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**COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN  
HEALTH DEVELOPMENT IN THAILAND**

**A thesis presented in fulfillment of the requirement  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is a chronicle of research into the implementation of community participation in health development in Thailand. Community participation is recognised as the key concept of primary health care. Participation in this study has been conceptualised as power. Therefore, to participate is to achieve power, and participation is a process of empowerment. The research participants were health workers employed at the subdistrict health centre, and village health volunteers. These participant groups were chosen because the researcher perceived that they were groups with relatively little power in the Thai health service.

The research involved the participants in a two stage process. The first stage was an examination of the concept of participation in relation to the community's experience with development projects. During this stage it became apparent to the researcher that the original concept of community participation was poorly understood by both participant groups. The second stage involved the use of participatory research to achieve community empowerment by supporting the participants in an analysis-action-reflection process. Dialogue, with equal respect between the researcher and participants, was the key method to encourage analysis of their existing situation in order to raise their awareness, the most important step of empowerment. Simultaneously, action research was also utilised to solve a selected health problem, dengue fever control. A comparison between the results of the implementation of action research processes and that of the participatory research processes utilised in this study revealed that participatory research better ensured community participation in health development.

The findings provide an understanding of the theoretical concept of community participation in health development, and its enaction by the use of an empowerment process. The utilisation of a new primary health care approach, whereby the community is empowered to be self reliant and solve its own health problems, would depend on the acceptance and application of the empowerment approach by health workers. The empowerment approach would need to be pivotal in the work of all health personnel, including the implementation of policies and routine practice.

Specifically, the empowerment approach has much to offer community health nursing and its adoption would support the World Health Organisation's recommendation that a problem-solving, process-oriented and community-based curriculum is necessary to adequately prepare these practitioners. The adoption of this approach would require expansion of the present curriculum to include not only public health science and nursing science concepts, but also those related to community development. The new curriculum would uniquely equip nurses to work in communities and this in turn would provide specialised knowledge for community health nursing, allowing it to be differentiated from other nursing specialties.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

APHA	American Public Health Association
AR	Action research
BMN	Basic Minimum Needs
CIH	Community involvement in health development
CP	Community participation
CPHC	Comprehensive primary health care
CPHCC	Community primary health care centre
CPT	Communist Party of Thailand
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ILO	International Labour Office
MOPH	Ministry of Public Health
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board
NGO	Non-government organisation
PAHO	Pan America Health Organisation
PAR	Participatory action research
PR	Participatory research
PHC	Primary health care
SPHC	Selective primary health care
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
VHC	Village health communicators
VHV	Village health volunteers
WHO	World Health Organisation

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