

DEVELOPMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE COURSES IN THE FIELD OF RECREATION IN THAILAND

**Rachada Kruatiwa, Suchart Thawepornprathomkul, Thepprasit Gulthawatvichai,
Sombat Karnchanakit**

Faculty of Sports Science, Chulalongkorn University,
THAILAND.

ABSTRACT

This article aimed at proposing a study on the development of undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in Thailand such as background and evolution of curriculum in the field of recreation, curriculum arrangement, students' need, and its tendency specialized in the field of recreation in order to use it as the information to develop this field more successfully in the next future. The process of studying the development of undergraduate courses in this field comprised (1) studying the data related to the recreational management and development from the past decades, (2) investigating the current condition of undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in Thailand, (3) presenting the guidelines for the development of undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in Thailand. This study was conducted in a historical research together with a survey research. It was found that recreation has been added as one subject in the curriculum of Institute of Physical Education. In 2525 B.E. Department of Recreation, Faculty of Physical Education, Srinakarinwirot University, first opened the Bachelor of Science in recreation. Up to now, there have been five universities producing the undergraduate courses in the five fields of recreation in Thailand in relation to national Higher Education Development Plan, philosophy of higher education and educational standard of 2549 B.E. Therefore, the qualification standard of recreation for undergraduate courses should be created and the courses specialized in recreation should be run in accordance with Thailand Qualifications Framework (TQF) and philosophy of education. Furthermore, using the same educational standard of 2549 B.E. should be employed or adopted in a similar approach in the framework of procedure. In the way of developing curriculum, it should be acknowledged and approved by various universities, institutes, and colleges in either national or international levels. The curriculum should be integrated for a lifelong learning and emphasized on the sustainable development by participatory communities. In addition, building up international programs, promoting technology use, researching, and making innovation concerning recreation should be provided in order to make the professional staffs in the standardized universal level.

Keywords: Development, undergraduate courses in the field of recreation, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Global crisis, in all its complexity, has emerged over the past two decades as the major problem forced from human both directly and indirectly. The process of globalization is complicated and powerful. While it is difficult and perhaps dangerous to try to simplify, an overview of this phenomenon is a necessary starting point for more in-depth examination. Our society is changing rapidly and mostly full of problems such as confliction, corruption, poverty, etc. This caused mental suffering and physical suffering. Earning a living under pressure in the global world can have a direct effect on people's health, especially mental health. When facing unwanted problems, people mostly want to relax from such problems or stay away from those. If they cannot adjust themselves both mentally and physically to the

environment, stress and pressure will result in their daily lives (Santichai Chamchitchean, 2008). Therefore, human needs relaxing from job and assignments in order to enjoy and entertain themselves. Undoubtedly, recreation is a necessity for human to use recreational activities as an instrument of exercise for health, social contact, and earning a living (Sombat Karnchanakit, 2010).

Humans spend their time in activities of daily living, working, sleeping, social duties, and leisure, the latter time being free from prior commitments to physiological or social needs, a pre requisite of recreation. Leisure has increased with increasing longevity and, for many, with decreased hours spent for physical and economical survival, yet others argue that time pressure has increased for modern people, as they are committed to too many tasks. A little amount of recreation daily is the need of a busy life. While being a part of the rat race of today, when you struggle to stay in competition, it is also necessary to give some time to yourself and your loved ones. Recreational activities serve this purpose. In the present, there are a large number of organizations concerning recreation, examples of which are World Leisure Organization (WLO), National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC), National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). Such organizations or associations are world widely accepted and approved for whoever belongs to recreation field. The estimated goals of such organizations were to preserve environment, increase harmony in our society, make people enjoy and explore the special value for their lives.

Since then, Thailand by Thai government has also promoted and developed people's quality of life in both physical and mental aspects as it can be seen from the National Economic and Social Development Plan Vol. 10 (2550-2554 B.E.) and Vol.11 (2555-2559 B.E.), which is specified to make people live together happily. The real value of life is to spend free time from the routine properly by doing a mass recreation which depends on their preference and personal experience (Theprasit Kulthawatwichai, 2009). So, recreation is the very important thing and need for their livelihood (The Bureau of Recreation Promotion and Development, 2007). For that reason, Thai government assigned the Ministry of Sports and Tourism to follow the strategies towards tourism, sports, and recreation in order to go along in the same direction.

With special reference to the experience of the writer, who was the lecturer in recreation program, and the committee of managing curriculum specialized in recreation, it was clear about the status and obstacles towards the development of undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in Thailand. Lack of lecturers specialized in recreation was considered a main problem. This problem led to the quality of the students majoring in recreation. For this matter, the writer extremely desired to develop undergraduate courses in the field of recreation by studying and collecting the useful data or information about undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in Thailand as a tool to examine why the undergraduate courses in the field of recreation are unsuccessful, and to propose the guidelines for the development of undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in Thailand.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To study the data related to the recreational management and development from the past decades
2. To investigate the current condition of undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in Thailand

3. To present the guidelines for the development of undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in Thailand

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research intended to offer a study which contributes the development of undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in Thailand. To accomplish the purpose, the data were gathered from personnel concerning recreation, annual reports, periodicals, and related document of both private and public organizations in Thailand. This study was conducted in a historical research and a survey research. The documentary analysis and the questionnaire on the development of undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in Thailand were used as the tools of this research. The data from a survey were analyzed in terms of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Recreational Management and Development in Thailand

Recreation has concerned with Thai people and has passed from generations to generations in the form of Thai traditional singing, dancing, and playing children's game, but for the noblemen, civil servants, and the rich, mostly, it was introduced in the form of drama and acting. In the reign of King Rama the fifth, who realized the benefit of recreation, he was considered as a good example of spending his free time in recreation by writing essays and articles, creating literatures and poems, doing photography, doing drama, making handcraft, and so on. He not only promoted Thai martial arts but he was also athletic. The most outstanding achievement of this reign was the promotion of arts, culture, literature as seen from a large number of artworks handed down as part of the national heritage. This was a period when literature flourished leading this reign to become known well. In the year of 2455 B.E., King Rama the fifth introduced the students to educate Thai boxing and gymnastics, especially Thai students majoring in physical education. For this reason, it can be said that, the reign of King Rama the fifth was the original period of physical education in Thailand. Until now Department of Physical Education, having continued the mission given by King Rama the fifth, stated in National Recreation Development Plan clearly in order to promote recreation in Thailand for the benefit of Thai people and make their lives better. The duty of Department of Physical Education is to apply recreation as a tool to develop human quality to make people become good citizens and have virtue, and make Thai society peaceful.

From the aforesaid strategy, in order to obtain those obligations and missions, the staffs need positive thinking and understanding in recreational profession clearly because the duty of recreational staff is like a hub linking all organizations together such as public organizations, private organizations, local administrations, networks, communities, and latter on. The most challenging thing for recreational staff is to try to make people acknowledge, accept, and understand the value or the benefit of recreation. Encouraging them to use recreational service is the most challenging one, too. Cordes & Ibrahim (Cordes & Ibrahim, 1999) have given the examples of recreational fields, published in USA Magazine and AALR Magazine, as follows:

- a. Adventure
- b. Educational Recreation
- c. Commercial Recreation

- d. Local Recreation and Education
- e. Community Recreation
- f. Recreation in the conference
- g. Fitness Centre
- h. Recreation for Improvements
- i. Recreation and Culture
- j. Recreation for Industry
- k. Recreation for the Troops
- l. Professional Recreation Park
- m. The Student Organizations
- n. Tourism Recreation
- o. Recreational Therapy
- p. Voluntary Organizations
- q. Youth Centre

In Thailand, a majority of recreational leaders was the students from the Department of Physical Education because recreation was put in the curriculum. In 2525 B.E., Srinakarinwirot University decided to add recreation as the compulsory course in Department of Recreation, Faculty of Physical Education and Faculty of Science in order to produce only thirty students in recreation per year (Thanomwong Kitphet, 2008). This was not enough to satisfy the need of society as stated in National Recreation Development Plan Vol.1 (2550-2554 B.E.). In this Volume, it indicated that producing students in the field of recreation did not achieve all its goals; in other words, quality of personnel concerning recreation were not in the standardized universal level and the plan of producing students majoring in recreation should be taken in consideration from any universities (The Office of Sports and Recreation Development, 2010). Due to the said issue, some universities have arranged the curriculum to produce the students majoring in recreation in order to serve both public and private organizations; for example, recreational leaders in sub-districts, districts, national parks, health clubs, tourism offices, and factories in which, by laws, there must be a recreational regular staff in charge of creating recreational activities for factory staffs.

Current Condition of Undergraduate Courses in the Field Of Recreation in Thailand

The development of undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in Thailand has been processed slowly due to lack of real understanding and importance awareness in recreation (Suwimon Tangsajjapoj, 2010) which is very different from the United States of America, the recreation-originating country, in which recreation has been taken in consideration and developed gradually. For instance, Playground Association of America has arranged three short-term recreational training courses as the following (Sombat Karnchanakit, 2010):

- i. Normal Course in Play Curriculum, the course for personnel holding the directing position or directors due to the contents regarding the theory and the principle of recreation
- ii. Play for Grade School Teacher, the course for teachers in primary schools, who act as the recreational leaders

- iii. Institute Course in Play, the course for owners and managers of play ground, or organizations which arrange recreational activities or services

Then, recreational public and private organizations have been established and recreational services have been spread widely to every corner of the world. Playground Association of America changed its name to National Recreation Association which ran the one year course specialized in recreation at University of Minnesota, and then, it opened the undergraduate courses in the field of park and recreation in 1937. After that, University of Illinois first opened the graduate courses in recreation in 1939 (Suwimon TangSajjapoj, 2010). In 2000 there were 270 diploma programs, 320 undergraduate programs, graduate programs opened in over 100 universities and 31 doctoral programs nationwide in USA and Canada as the following majors:

- A. From undergraduate courses in recreation (Bachelor of Sciences Program), five majors can be chose:
 1. Outdoor Recreation and Resource Management
 2. Park and Recreation Management
 3. Recreational Sport Management
 4. Therapeutic Recreation
 5. Tourism Management
- B. From graduate courses (Master of Sciences Program) four majors can be chose;
 1. Recreation Administration
 2. Outdoor Recreation
 3. Recreation Sport Administration
 4. Therapeutic Recreation
- C. From doctoral courses (School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation) two majors can be chose;
 1. Director Recreation
 2. Leisure Behavior

In Thailand, the undergraduate courses in the field of recreation have been managed by Chulalongkorn University, Srinakarinwirot University, Ramkamhaeng University, Udtraradit Rajabhat University, seventeen campuses under Institute of Physical Education while the graduate courses in the field of recreation have been conducted by Chulalongkorn University, Srinakarinwirot University and Kasetsart University. The doctoral courses in the field of recreation have been produced by Chulalongkorn University and Srinakarinwirot University. Nowadays, the education in the field of recreation in Thailand is operated under the control of Office of Commission of Higher Education and its fields are divided into thirteen programs/ majors as the following:

- i. recreation,
- ii. recreational management,
- iii. park and recreation,
- iv. physical education and recreation,
- v. commercial recreation and tourism,

- vi. therapeutic recreation,
- vii. recreational administration,
- viii. recreational leader,
- ix. park, recreation and tourism,
- x. sports and recreation management,
- xi. recreation and tourism management,
- xii. recreational leader and management, and
- xiii. sports, recreation and tourism.

In conclusion, currently there are five universities producing the undergraduate courses in the five fields of recreation in the table below:

<i>Name of university</i>	<i>Faculty</i>	<i>Degree</i>	<i>Program</i>	<i>Major</i>
Chulalongkorn	Sports Science	B.S.	Sports Science	Recreation and Sport Management
Rajabhat Utdaradit	Science and Technology	B.S.	Sports Science	Sport Recreation for Business
Srinakarinwirot	Physical Education	B.S.	1. Recreational Leader 2. Recreational Management	
Ramkamhaeng	Education	B.A.		Recreational Leader and Management
Institute of Physical Education	Liberal Arts	B.A.	1. Recreational Leader 2. Commercial Recreation and Tourism	

In addition, according to the study, it can be seen that the fields of recreation in Thailand have been widely increased in both universities and institutes. The undergraduate courses in field of recreation were not run completely in accordance with Thailand Qualifications Framework (TQF) (Commission of Higher Education, 2009) and philosophy of education. Furthermore, using the same educational standard of 2549 B.E. were not employed or adopted in a similar approach in the framework of procedure. It can be said that Thailand by Thai government hardly promote and develop people's quality of life both physically and mentally as said in the National Economic and Social Development Plan Vol. 10 (2550-2554 B.E.). The objectives of producing students majoring in recreation were not consistent with the specified standard quality of producing the students in order to encourage them to have the best knowledge, to create and apply this field to the best of their knowledge, and to excel in recreation either theoretically or practically (The Bureau of Recreation Promotion and Development, 2007). Apart from that, the undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in Thailand must be designed to meet the same standard laid by Ministry of Education. Generally, according to Thailand education system, one academic year comprises two semesters. One semester must be not less than 15 weeks and 120 credits. The curriculum contains general subjects (not less than 30 credits), compulsory subjects (not less than 84 credits), major subjects (not less than 30 credits), and elective subjects (not less than 6 credits). In each program, there must be five lecturers, at least two of who must complete the master's degree or hold the position of assistant professor, majoring in that field or related fields. Curriculum evaluation must be done in every five years (The Office of the Secretary

General to the Council of Education, 2008). However, it was found that some universities, such as Institute of Physical Education, cannot fill the lecturers in the field of recreation to meet the qualifications given completely. As a result, development of lecturers in the field of recreation was not conducted as perfectly as it should be.

Moreover, the questionnaire on the opinions towards the curriculum appropriateness was constructed and distributed to personnel concerning recreation, divided into three sample groups consisting of Group 1: undergraduate producers comprising 96 curriculum committee, lecturers and staffs, Group 2: curriculum users comprising 242 fourth-year students taking undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in the academic year 2554 B.E., and Group 3: undergraduate users comprising 1,180 employers whom the undergraduates work for (96 from schools, 700 from public organizations, and 384 from private organizations). The findings revealed as the following:

1. The undergraduate producers and the curriculum users' opinions towards the curriculum appropriateness were found at a high level in terms of curriculum structure, curriculum contents, input factor, process factor, teaching and learning management, and measurement and evaluation. However, the undergraduate producers' opinion towards the curriculum outcome was found at a moderate level in terms of learning outcome standard, academic competency, and proficiency affecting the undergraduate users.
2. The undergraduate users' opinion towards the curriculum appropriateness was found at a high level in terms of undergraduates' qualification regarding learning outcome standard, moral and professional Code of ethics, knowledge, cognitive competency, interpersonal relationship and responsibility, and proficiency of arithmetic, communication and information & technology application.
3. It was suggested that the curriculum structure should be revised by any universities to achieve the standardization in the same direction. Also, it should be conducted in accordance with the professional standard and the national recreation development plan. Besides the standard and the national plan, recreation curriculum should be improved to satisfy the universal level, particularly a focus on the English language. The subjects regarding social adjustment, business and marketing should be, moreover, put in the curriculum along with the study tour and the intensive field experience. In relation to the input factor, a variety of teaching techniques and methodology together with recommendation on learning sources should be applied to class by the lecturers in any universities. Furthermore, educational personnel, up-to-date textbooks, modern and sufficient instructional media should be added in the university to satisfy the undergraduates' demand.

GUIDELINES & RECOMMENDATIONS

As we know that our social and economical condition in the global world is changing rapidly and competitively, earning a living and doing business require analytical thinking, wisdom, and specialized knowledge. The process of globalization is complicated and powerful. While being a part of the rat race of today, we have to struggle to stay in competition and prepare many things for the trade and the investment in ASEAN Economic Community. Every organization needs the intelligent ones either speaking foreign languages or being capable in using new high innovation or technology. Therefore, producing personnel concerning recreation should be organized in the same approaches, directions, and frameworks in order to support the country development and all its goals. Also, the development of undergraduate courses in the field of recreation should be based on the undergraduates' needs, the changing

condition in the global world and National Recreation Development Plan Vol.2 (2555-2559 B.E.) (Department of Physical Education, 2012) as the following guidelines:

The undergraduate courses in the field of recreation should be run in accordance with Thailand Qualifications Framework (TQF) and philosophy of education, and developed to meet the universal standard by creating the Qualification Standard of Recreation for the mutual recognition, using the frameworks as the guidelines for the policy implementation according to the act of national education, national educational standard, and tertiary standard, and improving teaching techniques, methodology, measurement and evaluation. In addition, the learning outcome standard at the minimum should be set up to ensure people and organizations in recreation and give the information for decision to the students who are interested in studying in the field of recreation, the organizations which require the students majoring in recreation, and the curriculum assessors.

1. The undergraduate courses in the field of recreation should be provided from micro to macro contents for promoting Thailand to become a more recreational society.
2. The undergraduate courses in the field of recreation should be integrated and emphasized on quality, modernity, self lifelong learning, and application in daily life.
3. The undergraduate courses in the field of recreation should be conducted in the form of community-based development. Educating recreational leaders, family members, teachers, and lecturers to have a better understanding of recreation, learn together from the recreational activities and be aware of using recreation activities in daily life is a way of developing community. Reducing social problems with gambling, drug addicted youth, etc. in community results from recreational activities between the undergraduates and the people in community.
4. The undergraduate courses in the field of recreation should be focused on professional personnel standardization to the universal level, both demand on recreation and supply on recreation to heighten the undergraduates' competency to meet the recreation criteria or Licensed Recreation; for example, leisure counseling, technology supporting, researching, and producing innovation.
5. The undergraduate courses in the field of recreation should be established in the multitudinous ways; for instance, setting up international programs for ASEAN Economic Community, linking with the trend of trades and investment, promoting liberalization of education, and opening the courses of foreign languages such as English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, etc.
6. The undergraduate courses in the field of recreation should be particularly organized for the people working in any organizations to standardize their proficiency. Short-term courses, weekend courses, and long-distance via internet courses are recommended. The contents of the course should be written in the multitudinous and interesting ways to satisfy their needs.
7. The undergraduate courses in the field of recreation should be created for a particular group, for example, the people with disabilities, the people with special needs, the elderly, and the retired people.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

From the aforementioned, it revealed the origin of recreation in undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in Thailand, the qualities and characteristics that the students should belong, the arrangement of undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in Thailand, a number of undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in Thailand, the ways to satisfy the

demands and trends of undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in Thailand. It is believed that the findings on the development of undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in Thailand will be beneficial as the compass to guide the people who may concern with and be interested in this field. This study can serve as guidance to every university, institute, college, and campus to develop the undergraduates to accomplish their purposes. Hopefully, the result of this study will be applied to produce the undergraduate courses in the field of recreation and enhance the Thai society. There can be no doubt that effective development of undergraduate courses in the field of recreation in Thailand will bring about the national sustainable development and the universal equality to any civilized country in ASEAN and the world.

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