

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSIONS

This study was a retrospective evaluative descriptive research. CIPP Model was used for the evaluation of strategic plan process of the Bureau of Non-Communicable Diseases. Study population consisted of all 45 officers employed by the Bureau. In-depth interview, self-reported form and questionnaire were constructed and validated prior to data collection, which took place from February 9 to 20, 2004.

The Director and four other mid-level managers (71.4%) participated in the in-depth interview and self-reporting. Among the other officers, 33 agreed to participate (86.8%). Data were analyzed by SPSS/PC⁺ program. Descriptive analysis statistics including percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to describe population characteristics, factors influencing strategic plan *per se*, the plan process and quality of strategic plan. Chi-square test was used to assess the association between strategic plan processes and plan quality.

5.1 Conclusions

Population Characteristics. Participants (n=33) were female officers (76.3%), aged between 41-50, married (55.3%) and graduating higher than bachelor degrees (44.7%). Most of them have been employed longer than 26 years but the average length of time working at NCD office was only 1.7 years. Most of them were involved in

technical aspect of the NCD prevention programs while some other tasks were also assigned when necessary.

Factors influencing strategic plan. Most of the officers (73.7%) had previous experience, averaged of up to 5 times, with regard to strategic plan formulation. Almost all (92.1%) had basic knowledge on strategic plan and process; sixty-four percent of them were trained during seminars or meetings.

Strategic plan processes. Among the 4 perspectives of CIPP model, participants viewed context (93.9%) and process (54.5%) as positive while input was judged as negative process (63.6%). However, the overall picture of the strategic plan process resulted positively (60.6%). Plan Quality. Most participants (65.8%) rated the quality of strategic plan as moderate.

Relationship between process and quality.

Process was significantly related to quality ($\chi^2 = 4.62$, $p = 0.03$)

5.2 Discussions

All NCD staffs were invited to participate in this study and each was asked to complete a questionnaire. However, due to their time schedules, the high and mid-level managers were, instead, interviewed. These different methods might jeopardize data analysis in the following way. Only data collected from technical and non-technical staffs were included in quantitative analysis based on questionnaire. Therefore, they were not as representative as data collected from the 3 groups of staffs using the same

method. However, we had attempted to link the 2 sets of data, quantitative and qualitative, and we found that they were highly correlated.

Among the 7 non-participants, 2 were mid-level managers who were not available at interview time while the other 5 were drivers and non-technical staffs. The latter group did not contribute significantly to the study results.

The results of this study had suggested critical and influential factors for strategic plan process of NCD Office as followed.

1. Factors influencing strategic plan process

Context

NCD Office staffs considered context factors as appropriate for strategic plan process (93.9%). Most staffs agreed that strategic plan must be related to national policy, public participation for NCD prevention and control. Moreover, the plan should incorporate mission, budgeting system and networking with external organizations. However, several items were rated as negative including customer complaints and duplication with other offices of the same nature. Duplication might have been caused by the increasing public concern about non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Several campaigns have emphasized risk modifications to prevent such diseases. Therefore, several organizations, whether health-related or not, have implemented prevention and control programs for NCDs.

Interestingly, the in-depth interview revealed that some managers did not perceive the association between external factors and strategic plan formulation. Some

staffs did not recognize external environment and were not assured that context or environmental factors could influence strategic plan process. This ignorance could harm organization because all managers, regardless of levels, could not lead organization towards expected results without clear understanding of the contexts and goals. More importantly, when mid-level managers failed to realize the importance of context and environmental factors, organization's mission and strategic plan could be biased (Tipawadi Mekasawan 2002). Moreover, some managers considered customer expectation as an indirect, in other word, not influencing factor while the majority agreed that customer expectation was an important factor when formulating strategic plan. Different backgrounds and management experiences might be a cause of this variability among the managers. Another significant factor could be management style of those managers. Due to their different characters, some managers tended to interpret situation differently. It could be said that professional development was the main determining factor for different individual character (Suthep Pongsriwat 2004). Managers must be trained and good leadership is required in order to implement RBM successfully. Therefore, managers having classical or so-called "traditional" management styles might neglect the influential external factors

Input

Most officers rated "input" items as negative (63.6%). The highly negative factors were staff shortage, corporate culture and conflict among staffs. With regard to staff shortage, the NCD Office was only recently established under the Structure Reform Plan of 2002 and most officers were transferred from previous offices on

voluntary basis. This transfer brought with it a situation of staff shortage. However, the Office has been recruiting additional staffs to relieve such shortage.

The NCD Office was similar to a large melting pot where staffs from different departments and backgrounds were mixed together. Therefore, staff conflict and different corporate culture were inevitable. Everybody needed to adjust to become acquainted with the new environment in order for the organization to thrive well. When staffs were recruited from several organizations where corporate cultures differed, conflicts among them were predictable. In addition, self-reliance and self-confidence could also strongly hinder adjustment. Character difference could affect staffs behavior leading to working environment and organization's success (Suthep Pongsriwat 2004).

Last but not least, the in-depth interview also revealed that organization resources; manpower, material and budget , were insufficient and unbalanced when compared to workload. Currently, staffs are working at different buildings, some of which are very distant and communication, of all means, has been difficult.

Process

Most officers agreed that process items were positive (54.5%). The influential processes included training on strategic plan process, responsibility assignment, staffs and customers' opinion hearing, monitoring and evaluation of progress and capacity building for staffs. The most negative factor was manpower allocation. The relatively large variety of content, complexity and involvement of several organizations rendered NCD prevention and control difficult. The newly established organization had to cope

with staff recruitment from existing organizations. Some tasks had inadequate number of staffs and re-allocation was needed based on workload. This shift of staffs also resulted in lack of knowledge and understanding of their new roles and responsibilities. There have been several mismatches. Quantitatively, there was staff shortage for most tasks given while, qualitatively, staff distribution has been unbalanced to the workload and some officers were considered “not fit for work”. One interesting explanation was that some staffs transferred themselves to the NCD Office so as to have stable positions but they had very limited skills. This resulted in work overload for the competent staffs.

However, managers appeared to disagree on process items. While some perceived plan process as good, systematic and clear, others viewed it as non-systematic and untargeted.

In terms of line of command within organization, the responsible officer was usually unconfident and could not make decision and, thus, causing delays. The managers themselves attended strategic plan meeting irregularly rendering the administrative process rather sporadic and important decisions could not be made in time.

2. Factors influencing quality of strategic plan

Overall, the strategic plan has been rated as having moderate quality (65.8%). The lower scored items included clarity, relationship, data availability and data accuracy. An explanation for these negative items was the lack of participatory situation analysis during the plan process. Another explanation, addressed frequently

during the in-depth interview, was the compilation, not combination of plans from different sections or divisions. With the lack of common agreement, the strategic plan could easily be unclear, unrelated and inaccurate.

3. Relationship between process and quality

The overall assessment revealed that there was no association between strategic plan process and quality of the plan. This negative finding might be explained by the fact that the staffs have gone through several plan processes, such as human resource training, both before and after the establishment of the NCD Office.

When analyzed separately, process factors, compared to the other 2 factors, appeared to statistically significantly related to quality. This could only be explained by the fact that most officers considered process factors as critical for the successful plan formulation. Those factors included meeting, participation in plan meeting, clear line of command, participation by co-workers, monitoring and evaluation and manpower allocation.

5.3 Suggestions from this Study

To obtain a clear and responsive strategic plan for non-communicable diseases, the plan should be national. Ministry of public Health i.e. the NCD Office should lead meetings among all parties involved.

Good leadership is highly critical for organization success. It would lead to appropriate problem solving and higher efficiency. It also enabled linkage to other governmental organizations.

Adaptive management of strategic plan should be considered and prepared so as to respond to changes appropriately.

Suggestions for subsequent study. This evaluation could be applied to assess plan process of other Department's Offices where common population characteristics occurred.

Due to its importance for strategic plan process, role of organization's leader should be studied or evaluated.