CHAPTER V

Conclusion and Recommendations

“One cannot choose his or her birth, but one can choose to be a good person.”

“A diamond in the mire: Homes for Children build good persons”

– Thai saying

Introduction

Children play a very crucial role in the survival and the prosperity of Thai society. They are, in essence, the future of Thailand, and they will someday be in control of the fate of the nation. To take good care of children is to take good care of the nation’s future. There have been very few studies about institutionalized children in Thailand in recent times. Therefore, the researcher conducted this study, ‘Study of Rehabilitation of Children in Institutions in the Bangkok Metropolitan Region’. This research is dedicated to studying the condition of institutionalized children, how they are taken care of by the government and the process of their rehabilitation, with a view to suggesting improvements.

Objectives of the Research

• To look at the management of the four institutions in terms of standards of care, staff and rehabilitation

• To look at the plans for each youth and his/her aspiration after discharge

• To compare the process of rehabilitation in the Home for Girls (Home 1) with that in the Homes for Boys (Homes 2-4)

• To explore the current situation and the achievement of discharged youth

• To suggest strategies for the effective rehabilitation of institutionalized children in Thailand.

This is an explorative research using the mixed research method. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources that give a picture of the current situation of standards of care, rehabilitation staff and management, plans for youth and their aspirations after discharge.
In this study, ‘Rehabilitation’ refers to the measures implemented to equip children and youth physically, intellectually, emotionally, psychologically, and socially so that they learn to participate in activities and deal successfully with life outside the institutions and integrate into mainstream society through services provided by the institutions. The term, “Standards of care” refers to the standards on the promotion of welfare service provision for children according to the Child Protection Act 2003, which prescribes a set of regulations or criteria for stipulating the implementation nature of quality service provision for children in homes for children. This set of regulations will help the children to be well-developed in accordance with their age.

The primary sources used in this study included persons from the management, social workers and members of the rehabilitation team, youth aged 18-24 years residing in four homes for children in Bangkok Metropolitan Region, Thailand, and discharged youth who were accessible.

Data on the management of the four institutions in terms of standards of care were obtained from persons from the management, social workers and members of the rehabilitation team and secondary sources. Plans for each youth were obtained from social workers and the rehabilitation team. The differences between the process of rehabilitation in Home for Girls (Home 1) and Homes for Boys (Homes 2-4) and information about the youth’s aspirations after discharge were obtained from male and female youth in the age group, 18-24, residing in the four homes for children in the Bangkok Metropolitan Region. Data on the current situation and achievements of discharged youth were obtained from the discharged youth themselves. Information on the problems faced by the management in rehabilitation/aftercare of children, gaps in policy implementation and suggestions for effective rehabilitation of institutionalized children in Thailand was gathered from all the informants.

The researcher used four sets of interview schedules for data collection from the informants consisting of eight persons from management, twelve social workers and the rehabilitation team, all fifty-three male and female youth aged over eighteen residing in the four institutions and ten discharged youth who were accessible.

As for the data from secondary sources included in this study, the researcher used documents of the Department of Social Development and Welfare, agencies and institutions such as annual reports, academic journals, statistical reports, self-assessment reports of institutions, research studies, and case records. Additionally, the data from legal provision such as the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, the Child Protection Act 2003, the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, the Ministerial Regulations, and the standards of care in the Homes for Children, were also collected. Non-
participant observations related to the infrastructure and other facilities for youth in the 18-24 age group were also used.

It uses a mixed research method of qualitative and quantitative data collection. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The researcher used techniques and methods of data collection such as interviews and non-participant observations. The researcher employed the method of quantitative data collection for the profiles of respondents.

This research was exploratory and descriptive in nature. To analyze the data collected from the above mentioned core informants and also the key persons from the management, social workers and rehabilitation team for this study, the researcher applied a simple statistical method like averages and percentages as outlined in the SPSS programme (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 11.5).

Theoretical Base of the Research

Sigmund Freud’s theory of personality can help us understand how a person processes his or her response to the outside world. The three aspects of one’s personality as proposed by Freud include the id or the innate pleasure principle, the ego or the negotiator and the superego, or the moral principle that enables a person to distinguish between right and wrong and at the same time desire to do good things. According to Freud, the ego has to negotiate between the id and the superego. The ego has to balance between the desire to seek pleasure and the self-restraint imposed by the superego. Freud also notes that a person develops his or her defense mechanisms by ignoring or deflecting problems, blaming others, reasoning, refusing a reality, and transforming negative desires into something positive.

Freud’s theory of personality is extended further by Erik Erikson, who describes the eight stages that children go through. These stages address how children deal with issues of trust, autonomy, initiative, competency, identity, intimacy, desire to contribute and self-fulfillment. Through all these stages, an individual has to deal with negative feelings such as mistrust, shame, doubt, guilt, inferiority, confusion, isolation, indifference and despair. Being able to identify what children or youth are struggling with psychologically, social workers can assist them to negotiate between positive and negative impulses.

Jean Piaget’s theory of cognitive development also contributes to our understanding of children’s cognitive abilities at different ages. Piaget calls the first stage from birth to two years, the sensorimotor stage, when children develop their motor skills; the second stage,
from two to seven years, the preoperational stage, when children learn to use language and focus on themselves; the third stage, from seven to twelve years, the concrete operational stage, when children develop a sense of conservation and can thing in concrete terms; and the final stage, from twelve years to adulthood, the formal operational stage, when children are able to think in abstract and logical terms.

Lawrence Kohlberg offers the theory of moral development that explains how children learn to socialize. He divides the moral development into three levels: the preconventional level, when children are able to separate good from bad and right from wrong; the conventional level, when a person cares about what others think of him or her and wishes to be accepted by others; and the postconventional, autonomous, or principled level, when a person tries to define his or her own sense of morality beyond society’s set of moral principles.

John Bowlby contributes his theory of attachment to the field of child development. He addresses four stages when infants develop their sense of attachment to the figures close to them. At the third stage, lasting from six or seven months to one year, infants can distinguish a stranger from a mother-figure and begin to become attached to a mother-figure. During the final period, after one year of age, infants and their mother form a relationship. He also notes that the principal attachment-figure, or a child’s natural mother, can be replaced by others and that the environment plays a crucial role in children’s behavioral development.

Bowlby’s recognition of the nature-nurture relationship echoes Urie Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory of human development. Both Bowlby and Bronfenbrenner seem to agree that a child’s development is affected by those around him or her. Urie Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory of human development reinforces the theories of human development proposed by Freud, Piaget, Kohlberg, and Bowlby. He explains that a child’s development is not only the result of his or her genetic traits but also his or her environment that includes people surrounding the child such as his or her family, school, and peers. He identifies the relationship between the child and his or her influences. Moreover, Bronfenbrenner believes that a balance in the interaction between the children and all the surrounding influences results in the children’s being happy with themselves and those around them. Bronfenbrenner, in essence, reiterates the nature-nurture connection in theoretical terms.

**Profile of Informants in brief**

The staff consists of eight persons from the management, twelve social workers and members of the rehabilitation team. The study revealed that most of them had obtained
bachelor’s degrees. They have been working in the Homes in the current position for a long period. Around 50 per cent of them attended training on different programmes. The data on the management of the four institutions in terms of standards of care and plans for youth were obtained from this group of informants and secondary sources.

As for the fifty-three male and female youth residing in the four homes for children in the Bangkok Metropolitan Region, most of them are in the age group, eighteen to twenty years. They have been staying in the Homes for eleven to fifteen years because they are orphans, including those without a guardian and those who have been abandoned. They continue to stay in the Homes after the completion of eighteen years because they are pursuing further study. The researcher conducted interviews with the group of informants to get data on the differences in the process of rehabilitation in the Home for Girls (Home 1) and Homes for Boys (Homes 2-4) and the youth’s aspirations after discharge.

Another group of informants consists of ten discharged youth who were accessible for interviews. The oldest discharged youth was twenty-nine years old and the youngest, nineteen. The minimum education that the discharged youth had completed was the secondary school level, while the highest education level was the bachelor’s degree level. The researcher observed that most of them were admitted to different Homes due to abandonment and they stayed in the Homes for a long period. Unfortunately, the number of discharged youth from whom the researcher was able to obtain the data on achievements and the current situation was rather small.

Information on the problems faced by the management in rehabilitation/aftercare of children and gaps in policy implementation, as well as suggestions for effective rehabilitation of institutionalized children in Thailand were gathered from all the informants.

The Management of the Four Institutions in Terms of Standards of Care

The researcher found that the superintendents of all Homes used to occupy that position before moving to the current Homes. Therefore, they were highly experienced in managing the organizations to comply with the standards of care, which consisted of the Standard of Organization/management, the Standard of Personnel, the Standard of Environment, the Standard of Services and Activities for children, and the Standard of Child Development in order to help institutionalized children develop in accordance with their age. However, the researcher discovered some significant gaps and learnt about the additional measures or activities that all Homes created to enhance the existing components of each standard. The researcher wishes to make the following observations:
The Standard of Organization. According to the standard of organization/management, all members of the staff are required to be aware of a set of guidelines and policies for organizational operation. The study indicated that in all the Homes, most of the staff did not participate in developing the Home’s philosophy, vision, strategy and mission. Therefore, they did not realize the importance of the agency’s philosophy, vision, strategy and mission, which are in fact the guidelines to achieve the best interests of the child according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Regarding budget allocation, the study indicated that Home 2 and Home 4 got their annual budget allocated as requested. This was because the Homes had planned their annual budget request and implemented it according to the annual plan. Home 1 had never received the annual budget as requested because its capital budget was reduced. Home 3 had never received the budget as requested, especially the budget for constructing and renovating the buildings of the Home because the government allocated a limited budget which was different from the findings of the research study conducted by Plongaon (1999). Plongaon discovered that the budget allocated for preparation for children’s emotional, moral, physical, and intellectual development according to the plan was limited.

The government gave priority to child development in all aspects according to the child developmental theories of Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, Lawrence Kohlberg, Jean Piaget, John Bowlby, and Urie Bronfenbrenner. In addition to the Government grant, each Home also received additional funds from the Homes’ Foundations. The foundations raise the funds through donations. The foundation in each home contributes the items for which the annual budget cannot be allocated. Home 1 seems to be more active in generating its own resources because of its location in the city. For example, Home 1 received nearly 23,88,678 baht in 2013 while others received less than 2 million in the same year. While Home 1’s foundation was able to afford the construction of a new building, wages for additional staff on contract and expenses for children’s activities as requested, other Homes’ foundations had enough money to spend on children’s activities, educational material, medical bills for sick children without an ID card or golden card, scholarships for the children, staff attending a seminar or a workshop, wages for additional staff on contract, children’s birthday party.

The Standard of Personnel indicates the minimum qualification or each category of personnel. (This is a development after 2003). Many of the members of the staff at the caregiver level were employed a long time ago, when no such requirements for qualifications were specified by the government. In addition, when this group of staff retired, the Homes have not been able to recruit staff with proper qualifications as the salaries offered by the government are low. The government does not give enough
positions for managing the Homes. Therefore, the management recruits staff using the Foundation money to have enough manpower. However, these are temporary positions and such staff get a lower salary (almost half) as compared to the permanent staff. Very often, they do not get an annual increment and are therefore unhappy. As a result, the turnover among such staff seems to be high. It has a negative impact on the standard of care for the children. The Homes have requested the government for more permanent positions and hope to get the same.

In an attempt to give the staff moral support, the Homes initiated a monthly award offered to an outstanding staff, who had shown exemplary performance. The Homes renovated the staff’s housing to make it more livable. All the staff were required to work together and to fill in for each other when necessary, a practice which was in line with the findings of the research studies conducted by Charuwastra (1994) and Kantharak (1992). Charuwastra examined the roles of the multidisciplinary team working in Babies’ Homes under the Department of Public Welfare in the central region and found that while the staff practiced as a multidisciplinary team, they had to be aware of the roles and duties of others. Kantharak (1992), who studied the roles of caregivers in the institutions under the Child and Youth Welfare Division, the Department of Public Welfare, also found that the caregivers had to do other tasks apart from child care.

To improve the efficiency of the staff, the Homes conducted training courses every year to provide all housemothers/housefathers knowledge and skills in the fields of psychology, child development and childcare techniques. Each Home sent its staff to attend training courses according to each individual’s potential. The Homes also conducted a forum such as a coffeehouse forum and arranged a counseling room separately. Each Home also made a concrete implementation plan.

*The Standard of Environment* is related to environmental management suitable for service provision and personnel performance. The study indicated that a number of houses and buildings in Home 1 and Home 3 were built long time ago. Therefore, they were really old. The Home did not have a sufficient budget for renovation. These Homes proposed the budget for a new building and for expanding and repairing existing facilities, and also requested a subsidy from the private sector. As for Home 4, due to the age of the institution, the dining Hall had deteriorated. It did not have a convenient cooking area. There was no multipurpose area for activities arrangement; the lack of such an area is against the standards of care. It was inconvenient to conduct the activities in the dining hall. Because the Home is located in a lowland area, flooding occurs during the rainy season. The researcher found that there was no research on the environment of the institutions.
The researcher found that the Homes were unable to follow-up on all the cases of discharged children due to the changes in their contact details. The study indicated that in the case of youth discharged during the last three years, the researcher got a list of ninety-four discharged youth from all the Homes in this study. Unfortunately, there were only ten cases of discharged youth who were accessible. The Homes did not give enough priority to the discharged youth, who lost contact with the Homes. The lack of contact between the Homes and the discharged youth suggests that the Homes have not paid attention to Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development which notes that individuals entering adulthood, (from 18 to 30 years), have to deal with a sense of isolation. Discharged youth are young adults who need to form intimate, loving relationships with other people. Their success can lead to strong relationships, while failure can result in loneliness and isolation. Therefore, there should be follow-up to find out whether the discharged youth have adjusted well in society and to give them a sense of connection with those they used to be familiar with.

As for the Standard of Child Development, the researcher observed that there were three groups of children: a normal group of children, a group of children at-risk, and a special group of children. The study indicated that all Homes gave priority to child development according to the child developmental theories of Freud, Erikson, Piaget, Kohlberg, Bowlby and Bronfenbrenner. Many children admitted in Home1 were not showing signs of age appropriate growth and development at the time of admission. As Carter (2005), Mulheir and Browne (2007), and Smyke et al. (2002, 2010) have pointed out, the children had learning disabilities because their IQ level was lower than the standard due to lack of proper age related stimulation. The studies indicated that the children who were underdeveloped prior to their admission to such institutions often experience physical and mental development delays as a result of malnutrition, lack of stimulation and emotional comfort. They also have learning disabilities, poor health and poor immunity to diseases. Therefore, the Home encouraged the children to drink milk and eat eggs regularly in order to promote age-appropriate development. They have maintained proper records to monitor the progress.

Home 2 also assigned a staff member to be part of the multidisciplinary team responsible for child development. The staff member worked with a psychologist and a nurse to create a data record form that specifies the behaviour and situation required to have special supervision, for instance, stealing, reading and concentration deficit and sickness, to name a few. The Home also specified a follow-up period and allocated a staff member to chart and follow-up an individual child development plan. Home 3 made the extra effort to educate the staff about how to make a child development plan, a follow-up plan, and an assessment plan to monitor the progress of child development through meetings and training programmes. Home 4 lacked specialized staff such as a nurse and a nutritionist.
The staff seemed to be unaware of the importance of child development; therefore, there was no serious focus on child development and adjustment.

**Implementation of the Rehabilitation Process based on the Standards of Care**

In this regard, the study indicated that there are different staff members in the multidisciplinary team playing a vital role in proper implementation based on the standards of care and the Regulation of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security on Implementation of Reception Homes, Welfare Institutions, Welfare Protection Centers and Development and Rehabilitation Center B.E. 2547. The researcher observed that each member of the multidisciplinary team complies with a standard of services and activities for the children after admission, comprising social work services for a new case and an old case, health services, nutrition services education services, activity and recreation services, and child development/stimulation enhancement services.

The above mentioned services are conducted after admission and then as part of a daily routine, a child development plan, health care and attention to special needs are implemented by a social worker, a nursing officer, a psychologist, educational officer, the housemothers or housefathers and the rehabilitation team.

**Plan for Each Youth**

The study indicated that a plan for each youth is made by a multidisciplinary team consisting of social workers and the rehabilitation team. Different training programmes and regular meetings are conducted for the staff to give them more knowledge and opportunities to share ideas as they work in the best interests of the children.

The social workers and the rehabilitation team make a different plan for each youth with regard to educational support, assistance with job placement, life skills training and assistance with finding accommodation.

**Educational Support**

The study reveals that all Homes have developed good practices to ensure appropriate educational opportunities for children. Home 1 and Home 4 have an Education and Vocational Promotion Section, while Home 2 and Home 3 have a Social Work Section to guide the youth to study further. The social workers and the rehabilitation team of each Home conducted educational counselling for each youth for his/her higher education. All children with good performance were given an opportunity to choose their areas of study and educational institutions. The social workers of Homes 2 and 3 and the
educational officers of Home 1 and Home 4 invited each youth to discuss and air his/ her views about further education, from certificate level to bachelor’s degree. Many of them studied in educational institutions near the Homes. All Homes supported tuition fees, transport fare based on the distance, and an allowance for lunch. They also created an incentive to save - the children/youth had to save money from their lunch allowance to buy such educational material for assignments. Because food is necessary and crucial for the children’s physical and intellectual development, skipping a meal may have a negative impact on their cognitive development, learning function and academic performance. In this regard, it was not possible to compare between these Homes because youth from all the Homes faced the same difficulty.

Support for Seeking Employment

The researcher found that Home 1’s social workers were ahead of those from other Homes in helping the female youth find part-time jobs while studying, and full-time jobs before and after graduation. This was because the Home was located in the heart of Bangkok and it was well connected with various private agencies. The researcher discovered that there were no youth at other Homes doing a part-time job. In addition, all Homes conducted skill training and seminars to prepare the youth to search for jobs and face interviews. The Homes focused on the youth’s employment before leaving the Homes. According to Tumonsuthorn et al. (1991) most youth preferred to find a job themselves. However, the researcher found that the Homes emphasized on special services with regard to employment required by the youth and allowed them to live in the Homes to get enough money, to adjust themselves, and to learn how to manage their budget for a couple of months.

Life Skills Training

The researcher found that the children realized that they have to leave the Homes after eighteen years of age or on completion of their bachelor’s degree. The study indicated that Home 1 provided life skills training better than the other Homes did, because the youth prepared meals themselves while other Homes could not arrange for such training opportunities. The common life skills training provided in all Homes were as follows: The youth were told about the differences between living inside and outside the institutions, and taught self-discipline and accountability. The Department of Social Development and Social Welfare’s policy enhance the Homes’ efforts to create a family atmosphere in the Homes and to provide life skills training in household chores, independent living in the same house, saving, a sense of self-worth, a sense of responsibility, an ability to adapt, an ability to solve problems and an ability to analyze in order to reduce risks in their daily life. The children also learn to exchange ideas, express their opinions, exhibit their public-mindedness and creativity, create a loving and coopera-
tive atmosphere, stick to their own routines, and make their own budget. The findings mentioned are in line with what Tumonsuthorn et al. (1991) have to say with regard to the need of activities in the institution. The researcher discovered that the children required additional activities including improvement of exercise and sporting equipment, study tours, camping, music, Sunday lessons on Buddhism, vocational training, extra tuition fees, and home visits. The special services the children required prior to leaving the institution for the society outside were counseling, preparation, employment, a farewell party as well as a reunion party between the discharged children and the children residing in the institution.

**Help in Seeking Accommodation**

The researcher found that at all Homes’ arrangements for accommodation was the same because an accommodation arrangement was made on request. That many youth of all Homes were willing to look for accommodation themselves before leaving the institutions meant that they had enough self-confidence to help themselves. This spirit of self-worth and self-confidence is in keeping with Urie Bronfenbrenner’s biocological theory, which explains that a child’s development is not only a result of his or her genetic trait but also of his or her environment that includes people surrounding the child such as his or her family, school and peers. He also identifies the relationship between the child and his or her influences. Moreover, Bronfenbrenner believes that a balance in the interaction between the children and all the surrounding influences results in the children’s being happy with themselves and those around them.

**Youth’s Aspirations after Discharge**

The researcher discovered that the children in the Homes were aware that one day they would have to live on their own outside the Homes. They expressed their aspirations in different areas of life. Education seemed to be the most important issue because they all knew that they needed education to be able to get on in society. Some children wanted to study as much as they could. They wanted to get at least a bachelor’s degree; many wished to pursue graduate study, others wanted a master’s degree and some even wanted to study for a Ph.D. They had gleaned that their level of education could affect their future employment and their life in general. The more education they got, the better their opportunity of being offered a good job. To achieve their goals, they knew that they had to study hard. They also needed to seek employment in order to support themselves. This study indicated that these children between the ages of twelve and adulthood, are in what Jean Piaget’s theory of cognitive development calls the formal operational stage, where they are able to think in abstract and logical terms.
Ways in which Institutions can Support Youth for their Reintegration into Society

*Projects for the Social Reintegration of Youth.* The Homes run many projects to help youth reintegrate into society such as the Youth Leadership Programme, Bonding Day Project, the Home-coming Day, Family Cooking Project, evening sessions tutorials, A Small House in a Big House Project, Preparation of Youth Project, Warm Relationships in Family Project and A Children’s Council. The staff said that these projects produced positive outcomes.

*Activities Conducted for the Children’s Physical and Intellectual Development, Psychological and Emotional Development.* With regard to the children’s physical and intellectual development, the Homes conduct different kinds of activities to enhance children’s psychological and emotional development, such as music, games, exercises, sports, study tours, a self-defence programme (taekwondo), occupational training, arts, environment, teaching programmes on how to protect themselves from seduction and sexual abuse, health education, dental health, tutorial sessions, self-esteem development, leadership, a bonding programme, camping, and so on.

Moreover, to enhance children’s psychological and emotional development, the Homes conduct programmes to instil a sense of ethics, morality, self-discipline, public-mindedness, and generosity such as an ethics programme, volunteering at temples, a sermon and Dharma programme, meditation, charity services, programmes for religious holidays and for special days like Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Teachers’ Day and Children’s Day, and New Year’s Day. In addition, the Homes also organize other activities such as arts, drama, music, movies, sporting and problem-solving activities, movies, activities to raise awareness about global warming and other environmental issues to enhance the children’s psychological and emotional development. Youth in the age group, 18-24 are given opportunities to participate in different kinds of activities such as sports, study tours, music, handicrafts, Dharma, and charity services to instil a sense of sportsmanship and fair play and a sense of fellowship and programmes such as part-time work, vocational and occupational training.

With regard to activities for physical and intellectual development, the researcher observed that all Homes provided the same number of meals per day, similar menus, and types of food. The youth at Home 1 had more opportunity to prepare dinner on weekdays and three meals on weekends. There were more visitors coming to provide them good food because the Home is located in the heart of Bangkok. Unfortunately, the boys and youth in Homes 3 and 4 did not have an opportunity to prepare food themselves because of lack of facilities. The boys and youth in Home 2 had an opportunity to
prepare dinner supervised by their housemother on Fridays. Therefore, those living in Home 1 and Home 2 were trained in life skills. However, Home 1 has been conducting this activity for a longer period than Home 2. All Homes provide the five food groups for the children to stay healthy. As a result, the youth are physically and intellectually well-developed according to their age.

With regard to clothing/bedding and personal items, the female youth at Home 1 in this study are not given the donated clothes due to lack of appropriate sizes. They buy casual wear, underwear and brassieres to suit their individual needs. The children in Home 1 are not allowed to wear shorts. They are required to wear sweatpants to participate in activities conducted by groups of visitors because Home 1 considers the welfare and safety of the children. Most youth in Homes 2-4 are satisfied with what they have been provided with, even though some of them also buy casual wear. They are satisfied with the bedding and personal items provided.

Regarding medical care and health, the findings reveal that most youth in all Homes are in good health. All Homes, unfortunately, do not have regular health care professionals on duty. However, there are members of the staff who are trained in first aid, and in serious cases, the child/youth will be transferred to a nearby hospital. Many youth in all the Homes can consult doctors at a hospital. This situation seems to suggest that the Homes do not want to spend money on employing permanent health care professionals. However, the Homes promote sporting activities which enhance the children’s physical development. More, the children living in the same housing unit can learn to interact and get along with each other as well as to develop life skills to prepare themselves for living outside the Homes after discharge.

To enhance the children’s intellectual development, the Homes give all the children educational opportunities. Up to Grade 6, the children in Home 1 attend school inside the Home, while those in other Homes have to go to local schools. After Grade 6, the children in all Homes go to schools, colleges and universities outside the Homes. In addition, the children participate in supplementary intellectually stimulating activities.

To prepare the children for real world experience, the Homes arrange a training programme on a job search and a job interview. They also are ready to help find part-time or full-time jobs when the children request them to do so.

Regarding psychological and emotional development, the Homes try to provide a family environment by assigning staff members, who act as housemothers and housefathers and by creating family-oriented activities for the children. The housemothers and housefathers offer an emotional refuge for the children. The children can seek com-
fort and advice when they have problems. The Homes also encourage older children to take care of the younger ones. Unfortunately, the children do not seek advice from the Homes’ social workers or psychologists as they feel intimidated by these professionals.

In addition, activities for social development are also conducted in all the Homes. The children in all Homes are given opportunities to join activities - both indoor and outdoor recreation facilities are available in the Homes such as television, games, library, volleyball, soccer, basketball and table tennis. They can see movies with friends. All the Homes offer their children opportunities to participate in debates, variety shows on stage and musical and game shows. The spirit of teamwork is infused in the children when they participate in sports and the Children’s Council’s activities.

The children in all the Homes learn how to take care of their daily household chores, how to persevere, how to be able to survive on their own, and how to be well-mannered and generous. The children are also taught life skills such as cooking, shopping, saving money, taking care of younger children, looking for a job, avoiding drugs, meditating, attending a talk on ethics and morality, and self-defence. They also feel that these programmes and activities can help improve their life outside the Home and help rehabilitate them as contributing members of society.

**Problems faced by the Management in the Rehabilitation/After Care of Youth**

- **Problems of Policy**

  According to the staff, there are policies that have not been implemented successfully in the best interests of the children. The department’s policy to allow in-house cooking for the children does not work well because the residences and the kitchen are far apart and the children are small. Besides, for twenty-five children, there is only one housemother. As a result of the small budget, conducting a follow-up of the children’s families upcountry cannot be done; however, the staff have requested assistance from the local authority with regard to follow-up and evaluation of the children’s families. The local authority will send the results to the department for further processing. There is no annual planning with regard to preparing the children to reintegrate into their families and society. Moreover, there is no annual budget allocated to the Social Work Section to help the children return to their families.

  Not all the policies can be implemented fully. For example, according to the policy on the education of children, all the children are to study until Grade 12, but some children cannot complete even Grade 9. Also, according to the Child Protection Act, the children cannot be subject to corporal punishment; as a result, some children who
may have behavioral problems cannot be disciplined. Above all, there is not enough manpower to take care of the children.

- **Problems of Management**

  Because there is a shortage of personnel in each Home, the daily operation, activities, and programmes cannot be carried out continuously and properly. For example, there is no child development expert who is available. Unfortunately, because of insufficient personnel, a systematic plan to take care of the children cannot be established.

- **Problems of Performance**

  The staff members have identified quite a few problematic areas of performance. Older children who stay in dormitories outside because of the location of their schools do not have a chance to talk to the staff because they rarely come to their Home. Returning a child to his or her family is also a problem because the child’s family is usually not ready to take care of him or her. Implementing a follow-up is difficult because of the change of address. Many of the children have no records; some are non-citizens, some are abused, some are orphans. As a result, the staff cannot easily accommodate all their needs. Some of the children have behavioral problems and do not know how to deal with difficult situations. Because of the shortage of staff, many children do always get the care and attention that they need. The teenagers usually need special attention from the staff members as they try to negotiate between wanting to be independent and not yet being ready to deal with life outside their Home. After their discharge, it is very difficult to keep track of them because they change jobs and telephone numbers without informing the staff.

  The children who have developmental problems are sent to Pra Dabot and Houses for the Mentally Challenged and later they go to the Centre for the Disabled for occupational training. Even after training, it is very difficult to find them jobs. Some personnel lack motivation or get discouraged when having to deal with the children’s various problems. The members of the staff have to work with the children to prepare them to reintegrate into society. They have to prepare the children to deal with their freedom outside the Home, to be independent and self-reliant. The staff feel that there is not enough time to do all the work they need to do for the children. The number of staff members is not proportional to the number of children; as a result, the children do not receive adequate attention with regard to their education and personal hygiene.
Gaps in Implementation of Policy in the Context of Rehabilitation of Institutionalized Children

Since the age gap between the staff members and the children is narrow, the children may not want to take the advice of the staff seriously. There is also a gap in the care of the children who are mentally challenged when they are young and in their rehabilitation when they are older. For example, after they have finished their occupational training programme, they do not know where to find a job. Some of the policies, though good, cannot be implemented effectively. The difficulty levels of the process of preparation of the children to reintegrate into society depend on individual cases; consequently, there is a gap in the implementation process. Even though each Home has a rehabilitation programme for those children who are ready to reintegrate into society, some children are still not able to live on their own outside the Home because they are so used to life inside the Home. The staff must try to work with them inside the Home until they feel confident enough to live on their own outside the Home. The gap between the attitude of the executive members of the administration and that of the implementation staff members is wide, and that gap affects the service provision for the children who need help. Sometimes, the members of the staff admit that there is a misunderstanding of the broad policy given by the executive administrators. Social work institutions are not given priority.

The staff feel that the management system needs to be equipped with an efficient information system and that they should be able to use the English language proficiently so that they can communicate with social work staff members in other ASEAN countries.

The Current Situation and the Achievements of Discharged Youth

Most discharged youth are able to survive on their own. Owing to their experiences in the Homes and the training provided by the Homes, the children have a positive attitude towards life and their future. Most of them are very grateful for the provision of welfare services offered by the Homes. Without such services, their lives would have turned out negatively or even tragically. They apply what they have learned from the Homes to their current situation. Some can be upheld as examples of success. This finding is in line with Urie Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory of human development, which identifies the relationship between the child and his or her influences. Bronfenbrenner believes that a balance in the interaction between the children and all the surrounding influences results in the children’s being happy with themselves and those around them.
Despite many interventions and policies and programmes being in place for the betterment of institutionalized children, it cannot be denied that institutionalization does impact children’s cognitive, emotional, physical, moral, and social behavioral development.

**Recommendations**

The researcher suggests the following recommendations for the effective rehabilitation of institutionalized children in Thailand:

**Policy Recommendations**

1. To develop a satisfactory service model, an agency executive needs to set up a vision, a mission, a policy, and an overall strategy as well as a strategic service plan. Officials at all levels have to learn and understand the art of service. The following activities need to be carried out: a study, an analysis, a design of a management system relevant to the policy on service, a regular reversed data auditing, a project on social service, consciousness building, staff training for service ability development, seminars, continuous skills training, upgrading the infrastructure and the standard of service, providing new facilities and equipment, and using the latest technology for service provision. However, the service control and capital reduction need to be properly adjusted in accordance with the agency status. In addition, the agency’s service culture needs to be cultivated and promoted. The working group development is set up for service development as a one-stop service. The improvement within the agency needs to be made regularly so that the services provided are effective, efficient, good and compliant with the standard. The maximum benefit of the agency’s services is seen in the fact that the children are well developed. Therefore, all the services must be of good quality and meet all the standards established by the Department of Social Development and Welfare.

2. Before discharging the children from the Homes, those with no family members should be offered a long-term loan for acquiring accommodation so that they can start a new life in society. They should be assisted in looking out for accommodation a few months before official discharge. A certain amount of mentoring by the staff will ease their transition into mainstream society. Besides, they can be put in touch with a social network that can be of help. For the initial period of three to six months after discharge, inviting them on weekends to the Home will give them a sense of security and emotional com-
fort. They will not feel emotionally, psychologically and physically isolated and helpless and will have time to build up their self-confidence. During the period they are allowed to stay in the Homes, they can save their income from working.

3. An office for discharged youth’s affairs or a helpline for discharged youth should be established. This office will oversee matters relating to discharged youth. It can offer them assistance and do a periodic follow-up visit to keep updated records of their progress. The office can serve as an anchor for them so that they do not feel emotionally/psychologically and physically isolated and helpless. The Homes should organize regular meetings of the discharged youth in order to keep in touch with them and they can also share their experiences with those who are ready for discharge.

4. As revealed by various studies, institutions suffer from shortcomings because of shortage of staff (personnel shortage) and poor quality of staff (unresponsive, insensitive, and even abusive). The Government should provide enough funds to appoint staff on a regular basis so as to avoid the appointment of contractual staff. Even when the Home appoints some contractual staff, the Government should regulate their salaries and they should be paid on par with the regular employees.

5. In order to have better trained social work staff, the Homes should offer frequent training programmes and seminars on different aspects of social work. This will remind social work staff of their crucial role in helping institutionalized children. In addition, the Homes should receive sufficient budget allocation.

6. A large number of youth said that they had been facing a financial problem about buying material for producing reports, assignments or portfolios. They skipped lunch in order to save their lunch allowance for the mentioned items. Therefore, the government should take this matter into consideration in the best interests of the children. The Homes can raise funds to get these things in sufficient quantity and understand the requirements from the school authorities in advance and provide such supplies to the children.

Implementing Research Findings

1. Institutionalized children have to deal with many challenges in life—abandonment, impoverished family, accused parents, sexual harassment, improper care and broken homes. They come from different backgrounds and circumstances. The staff should always be sensitive to their feelings and needs
by reflecting on the theories and principles of social work and put them into practice. Very often the staff members who are knowledgeable about social work theories and principles forget to apply what they know when dealing with institutionalized children. Social work staff should be kind, sensitive, sincere, positive, public-minded, selfless and willing to help. These qualities are essential because social work staff have to work with vulnerable and fragile children who need the warmth and affection that they miss out on in their lives. The staff members are actually the children’s surrogate family members.

2. The rehabilitation programme should emphasize sports, endurance training, self-discipline, honesty, and observation of rules and regulations. The staff should try to understand the children before blaming them without knowing what has actually happened. The housemothers should not put pressure on the children.

3. The children should be taught language skills that they can use while living outside the Home. The children should be given a strong educational foundation, and they should get at least a bachelor’s degree before leaving the Home. They should be taught the values of education, money, honesty, and hard work. The children should return to live with their families during a term break to reinforce a good relationship with their families.

4. It is understandable that many institutionalized children who are about to be discharged feel vulnerable and insecure about their life outside the institution, having led a rather sheltered life under the supervision and care of the institution’s staff. Before starting a job, they feel unequipped financially and emotionally. The institution has been their home for many years. They know their routine and the people whom they can approach for help and advice. They are also provided with necessary personal items and food. When they are on their own outside the institution, they have to depend on the skills and experiences that they have. At the outset, they are worried about how to pay rent and how to set up their household. Therefore, some of them ask for a starting fund and for an extension of their stay at the institution after their official discharge. While they are living at the institution, they can gradually prepare themselves emotionally and mentally for the adventures outside the institution.

5. Social workers have a lot to give the underprivileged and the vulnerable sections of society. They are knowledgeable about human development and social problems and are trained to help solve these problems. Social workers do so much to make a difference in the lives of many children. Society should
laud their efforts. They should be given the recognition and monetary compensation they rightly deserve. Social work programmes and services should be part of the national agenda and should receive adequate budgetary support from the government. Therefore, the Department of Social Development and Welfare should periodically organize training programmes on new information about rehabilitation so that the staff working in Homes can update their knowledge and apply it to their practice.

6. According to the researcher’s observation, Home 4 is located in a large area and there is a lot of space left to use for the children to learn how to cultivate and use the land for productive purposes. The children should be taught to follow His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej’s philosophy of the Sufficiency Economy. According to His Majesty’s theory, the land is divided into four parts with a ratio of 30:30:30:10. The first 30 per cent is set aside for a pond and fish culture. The second 30 per cent is for rice cultivation. The third 30 per cent is for growing fruit and perennial trees. The remaining 10 per cent is for housing, raising animals and other activities. There are three phases: The first phase is to live at a self-sufficient level, which allows farmers to become self-reliant and maintain their living on a frugal basis. The second phase is to cooperate as a group in order to handle the production, marketing, management, and educational welfare, as well as social development. The third phase is to build connections within various occupation groups and to expand business through cooperation with the private sector, NGOs and the government, in order to assist the farmers in the areas of investment, marketing, production, management and information management (http://thailand.prd.go.th/ebook/king/new_theory.html).

7. To help the children develop physically, socially, mentally and intellectually, the Homes should strengthen various programmes and the relationship between the children and the staff.

8. In view of the growing criticism against institutionalization of children, the institutions should move towards facilitating family care. It can be achieved through continuous/periodic evaluation of each case. The deinstitutionalization process should be encouraged in as many cases as possible. In case of children from single parent families or those admitted because of poverty or other problems faced by the family, it is necessary to work with the family members and help them improve their situation and take the child back. If that is not possible, placement in foster care can be tried. In cases where financial need is the main problem, the sponsorship programme can be of help and the child can be sent back to his/her family. Another option can be foster
care arrangement with a family that can take care of the child. For younger orphans, adoption can be an option. The same institutions can offer these services with a few additional staff and financial support. This will ensure comprehensive service to all children admitted in the institution.

9. Strengthening the involvement of parents/relatives in the progress of the child is necessary. Currently their involvement is minimal. They can be involved in formulating and monitoring the child care plan. Some of them can be enrolled as volunteers to spend some time in the home on a regular basis to help the staff in various tasks.

10. There should be a follow-up of those who have been discharged. For example, the Home should find out what and how they are doing. The Home should have a database of information about the discharged youth so that they can be easily contacted. The discharged youth should contact the Home.

In this connection, the researcher would like to share what the discharged youth had to say.

The discharged youth voiced their gratitude to the Homes, while making recommendations from their felt experience.

Chai (name changed) said,

*I have learned to be strong, patient, honest, and hard-working. I would really like the Home to prepare the children before their discharge by giving them education to the bachelor’s degree level and vocational training as well as teach them skills to live with others. I really want the Home to emphasize the importance of hard work, honesty and endurance. The Home should also do a follow-up of the discharged children.* (italics mine)

Discharged youth like Chai felt that the Home should contact those youth who could not adjust to the world without and bring them back to the Home for further rehabilitation. Nat (name changed), another discharged youth was quite vociferous about her sentiments and experience.

She maintained

*When I was living at the Home, I always thought about what I needed to do for my future. The Home has given so much to me. I was really surprised that I was given 15,000 baht upon leaving the Home. I was told that the money was to help me start a new life. I feel that I was taken care of very well by the staff. They were always there to give me advice and help. I still am in touch with those staff I do visit the children two or three times a year and bring them some donuts and cake. My suggestion is*
that those who have left the Home should contact the Home so that they can become useful to the younger children still living at the Home. (italics mine)

Nat was inspired by the King’s self-sufficiency philosophy and programmes and felt that the children should try to do their best and not waste the resources given to them. Besides, the staff needed to have a more efficient plan to distribute resources to reduce waste. Both Nat and Chai underlined the importance of giving back to the Homes not only by way of gratitude but also to instil confidence and hope in the children. Having interviewed the staff, the children residing in the four Homes and the discharged youth, the researcher has a greater appreciation of the significant contributions of the staff and a better understanding of different aspects of the operations, the living conditions and experiences of the children and of those who have already left the Homes.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. Since the relationship between the children and the Homes’ social workers and psychologists seemed strained, the researcher suggests that there should be a further study on the role of social workers and psychologists in the Homes, and, their relationship with the institutionalized children in particular.

2. The limited number of studies on foster care and adoption in Thailand prompts the researcher to recommend further research and evaluation on foster care and adoption services.

Support for a child comes from parents, family members, relatives, teachers, social workers, peers, community members and employers.

In essence, it takes a village to raise a child!