

The Core Competency of Personnel under the Ministry of Public Health:  
A Case Study of the Public Health Technical Officer  
in the Health Service Network 8

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**บทคัดย่อ**

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีความมุ่งหมายเพื่อศึกษาความคิดเห็นที่มีต่อสมรรถนะหลักของนักวิชาการสาธารณสุข เครือข่ายบริการที่ 8 สังกัดกระทรวงสาธารณสุข เพื่อเปรียบเทียบความคิดเห็นของนักวิชาการสาธารณสุข เครือข่ายบริการที่ 8 สังกัดกระทรวงสาธารณสุข ที่มีต่อสมรรถนะหลักที่แตกต่างกันในด้านเพศ อายุ ระดับการศึกษา ระดับตำแหน่งและประสบการณ์ในการปฏิบัติงาน และเพื่อศึกษาข้อเสนอแนะเกี่ยวกับสมรรถนะหลักของนักวิชาการสาธารณสุข เครือข่ายบริการที่ 8 สังกัดกระทรวงสาธารณสุข กลุ่มตัวอย่างได้แก่นักวิชาการสาธารณสุข เครือข่ายบริการที่ 8 สังกัดกระทรวงสาธารณสุข รวมทั้งสิ้น 334 คน ได้มาโดยการเปิดตาราง Krejcie และ Morgan ใช้วิธีการเลือกกลุ่มตัวอย่างโดยวิธีการสุ่มแบบบังเอิญ เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลเป็นแบบตัวเลือก แบบมาตราส่วนประมาณค่า และแบบสอบถามปลายเปิด โดยใช้โปรแกรมสำเร็จรูปในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล สถิติที่ใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลได้แก่ ร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ยส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน ความถี่ และการอภิปรายผลเชิงพรรณนาซึ่งผลการศึกษามีดังต่อไปนี้ ผลการศึกษาค้นคว้าเกี่ยวกับสมรรถนะหลักของนักวิชาการสาธารณสุข เครือข่ายบริการที่ 8

1. สังกัดกระทรวงสาธารณสุขพบว่าสมรรถนะหลักโดยรวมอยู่ในระดับมาก เมื่อพิจารณาเป็นรายด้าน พบว่าอยู่ในระดับมากทุกด้าน โดยเรียงลำดับค่าเฉลี่ยจากมากไปหาน้อย ได้แก่ ด้านการยึดมั่นในความถูกต้องชอบธรรมและจริยธรรม ด้านการทำงานเป็นทีม ด้านการบริการที่ดีด้านการส่งเสริมความเชี่ยวชาญในงานอาชีพและด้านการมุ่งผลสัมฤทธิ์

2. ผลการเปรียบเทียบ สมรรถนะหลักของนักวิชาการสาธารณสุข เครือข่ายบริการที่ 8 สังกัดกระทรวงสาธารณสุข พบว่านักวิชาการสาธารณสุขที่มีเพศต่างกัน มีความคิดเห็นเกี่ยวกับสมรรถนะหลักของนักวิชาการสาธารณสุข ไม่แตกต่างกัน ส่วนนักวิชาการสาธารณสุขที่มี อายุ ระดับการศึกษา ระดับตำแหน่ง และประสบการณ์ในการปฏิบัติงานต่างกัน มีความคิดเห็นเกี่ยวกับสมรรถนะหลักของนักวิชาการสาธารณสุข แตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .05

3. ผลการศึกษาข้อเสนอแนะเกี่ยวกับสมรรถนะหลักของนักวิชาการสาธารณสุข เครือข่ายบริการที่ 8 สังกัดกระทรวงสาธารณสุข พบว่าข้อเสนอแนะเกี่ยวกับสมรรถนะหลักของนักวิชาการสาธารณสุข ที่สำคัญด้านการมุ่งผลสัมฤทธิ์ ได้แก่ ควรจัดโครงการอบรมเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพให้แก่บุคลากรด้านการบริการที่ดี ได้แก่ ควรจัดให้มีการฝึกอบรมพัฒนาพฤติกรรมบริการให้ประทับใจ ด้านการส่งเสริมความเชี่ยวชาญในงานอาชีพ ได้แก่ ควรมีการติดตามวิทยากรสมัยใหม่อย่างต่อเนื่อง ด้านการยึดมั่นในความถูกต้องชอบธรรมและจริยธรรมได้แก่ ควรปฏิบัติงานด้วยความซื่อสัตย์สุจริตถูกต้องและให้ความเป็นธรรมแก่ผู้มารับบริการ และด้านการทำงานเป็นทีม ได้แก่ ควรจัดให้มีกิจกรรมร่วมกันในกลุ่มนักวิชาการสาธารณสุขเพื่อเสริมสร้างความสามัคคี

**คำสำคัญ :** สมรรถนะหลักกระทรวงสาธารณสุขนักวิชาการสาธารณสุข

**ABSTRACT**

This study purposively explored the public health officer's perception toward their core competencies at the Health Service Network 8 under the Ministry Public Health. The participants consisted of 334 public health officers who were different in gender, age, educational background, position, and work experience. The

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participants were selected by accidental sampling and the size estimation was based on the Krejcie & Morgan's Table. The data was collected from the rating-scale checklist and open-ended questionnaire and the data was analyzed by several statistical values: the percentage, mean, standard deviation, and frequency, that were finally discussed descriptively. The results were found as follows:

1. The total score of the public health officer's core competencies and the 5 high rated items of the core competencies were integrity, teamwork, service mind, expertise, and achievement motivation, respectively.

2. From a comparative study, the participants with different gender had similar perception toward their core competency; meanwhile, those with different age, educational background, position, and work experience differently perceived the core competency and the result was statistically significant (.05).

3. Regarding the core competency, the participants suggested that: in term of Achievement Motivation: training programs should be provided for personal performance improvement; Service Mind: training program on impressive service skills should be offered; Expertise: the public health officers should constantly keep up with the advanced information and communication technology; Integrity: the public health officers should treat the service users with sincerity, equality, accuracy, and transparency; and Teamwork: more activities should be provided to strengthen the unity amongst the public health officers.

**Keywords:** Core Competencies, Ministry of Public Health, Public Health Officers

## Introduction

The current trends of the information and communication technology, the political evolution, and the national competency enhancement for the competition on the world trading forum are altering the government service system so they need to be constantly changed with the trends. Particularly in the human resource section, it is inevitably challenging to encourage the staffs create more valuable works for an organization in order to efficiently survive in the rapid-growing environment while they can work happily (Office of the Civil Service Commission, 2004). In this regard, Office of the Civil Service Commission or OCSC is a responsible organization to create the government service laws and orders for the government officers and to monitor how they work. Lately, the ranking and payment system have shifted the focus to work achievement, cost-effective outcome, and corporate social responsibility. This is expected to be an effective mechanism for reorganizing the government service system and motivating the government officers to improve and ultimately activate their working competency to achieve the goal (Office of the Civil

Service Commission, 2010: 4). In addition, Ministry of Public Health is one of the subdivisions under the OCSC and caring for the people's good health by managing the universal health coverage system including health promotion, illness protection, health care service and health rehabilitation. Unfortunately, it is currently indicated lots of problems have been found in the Thailand's health care service system e.g. ineffective service, low quality service, equality for health service access, an excessive number of the service users. These problems definitely affirm that the health care resources have been obviously misused and did not match with the actual duty of the health care center (Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Health, 2012: 1). In response to the problems, Ministry of Public Health starts the health care network instead of expanding the service area of the hospitals. That is, 4 – 8 provinces will be formed as on network offering both primary and secondary services for approximately 5,000,000 people. Finally, 12 health care networks were formed. In particular, Network 8 including 7 provinces: Nakon Phannom Buengkan, Loei, Sakon

Nakhon, Nong Khai, Nongbualamphu, and Udonthani. This network provides 976 health care centers for an estimated number of 5,410,954 people (Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Health, 2012: 8). In term of an organization management, the success of either public sector or private sector relies on the leader with effective functionality and decision-making skill. Previously, the leader's decision was typically made on the resources or inputs called 4'Ms including *Man*: human resource; *Money*: budget; *Materials*: supply; and *Machine*: equipment and technology. In fact, the key factor on the leader's decision making is human resource since people is likely the heart of an organization that mostly leads to a successful management.

Competency is a key concept in the extent of human resource. The competency of the staff within an organization firstly became a highlight in 1970's when Prof. David C. McClelland in Harvard University was developing the test on an individual's attitude and characteristics that leads to a successful outcome (Subunn leamvijarn, 2005: 51 – 52). Later, a number of academicians and institutions worked on this competency basically mentioned based on McClelland's definition since he is a psychological specialist at Harvard University, United States, who initiatively marked a significance of the personnel's competency within an organization by entirely perceiving the individuals for their introvert and extrovert characteristics. He looked deeply into the hidden potential inside a person and defined "competency" or the characteristic hidden inside an individual person and it will motivate the individuals to effectively achieve their goal at a higher level or may go beyond the expected goal (Sukanya Rassametummachot, 2005: 4). Even though the definitions of competency may vary, the OCSC claims that after implementing the competency model in an organization, the human resource management became more effective. Accordingly, the OCSC decided to apply the model to manage the government officers around Thailand so they could develop their personal competency to

handle any changes inside and outside an organization (Office of Civil Service Commission, 2005: 1). For Thai government officers, they typically need 2 types of competency including 1) Core Competency that is necessary for all government officers; and 2) Functional Competency that may vary depending on specific careers or jobs. Indeed, core competency is the characteristic to be necessarily equipped with the government officers in all positions. Hence, core competency is specifically defined to construct the shared value and behavior amongst the government officers and it consists of 5 key concepts including Achievement Motivation, Service Mind, Expertise, Integrity, and Teamwork (Office of Civil Service Commission, 2010: 4). From that was mentioned above, the public health officers should be equipped with knowledge, skill, and competency in order to perform an effective work, so personal competency should be carefully explored and enhanced to suite the scope of work of the public health officers who needs to well-rounded and be able to keep up with the trends of information and communication technology, the academic advancement, illness evolution. They are also expected to promote a good hygiene, prevent, control, and heal any kinds of diseases, and properly managed a patient's rehabilitation. In this regard, the Health Service Network 8, under Ministry of Public Health, in charge of the upper Northeast is being faced with many problems e.g. ineffective service, low quality service, inequality in health care service access, an excessive number of patients, etc. These problems indicate the misuse of resource that does not suit the role of the health Office (Office of Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Health, 2012: 1). Another factor is that none of the previous study was conducted on the core competency of the public health officers, particularly in the Health Service Network 8. Consequently, the researcher was inspired to deeply study the core competency to find the guide to help the health care personnel to develop their competency so that they could effectively serve the people as mentioned in the organization's vision. To

do so, the public health officers should be ready to improve themselves for better performance and to keep up with the changes at the present time and future trends.

### Objectives of Study

1. To explore the participant's perception toward the core competencies of the public health officers in the Health Service Network 8 under Ministry of Public Health.

2. To compare personal perception amongst the public health officers toward their core competencies based on their gender, age, educational background, position, and work experience.

3. To gain useful suggestions on the public health officer's core competencies.

### Research Hypothesis

The public health officers in the Health Service Network 8 with difference profile including gender, age, educational background, position, and work experience may show different perception toward their core competencies.

### Research Conceptual Framework

To explore the core competencies of the public health officers in the Health Service Network 8, the 5 key competencies of the government officers were employed (Office of Civil Service Commission, 2010: 4) as listed below

1. Achievement Motivation
2. Service Mind
3. Expertise
4. Integrity
5. Teamwork

### Research Methodology

#### 1. Population and Sample Group

1.1 Population was 1,881 public health officers in the Health Service Network 8 from 7 locations including 1) 320 participants from Nakhon

Phanom Provincial Health Office; 2) 106 participants from Buengkan Provincial Health Office; 3) 263 participants from Loei Provincial Health Office; 4) 402 participants from Sakon Nakhon; 5) 236 participants from Nong Khai Provincial Health Office; 6) 156 participants from Nongbualamphu Provincial Health Office; and 7) 398 participants from Udonthani Provincial Health Office. (Government Inspection Area 8, 2014).

1.2 The sample group consisted of the Public Health Technical Officer in the Health Service Network 8 consisted of: 1) 57 officers from Nakhon Phanom Provincial Health Office; 2) 20 officers from Buengkan Provincial Health Office; 3) 47 officers from Loei Provincial Health Office; 4) 70 officers from Sakon Nakhon; 5) 42 officers from Nong Khai Provincial Health Office; 6) 29 officers from Nongbualamphu Provincial Health Office; and 7) 69 officers from Udonthani Provincial Health Office. It was totally 334 participants. The sample size estimation was calculated from the Krejcie and Morgan's table (Suchitra Boonyarattapan, 2000: 181-182; cited in Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). and the participants were selected by accidental sampling.

#### 2. Research Instruments

The research instrument was the questionnaire that had been designed following the research objectives and conceptual framework containing 3 parts as follows.

Part 1: The informant's personal information (Checklist) including gender, age, educational background, position, and work experience.

Part 2: Personal perception toward the five core competencies of the public health officers in the Health Service Network 8 with 5-point rating scale for 5 key concepts including Achievement Motivation, Service Mind, Expertise, Integrity, and Teamwork

Part 3: Suggestion on the core competencies of the public health officers in the Health Service Network 8. This part was an open-ended questionnaire with 5 items of question.

### 3. Data Collection

For the complete data, the data collection was planned as below.

3.1 The researcher asked for a letter of recommendation from the College of Political and Governance before it was sent to any of the concerned people.

3.2 The consent letter for data collection was sent to key informants in the Health Service Network 8 and later the data collection was performed taking a month. Finally, it was verified as a complete set of data.

3.3 The questionnaire was returned and the data was verified before the data was analyzed by the computer program to find any of related statistical values.

### 4. Data Analysis

The data from the returned questionnaire was analyzed as follows.

4.1 The data from the questionnaire was firstly verified to construct complete set of data and the data analysis was performed later.

4.2 Questionnaire Part 1: The informant's personal information was analyzed to find the frequency and percentage.

4.3 Questionnaire Part 2: the participant's core competency was analyzed to find the mean and standard deviation scores. The result was later interpreted.

4.4 The scores from the research hypothesis test were compared with the participant's attitude scores. The outcomes and the research hypothesis test were statistically analyzed with T-Test and F-Test (One-Way ANOVA), and with Scheffe's multiple comparison test.

4.5 Questionnaire Part 3: the participant's suggestion was analyzed by frequency.

### Conclusion

From the study result, it was indicated that all of 5 key concepts of the core competencies were

at a high level: Integrity, Teamwork, Service Mind, Expertise, and Achievement Motivation.

According to the comparison test, it indicated that the participant with different gender had similar perception toward their core competency; whereas, those with differences in age, educational background, position, and work experience, showed different perception toward the core competencies. The outcomes were statistically significant (.05).

Furthermore, the participant presented different suggestions for the five key concepts of their core competencies: Achievement Motivation: More training programs should be provided for the public health officer's performance improvement; Service Mind: Any of training programs should be offered to help the public health officers develop good manners and create the first impression for service users; Expertise: The public health officer should constantly keep themselves up with any kinds of modern technology; Integrity: The public health officer should perform their work with sincerity, transparency, accuracy, and morality to efficiently serve their customers; and Teamwork: Any of activities should be organized to improve a good relationship amongst the public health officers.

### Discussion

The study was purposively conducted on the participants with different profiles concerning the five key concepts of the public health officer's core competency including Achievement Motivation, Service Mind, Expertise, Integrity and Teamwork. The significant outcomes were discussed below.

1. In term of the core competencies, the participant's score was totally high and the first 3 highest mean scores could be ranked in descending order as follows: Integrity, Teamwork, and Service Mind. Remarkably, the lowest score was rated for Achievement Motivation but the total score was still high since the Health Service Network 8 was operated under a certain goal and all missions were performed successfully. Besides, the achievement can be clearly

evaluated corresponding to all of the key indicators. Consequently, the first priority of the success should rely on the public health officer's integrity, teamwork, and service mind. On the other hands, the public health officers who perform their works on these 3 key concepts should definitely produce the successful missions.

2. The comparative test indicated that the participants with different gender similarly rated high score for all of the five key concepts and had similar perception toward their core competencies. The outcomes were statistically significant (.05) and similar to a previous study by Jittisarn Wuttivet (2010: Abstract) on the core competency of the probation officers in the Department of Probation in the North-east and found that the participants with different gender had similar perception toward their core competency ( $p > .05$ ).

3. The participants with different age rated high score for the core competency and the five key concepts. To be exact, they showed different perception that was statistically significant (.05) toward Achievement Motivation. It was also showed that the participant at 31-35 and 36-40 years old were low motivated toward their achievement compared to the participants at the age of 45 years. This was supported by a study of Siriwan Khwannang (2007: Abstract) on the favorable competency for the success of the deputy district chiefs in Uttaradi province based on their colleague's perspective. Namely, she found that the participants with difference in gender, age, educational background, working experience, and position had different perspectives toward the subject's commence and the outcome was statistically significant (.05). In the same vein, this was similar to what Cham-nong Saiwongpanya (2007: Abstract) found in her study, on the guide to enhancing the government officer's competency in Nakhon Sawan Protected Area Regional Office 12, that the participant's core competency score was mostly high in which the highest score was rated for Integrity followed by Teamwork. Notably, the lowest score was given to Expertise. Another no-

table outcome was that those field-working officers gained the lowest score for their Achievement Motivation. However, these different perspectives might be the result from the fact that the public health officers were from different generations so that their knowledge, skill, and proficiency were different as well. Then, their perspectives varied.

4. The participants with different age rated high score for the core competency and the 5 key concepts. They also notably showed different perception that was statistically significant (.05) toward 3 key concepts including Achievement Motivation, Service Mind, and Expertise. It was noted that the participants with master degree had higher level of competency than those with bachelor degree so it was affirmed that with different educational background, the participants had different level of knowledge, skill, and expertise. Their perception varied too. To support the claim, Jittisarn Wuttivet (2010: Abstract) affirmed that her participants with different profile in the Department of Probation in the Northeast similarly had different perception toward their core competency and the outcome was statistically significant (.05).

5. The participants with different position gave high score for their core competency and the 5 key concepts, but their perception was notably different and statistically significant (.05) toward 2 key concepts including Achievement Motivation and Expertise. As a whole, the participants at Senior Professional Level/Expert Level showed higher level of competency compared to those at Practitioner Level/Experienced Level. In term of Achievement Motivation, the professional/expert officers had higher level of competency than the practitioner/experienced officers. Similar outcome was found for Expertise. Likewise, a study by Pisamai Puangkham (2008: Abstract) found a similar result. Therefore, to enhance the public health officer's performance to effectively achieve the missions, they should be well trained for: 1) Advanced knowledge and skill e.g. a training program for position-based proficiency improvement, organizing a meeting for idea sharing and learning

within an organization, offering a field trip to visit any of associate organizations with best practices, assigning a person with some challenging task or to take care of a mission supervised by a coaching team, planning and offering any curriculums to promote each of position-based proficiency, and organizing academic activities for the supportive officers; and 2) Working skill and experience enhancement e.g. organizing any of field trips or special program for knowledge management for the supportive officer's performance improvement for practical evaluation, encouraging the officers to constantly improve their proficiency, determining a working standard, revising the working standard and evaluation method, managing an effective working rotation amongst the staffs in an organization, and creating and revising a working handout for each of particular positions.

6. The comparative study indicated that the participants with different work experience had different perception toward their competency and the outcome was statistically significant (.05) for Achievement Motivation and Teamwork. By majority, the participants with over 15 years of work experience showed higher level of competency than those with 11-15 year and 1-5 years of work experience. In term of Achievement Motivation, the 15-year experienced officers show higher level of competency compared to other 2 groups. For Teamwork, the 15-year experienced officers show high level of competency than a group of 1-5 year experienced officers. This was corresponding to the study by Siriwan Khwannang (2007: Abstract) on the colleague's perspective toward the deputy district chiefs in Uttaradit province and discovered that the first 3 key concept of core competency consisted of Achievement Motivation, Service Mind, and Integrity, whereas the participants had different perspectives toward the subject's working period and responsibility. Additionally, the colleagues from inside and outside the organization strongly agreed Service Mind, Teamwork, and Expertise were the favorable competency that were firmly correlated to the success of the deputy district chiefs in Uttaradit province

## Suggestions

According to the discussion and conclusion, the useful suggestions for further study and development were as follows.

1. Suggestions for the use of the study outcome

1.1 Significantly, Achievement Motivation was rated with low score indicating that the public health officers still were inexperienced in setting the goal so it seemed more difficulty to create a better achievement. Hence, the results could be used to design any of training courses for improving the officer's working performance particularly based on the key indicator for work achievement and improving the working process with new innovations.

1.2 The participants agreed that Teamwork could be classified by their work experience. To be exact, the 15-year experienced officers had higher competency than those with 1-5 years of work experience. This result could be used as the guide to the development of the inexperienced public health officer's working performance and skill so that they could gain better teamwork skills.

1.3 Integrity is the highest core competency; therefore, there should be any training courses on implanting the public health officers with a good sense of service so they would do their work improving the quality of the officers with, sincerity, accuracy, and equality.

2. Suggestions for further study

More suggestions for further study were discussed follows.

2.1 This study was exclusively conducted on the public health officers in the Health Service Network 8 so there should be any further studies on other groups of people in order to perceive more feedbacks. These feedbacks could be a guide for working performance development in other working contexts

2.2 There should be a comparative study on the core competencies between the public health officers in the Health Service Network 8 and

the personnel in other organizations to gain an in-depth insight toward the issues.

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