

# The Development of Physical Activity Leaders Using a Contemplative Education Approach to Promote Wellness among the Elderly

*Arphat Tiaotrakul*

Faculty of Education, Naresuan University, Thailand

E-mail: arphatt@nu.ac.th

*Thaweesub Koeipakvaen*

Faculty of Education, Naresuan University, Thailand

E-mail: thaweesub@yahoo.co.th

*Pakkawat Sertbudra*

Faculty of Education, Naresuan University, Thailand

E-mail: magma\_khom@hotmail.com

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to develop physical activity leaders using a contemplative education approach to promote wellness among the elderly. This study used the qualitative method design. All subjects were 30 physical education and exercise science students. The instrument focus on the contemplative approach with the 7Cs, which are Contemplation, Compassion, Connection, Confronting, Continuity, Commitment, and Community. The results from reflective papers, observation and focus group were analysed by content analysis. The result of this study shows that the students learned to become the leader leading the elderly to do physical activity. The outcome of the learning came in three domains. The first one was cognitive domains. It was found that the learners had understood the lessons in the course and could connect them with self-awareness, recognizing the differences between the elderly's physical body and mind. Secondly, the psychomotor domain was presented as the students had learnt to focus. All these are learned through contemplation and acknowledging the importance of deep conversation. Thus, they made possible physical activity leaders who could promote health for the elderly. Lastly, the affective domain shows that the learners had transformed their abilities into a fundamental domain. They had come to love and have compassion for the elderly.

**Keywords:** Contemplative Education, Physical Activity Leaders, Elderly

## Introduction

The physical education and exercise science students have a distinctive role within the community. Developing physical activity leaders among physical education and exercise science students is important because the skills obtained are essential for their future career. The process in this study is a way to help students establish some value critical for their leadership development. It gave the students an opportunity to use their knowledge and skills acquired from their college experience (Lester, 2015). Aside from that, Lester in his 2015 work also explained that such a project was a way to challenge students to expand both their personal and professional skills. To be an effective physical activity leader, one has to be fully equipped with the knowledge required as well as have a positive attitude towards the

target group and the activities. Thus, to provide the students with the necessary education for becoming a physical activity leader requires a process of equipping them with knowledge, skills, and attitudes suitable for leading physical activities for the elderly. The contemplative education approach is a means appropriate for developing students as it guides students to learn contemplatively and creates public consciousness among them. Therefore, it can be seen that the approach can be adopted in developing a physical activity leader among physical education and exercise science students who will conduct voluntary activities with the target group to promote wellbeing.

Lester (2015) presents keys to designing a class that successfully melds service learning and student leadership development. Contemplative practice (Schutloffel, 1999) is based in a reflective model of leadership practice grounded in metacognition (Flavell, 1977; Manen, 1977). In other words, contemplative practice encourages in physical education and exercise science students a distinctive way to think about their own thinking regarding their decision making processes and outcomes. The reflective process advocated by Manen (1977) provides another theoretical component of the contemplative model that is both introspective and collaborative. Contemplative practice in physical education and exercise science students to be physical activity leaders to promote wellness among the elderly in community as a means for holistic student development (Schutloffel, 2008).

What's more, contemplative pedagogy as used in this study also serves several educational goals. Research shows that contemplative practice, even if performed for short periods, improves attention (Jha, 2007; Tang et al., 2007), cognition (Zeidan, 2010), and cognitive flexibility (Moore, 2009). At Stanford University Doty (2012) has established the centre for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education, whose research shows that compassion can be strengthened.

The idea of contemplative education concerns holistic learning which will result in some transformed his abilities into a fundamental. It is a means to acquire knowledge over and above rationality and sensitivity. Contemplative education enables learners to understand themselves from the inside, be conscious, and uncover the truth. As a result, it will bring about change within oneself. They will acknowledge relations and become aware of the value of human beings as well as of things. They will learn to love and accept differences. Ultimately, it will lead to the subjects having public mind. This can be considered as improving internal attribute of the learners. They will also become compassionate and loving. Contemplative education has three learning processes which are deep listening, contemplating, and meditating. (Wasi, 2006) The fundamental principle of the approach can be explained as the Principle of Contemplative Education, aka 7Cs. They are 1) Contemplation 2) Compassion 3) Connection 4) Confronting 5) Continuity 6) Commitment and 7) Community. (Ninchaigowit, 2008)

Because of the process, it can be said that instruction based on Contemplative Education Concept could promote their learning with a variety of activities. The promotion is done through self-directed learning and group working that use dialogue, deep listening, learning basement, self learning reflections, group learning reflections, journaling, and different kinds of teaching and learning techniques. This is so to motivate and develop students' thinking skills among free and safe zone atmospheres and spend more time to share students' opinions (Rumpagaporn, 2016)

In regard to the assessment of change affecting the development of the country, one agenda is the continuity of aging society. The old-age population will increase to 81.9 million. The trouble it causes is the increase in health-related issue expense resulting in the decrease in the budget for other aspects development. Thailand is also going towards aging society. In the year 2025, Thailand will become a complete aging society. Both the government and public

sectors will have more burden providing budget for expense relating to the improvement of the elderly's quality of life. (Office of the Prime Minister, 2011)

The aging of the population has raised awareness among people. Many are preparing for the situation. In Thailand, importance is given to the elderly. The National Elderly Plans have been set up. The second plan for 2002-2021 involves the promotion of physical activities among the elderly appearing in the second strategy called "The Strategy of Supporting the Elderly." One of the measures is to promote knowledge of health promotion. In addition, in the fifth strategy concerning analyzing, developing, and distributing knowledge regarding the elderly as well as following up the result of the implementation. Another measure is to encourage and support research and improvement of knowledge of the elderly in a bid to create policies, improve services or operations beneficial to the elderly.

In Public Policy in Healthcare Utilization of the Elderly: Evidence from Kanchanaburi DSS, Thailand (Netithanakul, 2015), inequality between holders of the universal health care card and those who did not have the card was raised. According to the research, the two groups did not have the same chance in accessing healthcare services. This also related to the wealth index. One of the most important things in health promotion is preventing health issues and delaying the deterioration. Hence, health promotion in the elderly is important in ensuring that the health issues do not arise from the first place.

On the holistic improvement of people's quality of life properly integrating wellbeing all physically, mentally, socially, and intellectually as well as the attempt to develop Thai society to be of high quality holistic reduction of health risk factors by promoting well-being among Thai both physically and mentally and providing them with skills and knowledge so that they can take care of themselves. It can be seen that consciousness and awareness of the changes occurring both in the national and global level appear in the plan. Efforts of exercise may prevent or delay a number of diseases prevalent among the elderly such as diabetes, colon cancer, heart illnesses, cerebral accidents and others. With the activities to promote their health, the risk of public health expenses from any of these causes being significantly reduced (Moisesescu, 2014). Therefore, developing physical activity leader to promote physical activity among the elderly can be considered as a process of helping everyone to have good health and become a quality human resource of the country.

It can be seen that one factor to resolve the current national crisis is to create public consciousness among the people. Providing education using contemplative education. The approach has the process that will bring about change from within the learners as it creates public consciousness and compassion. It can be said that the approach can complete the learners as human beings because they learn from doing. The education that stresses the theories and memorizing contents in the book alone without understanding oneself is incomplete in itself. This reflects that the education is not truly holistic. Ultimately, learners will become selfish and stressed out. They will lack creativity and incapable of solving problems. Most importance, there will be a lack of public consciousness and will cause other crises such as economic, social, environmental crisis. The lack of self-completion will push one to fulfill himself by using drugs, or being extravagant which are deviated behaviours leading to many more problems. (Wasi, 2006) Thus, men should learn to reduce selfishness. They should know broadly and become aware of their surroundings. They should learn to do and learn to live together. (Wasi, 2012)

Promoting public consciousness among learners as well as highlighting their capabilities through voluntary community activity will give experience to them and they can learn what it is like in the real situation. The approach will complete the physical education and exercise science students from faculty of education, Naresuan University as a qualified person to lead physical activity. This is because it equips the students via the various activities they are required to do. The learners, ultimately, will be able to deploy what they have gained in the

field. Most of the activities will be voluntary-based in the community service form. This is to produce sport and exercise leaders of the future. The research-based development of physical activity leaders could be considered as improving the knowledge of physical training in the elderly in a bid to develop students to be physical activity leaders. These will promote healthcare among the elder which will help prevent other health-related issues. They are primary problems of the elder. Hence, to promote their health care means that the long-term issues can also be reduced and their quality of life be lifted. Thus, I adopt the approach of contemplative education to develop the students studying physical education and exercise science and integrate the teaching with educational services to the community in order to train students to become physical activity leader with a public mind and a human resource essential for the country. The purpose of research to develop physical activity leaders using contemplative education approach to promote wellness among the elderly.

## Methodology

This study used the qualitative method design. All subjects were 30 physical education and exercise science students from the faculty of education, Naresuan University. The samples were selected using purposive sampling. Participants were students meeting for two hours, once every week for activities. They also completed a learning journal demonstrating what they had learned from participating in activities. The students indicated that the program had helped them feel prepared for leadership opportunities. They valued interacting with the elderly in the community and learning how they could distinguish themselves as leaders to promote wellness among the elderly. The instrument include teaching plans focusing on the contemplative approach, observation reports from physical activity leadership, learning journals, measuring of functional fitness of older adults. All these with the focus on the contemplative approach with the 7Cs, which are Contemplation, Compassion, Connection, Confronting, Continuity, Commitment, and Community. The data were collected via participant observation, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews. The results from reflective papers, observation and focus group were analysed by content analysis. This study was approved by the Naresuan University Institutional Review Board (protocol number: 828/58).

This program emphasises experiential learning and revolves around service learning projects. This program is based on the theoretical foundations that informed the decision making during the ongoing development of this program. Next, the planning process that occurred prior to the initial offering of the program is discussed. Feedback from researching other leadership programs, conversations with local community at the outset, and feedback elicited from expert highlighted the biggest challenges associated with facilitating student leadership development in a service learning context. The connections between the multi-source feedback, class refinements, and suggested keys to success are reviewed.

Proceed in accordance with the activity plan stressing the contemplative approach promoting physical activity in the elder using 7Cs. They are contemplation, compassion, connection, confronting, continuity, commitment, and community and they are good for the learning development because they include activities to facilitate the learning development of the learners; 1) Contemplation 2) Service Learning 3) Physical Activity 4) Physical Activity Leaders 5) The Elderly 6) The Happiness of The Elderly 7) Physical Fitness of The Elderly 8) Yoga for The Elderly 9) Field Study1 10) Field Study2 11) Field Study3 12) Reflection and Conclusion 13) Follow up.

**Table 1** The Activity Plan of the 7 Principles of the Contemplative Education

<b>Activity Plan</b>		<b>Contemplative Principles (7C's)</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Contemplation		Contemplation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Build positive attitude of becoming a physical activity leader for the elderly using contemplation, dialogue, and reflection. Contemplation is going into the state of mind that is best suitable for learning. Under that state, students learn to work consciously in all the ways of cognitivity, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. This is done through dialogue to create familiarity. The students subsequently would be relaxed and see the advantages of the activities and how to apply these in the future.</li> <li>2. Students learn how the activities would be conducted. The activities included check in and sharing and opening with compassion in good learning environment.</li> </ol>
Service Learning		Confronting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students learned the background of service learning and how to conduct the activities. The students would go in the field to lead the elderly to do activities. They learn everything from identifying the problems to finding the solutions. The students had to confront with the targeted participants. They learned to get out of the comfort zone to learn new things and got to understand their limitations by working with the elderly.</li> </ol>
Physical Activity		Contemplation and Confronting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students learned how the health of people in different ages went from activities, lecture, demonstrations, and practice.</li> <li>2. Build positive attitude for being a physical activity leader for the elderly using contemplation, dialogue, and reflection. The students would be relaxed and get to the statement mind where they were conscious about their emotions. They would be able to express their thoughts about their previous and future activities through dialogue.</li> <li>3. Students practiced with peers how to lead the elderly to do physical activities.</li> <li>4. Students learned how to lead the physical activities through service learning. They would have to confront with the real situations by practicing with the real elderly. This got them out of their comfort zone and face with the danger zone. This allowed the students to see their limitations. After the practice with the elderly, students also reflected the lessons learned from the activities.</li> </ol>
Physical Activity Leaders	Activity Connection and	Confronting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students learned about being the physical activity leader using the connection principle, connecting the practice with the real life experience which led to the process of internalisation. This would also connect the students with the targeted community as they reflected their thoughts from what they had seen and contemplated. The process promoted the positive view on both themselves and others.</li> <li>2. Students learned to accept different opinions without judging them as well as learned to let go so to peacefully coexist.</li> <li>3. Build positive attitude about being a physical activity leader in the lecture. Students learned how to lead the physical activities and reflected their opinions and suggestions on the topic.</li> <li>4. Students reviewed what they had learned in the class through a video clip showing how to lead a physical activities. Students learned how to write a project proposal. They also had to confront with the real situations by discussing with the elderly.</li> </ol>

**Table 1 (Con.)**

<b>Activity Plan</b>	<b>Contemplative Principles (7C's)</b>	<b>Activity</b>
The Elderly	Compassion, Connection, and Confronting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students learned about the nature of the elderly--their bodies, emotions, sociality, and desires.</li> <li>2. Build positive attitude about being a physical activity leader. With the contemplative approach, the students were taught about the exercises suitable with the elderly as well as the problems the elderly may have.</li> <li>3. Explaining how to apply the compassion principle when leading the physical activities that is being friendly with the participants as well as creating the learning-friendly environment. The students learned about the connection principle, connecting the practice with the real life experience which led to the process of internalisation. This would also connect the students with the targeted community as they reflected their thoughts from what they had seen and contemplated. The process promoted the positive view on both themselves and others. Students learned to accept different opinions without judging them as well as learned to let go so to peacefully coexist.</li> <li>4. Practice how to lead the activities through service-learning. They would have to confront with the real situations by practicing with the real elderly. This got them out of their comfort zone and face with the danger zone. This allowed the students to see their limitations. The activities included dialogue and sharing and opening. The students also reflected the values of the elderly and their health problems.</li> <li>5. Review the lessons.</li> </ol>
The Happiness of The Elderly	Contemplation, Compassion, and Connection	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students learned about the happiness of the elderly through lecture, demonstrations, and practice.</li> <li>2. Build positive attitude of becoming a physical activity leader for the elderly using contemplation, dialogue, and reflection. Contemplation is going into the state of mind that is best suitable for learning. Under that state, students learn to work consciously in all the ways of cognitivity, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. his is done through dialogue to create familiarity. The students subsequently would be relaxed and express their thoughts about the topic. The students learned about compassion. that is being friendly with the participants as well as creating the learning-friendly environment. The students learned about the connection principle, connecting the practice with the real life experience which led to the process of internalisation. This would also connect the students with the targeted community as they reflected their thoughts from what they had seen and contemplated. The process promoted the positive view on both themselves and others. Students learned to accept different opinions without judging them as well as learned to let go so to peacefully coexist. The activities included checking in and learning how the elderly viewed happiness and the five-dimension happiness for the elderly.</li> <li>3. Practice how to lead the activities through service-learning. They would have to confront with the real situations by practicing with the real elderly. This got them out of their comfort zone and face with the danger zone. This allowed the students to see their limitations. Th activities included dialogue and sharing and opening. The students also reflected what they had learned.</li> </ol>

**Table 1 (Con.)**

<b>Activity Plan</b>	<b>Contemplative Principles (7C's)</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Physical Fitness of The Elderly	Connection	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students learned about the exercises suitable with the elderly and their physical fitness and how to test it through lecture, demonstration, and practice.</li> <li>2. Build positive attitude of becoming a physical activity leader for the elderly using contemplation, dialogue, and reflection. The students should learn what exercises were best for the elderly, their physical fitness, and how to test it. They would be able to identify the benefits of the test, explaining the types of exercise as well as the duration and frequency.</li> <li>3. Practicing being a physical activity leader and a coach. The students chose a sport they would coach and practice coaching with peers. Practice also how to test the physical fitness of the elderly. Review the lessons learned from the activities.</li> </ol>
Yoga for The Elderly	Confronting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students learned about yoga for the elderly through the contemplative approach, dialogue, lecture, demonstrations, practice, and reflection.</li> <li>2. Built positive attitude of becoming a physical activity leader for the elderly using contemplation before learning.</li> <li>3. Students practiced how to teach the elderly yoga with peers. Reflected on what they had learned from the activities. This practice allowed students to prepare themselves before they had to confront with the real situations. They had to leave the comfort zone and learn their limitations as they worked with the elderly in the field. Students reflected what they had learned from the activities.</li> </ol>
Field Study	Confronting and Continuity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students learned more about service learning as they conducted the physical activities with the elderly. The learning was through the activities, lecture, demonstrations, and practice. The confrontation principle was used for students to get out of their comfort zone and realise their limitations. Students were assigned to work with the elderly that had been targeted.</li> <li>2. Built positive attitude for being a physical activity leader and conducting activities for the elderly, using the contemplative approach and dialogue. Playing the buddy game with the targeted elderly to get familiar with them. The continuity principle was used to create dynamics in the learning process. This helped bring out the true potential out of the students and for them to work in the field continually. A group dialogue was also used to discuss the lessons learned in each session, right after the physical activity with the elderly. This was for the students to reflect the problems and what they had learned.</li> <li>3. Practicing being the physical activity leader, taking the role of the coach. Students chose a sport or an exercise to teach the elderly. As they did this with the targeted elderly, students got to confront with the real situations to get out of comfort zone and learn their limitations. Students reviewed what they had learned from the activities.</li> </ol>

**Table 1 (Con.)**

<b>Activity Plan</b>	<b>Contemplative Principles (7C's)</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Reflection and Conclusion	Confronting, Connection and Commitment	<p>1. Used the service learning to help develop the awareness about being the physical activity leader through activities, lecture, demonstration, and practice. The confrontation principle was used for students to get out of their comfort zone and realise their limitations as students were out in the field to work with the targeted elderly. The connection principle is used for students to link the learning with real life activity which ultimately led to internalisation. The process connected the students with the targeted community through the reflection that each students showed what they had seen. The contemplation resulted in positive thinking. This got them to accept others and different views without judging as well as learned to coexist peacefully.</p> <p>2. Concluded the result of the activity leading with the elderly using the contemplative approach, dialogue, and reflection in the learning process to become the physical activity leader. The commitment principle was used for students to apply what they had learned with their lives later on. This would lead to the continual transformation that was also sustainable. Students were also asked to lay out what they had learned and how they could adapt them for future use.</p>
Follow up	Commitment and Community	<p>1. The commitment principle was used for students to take the process and adapted it with their daily lives. This would lead to the continual transformation that was also sustainable. Students were asked to reflect what they had learned and how to use it after the activities. All activities had been conducted with the community principle. Students shared similar feelings and were under the process that support the learning and the transformation. This also created a network that they could exchange ideas which is another way to sustainable learning.</p>



## Results

The study found that the contemplation approach could be a mean to develop physical activity leaders for the elderly. The approach with the 7Cs contributed to the integration of body, mind, and intelligence. The participants had taken part in different activities in 13 weeks according to the approach. They helped students learned through experience contribute to their growth. The students learned to be the physical activity leader for the elderly with the results shown in cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains. In the first domain, it was found that the learners had understood the lessons in the course and could connect them with self-awareness, recognizing the differences between the elderly's physical body and mind. Secondly, the psychomotor domain was presented as the students had learnt to focus. All these are learned through contemplation and acknowledging the importance of deep conversation. Thus, they made possible physical activity leaders who could promote health for the elderly. Lastly, the affective domain shows that the learners had transformed their abilities into a fundamental domain. They had come to love and have compassion for the elderly. Ultimately, the results demonstrated that the learning process had resulted in the balanced integration of physical, soul, and intellect. The students learned to become the leader leading the elderly to do physical activity.

## Discussion

This study investigated the effects of the 7 Principles of the Contemplative Education (The 7Cs) activity on enhancing pre-service physical education and exercise science teachers knowledge based on the framework of contemplative education by deepening the reflective process. The main purpose was to make the learner more aware of the humanity and to improve the program objectives as well as learning through contemplative approaches.

The research findings found that the contemplative education approaches could enhance the students' desire to become physical activity leaders as well as their understanding, emotional self-regulation, empathy, compassion for self and others and action in order to encourage and transform self-learning, deepen learning and build inner strengths and skills. Through these approaches, the students learned to enhance and improve physical activity leader skills, calm their bodies and minds, focus, and even open their heart by exchanging different learning ideas. The contemplative education approach enabled the students to recognise and properly tend to behavioural patterns as well as allowed them to process facts which led to contemplation and ultimately to wisdom.

Contemplative practice, through reflection, has the potential to contribute to creating a faith service learning community for students in the society. Manen (1977) proposes that three types of reflection are possible: technical, interpretive and critical. Technical reflection provides a description of what is going on. For example, a physical activity leader might choose to think about what happened at a recent meeting or the activity with the elderly. Interpretive reflection asks the question, what message does the elderly behavior send? What message does the principal want to send in reaction to the elderly's response? Condescending? What does this interaction mean for future discussions about the elderly behaviors? An examination of the meanings created (what is good elderly behavior) or the messages sent (we know what's best for your health), reveal stumbling blocks to promote wellness among the elderly. According to Factors Affecting the Quality of Life of the Elderly in Thailand (Whangmahaporn, Simmonds & Whangmahaporn, 2018), the most effective factors in order on the quality of life of the elderly in Thailand are Health promotion behaviors: Social behavior, Health promotion behaviors: Living behavior, Materials, finance and labor support. Developing physical activity leader for the elderly partly helps older people engage in social activities leading to better health behavior and quality of life.

Finally, critical reflection requires the physical activity leader to consider their own values, beliefs and philosophy as they think about why they think the way they do regarding the elderly meeting.

## Recommendations

- 1) Students should be followed up and developed continuously to study the persistence of the behavior.
- 2) Implementation of the contemplative theory should be made in accordance with the characteristics of the students.

## Conclusion

This study reported the effects of a course designed to promote the development of physical activity leaders and a deeper understanding of the self as related to the profession. Teaching is not merely a technical activity; it is also moral and ethical (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). As such, what a 21st century physical education and exercise science teacher should know must go beyond physical activity leaders by using a contemplative education approach to promote wellness among the elderly.

The contemplative education approach is an approach that suits well both international and national educational provision whose main emphasis is to develop on holistic development. They can be used in the training aiming to produce physical activity leaders. The learners will become conscious. All these are thanks to dialogues and the study conducted in the form of social service. The exchanges allow them to making them become happy and see the value of the content before going in the field. This also create their relations with the external society and they can relate what they learn and put it to real use in daily life.

It is hoped that the findings of this study add some insights to develop physical activity leaders as a critical component of teacher education so as to develop “all-sided” teachers, who can provide engaging and fulfilling instruction for 21st-century.

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