly Volunteer’s Participation on Elderly Group for Health Promotion and Health Protection on Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province through Participatory Action Research” conducted by Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Rajabhat University.

**V. RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The electronic information technology has been significantly improved for the last 13 years. The Internet is a way of borderless communications for knowledge, and the new generations are utilizing the eLearning from their communication gadgets.

At the same time, the seniors have realized the usefulness of eLearning via new communication devices. The seniors can search for much helpful senior care knowledge to improve their quality of life and make them happy.

For both healthy seniors and ones who suffer from aging illness, there are many reasons why using advance information system of eLearning provides very positive outcomes of their health as well as their quality of life.

1. **Advance Technology, Lower Cost of New Gadgets**

   With more advance technology and lower cost of new communication devices, the seniors can afford to purchase these new gadgets for their eLearning of senior care.

   E.g. Personal digital assistant (PDA), Smart phone, iPod, iPad.

2. **eLearning of Senior Care Knowledge**

   eLearning helps seniors quickly access to the useful senior care information. They can learn about new products/supplies of senior care. E.g. Learning how to use the blood pressure unit or necessary medical supplies.

3. **Improve Senior Care’s Quality of Life**

   From the studies of many education institutions, the characteristics of eLearning are substantially different from the other ways of learning, since it has many hybrid modes as follows:

   3.1 **Enhancing**

   eLearning motivates learning at anytime and anywhere, as well as promotes actual learning. The seniors can communicate to anyone at anytime. E.g. The seniors can contact their friends and relatives at anytime to discuss about senior care, and share their
new knowledge via SMS, e-mail, social networking.

3.2 Exciting

eLearning makes seniors more excited to learning about new things. Instead of learning by reading senior care articles, the seniors can learn much senior care knowledge from YouTube, the largest worldwide video-sharing community, on the Internet.

3.3 Engaging

Once the seniors have attracted to learn and explore new knowledge, the seniors can subscribe to the senior community and access the community website at anywhere and anytime. The engagement of senior community leads to collaboration and appeal for further studies and productive research knowledge.

3.4 Enjoyable

eLearning makes knowledge delight to learn. The regular learning is cut-and-dried materials, but eLearning is more enjoyable with interactive multimedia features.

3.5 Entertaining

Entertainment promotes and supports eLearning in many ways. Firstly, the senior care knowledge information combined with entertainment is called “Senior InfoTainment.” Secondly, the senior care training plus entertainment is known as “Senior Care EnterTraining.” Thirdly, the senior care education and entertainment is the most well-known as “Senior EduTainment.” Last but not least, the new concept of ethical senior care with entertainment is to be called “Senior EthicTainment.”

3.6 Embedding

eLearning makes a convenient learning environment. E.g. The seniors who are eLearning to Increase the Quality of Life for Senior Citizens working or having their own business operations can search and learn the new knowledge from eLearning, while working or taking care of their business operations.

3.7 Empowering

eLearning empowers seniors to learn many useful knowledge. The seniors have their power to choose the knowledge topics that they are interested to learn.

3.8 Efficiency

eLearning makes an effective learning of many useful knowledge. The seniors spend the same or less time to obtain more knowledge. Moreover, the cost of eLearning is less expensive other ways of learning.

3.9 Explicit Contents

eLearning makes learning with clear purpose and structure. The flexibility and customization of eLearning create the contents with appropriate understandable purpose and structure.

3.10 Extensibility

eLearning expands the outcomes and changes/adapts them according to the learners’ environment along with future new technology. The extension of eLearning is leading to the sustainable learning of knowledge-based society.

4. Limitations of eLearning

eLearning depends on the communication gadgets. The specifications of device such software or application are important to support the new features. At the same time, the new gadgets are normally expensive, and the cost of access either wired or wirelesses coupled with upgradable choices are to be considered.

A. Recommendations

The senior eLearning using new advance information technology is one of the most important successes on improving the quality of their life. The further development and learning of information systems suitable for senior care industry is recommended.

The senior care knowledge management center can be developed with the electronic information technology via the Internet to provide the useful senior patient care knowledge for the family members and other interesting stakeholders in the society. It is critical to the health of elders in Thailand as well as global society, providing the high quality senior care and knowledge-based center of Thai aging society.

In addition, the seniors should concern about the accuracy of data that can be reliable. If there is any information related to the financial data of seniors, the data security is the most important concern. The seniors
should be very careful when providing their financial data to any third party. E.g. If they would like to subscribe an online database of senior care article, they should make sure that the data are from good reputation and reliable sources, since there are plenty of useful information available on the Internet. Furthermore, the seniors should carefully explore, learn and choose ones with the most appropriate or good to high quality.

Therefore, the implementation of eLearning knowledge management center is highly recommended for sustainable learning to improve the quality of life for seniors and other stakeholders in the society.

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REFERENCES


