THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LEARNING MANAGEMENT MODEL TO ENHANCE SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING OF ADULT LEARNERS IN RAJABHAT UNIVERSITY

Sumolnit Kerdnoonwong[1]

Wirathep Pathumcharoenwattana[2]

Abstract: The Rajabhat University Act BE 2547, Section 7 was specified that 'The University is an institute of higher education for local development…' Therefore, the forty-Rajabhat-university has proposed various part time programs which response local adult learners' needs. However, the adult learners need to be developed Self-Directed Learning (SDL) characteristics by appropriate methods for supporting their successful learning. Therefore, the research was aimed at 1) analyzing the SDL characteristics of adult learners in Rajabhat University 2) developing learning management to enhance SDL of the adult learners and 3) developing strategies for applying the learning management model.

The research methodology is the study of whole SDL concept, which is synthesized to be in nine components: (1) philosophy and concept, (2) goal, (3) process, (4) characteristics of learners, (5) learners' roles, (6) instructors' roles, (7) learning resources, (8) administration, management and strategy (9) evaluation. Data collection on SDL characteristics of adult learners in Rajabhat University and best practice learning models of Thai educational institutions will be analyzed and synthesized to be interview questions for experts on SDL, Non-Formal education, adult education and Rajabhat University administrators. The data and information collected will be qualitative analyzed and synthesized to be a draft of SDL Management Model based on the nine components. The draft will be evaluated by administrators of the Rajabhat and trying out on a case study Rajabhat university and the SDL model of Adult learners in Rajabhat University will be developed and presented.

Keywords: Self-directed Learning, Learning Management Model, Adult Learners

Introduction

Thai Higher education's problem during this decade was due to the dramatic changes on internal & external factors: Thai population structure, the expansion on higher educational institutions, free educational policy, the limitation of learning resources and the effects on latest technology. Educational management was concentrated on business but the educational quality was not developed. Therefore, the current educational policy was aimed to produce potential human resource and innovation for competitive quality. Therefore, the promotion of educational center and ASEAN research center would promote the sustainable development of the country. Thai higher education should be set to suit for both young learners and adult learners. The study programs should be flexible and designed by using learners' needs. Particularly, adult learners who have various learning needs because of differences of experience and occupations. So, the group of Rajabhat University which are located in the most area of Thailand, There are several study programs proposed for adult learners during evening or weekend. However, results of many studies on Rajabhat University have shown that the adult learners are lack of self-directed learning characteristics, which are the cause of inefficient learning. Therefore, the characteristics of self-directed learning on the adult learners should be promoted by developing appropriate learning management model. Self-directed learning theories and concepts are studied firstly and best practice learning models from educational institutions are analyzed.

Objectives

To develop the learning management model to enhance self-directed learning of adult learners in Rajabhat University according to research and development technique.

Literature Review

Self-directed learning (SDL) is a theory, which describes how to change learners' opinion and behavior on dependent learning to be independent learning. SDL is called in various ways such as autonomous learning, independent learning, self-regulated learning and self-access learning. However, their similar aim is to promote learners to set and precede their own learning goals to be successful without instructors' control. (Gardner and Miller, 1999)

Malcolm S. Knowles (1913-1997) is an important person to the establishment of a theory of practice of adult learning. His ideas on self-directed learning are important to understanding patterns of adult education. Learners seek out an education to improve their lives; they are motivated; this initiative

[1] Ph.D. Candidate, Doctoral Program in Non-Formal Education, Department of Educational Policy, Management, and Leadership, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

[2] Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Policy, Management, and Leadership, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

should be met by a flexible and democratic system of adult education that provides courses according to public demand.

Knowles puts forward three immediate reasons for self-directed learning. First he argues that there is convincing evidence that people who take the initiative in learning (proactive learners) learn more things, and learn better, than do people who sit at the feet of teachers passively waiting to be taught (reactive learners). 'They enter into learning more purposefully and with greater motivation. They also tend to retain and make use of what they learn better and longer than do the reactive learners.' (Knowles 1975)

A second immediate reason is that self-directed learning is more in tune with our natural processes of psychological development. 'An essential aspect of maturing is developing the ability to take increasing responsibility for our own lives - to become increasingly self-directed' (Knowles 1975)

A third immediate reason is that many of the new developments in education put a heavy responsibility on the learners to take a good deal of initiative in their own learning. 'Students entering into these programs without having learned the skills of self-directed inquiry will experience anxiety, frustration, and often failure and so will their teachers (Knowles 1975).

Moreover, researchers have explained self-directed learning in various ways. Wolters, Pintrich and Karabenick (2003) define self-directed (self-regulated) learning as "an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features in the environment". Wolter (2003) go on to report that models of self-regulation usually share four phases: goal setting, monitoring, control and regulation, and reflective processes, all directed by the learner. In addition, Snow, Corno, & Jackson (1996) identify cognition, motivation/affect, behavior and context as major, though not distinct, areas of regulation. In a more general sense, Gibbons (2004) describes the process of selecting a particular area in which learners want to advance understanding, abilities, skills, or personal development by their own efforts as a feature of self-directed learning.

Knapper (1988) identified a number of criteria associated with the development of lifelong learning that are also descriptive of the context for developing self-directed skills. These criteria included active student involvement, a democratic learning approach, flexibility in terms of time and amount of learning, provisions for individual learning differences, motivating content that is relevant to the learner's everyday life, opportunities for collaboration, integration of knowledge from different fields, and an atmosphere that encourages risk-taking in the learning process. To develop the qualities of autonomy or learner independence, opportunities for active student involvement, relevance, and risk-taking musts be provided at all stages of the educational process (Knapper, 1988; Alagic, Gibson & Doyle, 2004; Cannatella, 2000).

According to Corno and Mandinach (1983), self-regulated learning is considered as the highest form of cognitive engagement. They define self-regulated learning as the purposeful planning and monitoring of the cognitive and affective processes involved in the successful completion of selected tasks. These tasks are characterized by the use of appropriate information attainment and reorganization skills. They maintain that for some learners these metacognitive processes of planning and monitoring are well developed to occur automatically. However, the problem of providing opportunities to develop self-directed learning in all students remains to be addressed.

Teacher educators have both an opportunity and an obligation to provide a transitional bridge to the self-directed learning paradigm. Gibbons' (2004) five stages, each involving a new set of tasks, are described below. Descriptions include references to learning cycle steps that facilitate the process towards acquisition of self-directed learning skills.

1) Incidental self-direction

The teacher introduces self-direction in an activity (explore – providing materials and a task for exploration) implying a possible use of any of the following stages. Students find themselves in a situation that they cannot get out of without gathering data and looking for a solution; it can be part of a larger problem, or a project, or an independent event. For example, during the exploration stage when learning about an electric circuit, they might incidentally try to connect more batteries and find out about parallel and series connections.

2) Independent thinking

The teacher provides an environment that facilitates a discussion with a goal of explaining the studied concept or phenomena; or the teacher poses open-ended questions for students (explore and explain). In addition, after explaining what they have found out including term introduction, the teacher can facilitate independent thinking by asking them to brainstorm the new concept that they like to find out; or by asking them, "Did everything happen the way you anticipated? Were there any discrepancies? If yes, how might they be explained?" A teacher that believes in the self-directed paradigm will support and

encourage students' independent thinking by generating opportunities for new quests.

3) Self-managed learning

The teacher structures the environment and activities to provide an atmosphere in which students are able to accept setbacks as a part of the learning process (elaborate; student's inquiry). They will also have opportunities to apply what they have learned in new situations involving the same concepts.

4) Self-planned learning

The teacher can assist students in making a rough timeline and pivotal points in accomplishing the assignment. Overtime, less guidance is provided (coaching, fading,). Extra-curricular activities (e.g. taking a dance class); Participating in a science fair or science Olympiad.

5) Self-directed learning

In a broader context of an assignment, a learner is provided an opportunity to make their own choice about the project to undertake (expand - the concept is action research; student-centered inquiry). After getting in-service opportunities, teachers look more closely into the learning occurring in their classroom (keeping an observational journal) and look for things that they would like to change. They conduct action research concerning selected questions/problems about their classroom practice. At that point they have a need to know more about data collection, analysis and other characteristic of action research. If the action research were introduced in a traditional way (lecture), the opportunity for self-directed questions would not exist; necessary reorganization of knowledge to support self-directed learning would not happen.

The selection of the strategy is highly dependent on educators' (a) understanding of self-regulated processes and life-long learning skills, and (b) understanding of and experience with learning cycle models. Educators' ability to engage and motivate students is required for the successful implementation of these strategies. It requires that students take an active role in selecting, designing and implementing their own learning activities.

Stages can be a guiding sequence for moving forward or employed one at a time. The way in which phases are used is highly dependent on the individual educator's understanding of self-regulated processes and life-long learning skills, including his/her ability to engage and motivate students. It requires that students take an active role in selecting, designing and implementing their own learning activities.

The SDL theory and concept are studied and commented by many researchers and educators as above. They are analyzed into nine components as a learning management model:

1) "Philosophy and concept" means the clarification of SDL on values, believes, advantages, reasons that are described.

2) "Goal" means the required purpose on SDL and how to be successful.

3) "Process" means the steps of behaviors on learners and instructors, which bring to be successful on SDL.

4) "Characteristics of learners" means the learners' behaviors, expressions, attitudes and personalities, which are according to SDL.

5) "Learners' roles" means their appropriate behaviors and duties, which support SDL process.

6) "Instructors' roles" means their appropriate behaviors and duties, which support SDL process.

7) "Learning resources," means the learning resources that enhance SDL process, such as libraries, experts, field trips.

8) "Administration, management and strategy" means the management plans and decisions by using various strategies for the most effective SDL.

9) "Evaluation" means the steps and methods for measuring and appraising the learners' performances and competences after developing by SDL process.

Research Methodology

The development of an instrument for measuring SDL characteristics of the adult learners involves applying the SDL Characteristics Checklist developed by Suwat Watatnawong (2003). Instruments for collecting information on the best practice learning models and the nine components involve designing the interview questions. The instruments are developed and used as follows:

1) The drafts of the instruments were submitted to experts who examined them for content validity. 5 professional experts are comprised of 1) 1 adult education expert 2) 1 Non-Formal education expert 3) 1 Self-Directed experts 4) 5) 1 Dean of Faculty of Education in a Rajabhat university and 5) 1 evaluation expert.

2) The SDL checklist was submitted to a trial study with adult learners possessing SDL characteristics similar to the sample group. Then, the developed checklist are submitted to adult learners in Rajabhat University

3) The developed interview questions on the best practice learning models and the nine components will be used to collect information from best practice learning models of Thai educational institutions and related professional experts.

4) The data and information collected will be classified, analyzed and synthesized by qualitative and

quantitative methods to be the draft of the learning model based on the nine components.

5) The draft will be evaluated by administrators of all Rajabhat university. The developed learning model will be qualitative evaluated by trying out the model in a case study Rajabaht University.

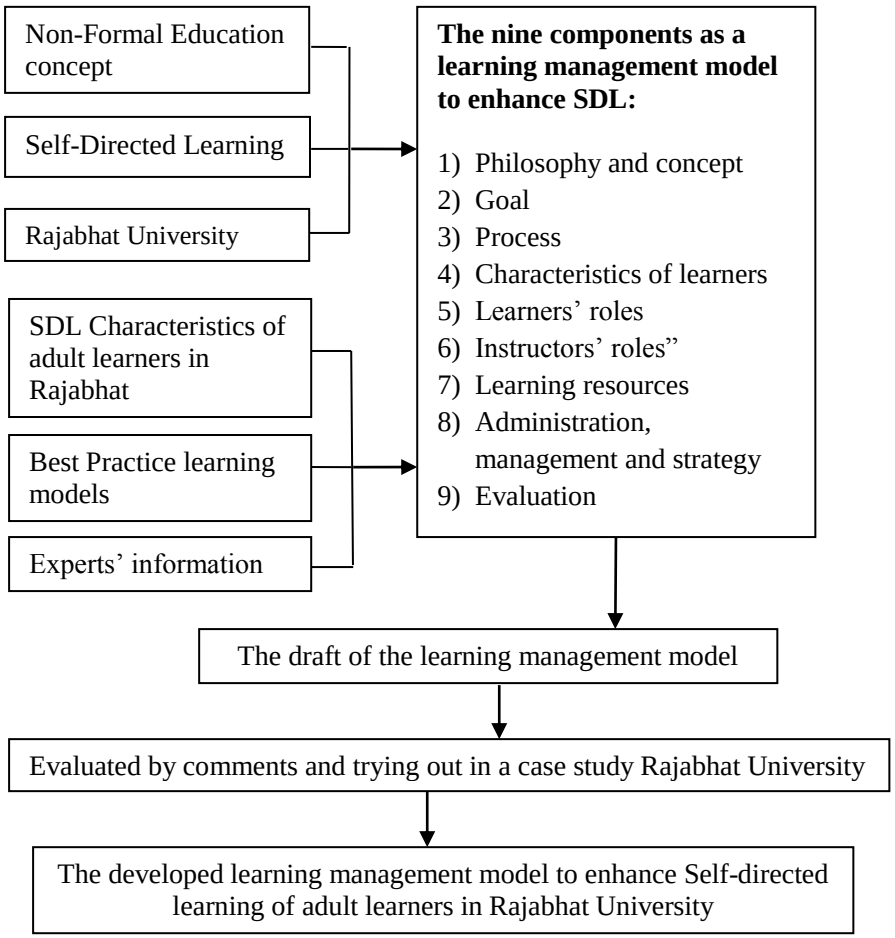

Figure 1: Process on Development of a Learning Management Model to Enhance Self-Directed Learning of Adult Learners in Rajabhat University

Conclusions

There are findings from the SDL checklists, the weak points of adult learners in Rajabhat University on SDL characteristics are (1) "They cannot keep themselves in their learning" (2) "They need other persons to analyze their learning needs." (3) "They do not really want to learn independently. The findings have shown their negative behaviors and attitudes on SDL, which would be assumed that the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th components on the learning model should be concentrated on. These components should be amplified and clarified by analyzing and synthesizing the experts' attitudes and opinions on SDL in the Rajabhat context. Therefore, the model will be developed in most appropriate concept.

Recommendations

The language usage in the SDL Checklist should be realized on implied meanings for decreasing of mistake answers caused by language misunderstanding. In addition, the context of the questions should be selected in consistence with the nature of the each expert who answers questions through dept interview process. In my opinions, the language used in hard-copy instruments such as questionnaires and checklists should be carefully designed due to one-way communication from the papers while two-way communication between interviewers and interviewees happened during the process.

Self-directed learning is one of the most important adults' characteristics for their successful learning. The various SDL studies defined the route to be an "ideal" SDL learner. Moreover, the adult learners in the Rajabhat need to be develop their learning due to the above findings. So, the development of the adult learners in the Rajabhat university where covered the most area in Thailand, it would be the Thai human resource development in the same time.

References

Bejot, D. D. (1981). *The Degree of Self-Directedness and the Choices of Learning Methods as Related to a Cooperative Extension Program*. Dissertation Abstracts International. 42 (June 1981).

Box, B. J. (1983). *Self-Directed Learning Readiness of Students and Graduated of an Associate Degree Nursing Program.* Dissertation Abstracts International. 44 (September 1983):679-A.

Brookfield, S. (1984). Self-Directed Adult Learning: A Critical Paradigm. *Adult Education Quarterly*. 35 (Winter 1984): 59-69.

Candy, P. C. (1991). *Self- direction for Lifelong Learning: A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cannatella, H. (2000). *Autonomous Learning and Teaching*. Retrieved September 20, 2010, from https:// www.ilt.ac.uk/iltac2000/cannatella/Autonomy.rtf.

Corno, L., & Mandinach, E. B. (1983). The role of cognitive engagement in classroom learning and motivation. *Educational Psychologist*, 18(2), 88-108.

Gad, R. (1993). *Self-Directed Learning as a Future Training Mode in Organizations.* Dissertation Abstracts International. 47 (April 1993):1993-A.

Gibbons, M. (2004). Pardon me; didn't I just hear a paradigm shift? *Phi Delta Kappan* 85(6), 461-467.

Gardner D. and Lindsay Miller (1999). *Establishing self-access: from theory to practice*. Edition: Imprint: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Knapper, C. (1988). Technology and lifelong learning. In D. Boud (Ed.), *Developing student autonomy in learning* (2nd ed.), (pp. 91-106). London: Kogan Page.

Knowles, M. S. (1975). *Self-Directed Learning: A guide for Learners and Teachers*. Chicago: Association Press.

Wolters, C. A., Pintrich, P. R., & Karabenick, S. A. (2003, March). Assessing Academic Self-regulated Learning. Paper presented at the conference on Indicators of Positive Development: Definitions, Measures, and Prospective Validity, Washington, DC.

Wattanawong, S. (2003). S*elf-Directed learning of continuing Vocational Education Learner*, Ph.D. (Vocational Education): Kasetsart University.