

## THE RECREATION PROFESSIONAL IN THAILAND

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### ABSTRACT

*Thailand is preparing for One ASEAN One Community in 2015. There are many plans to provide professional standards for Recreational Professions. These are being rapidly discussed as 2015 draws near.*

*The standards of competencies for recreation societies and recreation professionals have become a focus. These are widely being discussed within the bounds of The Recreation National development plan 2007, the objective of this plan is to establish standards for recreation professionals, who promote that recreation be a part of everyday of life and educate the general public about this. The present status is now no recreational workers or professionals have been informed or taught to follow The Recreation National development plan 2007. This has led to misunderstanding in recreation philosophy and cooperation from both private sector and government sector. The aim of this study was to develop the standards of recreation profession (s) in Thailand with Delphi technique. It was a powerful tool for investigation the future trends by gathering expert ideas. These ideas will help establish professional standards for recreation, they will also define outcomes of what recreation professional can do and able to do.*

**Keywords:** Professional standard, recreation professionals, Delphi technique

### INTRODUCTION

The First National Recreation Development Plan was completed in 2011, while the Bureau of Recreation Development and Promotion reported that plan was unsuccessful especially in strategy for establishes recreation workers to be professional. The recreation professional became aware of academician in field because there are still missing the framework of recreation professional including in the national recreation plan, however they announced the second plan to continue that strategy (Public Hearing in the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Recreation Development Plans, 2011).

Standards today this is more important than before because globalization has connected the west with the east and trends are happening faster than before. Especially Thailand is preparing to be One Community in ASEAN 2015, moreover there is an increasing need in recreational services (Kraus, 1984), these are expanding rapidly because the demographics of today. People have more free time and unemployment rate rises (Employment Promotion Devision, 2010).

The professional standards in developed country is poor and not significant to the public, during the past two decades a considerable amount of research has focused on professional standards broadly but does not appear in the recreation field. The purpose of this study was to find out the professional standards for recreation worker in Thailand to achieve and succeed in their career path and be recognized in society.

## LITERATUREREVIEW

### Professional Standards

Professional standard have long been studied in sociology to investigate the regulations of duties (Morris, Crawford, Hodgson, Shepherd, & Thomas, 2006). Professional standard was a symbol of quality that should be recognised by public, when it is certified by association and accreditation with education (Wilson & Wilson, 2009). According to Flexner (2001) interpreted professionals must be intellectual and responsibility. Being professional was a traditional by being self-control, autonomy, stressed the roles, and self-regulation (Beelde, 2002) so, it's rated higher than others service occupations (Tsetsura, 2010) because it had special competency, esoteric body of knowledge, and valuable to social system. Moreover professional standards were the results of development in human resource system with training and certifying (Bartlett & McKinney, 2004). The purpose of standardization in professions is to define the scope of practice uniqueness, it's poised to set standards since they have the necessity to do.(Hammersley & Tynon, 1998). Therefore, professional standards were the rules and ethical principles for acting (Giddy, 2006).

Professionals always get respect because of their technique, expertise, knowledge and ethics, they work with highest responsibility (Raelin, 1987),that means, qualifications and skills. These are the important factors of any profession/professional(Sheldon, 1989). In addition to Evettes (2006) reported professionals were held in regards because their knowledge, training, and experience that eliminated risk assessment. However, the professional consists with impetus, and traits. Impetus is the pushing from policy or social, Trait is examining the characteristic needed from occupational to professional (Moss, Boon, Ballantyne, & Kachan, 2007).

Professionals is identifying in five specific attitude dimensions that is a characteristic of professional: professional autonomy, commitment to profession, professional personality, professional ethics, and believes in professional standards (Bartol, 1979). Not at all, Sheldon (1989) more expressed the characteristics of professionalization include: long training and education, code of ethics, organization, complex occupation, altruistic service, body of knowledge, people oriented, licensed, high prestige, competence tested, self-employed, and the last, high income. Furthermore Anderson and Stone (2005) reported for recreation professional in the big crowned city, the cultural competency is important for settles a variety of activities and to reduce the social conflict.

### Recreational Need for Professional Standards

The growth and need of recreation service has been accelerated (Kraus, 1984), there were shown from the tourism industrial expansion, the demand for Park, and the growth up of entertainment industrial revenue. Thailand also, there are many researches show a need for recreation in all of ages still continuing increase, but still missing of recreational professionals who are responsible in setting up, running and promoting recreation to participants (Deweena Neranoi, 2009; Phimpawee Neeparl, 2009; Rachan Wongtakrua, 2008; Witthaya Inpongpan, 2008). The increase in demand for recreation service will reflect to the need of professional (Pitts, 2012).

Recreation has a variety of activities in dairy life that participants choosing to do to improve their quality of life (Bereau of Recreation Development, 2008; Jarin Thaneerat, 1964; Sombat Karnjanakit, 2001). The recreation forms always change but still seeking personal satisfaction with pleasure and most importantly self-development, however to get the real benefits of

recreation they must get instruction of recreation professional (Jarín Thaneerat, 1964) who truly understanding in recreation philosophy.

Recreation careers in Thailand seem different from other countries because of the lack of standards in recruitment of workers and professionals. Thailand's various recreation industries varied in knowledge and degree of difficulty with no specific rules to recruits (Employment Promotion Division, 2010). The recreational workers have many tasks to do such as administration, planning, setting activity, consultant, and much more, but there are no rules for them to priorities and manage in their schedules. There are no indicators to evaluation their duty, the rules and normal guidelines for professional standards, which is usually construct by experts in each fields (Giddy, 2006).

**Table1. Recreation Career in Thailand, sources from Department of Employment**

<i>Position</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Qualification</i>
1. Spa Manager	planning, marketing, managing, financing, controlling	BS in management or related field
2. Amusement Officer	service	BS in any field or vocational education
3. Stadium Manager	planning, marketing, managing, financing, controlling	BS or higher in Physical Education / Sport Science or related field
4. Recreation Leadership	planning program, leading, monitoring, evaluate	BS in Physical Education / Recreation or related field
5. Instructor	setting program, setting facilities, training, evaluate	BS in Physical Education / Sport Science

### **Delphi Technique**

The Delphi technique was developed by the researchers of RAND Corporation in 1950 with the objective in purpose of military project and successful (Daud, Ismail, & Omar, 2010; Hsu & Sandford, 2007; Keeney, Hasson, & McKenna, 2001; Landeta, 2006; Underhill, 2004). Nowadays it is broadly use and recognize to forecasting future for the way of planning, policy, and strategy (Landeta, 2006; Tolley, Lumsdon, & Bickerstaff, 2001), it is valuable method to measure by gathering the opinion of experts in related field (Hsu & Sandford, 2007; Landeta, 2006; Tan et al., 2010). Delphi technique is the process require cautious plan, it's validity and reliable instrument to prediction and making decision based on systematic of panellist consensus universal used in science and technology (Cuhls, 2012) including in social sciences and being increasingly (Keeney, et al., 2001; Landeta, 2006) especially in recreation and tourism research also (Austin, Lee, & Getz, 2008).

The objective of Delphi technique is to develop a possible issue alternative, to explore the information base on consensus of experts group, and to collected judgements of a widely of plan, disciplines, policy, and development the alternative issue (Hsu & Sandford, 2007; Keeney, et al., 2001) it always efficiency to forecasting the specific issue and significant (Daud, et al., 2010) because it is an expert survey for two or more round to meet results (Cuhls, 2012).

Characteristic of Delphi technique is a method for collection expert's consensus by a systematic of questionnaires (Ruthne Kurth-Schai, Chumpol Poolpatarachewin, & Somwung Pitiyanuwat, 1998). Delphi was two type commonly use, first it's call classical Delphi and second is modified Delphi (Austin, et al., 2008). It's systematic procedure to

investigate the topics relate the future trends or create the new services (Cuhls, 2012). It designed to reduce the effect of noise cause without confrontation of panellist (Landeta, 2006). The Delphi does not use the random sample, researcher must consideration the experts as a specialist in their field for selection with specific criteria based on current knowledge and representative to ensure the validity (Keeney, et al., 2001). Therefore Daud et al, (2010) explained the credibility for validity and reliability of Delphi technique is the expert's selection process.

**METHODOLOGY**

To efficiency identified the standards of recreation professionals by Delphi technique, the qualitative and quantitative method were used, and to reduce the concern of validity and reliability so, researcher planned the procedure into six steps start from literature review and re-search (figure1)

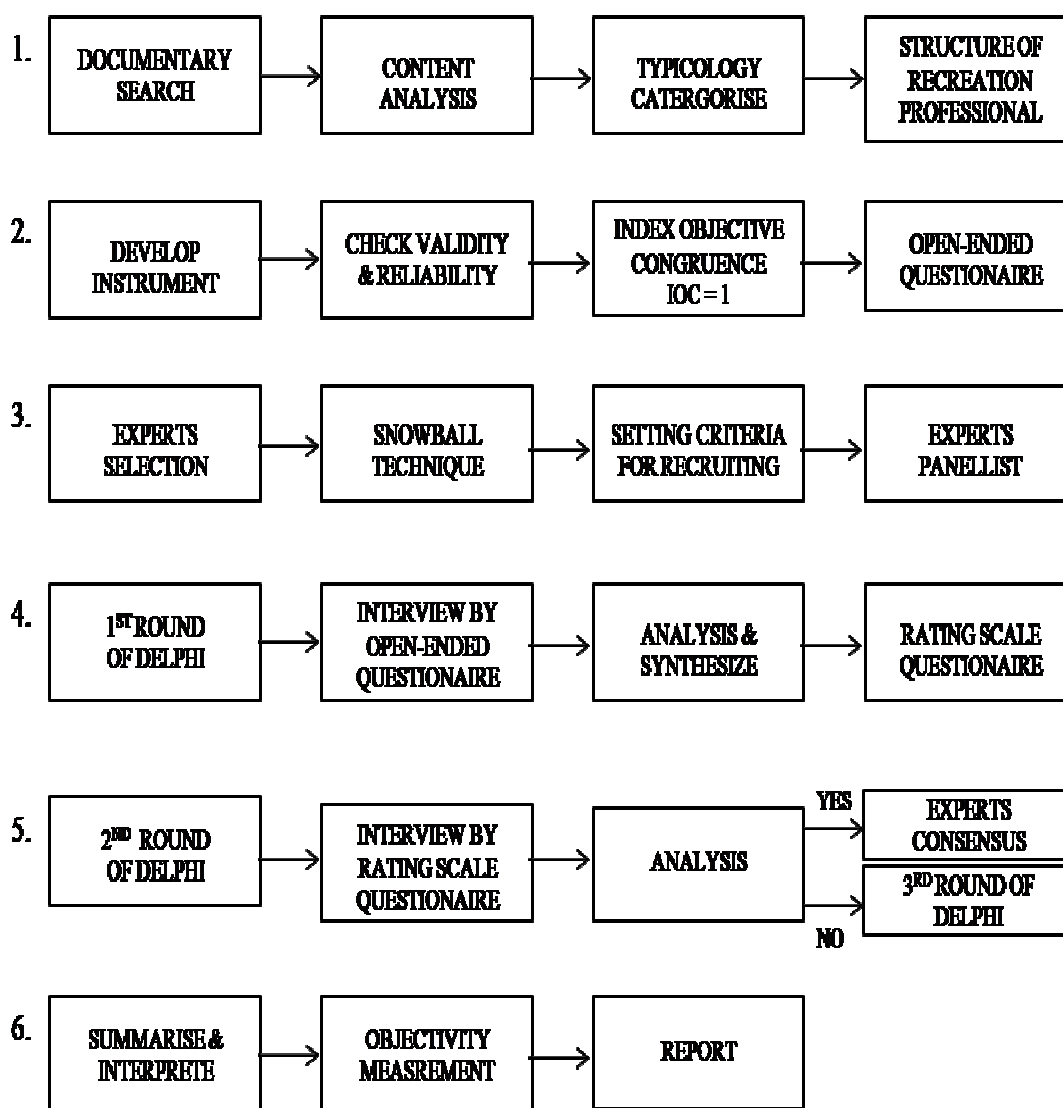


Figure 1. The research methodology

## **Instrument**

The classical Delphi must be start with the open-ended questionnaire and the rating scale questionnaire will develop next round. The first round of this study used an open-end questionnaire for asking the experts ten questions, gathering their free opinion. The second round and the next round used the five rating scale questionnaires with the question developed from the previous round.

## **Statistical**

This study analysed by both qualitative and quantitative statistical, for qualitative statistical researcher used content analysis to categories the group of keywords, and for quantitative researcher used statistical of dispersion with the mode, median, and Inter-quartile Range (IR) scores were calculated for each standard. The score was accepted as reach consensus was IR scoreless or equal 1.5, the difference between median and mode score was less than or equal 1.(Ruthne Kurth-Schai, et al., 1998)

## **Experts Panel**

The Delphi technique was designed to gather the opinion of experts with systematic of synthesize and analyse data, the experts selection was very important step in the process that reflect to the results. The panellist selection was not a random sample from public (Keeney, et al., 2001), the experts panellist must be considerable in breadth and depth, purposive sampling with intent in knowledge backgrounds, experience, and recognition were used to recruit the panel of experts to reduce the weak-point of validity and reliability in Delphi technique (Daud, et al., 2010; Ruthne Kurth-Schai, et al., 1998). They argued about the number of experts, how many would be credible. Hsu and Sandford (2007) stated the people who will qualify to be an expert in Delphi process must be the top management in the field, professional, and available to participants along the study.

Researcher used snowball technique to recruit the expert's panellist with at least three of four significant criteria as 1) Have more than 10 years' experience in recreation 2) Still working in recreation industry 3) Graduated master degree minimum or 4) Certified by an international recreation training course. That means the real experts in recreation sociology will be suggestion, the total of thirteen names were listed and twelve agreed to be participants. There was only one woman in list and at least 7 of experts she was on the committee of national recreation development plan since 2007. Moreover the panel of experts were from both private and government sectors, 46% of them certified by the doctoral degree and all of them have experience in recreational work with least ten years of experience and still working in this field.

## **RESULTS**

The finding showed that the gender, age, and education of panellists did not seem to be barriers for the study. The first round of consensus was the standards in recreation professionalization in Thailand must be in consistency with the fourteen indexes of knowledge, eleven indexes of skill, and nine indexes of characters. Furthermore the finding showed that the majorities of the recreation professional standards in Thailand reflected the national recreation plan as altruism, equality, and educated. However, the experts did not focus on indicator to rate each standard.

**Table 2. Standards of Recreation professional**

<i>Knowledges</i>	<i>Skills</i>	<i>Characters</i>
Bachelor Degree in Recreation	Advise	Creativity
Communication	Attended Conference Seminar	Democratic
Cultural	Communication	Ethics
Evaluation	Coordinator	Friendliness
Facility & Resource Management	Leading Activities	Good Personality
Financial	Making Decision	Honesty
Management	Manage Multiple Tasks	Leadership
Marketing	Monitoring	Moral
Policy and Politic	Promoter	Professional
Psychology	Public Relation	
Public Relation	Service	
Risk Management		
Scientific		
Technology		

## CONCLUSIONS

That one of standards, cultural competency is the core of Recreation Professional Standards, (Anderson & Stone, 2005) only some of experts mention it. Cultural competency is clarifying the difference of social status for Professional service especially when there are more than million migrants from various neighbouring counties living in Thailand.

The structure of professional standards in recreation in Thailand is close to the standards of educational. The findings suggested succeeding in standard development of recreation professional, we should strongly implement and establish an independent association for controlling recreation professionals and enforcing standards from related organizations or the state. These standards will help Thailand prepare to be part of the ASEAN community in 2015.

On the other hand the researcher found that the opinion of the experts is a requirement for construct of an autonomous association. Before implementing these standards to make recreational professional show their value and benefits to public. In summery we see the need for recreational professionals must work and cooperate with each other and work towards having a set of standards that all professionals in the recreational industry may follow.

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