

ASSESSING STUDENTS' SELF-EFFICACY FOR LEARNING AT AN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY IN THAILAND

Richard Lynch¹

Abstract: Development of a commitment to lifelong learning among students has become a key objective of education throughout the world. This is particularly the case in university study at both the undergraduate and, more especially, at the graduate levels, where the students are expected to shoulder increasingly greater responsibility for their own learning in both classroom-based and online learning contexts. An important aspect of that responsibility lies in the acquisition of metacognitive self-regulatory skills whereby students are enabled to manage their own learning in a variety of environments. Social cognitive self-regulation theory posits that an individual's beliefs in their ability to manage their own learning will be predictive of their active participation in current learning which will in turn be predictive of their commitment to lifelong learning. This paper describes a small scale validation study – prelude to an intended large scale university-wide study - of a questionnaire to measure self-efficacy for university level learning. The original 10-item scale, composed of 2 sub-scales (self-efficacy for information processing and self-efficacy for information finding), was first developed by researchers in Italy in 2007. It was slightly modified for the current study (a further 2-item sub-scale being added to measure self-efficacy for English listening and reading comprehension) and completed by a convenience sample of graduate (M.Ed.) students ($n = 38$) at an English-medium international university in Thailand. Each of the 3 sub-scales attained satisfactory degrees of internal consistency reliability. As well, in line with self-efficacy theory, correlations between each of the 3 sub-scales as well as the total scale and the respondents' self-reported expected grades were robust and statistically significant.

Keywords: Academic Self-Regulation, International, Lifelong Learning, Self-Efficacy for Learning, Social Cognitive Learning Theory, Measurement Scale, Metacognition, Motivation for Learning, Thailand

Introduction

In 2010, the European Union issued a report entitled *Mapping Major Changes to Education and Training in 2025* (European Commission Joint Research Centre,

2010). One of the most important findings of the report was the central role that lifelong learning will come to play in the coming decades. A set of 12 thematic clusters (including technology in education, globalization of education, open education and resources, etc.) were described in the report, which summarized what experts considered will be the main changes to education and training over the next 10 to 20 years. The lifelong learning cluster was a connection point for all other clusters, suggesting that many of the projected changes to education generally are related to the likelihood that in the near to medium future, skills and competences will be acquired in a Lifelong learning continuum.

Although the above-mentioned report focused on the situation for education in Europe, the concept of promoting lifelong learning is not foreign to Thailand. Although the concept has a long presence within the Thai education community as embodied in efforts to promote adult literacy since 1932, provision for lifelong learning was first introduced formally as education policy in Thailand in the National Education Act of 1999 (Jariyavidyanont, 2002; Krissanapong, 2001; Lao, 2009). In 2001, Mahidol University hosted an ASAIHL-Thailand Conference on Lifelong Learning. Although the Office of the Higher Education Commission organized a conference in June 2012 entitled *Smart Innovations in Education and Lifelong Learning*, it can be noted that the practical realization of lifelong learning in Thailand remains more an ambitious goal than a practical reality (Lao, 2009).

Lifelong learning is prominently mentioned in the official Thailand Basic Education Core Curriculum of 2008. The terms “continuous lifelong self-development” and “lifelong learning” are mentioned throughout the official curriculum document. The development of lifelong learning capability in Thai students is stated as a key goal of the curriculum in the Vision section (Thailand Ministry of Education, 2008). Muongmee (2007, p. 8) highlighted the importance of the link between lifelong learning and self-regulation of learning in Thailand when she stated that “. . . lifelong learning takes, as one of its principal aims, equipping people with skills and competencies required to continue their own ‘self-education’ beyond the end of formal schooling. In this sense, self-directed learning is viewed simultaneously as a means and an end of lifelong education.”

Given the importance now placed upon the development of lifelong learning skills, inclusive of

¹ Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Education, Assumption University, Thailand
richardlynch@alumni.usc.edu