

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale

“Health is the right of all Thai citizens”. The development of health of all Thai citizens is the foundation of resource development because the country’s growth and development depends largely on the quality of the citizens. Therefore, the National Health Development Policy has been set the ultimate goals to reach for all Thai citizens. And the organization that is responsible mainly for the health of the people, particularly in the provincial regions, is the Ministry of Public Health. ⁽¹⁾

The Ministry of Public Health has tried to develop the standard and quality of all health service organization in every level in order to satisfy the people, especially the poor and the deprived, to none equal access to quality health services and with justice price. According to the Plan 9 of the Ministry of Public Health (2002-2006), one of major goals of the plan is to establish criteria, and standard assurance development of health facilities at all levels by centering on systems developed in Thailand, albeit international accredited, including enhancing efficient and tertiary care, including emergency medical service, complementing universal health insurance coverage. And the emphasis is also put on the development of primary care unit, which is considered

as the front line care, health promotion, disease prevention, rehabilitation, and primary care, to meet the needs of the people. ⁽²⁾

The policy regarding the establishment of universal health insurance has been already put into practice. According to the philosophy of universal health insurance all health service organizations of every level must re-think about their management process, health services provided, and re-design their models, working strategies, and health service system management, in order to reach the state of well-being with the limited resources. The emphasis has been put on the development of the “Nearly Home and Heart” service which is the primary care service with the aim to make this primary care unit the efficient one and to emphasize on promoting health rather than curing illness. This policy provided the opportunity for the large scale of developing primary care unit (PCU) all over the country. ⁽³⁾

The national Health Insurance System emphasized on “having” and “using” the primary care unit. This unit is responsible for providing a comprehensive service as related to medical care, health promotion, disease prevention and control, and rehabilitation, unless the patient’s condition is too severe to handle, the unit will refer the patient to other health service. The primary care unit has to coordinate with the primary care unit of the other health service level within its network, or between the government and the non-government organizations as well. In order to meet the principle of health service network system which aims to make the high quality services to fully cover all Thai citizens, all primary care units which used to be the parts of

every health service level need to identify their roles, procedures that will be beneficial for the service users and the system itself. ⁽⁴⁾

Nakhon Si Thammarat Province is one of the province that responded the national Policy on Health System Reform, which has started the program since the 1st of October, 2001. All together there are 250 health services under the Ministry of Public Health which composed of 65 main contractors and 185 sub-contractors. The primary care unit is the government health service at the sub district level which locates closely to the people and perceives various problem of the people. It is responsible for providing comprehensive health services, thus, it is very important for the people especially the poor and the large percentage of the population of the country who could not get the services from the government and non-government health organizations in the urban are as where higher capacity and higher quality of the services are available. Therefore, these primary care services for the people.

The key successful strategies to manage the primary care unit are the acceptance and cooperation from the primary care unit staff. They have to gain adequate toward their work including their work. These factors will help make the primary care unit reached the goal set. Therefore, the quality development of the primary care unit should be emphasized on this aspect.

Thus, the researcher is interested in studying the opinions regarding significance and quantity of health service providers at the primary care units in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province. It is expected that the results of this study will be beneficial for

improving health services at the primary care units in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province including developing the plan to improve the standard and efficiency of the primary care units.

Research Questions

Primary Research Question

How are the health services provided at the primary care units in the year 2002 ?

Secondary Research Questions

1. What are the general characteristics of the health service providers and the primary care units in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province in the year 2002?
2. What are the perceived significance and the actual practices of the health service providers regarding health service activities, in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province?
3. Did the different personal factor of the health service providers account for the difference of their opinions toward health service activities?
4. Did the general characteristics of the primary care units affect on the opinions of the health service activities?
5. What are the problems and obstacles in implementing health service activities of the health service provider at the primary care units?

Objectives

- **General objective**

To assess the health service activities of the health service providers of the primary care units in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province.

- **Specific objectives**

1. To study the general characteristics of the health services providers and of the primary care units in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province.
2. To study perceived significance and actual practices of health service activities among the health care providers in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province.
3. To compare the difference of the health service providers' opinions with the personal characteristics regarding gender, age, marital status, educational level, years of government services, position, classification, year of working at the primary care units, types of work, roles/responsibilities, and training program attended
4. To compare the difference of the health service providers' opinions with the general characteristics of the primary care units regarding type of the PCU, model, number of personal, and number of population responsible for.
5. To study the problems and obstacles in implementing health service activities of the health service providers at the primary care units in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province.

Conceptual Frameworks

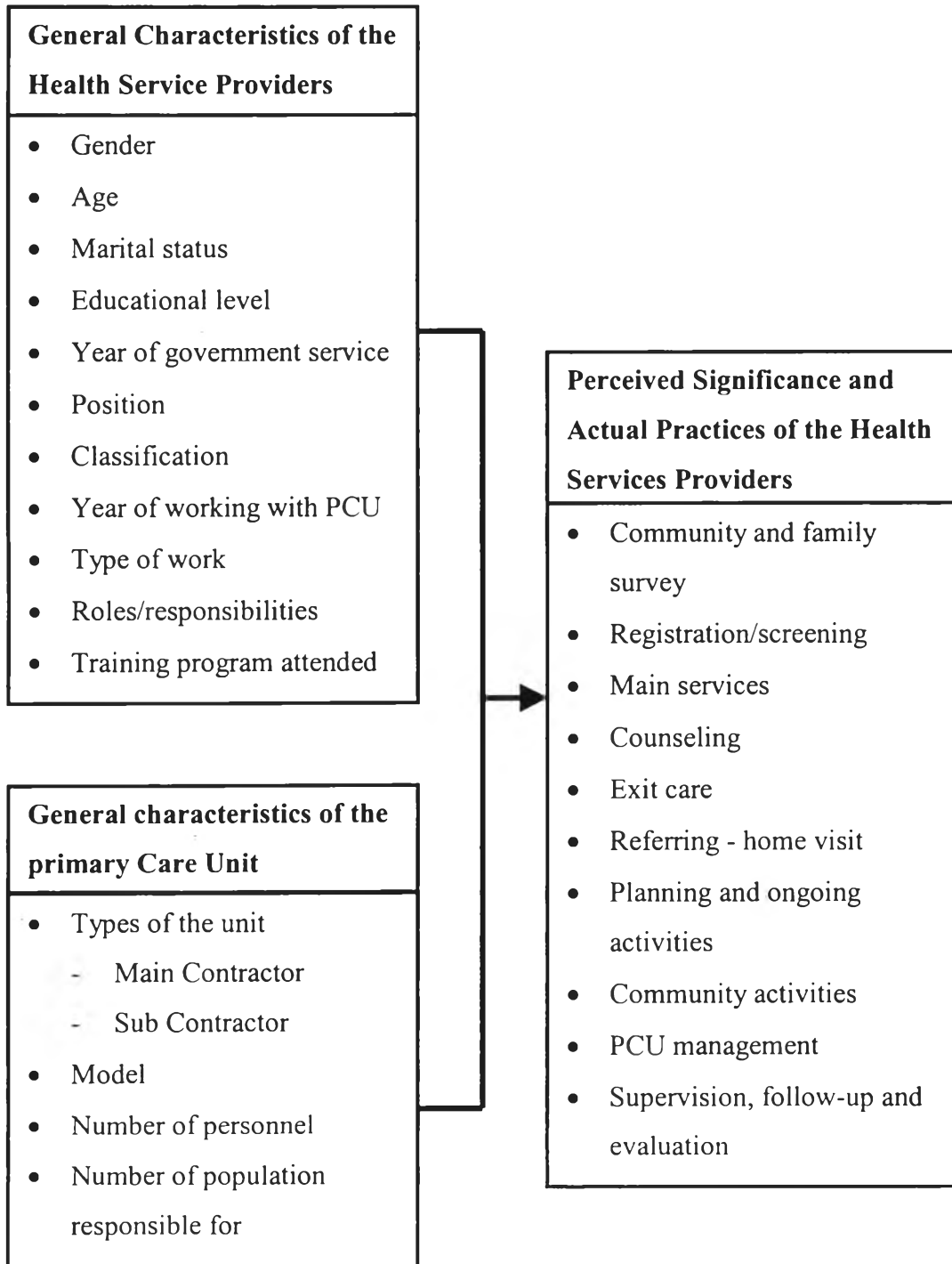


Figure 1 : Conceptual Frameworks

Assumptions

1. This study was concerned with the opinions of the health service providers working at the government primary care units only and the responses of the health service providers and the administrators were considered as the truths for the preliminary evaluation.
2. The 1-5 rating scale which is the ordinal scale, was considered as the equal interval of the opinion level. The same score of each individual subject is equal.
3. The weight of each health service activity is equal.

Limitation

This research is aimed at studying the opinions of the providers in the primary care units, especially the ones in the state sectors belonging to Nakhon Si Thammarat Public Health Office. The result of this research cannot be used as representative criteria of the overall providers working in the PCUs of the nationwide provincial Public Health Offices.

Ethical Considerations

There is a speculation that ethical problems may arise (according to the Act of Information). However, there is a way to prevent such problems. That is to say, the researcher has to ask Nakhon Si Thammarat Public Health Office for permission and cooperation in doing the questionnaires.

Operation Definition of the Terms

1. **Assessment:** Mean the data collection, the expression of opinions, feeling, or evaluation the quantity of the work performance and the perceived significance of health service activities performed of the health service providers working at the primary care unit.
2. **Opinion:** The level of opinions, feelings, on evaluation that were considered from experience of the health service providers working at the primary care units toward the health services provided as related to perceived significance and the actual practices.
3. **Health Service Providers:** The public health personal working at the government primary care units, composed of physicians, dentists or dental hygienists, pharmacologist or assistants, professional nurses, technician nurses, public health officers, public health administration officers, and community public health personnel.
4. **Primary Care Unit:** The organization that provides the front-line service for the convenience of the people to access to health services, which provides curative, health promoting, disease prevention, and basic rehabilitation, health promoting, disease prevention, and basic rehabilitation. The services provided for out-patients whereby this special service may be set separately within the existing building (or separated from) and the unit is equipped with human resources, materials, and organization system for providing primary care. For this study, the primary care units included the units in the general hospitals, community hospitals, health center/municipal

health centers/ Red-cross/ others, including the Sub-PCUs which are all health centers within Nakorn Si Thammarat Province

5. Health Service Activities: The important activities in accordance with 10 principal procedures of primary care service, as follow:

1. Community and Family survey	7 activities
2. Registration/screening	5 activities
3. Main services	6 activities
4. Counselling	5 activities
5. Exit Care	3 activities
6. Referring- home visit	4 activities
7. Planning and ongoing activities	4 activities
8. Community activities	14 activities
9. PCU management	14 activities
10. Supervision, follow-up and evaluation	3 activities

Expected Outcomes and Benefits

A Results of this study will be:

1. The data can be used for planning a program for developing and improving the work of health personnel in the primary care units in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province.
2. The data can be presented to the Universal Health Insurance Committee of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province to plan the program for supporting and developing the primary care units.