

# Urging Earning Boost for the Unemployed Elderly: Mechanism to Enhance Active Aging

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The purposes of this research were (1) to examine problems and obstacles of elderlies from making a living and the need for vocational training (2) to develop a vocational training model and a mechanism to urge earning boost and (3) to evaluate the outcomes of the model. This study used mixed-method approach and divided the study into 3 phases. In the first phase, the researcher used questionnaires to survey 246 elderlies in Samut Prakan province regarding their problems/obstacles and the need for vocational training, along with conducting a workshop with 21 community leaders/representatives and interviewed 2 municipal executives. In second phase, the results from the first phase were used to develop a vocational training model and a mechanism to urge earning boost in consultation with experts and municipal executives. In the final phase, the outcomes were evaluated by collecting data from project participants, community leaders/representatives and the municipal officials. Results found that most of the problems/obstacles that keep elders from making a living were health, economics, and other problems such as lack of knowledge about marketing, lack of self-confident and inspiration Knowledge and skills needed most were marketing concepts and e-commerce skills. The data analyses also revealed that marketing and e-commerce knowledge and skills of participants significantly increased after attending the training. One-two months after the trainings, participants began to sell their products online and reported income increased, as expected outcomes.

**Key words:** *Active aging, Earning Boost, Unemployed Elderly.*

## Introduction

Changing in demographic structure is a major problem occurring around the world due to the declination tendency of younger population (aged under 15 years) and working age population (aged 15-59 years). Meanwhile, the proportion of the elderly population is likely to increase steadily. The United Nations reported that in 2019, there were 703 million people aged over 65 years around the world and the number of elderly people was expected to increase to 1.5 billion by 2050. This means the elderly are now 9% of the world population and will increase to 16% of the world population. In other words, 1 in 6 people in the world will be over 65 in 2050 (United Nations, 2020). These changes have changed the nature of labor market (Hertel & Zacher, 2018; Rudolph, Marcus, & Zacher, 2018). As the global labor market consists of an increasing proportion of older people, the Work Life Expectancy of the world population has increased steadily over the past decade, especially female workers (Loichinger & Weber, 2016). The phenomenon is in line with the situation in Thailand. According to the National Statistical Office's survey on working conditions in 2018, approximately 37 percent of Thai elderly were found to still work (Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Development Institute, 2018). This survey data shows that the elderly, especially those aged 60-64 years, are still healthy and capable in various fields which should be conducive to the ability to continue to work. Therefore, encouraging the elderly to remain in the labor market for as long as possible is one of the important policies that will help Thailand cope with the aging society. The government pays attention to this issue and supports a large budget for organizing vocational training programs to improve the potential of the elderly to have knowledge and skills with the hope that the elderly will be able to earn income by themselves, have a good quality of life, be self-reliant, and be least in social dependency.

However, the elderlies have many limitations to generate income such as economic problems, debts, lack of funds for investment, and problem of participation in community development. There are also the problems from a loose combination, lack of knowledge and understanding on how to start a business such as accounting, financial management and budgeting, marketing, public relations, and packaging (Lumlao, 2011). In addition, some elderly people have the same values and beliefs that old people have one foot in the grave. There is no need to develop oneself. Many elderly people lack motivation. They do not see the importance and do not want to develop learning skills as well as not wanting various learning resources (Yingratanasuk, Choetkiertikul, & Wanpiroon, 2015). Besides, the elderlies do not apply the knowledge they have trained to use and generate real income. Therefore, the government sector is necessary to develop knowledge and skills for the elderly along with exploring the problems that are major obstacles in order to build a mechanism to encourage the elderly to apply the knowledge that is trained to further use in generating income. This will reduce dependency on family and government and also help to replace working age labor that is

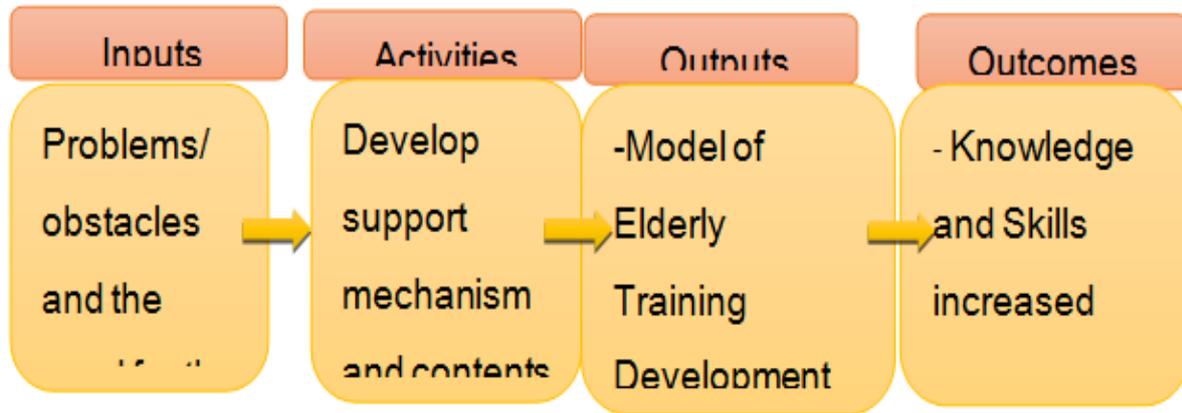
reducing. The objectives of this research are (1) to explore problems, obstacles, and needs for vocational skills training of the elderly (2) to develop a vocational training model and mechanisms to urge earning boost, and (3) to evaluate forms of vocational skills training and mechanisms to urge earning boost.

## Literature Review

In the development of vocational skills training for the elderly, apart from the need to know the problems and limitations of the elderly in the local area (Yingratanasuk, Choetkiertikul, & Wanpiroon, 2015; Lumlao, 2011), it is also important to consider the form of activities and teaching processes that are suitable for the nature of the elderly. In the era of aging society, many academicians have focused on the factors that affect adult learning success (Kaak, 2019; Oriji & Uzoagu, 2019; Van der Walt, 2019; Feltsan, 2017). The concept of adult teaching methods or “Andragogy” was first known in the academic field by American educator Malcolm S. Knowles. This Andragogy concept has become more and more popular until becoming Classic Theory causing Knowles to be named Father of Andragogy. Knowles (1980, 2005) demonstrated that adult’s learning was completely different from children’s learning in the Concepts of Learners, Role of Learners’ Experience, Readiness to Learn, Orientation of Learning, including Learning Motivation. Moreover, the current research has found that social support in various forms such as emotional concern i.e. liking, love, or empathy; instrumental aid i.e. goods or services; information about the environment; and appraisal i.e. information relevant to self-evaluation are the important factors affecting the quality of life in various aspects of the elderly (Whangmahaporn, Simmonds, & Whangmahaporn, 2018; House, 1981). Based on the review of literatures and related researches, the researcher developed the conceptual framework of the research in the form of logic model (McCawley, 2002) as follows:

## Conceptual Framework

**Phase 1:** Survey the problems, obstacles and needs for vocational skills training of the elderly



## Research Methodology

This is mixed-method research using quantitative research and qualitative research methods in conducting the research. The research details are as follows.

### Sample Groups and Methods of Data Collection

The sample groups in this research were divided into 4 groups consisting of 246 elderly persons in Samut Prakan province, 32 elderly persons participating in the project, 21 community leaders and representatives of community leaders, experts on elderly training and administrators of local administrative organizations.

### Processes in Conducting Research

The researcher investigated the problems, obstacles, and limitations why the elderly could not use the knowledge they have trained to earn money and explored the needs about vocational skills for the elderly so that they could actually generate income. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected in January 2019. The details of operation were as follows:

- 1) The researcher used the questionnaires to explore problems, obstacles, and needs for vocational skills of the elderly entirely in Samut Prakan Province. The data was collected from 246 elderly in Samut Prakan Province.
- 2) The researcher organized the workshop targeting on the group of leaders and community representatives in Samut Prakan Province. The operation was done by requesting assistance from various municipalities to help publicizing for recruiting the volunteers and requesting

the cooperation from 21 community leaders. The experienced experts in training for the elderly, community enterprise, social enterprise, and innovation were the facilitators in proceeding the activities and drawing the conclusions. In this workshop, participants were divided into 4 groups, 5-6 people each, and the activities were divided into 2 parts as follows.

**1<sup>st</sup> Activity:** Study the problems / obstacles in generating income

The process facilitator asked the audiences why the elderly did not use the knowledge from professional training to make money and what the main problems of people in the community were. The audiences were given the Post-it paper to write down the problems and stick the paper on the Flip Chart board. The participants were in the group discussion and then the group representatives would make a presentation to summarize the problems.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Activity:** Study the needs on knowledge and skills for earning money

The process facilitator asked the audiences what kind of activities that would lead to real income generation and which topics the elderly would like to have training. The Post-it paper was also provided for presenting the activity patterns and topics to train for sticking on the Flip Chart board. The participants were in the group discussion and having the group representatives to summarize the appropriate format and topics of training suitable for the community.

3) The researcher interviewed 2 administrator and official of local administrative organizations regarding the job features of the elderly in the Province, the previous vocational training programs, the methods for selecting projects / activities for the elderly, the project forms, including the activities considered successful and unsuccessful.

**Phase 2:** Develop a model for vocational skill training and mechanism to urge earning boost

1) The researcher brought the research results from Phase 1 to develop the forms, contents, activities and methods for selecting elderly groups to join the project with the experts, facilitators, and municipal officials in Samut Prakan Province.

2) The assistance was requested from Samrong Nuea Sub-district Municipality in publicizing the activities and recruiting the elderly people by selecting the elderly according to the specified qualifications.

3) The vocational skills training activities were organized for the elderly 2 times.

**Phase 3:** Evaluate from using the vocational skills training model for the elderly

1) After the training, the evaluation was made on the knowledge and skills from both times of training sessions with the goal of not less than 80% of the participants to gain more knowledge and skills in their careers.

- 2) After 1-2 months of training, the research team followed up and evaluated the application of knowledge in the careers and the increase of income of the project participants by submitting the survey in the form of Google Form via social media. The target was for the group of not less than 5 percent of participants to start working / making money and at least 5 percent of participants to earn additional income after the training project.
- 3) After 1-2 month of training, the research team interviewed the local government organization officials and community leaders / representatives by using an unstructured interview to allow the sample group to discuss about the advantages and project limitations including the recommendations for further development of the elderly training model.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The descriptive statistics included frequency distribution, percentage, mean, and standard deviation in describing personal data characteristics, levels of problems, obstacles and needs for vocational skills training for the elderly. The inferential statistics were used as Paired t-test to compare the differences of mean, knowledge, understanding and ability in marketing and e-commerce planning of the project participants before and after the training. In addition, the content analysis was also considered on the common points and the differences of data in order to find the relationship, the connection of data about obstacles, the need for vocational skills training for the elderly from the viewpoints of the community leaders, community representatives, and government officials. These were analyzed altogether with the quantitative data in order to obtain suitable vocational skills training model for the elderly.

### **Research results**

#### ***Survey results of problems, obstacles, and the need for vocational skills training for the elderly in Samut Prakan Province***

The sample group of 246 respondents responding the questionnaires are mostly female for 73.8% with the average age of 67.4 years. Most of them are in the age range of 60-70 years calculated as 58.4%. They graduated primary education or lower for 48.5%. 97.1% of them are Buddhists with marital status of married for 50.4%. They have the number of members in the family for 3-4 persons for 43.3%. 71.8% of them currently live with their children. 72.1% are retired or unprofessional. Most of them do not have average monthly income accounted for 30.9%. 39.6% earn less than 5,000 baht. Most of them have an average monthly expenditure of less than 5,000 calculated for 41.2% while 34.3% have about 5,000-9,999 baht. Most of sources of income are mainly from government contributes accounted for 47.6% and 42.3% are from their children, relatives, and siblings. For economic conditions, 35.3% of them have savings and no debts while 34.4% have no savings and no debts. Most of the elderly are healthy (from self-assessment) accounted for 61.9%.

From surveying the problems, obstacles, and needs for vocational skills training of 246 elderly persons in Samut Prakan Province, it was found that less than 1 in 3 samples received vocational training accounted for 29.8%. The problems that cause the sample group not to be able to make money are divided into 3 areas; 1) personal and health problems with the problem that cannot make money the most is having congenital disease accounted for 55.7%, 2) economic problems with the problem that causes the sample group not to be able to generate income most is not having market to support accounted for 46.2% followed by the lack of investment accounted for 41.5% and the high production costs accounted for 40.8%, 3) social problems with the problem that causes the inability to generate income including the lack of government support accounted for 38.9% and the lack of integration of groups / networks accounted for 36.0%. Apart from the health problem, the problems that cause most elderly people not to be able to make money are due to not understanding marketing, having no market to support products, having no investment fund for opening the stores or renting stalls, having no time to sell, not knowing what to sell/what to do, and lacking motivation to start. The elderly people cannot do the work alone and they are difficult to group. Moreover, the form of activities is not consistent with the interests of the elderly. The projects or activities that are of interest to the elderly do not lead to income generation. The sample group proposed the training model as a demonstration and try for real practice. The elderly still lack knowledge and skills. The topics that need training the most are knowledge of marketing, other sales channels such as online product sales and OTOP product development.

### ***Vocational Training Model and a Mechanism to Urge Earning Boost***

Phase 2: The process for the development of vocational skill training model and mechanisms to urge earning boost can be summarized into 4 processes. Process 1) Develop training topics from the problems and needs of the target group by finding that the elderly still lack the knowledge and understanding of the market. They sell anything. Therefore, in order for the elderly to understand basic sales principles, it is necessary for them to have basic knowledge about marketing first. In addition, according to the results of surveys and workshops, most elderly would like to train for E-Commerce or online sales. The training in this matter may help fixing the limitations in the lack of funds to open stores or rent stalls and the problem of the elderly not having time to go out to sell. Moreover, as the market for products is not limited to the community area, the training of the elderly for 2 times are on the topic of basic Marketing for the elderly consisting of techniques and methods of marketing and E-Commerce for the elderly which focuses on teaching online sales with application. The teaching ranged from creating account in various applications, photography techniques, writing sales captions, process of posting for sales, and financial management.

Process 2) Determine the eligibility of project participants to suit the activities by selecting the elderly group from the following qualifications. They must be able to use smart phone,

have products that they want to sell, be interested in selling online and have children, relatives or friends to help selling (by allowing children or relatives to attend the training as well).

Process 3) Create a Support Group. The researcher created the Group Chat using the Line application to allow the participants to get to know one another. They could be familiar before training. The participants felt that they have Co-Location. This was also the communication channel for exchanging the opinions, providing news and information as a way to distribute teaching materials and related documents in digital format. There were 36 members in this group consisting of 32 participants, 2 facilitators, 1 researcher, and 1 research assistant.

Process 4) Organize activities by creating the participatory learning atmosphere to create an atmosphere of participatory learning for the facilitators participating the project to send the photos of products they want to sell online before training. Such photos would be used as the examples in teaching. The results showed that the project participants were very interested in seeing their products and those of their friends. Besides, the facilitators participating the project attended the real practice from creating an account to sell online, photography techniques, writing sales captions, and posting trial for actual sale.

### ***Results of Evaluation on the Use of Vocational Training Model for the Elderly***

The evaluation results showed that before participating in marketing training activities, the elderly had knowledge about marketing. They understood the marketing process and had the ability to plan marketing by themselves moderately. The survey results after participating in marketing training activities for the elderly revealed that the participants had knowledge about marketing. They understood the marketing process and thought that the knowledge gained from this training would be used to develop their own products and sales. They thought that this marketing training could increase their income at a high level. However, the participants still thought that their ability to plan marketing by themselves was at a medium level. Overall, the sample group thought that they had more knowledge about marketing for 96.4%. 86.7% of them had better understanding on the marketing process. They had increased their ability to plan their own marketing for 82.8%. The results of hypothesis testing using Paired t-test showed that the participants agreed that after receiving marketing training for the elderly, they had knowledge about marketing, understood the steps in marketing, and the ability to plan marketing by themselves more than before training significantly at the .05 level (as in Table 1).

**Table 1:** Results of comparison on the average of knowledge, understanding, and marketing capability before and after marketing training for the elderly using Paired t-test.

Issues in comparison	Testing	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	t	Sig
1. Knowledge on marketing	Pre	2.33	1.06	-8.762	.000*
	Post	3.83	0.79		
2. Understanding on the marketing process	Pre	2.28	1.08	-7.290	.000*
	Post	3.78	0.79		
3. Ability to plan their own marketing	Pre	2.32	1.17	-6.892	.000*
	Post	3.55	0.93		

\* significantly at the 0.05 level

Meanwhile, the evaluation of E-Commerce training for the elderly found that before joining the E-Commerce training for the elderly, the project participants had knowledge about online sales, understood the online sales process, and had the ability to plan online sales by themselves at the low level. However, after participating in the E-Commerce Training, the participants had knowledge about online sales, understood the online sales process, and thought that they had the ability to plan online sales by themselves. They thought that the knowledge gained from this training would be used to develop their products and sales. They also thought that this E-Commerce training could increase their income to a large extent. Overall, the participants thought that they had increased knowledge about online sales accounted for 92.3%. They had an understanding on the online sales process increasingly to 96.2% and they thought that their ability to plan online sales by themselves increased accounted for 96.2%. Besides, the hypothesis testing using Paired t-test showed that the participants agreed that after participating the e-commerce training, they had knowledge and understanding on the process of online sale as well as having the ability to plan online sales more manually than before training significantly at the .05 level (as in Table 2).

**Table 2:** Results of comparison on the average of knowledge, understanding, and marketing capability in planning to create E- Commerce by themselves before and after E-Commerce training for the elderly using Paired t-test

Issues in comparison	Testing	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	t	Sig
1. Knowledge about online sales	Pre	2.07	1.18	-8.859	.000*
	Post	3.86	0.80		
2. Understanding on the online sales process	Pre	2.00	1.15	-9.163	.000*
	Post	3.79	0.79		
3. Ability to plan online sales by themselves	Pre	1.89	1.10	-9.396	.000*
	Post	3.79	0.88		

\* significantly at the 0.05 level

After 1-2 months of training, the research team followed up and evaluated the use of knowledge in their careers. The income of the project participants increased. The results of the survey showed that there were elderly people who applied the knowledge they had trained to work / make money accounted for 25% of all participants. Meanwhile, there were elderly people whose income increased after training accounted for 15.6% of all participants. The results of the interviews with leaders / representatives of communities and the officials of local organizations found that the outstanding points of the project were the criteria for selecting suitable project participants and having good systems / support groups. Meanwhile, it was pointed out that what to be developed was training duration that was too short. It might be changed to a short training course and trial test for actual sales during the training. The post-training support system should be organized as the ongoing activities.

### **Result Discussion**

The study results in the 1<sup>st</sup> phase showed that some elderly people did not have the real intention to make money. They came to join the training because they just wanted to meet their friends. They did not want to stay at home. The community leaders noted that the training program for the elderly did not clearly specify the qualifications of the participants. Mostly, only the age of the participants was determined. Therefore, the qualifications of the project participants might not be consistent with the project goals and activities. In addition, the form and content of most training program activities came from the initiatives of executives or officials in relevant government agencies. Sometimes the activities did not correspond with the interests of the elderly. The results of this initial study also suggested that for the style of organizing, the elderly did not like to listen to the long lecture because they could not sit for a long time. When the academicians spoke, the elderly did not understand. Besides, various documents could not be read. Mostly, it was the demonstration and trial for the real practice. The majority of the projects organized by the government were for listening to the lectures from officials or academicians from various institutions or agencies. Therefore, when having projects of this nature, the elderly did not give enough attention. When there was a survey on training topics that the elderly always call for, it was the teaching on cooking or making various handcraft. The projects or activities that the elderly were interested in did not lead to income generation. These projects only focused on teaching practices such as cooking or teaching them to make souvenir. The project did not provide knowledge about how to sell and did not have a system for monitoring and evaluating whether after training the elderly applied the knowledge usefully or not.

However, the interviewees from local organizations and community leaders pointed out that this project had some distinct features from the previous project. Firstly, the project had criteria for selecting project participants that were conducive to generate income. For example, the interested persons who would like to participate in the project must have

products to sell. They must have the interest to sell online and must have the ability to use a smart phone as well as having children or relatives to help selling. Secondly, the project had a good support system. As the online sales were difficult for the elderly, the helpers after the training were absolutely necessary. Therefore, having the children trained with them would make understanding the steps of the online sales process. They would be able to assist the elderly in selling online. In addition, the community representatives also agreed that the participants were very good support group. They began to know one another and create familiarity with the LINE application before joining the training. On the training day, some project participants gave the products to the facilitators and other participants to try. They requested feedback from the participating friends and instructors. The project participants agreed that their friends in the group continued to inspire and encourage activities. For example, when a friend started sending photos of the products they wanted to sell, the others began to send other photos as well. They asked about the sales methods, asked for feedback, and encouragement including appointment for tutoring for online sales. In addition, as the group leader was an active person with technology knowledge, he could give good advice to the group members. The local authorities from the Social Welfare Division were the liaisons to select this group leader. These behaviors were consistent with the concept of social support from House (1981) that described the influence of various social support on work. Thus, the above two factors were important mechanism for driving the elderly to start bringing the knowledge and skills that they had been trained to start making money.

### **Recommendations**

1. Since most projects or activities that the elderly are interested in do not lead to income generation, before writing the project, the person responsible for the project should study, analyze the needs and worthiness by considering the contents and form of training to be in line with the ultimate goal at the level of policy and plan.
2. The persons in charge of the project should consider selecting the target group that has real intention to generate income, has the readiness and potential to pursue a career after training. The selection criteria may be established to be conducive for generating the income. The collaboration should be made with the officials from relevant local administrative organizations such as social development personnel or social welfare department officials in order to understand the nature and characteristics of the elderly in the community.
3. In the development of vocational training programs for the elderly, the persons responsible for the project should consider the creation of support groups in various forms along with the participatory training activities by coordinating with local authorities network existing in the community or creating the new group or network. This is for the participants to exchange real sales experience as well as motivating fellow trainees who have not been actually sold to try out for real or create a mentor project for advice after the training.



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