

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CURRICULUM OF THE ELDERLY CARE SYSTEM LEARNING CENTER OF A LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION IN THAILAND

Puraya A^{1*}, Klankhajhon K², Thojampa S³, Kumpeera K⁴,
Boonpracom R⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}Faculty of Nursing, Naresuan University, Thailand

**amarapornp@nu.ac.th*

Abstract

This participatory action research for the development of the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center of a local administrative organization aims to study the context, problems and needs in constructing the curriculum for the elderly care system learning center and to construct the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center that is an innovation in accordance with the context of the area. The curriculum of the elderly care system learning center consists of the following subjects. 1) Core subjects consist of participatory local management, development and use of information for elderly care and community-based welfare provision. 2) Minor subjects include community-based health care for the elderly and sustainable community economic development. 3) Innovative subjects consist of development of elderly care volunteers and building the network partners for elderly care at Wang Tha Di Elderly School. The curriculum of the elderly care system learning center reflects the process of integrating knowledge in the local community with the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center and the learning process of the community. A lifelong learning process of the elderly who have the potential can be established so that they can develop their life as the valuable elderly. The needs of the elderly for the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center allows the elderly to have potential to live with others in society and realize their self-esteem. They will be able to show their full potential, and accepted by society as the population with quality.

Keywords: Participatory action research, curriculum of the elderly care system learning center, local administrative organization

Introduction

The rapid change in population structure around the world has resulted in the increasing number of the population aged 60 years and over in terms of both quantity and proportion to the total population. On the contrary, the childhood population continues to decline. It is reported that by 2050 the number of the elderly will increase to 1,963 million, accounting for 22% of the total population. According to the situation of the aging population structure in the past 10 years in Thailand, the number and the proportion of the population aged 60 years and over increased to

9.2% in 2000 and it was expected that in 2019 the proportion would increase to 15.3%. (Bureau of Policy and Strategy, Health Ministry of Public Health. Health Annual Report, 2011; Sorakrij, 2016; Bureau of Health Ministry of Public Health, 2016). This indicates that at present, Thai society is entering the aging society. Therefore, developing the elderly health care system in the community is important, and it requires cooperation from many sectors to effectively drive the operation. So, it is necessary to develop the community potential in providing care for the elderly in terms of policy, mechanism and management in the area with the coordination mechanism at the provincial, district or sub-district levels. Work standards and work indicators must be specified for enhancing the community potential in providing care for the elderly. Also, Sub-district Health Promoting Hospitals, the leaders in the area and the village health volunteers must be the leaders in the management and provision of services. The organizations in the community and the local administrative organizations have to provide support. (Fetterman, 1998; LeCompte, & Schensul, 1999; Nuntaboot, 2013; Poonthawee, 2017; Phinyoo, 2013). The operation needs cooperation from the local government organizations, health service units, the elderly group and related mechanisms in order to be the center of the community potential in caring for the elderly. It is also the way to promote and support families, community organizations and elderly health care volunteers in the community to have the ability to take care of the elderly appropriately. Another important thing is encouraging the elderly to live as long as possible without dependence, focusing on disease prevention strategies together with appropriate health promotion, promoting the elderly to have healthy physical and psychological conditions. The elderly in the community must be developed and promoted so that they have good quality of life and are able to adapt to any changes. The knowledge and the experiences of the elderly should be used and preserved as the national treasury to benefit society and nation. Also, the population of all ages and groups must be prepared to enter the aging society properly. In addition, the social systems and mechanisms supporting people in society to live with stability, happiness and good quality of life must also be created. (Morse, 1995; National Research Council of Thailand, 2017).

Thailand is, therefore, preparing to enter the aged society in terms of economic and social development that are friendly to the elderly. Thailand's 20-Year National Strategy (2018 - 2037) has been prepared. It is expected that in 2037, the proportion of the elderly will be 30% of the country's population in Thailand. The strategy of development and capacity building of human resources has also been established. The elderly will be supported to be a driving force in the country through the enhancement of living skills, career skills, having a job that suits their potential, health promotion, health restoration, disease prevention for the elderly, along with setting up friendly environment for the elderly and social security consistent with basic

necessities of life and participation of the elderly in society (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2018). In addition, the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017 - 2021) sets out the strategies for building and developing human capital potential with the goal to promote people of all ages to have more skills, knowledge and abilities. The quality of education and lifelong learning is enhanced. The learning resources in the community are improved to be the creative and living learning centers such as museums, libraries, archaeological sites, historical parks and the Elderly School. The knowledge management system that is local wisdom is also promoted (The 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan). Therefore, one of the approaches used in solving the problems that arise in the aging society is to promote and support the elderly to have lifelong learning that meets their needs. The Elderly School is a form of management which is lifelong learning. It allows the elderly to have opportunities to learn and exchange activities with the community whether an exchange of living life, local wisdom learning and self-development. This form of learning, therefore, emphasizes the importance of informal or non-formal education, which is an activity that promotes lifelong learning and develop skills necessary for the elderly's life. Moreover, the elderly are important in terms of being a source of local wisdom knowledge. The elderly have accumulated experiences and passed on the wisdom of the local community.

The local administrative organization's role is, therefore, extremely important as a government agency at the local level that is closest to the local people. Wang Tha Di Sub-District Administrative Organization, Nong Phai District, Phetchabun Province follows the Sub-District Administrative Organization Act, B.E. 2537 and Amended (No. 5) B.E. 2546, Section 67 (6), which assigns the Sub-District Administrative Organization to play a role in promoting the development of women, children, youth, the elderly and the disabled; and Determining Plan and Procedures in Decentralizations to the Local Administrative Organization B.E. 2542, which allows the Sub-District Administrative Organization to have the power and duty in organizing public service systems for the benefit of the people in their own area. Therefore, the local government organization which is an agency act as the main host must cooperate with other organizations and partners to provide care for the elderly. It has to carry out a variety of activities such as social, health and recreational activities (Kamnak, & Phanlertphanij, 2016; Khampuk, 2015; Wongprom, Jongwutiwes, Prasertsuk, & Jongwutiwes, 2015).

Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization experienced lessons learned from working to develop the area-based elderly care system. Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization joined the network in caring for the elderly with KraiNok Sub-district Administrative Organization in 2015. Because the development of the potential of the elderly, the environment and the provision of funds or welfare was needed in the community,

Thailand Community network Appraisal Program (TCNAP) was established and the information can be used in conjunction with the development of the elderly care system. The social capital was searched for and used from the existing community research (RECAP) to drive the development of the elderly care system in the area. Many sectors the area worked together, including the village headmen, the elderly care volunteers, the village health volunteers from the district hospital, SAO staff and the elderly in the area. In addition, there was an integration of cooperation among network partners in organizing activities for the elderly, such as temples, schools and the district hospital that work together to drive elderly care. It was also supported by the Thai Health Promotion Foundation to be the coordination center for community-based elderly care. Hence, this matter must be taken seriously. Therefore, the research team conducted the study on the development of the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center of a local administrative organization in order to use the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center to operate in the Sub-district Administrative Organization and Wang Tha Di Elderly School. It will benefit the community and the elderly in the Sub-district Administrative Organization area through the participation process of the community and the local administrative organization. It will also be used in the development of lifelong learning. Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization places importance on this issue along with implementing local policies consistent with the national level. The elderly are a very large group in the community and each of them have experience, wisdom and creativity that can benefit the community and enable Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization to step into the aging society with quality and happiness.

Method

Research objectives

1. To study the context, problems and needs in constructing the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center at Wang Tha Di Sub-District Administrative Organization, Nong Phai District, Phetchabun Province.
2. To construct the curriculum the elderly care system learning center that is an innovation in accordance with the context of Wang Tha Di Sub-District Administrative Organization, Nong Phai District, Phetchabun Province.

Research Methodology

Participatory action research (PAR), which is qualitative research methodology, was employed for conducting the research entitled “Participatory Action Research for the Development of the Curriculum of the Elderly Care System Learning Center of a Local Administrative Organization

in Thailand". The data collection and research conduction procedures based on the research objectives were as follows.

Phrase1: Studying the context, problems and needs in constructing the curriculum for the elderly care system learning center with the following steps:

1. The information obtained from the documents on the elderly of Wang Tha Di Sub-District Administrative Organization, Nong Phai District, Phetchabun Province: The obtained information was studied in order to learn about the elderly in the Sub-district Administrative Organization area. Sub-district Administrative Organization established the committee of Wang Tha Di Elderly School.
2. Forums: The forums for brainstorming from 40 samples were organized to study the context, the community area and the needs. The key Informants were selected by the criterion sampling which was set by the research team according to the research objectives (Phothisita, 2019). The forums were organized to brainstorm on the needs of the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center consistent with the people' community way of life and to study the requirements of the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center of Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization.
3. Focus group discussion: The focus group discussion was administered with the participants who were 10 elder persons living in Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization, consisting of 5 representatives of the community and the government organizations involved in caring for the elderly, and 5 administrators of the local administrative organization and civil servants performing duties on caring for the elderly.
4. Interviews: The interviews were administered with 10 elder persons living in Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization, consisting of 5 representatives of the community and the government organizations involved in caring for the elderly, and 5 administrators of the local administrative organization and civil servants performing duties on caring for the elderly.

Phrase 2: Constructing the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center that is an innovation in accordance with the context of Wang Tha Di Sub-District Administrative Organization through the community participation process using participatory action research with the following steps.

1. Planning: There was preparation mechanism in collaboration with the community, the local government organization and the elderly network in the community to analyze the status of

the community and create the guidelines for the development of curriculum of the elderly care system learning center.

2. Operation: The community forums were organized with 40 stakeholders in the community involved in the operation, including the Chief Executive of the SAO, the Deputy Chief Executive of the SAO, the Chief Administrator of the SAO, the executives, the Chairman of the Council and the office staff of the local community organization, the village headmen, the community presidents or the representatives from each community, the health personnel from Tambon Ban Klang Health Promoting Hospital, the village health volunteers, the elderly care volunteers, the elderly from Wang Tha Di Elderly School and in the community and the caregivers of the elderly and 2 researchers.
3. Constructing the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center examined by the community: It was the process to offer options for constructing the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center and implementing it in Wang Tha Di Elderly School.
4. Evaluation: It was performed after implementing the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center by interviewing, organizing focus group discussion and forums so that the stakeholders can reflect their opinions on the implementation of the curriculum.

Data analysis

This was qualitative research using the participatory action research process. The content analysis and the thematic analysis were employed. The data collected from the interviews, the focus group discussion, the community forums and the participatory observation were analyzed as the information supporting various issues. The collected data were classified to link with the research issues.

Results and Discussion

The results from Phase 1: Studying the physical community context and needs in constructing the curriculum for the elderly care system learning center revealed that Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization has a total population of 6,180 people, consisting of 3,120 males and 3,152 females with an average density of 92 people per square kilometer. There are 1,422 households, with a total of 805 elderly people, including 357 men and 458 women. The proportion of the elderly per total population is 12.98%. There are 9 villages in the community. The villagers have learned together and created mutual acceptance. In terms of welfare, there is the community welfare. The organizations providing help are Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization and Provincial Social Development and Human Security. Fundraising is also organized for the elderly who study in the Elderly School of Wang Tha Di

Sub-district Administrative Organization. Ten baht is collected from each older person every Friday and this money is used for helping the elderly studying in the Elderly School who have health problems, including brain diseases, high blood pressure, dyslipidemia, diabetes, obesity, heart disease, stress, lack of exercise, smoking, family history with brain diseases and degeneration of brain cells. These health problems are mostly found in people over 60 years old. The brain diseases that are more common in the elderly include Alzheimer's, dementia and paralysis, or stroke, diabetes, causing various symptoms such as frequent urination and thirst, drinking plenty of water at a time, fatigue, weight loss for no reason. These health problems may also cause other complications such as blurred vision or blindness, kidney deterioration, numbness along the tip of the hand and toe. The elderly may also be easily infected and have hypertension, urinary system diseases in the elderly men, prostate cancer which is most common in men aged 60 years and over, macular degeneration, cataract, glaucoma and vitreous degeneration, which are caused by many reasons. But most of the causes of eye diseases are degeneration due to older age, resulting in vision impairment.

In terms of elderly care, Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization provides health services by establishing the Day Care. There are health officers providing services at Sub-district Health Promoting Hospital. There is also a service unit. The emergency vehicle service is also provided for 24 hours. There are groups of the elderly care volunteers and the village health volunteers responsible for providing health care to the people in the community, especially the elderly. This is to help each other within the community, especially caring for the elderly who are sick at home, or the bed-bound elderly who are unable to take care of themselves. Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization has a health service unit, which is Ban Klang Sub-district Health Promoting Hospital. The health care network of the people in Wang Tha Di Sub-district is also created. The elderly health care volunteers, the village health volunteers and other public health agencies provide health care services such as screening for the visually impaired, bone mineral density test and cataract screening. Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization provides assistance and facilitates the delivery service from home to both the hospital in the district and in Phetchabun Province. In terms of health care innovation, there is an integration of 3 different color flags, which separate the elderly into 3 categories according to the flag's color as follows. 1) Green represents the well elders. 2) Yellow represents the elderly with chronic illnesses, 3) Red represents the bed-bound elderly who are unable to take care of themselves and require special care. In addition to the three-color flags, there is also an innovation of drinking Pae Tum Pung Tea, which has medicinal properties, especially for the prevention of amnesia in the elderly.

The results from Phase 2: Constructing the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center that is an innovation in accordance with the context of Wang Tha Di Sub-District Administrative Organization through the community participation process using participatory action research were as follows. The forums were organized to brainstorm on the construction of a suitable curriculum of the elderly care system learning center for Wang Tha Di Elderly School. It was administered through the participation of 4 major parties, namely the local administrative organization, Sub-district Administrative Organization, the government agencies and the community organizations. There was the linkage management mechanism in the area. People participated in sharing ideas, doing activities and receiving benefits together, resulting in having unity and loving homeland. The community had strong self-management and provided care and help over the disadvantaged in the form of management such as organizing the projects of clean roads, white roads and clean and livable houses. People in the community helped each other and developed the network partners in the area, consisting of the government sector, the local administrative organization, Sub-district Administrative Organization and the public sector. The elderly benefited from the development in the area. The innovations focusing on health promotion, career promotion, and development for stable quality of life were used so that the elderly were not a burden to their children and had self-reliance. As a result, the community was strong and had self-reliance at all levels, resulting in the economic growth in the community, decreased problems in the community, creating jobs, generating income, and happier society as people shared ideas together and helped each other within the community. The network partners can be developed in the area to become accumulated experiences of those having knowledge and ability in various fields until the concept of the curriculum was obtained. The curriculum is the guidelines for teaching and passing on knowledge about elderly care based on the area as the area is equipped with complete learning and local resources, obtaining from experience of the experts with knowledge on subjects in the area. In addition, the knowledge will be passed on to others in order to create new elderly care innovations.

Phase 1) The forums were undertaken 3 times and the opinions were obtained from the stakeholders and the key informants. This could lead to the synthesis of the development of the elderly care system of Wang Tha Di Sub-district. The curriculum of the elderly care system learning center was constructed from the conclusions from the forums and the participatory action research with a focus on the elderly in the community. Everyone can participate in Wang Tha Di Elderly School organized by Sub-district Administrative Organization. The curriculum of the elderly care system learning center can be used for organizing elderly activities in Wang Tha Di Elderly School.

Phase 2) The research was conducted using participatory action research (PAR) to construct the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center of the Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization. The research team worked with the people in the community

involved in this issue. The process included surveying the community status, analyzing the potential of the community, reflecting the information of Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization in accordance with the local context and presenting the information of Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization to the community forums consisting of the local government administrators, the community leaders, the representatives of the villagers and the public health network partners to encourage participation in expressing opinions and deciding on the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center through the real community participation process. It was found that according to the participatory action research process, the forums for exchanging ideas and analyzing the data were organized. The curriculum of the elderly care system learning center was used at Wang Tha Di Elderly School. Therefore, at the end of Phase 2, the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center was obtained as shown in Figure 1.

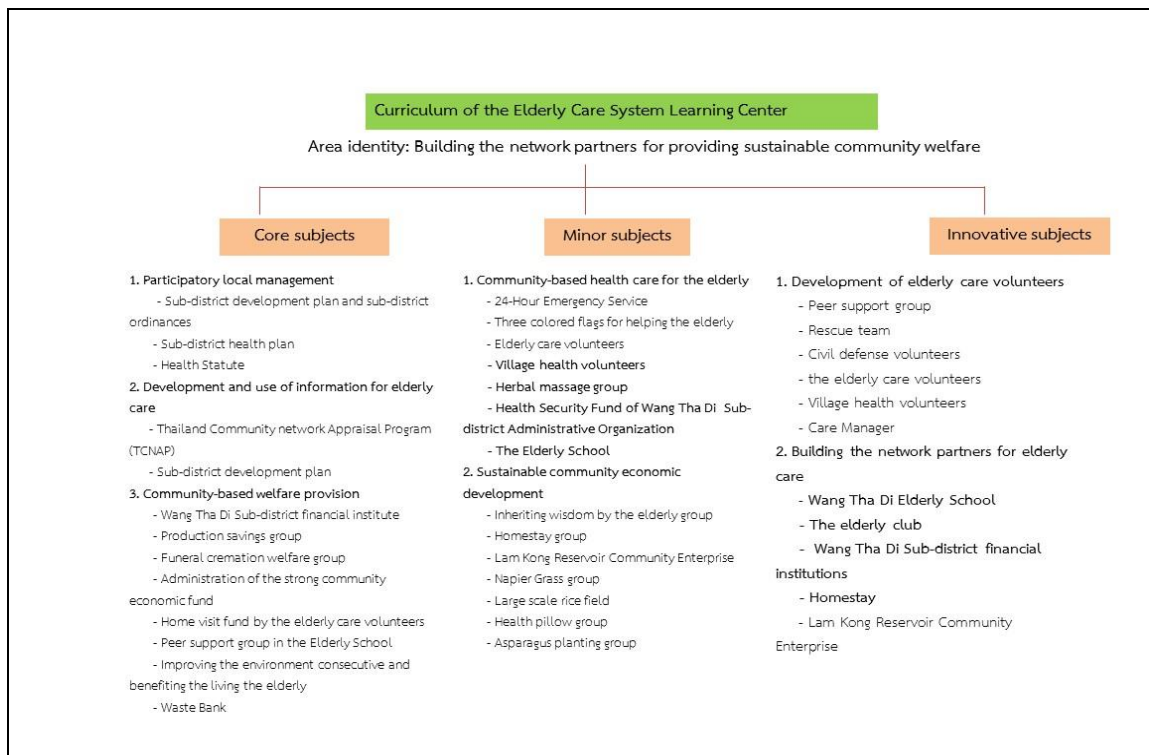


Figure 1: The curriculum of the elderly care system learning center
Source: Participatory action research (PAR)

The curriculum of the elderly care system learning center of Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization was constructed under the conclusion, the analysis and the recommendations of the participation and learning of the elderly and the stakeholders. It was the practical curriculum of the elderly care system learning center. Wang Tha Di Elderly School was strengthened and the resources in the community were effectively used.

Phase 3) The curriculum of the elderly care system learning center was piloted and evaluated through the community participation process. It occurred from the community decision-making process. The activities of recreation and healthcare according to the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center were organized through the community participation. It was found that the activities carried out according to the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center met the needs of the elderly who participated in the activities. Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization supported the activities. The evaluation of the activities revealed that the activities carried based on the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center can lead to success in elderly activities in the Sub-District Administrative Organization area and Wang Tha Di Elderly School through the participation process from the cooperation of the elderly in the community, the municipality and other networks. After completing the activities, the elderly who participated in the activities expressed their opinions on the activities of the curriculum. They reflected the results and their satisfaction on the activities. They also wanted the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center to be used in the community and Wang Tha Di Elderly School. The local government organization had the role in learning management. The mission of Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization was to give cooperation in providing care for the elderly. Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization as a government agency at the local level played a critical role in supporting infrastructure, and empowering the mission on the elderly affairs because Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization realized the importance of the elderly affairs. Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization was a strong local government organization getting support from other local government organizations in the area. This was the factor of success in implementing the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center by the community.

Discussion

The construction of the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center that is an innovation in accordance with the context of Wang Tha Di Sub-District Administrative Organization through the community participation process can display the curriculum structure of the elderly care system learning center. The participatory action research process was employed, starting from studying basic information, analyzing the community context, presenting information to the community forums so that the stakeholders can share their comments. Pilot study and evaluation were also administered, so the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center was obtained, focusing on non-formal education activities for all of the elderly in order to prepare them for entering the aging community effectively. The local administrative organization was the main organization responsible for the implementation of the activities based on the activity theory (Kossith, 1988 cited Chinakai, 2014). The performed

activities made the elderly feel that they are valuable and beneficial to society. The elderly also needed social space and believed that joining activities contribute to the development of physical and mental health and also benefit the community. The curriculum of the elderly care system learning center of Wang Tha Di Sub-District Administration Organization, NongPhai District, Phetchabun Province consists of the following subjects. 1) Core subjects consist of participatory local management, development and use of information for elderly care and community-based welfare provision. 2) Minor subjects include community-based health care for the elderly and sustainable community economic development. 3) Innovative subjects consist of development of elderly care volunteers and building the network partners for elderly care at Wang Tha Di Elderly School. The curriculum of the elderly care system learning center reflects the process of integrating knowledge in the local community with the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center and the learning process of the community. A lifelong learning process of the elderly who have the potential can be established so that they can develop their life as the valuable elderly. The needs of the elderly for the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center allows the elderly to have potential to live with others in society and realize their self-esteem. They will be able to show their full potential, and accepted by society as the population with quality (Department of Older Persons, 2016; Devalersakul et al., 2016).

Conclusion

There are 8 0 5 elderly people, including 3 5 7 men and 4 5 8 women in Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization. The proportion of the elderly per total population is 12.98%. So, Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization is an aging society. There are occupational groups, agricultural groups, and employment groups. The majority of the elderly have the burden of taking care of their families. Most of them have careers in farming or handicrafts. In addition, most of the elderly in the community have economic problems. They have high household expenses and low income. Career development is needed. These are the problems among the home-bound, bed-bound and disabled elderly. Therefore, the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center that can reflect the needs of the elderly activities, namely cultural knowledge, community way of life, occupation and health is needed. From the organization of community forums and interviews, it was found that the activities of the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center should promote the community potential and meet the economic needs of the elderly. This corresponds to the study results of Anantawan et al. (2016) and Muensaen et al. (2014), discussing the economic needs of the elderly. It is also consistent with the study results of Rojpaisarnkit & Kreingkaisakda (2017) and Tapasee et al. (2017), recognizing the basic needs as the universal needs of the elderly to be sought-after in

any society or culture. The elderly all over the world have psychological needs and advanced requirements. These needs are easily changing in line with social and cultural needs and way of life of the elderly as a result of the social patterns and norms. It can be said that the integration of the needs of the elderly with the curriculum of the elderly care system learning center of Wang Tha Di Sub-district Administrative Organization is an integration of the needs of the elderly, the community, and the local government organization, reflecting the needs for dependency arising from the community and the economic needs of the elderly in the community.

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