

Development Strategy for National Fitness Award 100 via comparison and Analysis of the Korean Government's Health Policy Projects

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: This study aims to offer development strategy for public policies to be implemented more efficiently by conducting comparative analysis of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism's (MCST's) National Fitness Award 100, Korea's iconic health policy project, with the Ministry of Health and Welfare's (MOHW's) Integrated Health Promotion Program.

Methods: Content analysis was used to compare and analyze the materials on health policies and a group of experts were brought together to devise differentiated development strategies for National Fitness Award 100.

Findings: First, systematic foundation enabling the sharing of professionals, facilities and programs should be built through law revision. Second, a system should be in place to cooperate with relevant agencies dealing with health policies. Third, programs for physical activities should be developed and advanced. Fourth, the participant target should be expanded so that the project can become the foundation of lifetime physical activity. Fifth, promotions and campaigns to facilitate the program should be conducted to attract citizens to National Fitness Award 100.

Conclusion: National Fitness Award 100 program can become a differentiated project through legal revisions and operation system building for the cooperative operation of health policy projects.

Keywords: Health policy project, National Fitness Award, Integrated Health Promotion Program, Development strategy

Introduction

According to the recently announced demographic structure data of Korea, the median age is to increase from 40.9 in 2015 to over 50 in 2033, and even further to 58.7 in 2065, while the aging index will exceed 100 in 2017 and multiply by 4.4 times to 442.3 in 2065^[1].

Such an escalation in the elderly population will boost the overall chronic disease prevalence rate, thereby pushing up the medical expenses of the senior population

and having an absolute impact on the national medical expenses^[2]. This causes an anxiety over social finance.

Above all, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD's) member average of annual medical expenditures were 3.6% in 2003-2009 and 1.4% in 2009-2016. On the contrary, Korea's corresponding figures were 8.5% and 5.7%, increments of 4.9% and 4.3%, respectively^[3], higher than the OECD average. The fact that Korea's health expenditures displayed an upsurge, going against the global trend^[4], exhibits the inevitability of the need to change and revise the current health policy.

The Korean government has shifted its health and medical policy direction from focusing on treatment to

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disease prevention, legislated National Health Promotion Law and implemented health promotion projects since 1998 in order to contribute to national health promotion and expenditure reduction. Starting in 2011, it initiated National Fitness Award 100 under Article 16 Section 2 of the National Sports Promotion Act, and has been expanding the scope of health policies^[5]. Although the two projects differ in the drivers and competent ministries, they operate similar programs in detail such as fitness measurement, exercise prescription, sports classes, etc. with the purpose of promoting national health and fitness^[6], which are mostly pro bono with state funding^[5]. However, an issue was recently raised at the public project operation evaluation that government's investment in similar projects may lead to wasting the budget, calling for discussions among relevant government agencies about the operation and operational reexamination as the issue may hinder the efficient operation and sustainable and effective service for the citizens^[7].

Nevertheless, the controversies and criticisms of similar projects without in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the two projects may actually damage their purposes and values. Such problems may not only make it difficult for the agencies to run the projects but it may also be neglecting and countering the citizens' demands to achieve the fundamental purpose - personal health and happiness.

Therefore, the overlap or difference of the two projects should be judged only after comparing and analyzing them. This research conducts a comparative analysis of National Fitness Award 100, Korea's representative health policy project, and Integrated Health Promotion Program to overcome concerns and problems of overlapping projects and suggest development strategies that could boost the efficiency of government budget spending by allowing the projects to learn each other's strengths and expertise.

Method

1. Subject

This study selected the MCST's National Fitness Award 100, Korea's iconic health policy project, and the MOHW's Integrated Health Promotion Program as the subject according to the research objectives. Relevant reports and papers on the specifics of physical activity projects, meeting materials and activity report on policies and services, comprehensive communication documentaries provided on the websites of related agencies, etc. were collected for analysis.

2. Analysis methods

This research applied content analysis to compare and analyze the detailed project materials regarding physical activities in the National Fitness Award 100, Korea's iconic health policy project, and the Integrated Health Promotion Program. Content analysis, through which the information acquired indirectly on the subject is switched and computed, is useful to analyze secondary qualitative data^[8].

In addition, an expert group (experts on MOHW's Integrated Health Promotion Program policies (2), experts on MCST's National Fitness Award 100 policies (2), on-site experts (4), doctor and professor in public health (2), doctor and professor in physical education (2)) was organized to compare and analyze the two programs and formulate strategies to develop policies. From data collection to its interpretation, the experts discussed to come to a consensus in order to secure the objectivity and integrity of the data.

Result

1. Comparative analysis of National Fitness Award 100 vs Integrated Health Promotion Program

1-1. Project implementation basis and objective

The objective of National Fitness Award 100, based on National Sports Promotion Act Article 16-2, is to conduct sports-for-all activities and certification of fitness by encouraging citizens' voluntary participation in sports for all and supporting scientific fitness management. Integrated Health Promotion Program, based on National Health Promotion Act Article 6, Article 19, Article 19 of the Enforcement Decree of the same Act, Law for Community Health Article 9, aims to practice healthy life, prevent chronic diseases and manage health of vulnerable class^[9].

According to the analysis of project implementation basis, the two projects have different legal grounds: National Sports Promotion Act and National Health Promotion Act. While National Fitness Award 100 supports scientific fitness management and encourages sports-for-all participation through physical activity-oriented program operation, Integrated Health Promotion Program includes physical activities for health management as a part of its entire project.

1-2. Project progress

National Fitness Award 100 built a citizen fitness certification system in 2011 and ran a pilot version of national fitness certification program in order to support scientific fitness management and encourage participation

in sport for all by offering customized exercise prescription service and fitness promotion program. After switching to an official program, the participant range was expanded to senior citizens in 2013 and teenagers in 2014, thereby increasing the number of Citizen Fitness Assessment Centers constantly (43 centers as of 2018). In 2018, on-demand teams (2), National Fitness Award On-Demand Bus (1) and mobile sports activity certification affiliated with private app additionally began operation, extending the support for those marginalized from physical activities. On the other hand, Integrated Health Promotion Program initiated a pilot program at 18 public health centers in 1998, which expanded to all the centers across the country in 2005. Physical activity, in particular, began operation as an individual program of the Integrated Health Promotion Program for local communities in 2013-2015 and was created as a new area on the regional medical information system in 2016

1-3. Project target

National Fitness Award 100 targets youth aged 13 or older, adults and seniors, while Integrated Health Promotion Program is operated for all citizens from infants to the elderly, the disadvantaged group and multicultural families.

According to the project target analysis, the two projects appeared to be different because National Fitness Award 100 targets those aged 13 and over, while Integrated Health Promotion Program provides services to citizens of all ages. The latter, in particular, has a difficulty in drawing the youth because it conducts physical activity programs along with nutrition, anti-smoking, anti-alcoholism, etc. programs.

1-4. Standardization of operation process

As the operational process of National Fitness Award 100 is standardized, anyone who visits Citizen Fitness Assessment Centers will go through identical procedures. Such standardization of the process has been validated and applied via pilot programs and research on national fitness and health promotion that preceded National Fitness Award 100. The process was also standardized because it is important to constantly motivate citizens to take part in sport for all.

However, Integrated Health Promotion Program's operation process for physical activity program has not been standardized. Hence, it takes different forms according to the situations at the public health centers. Among fitness measurement, exercise prescription

and sports classes, the centers either select one or mix multiple services.

1-5. Professionalism of project contents

1-5-1. Professionalism of fitness measurement items and assessment criteria

National Fitness Award 100 categorizes its targets into youth aged 13 or older, adults and the elderly. The experts measure each group's fitness and develop as well as apply the required fitness items themselves. As fitness certification is conducted based on the fitness measurement results, the project guarantees the professionalism of the fitness measurement items and criteria, which are necessary for the scientific fitness management of the citizens, through an objective and valid procedures.

On the other hand, Integrated Health Promotion Program only provides guidelines based on study findings from Establishing Cut-off Point of Physical Fitness by Age in Early Childhood^[10], youth physical activity promotion system (PAPS) manual^[11], Korean national fitness assessment 2011^[13], etc.

1-5-2. Sports and fitness promotion class operation environment

National Fitness Award 100 has two exercise prescriptors and two fitness measurement staff with the state registered sport-for-all instructor certification working at each Citizen Fitness Assessment Center and requires by regulation that an exercise prescriptor has to participate in a fitness promotion class if in operation.

Integrated Health Promotion Program, however, is being operated without any standard in dispatching instructors. Citizen Fitness Assessment Centers were selected because they fulfill the sports facility requirements, enabling them to operate sports programs considering the participant needs. However, Integrated Health Promotion Program has a trouble providing programs according to the user needs because it did not have any facility standards related to sports classes.

1-5-3. Building system to share information and secure big data

National Fitness Award 100 has computerized and managed all the information acquired through the program including the fitness measurement results and assessment levels upon receiving the consent

to collection of personal information. However, as Integrated Health Promotion Program does not have a system in place to share information or secure big data, it cannot gather data to analyze an individual's continued fitness and health management as well as the mid- to long-term effect of the government investment.

2. Development strategies for National Fitness Award 100

2-1. Legal revisions to vitalize physical activities

Most exercise specialists currently working at public health centers vary in terms of the professional education they received on strengthening fitness and have different level of competencies according to the work environment and characteristics^[13]. On the other hand, National Fitness Award 100 specialists are qualified by the government, meaning they have the suitable expertise to teach physical activities. Furthermore, the obligatory regulation that they must be on site at all times enhanced the user safety and satisfaction, thereby boosting re-participation rate. As such, vitalizing physical activities is an important factor affecting health promotion, which is why these instructors should be utilized more widely. Moreover, the law should be revised so that facilities and programs, on top of the instructors, can be discussed for sharing and affiliation. Legal revision will lead to cooperative and affiliated health policies and programs, which will bring about positive effects, save the government budget and become an effective tool to utilize a wide pool of experts.

2-2. Cooperative system building to enable constant physical activity participation

Both programs are merely recommending all participants to work out in their daily lives at the moment. To resolve such issues, National Fitness Award 100 should take advantage of the fact that public health centers are highly accessible and advertise its programs there, while Integrated Health Promotion Program could be advertised through National Fitness Award 100's promotions and campaigns as they are comparatively more well known. In addition, since medical-based basic health examination and dietary consultation are available^[16], measures to prompt physical activities in a safe manner should be conceived

2-3. Development and advancement of physical activity programs

The major reason holding Koreans back from participating in physical or sports activities is lack of time^[14]. To minimize such problem in reality, the On-Demand program operated as a part of National Fitness

Award 100 should be expanded and a system to support the operation of integrated health management should be installed for venues that want to take part.

Meanwhile, the ministries should maintain and step up cooperation with the Ministry of Education to utilize the physical activity promotion system (PAPS) that was introduced to address youth obesity and strengthen fitness. They should also collaborate to advance the health management programs to render them fun and interesting by reflecting teenager characteristics. As the level of youth physical activities, arbitrated by social support, is relevant to those of parents and friends^[15], such factors should be considered when developing programs and devise strategies to constantly update the existing ones.

2-4. Expansion of targets

National Fitness Award 100 only targets citizens who are 13 years old and up, unlike Integrated Health Promotion Program, which provides the service to all nationals. The US and Germany offer President's Challenge and Sports Badge programs, which are similar to National Fitness Award 100, to citizens at the age of 6, while also operating programs for all age groups^[7] to encourage participation in physical activities according to the life cycle.

It is crucial for National Fitness Award 100 to expand its targets to under 13 as the participation in sports during childhood forms a lifetime exercising habit and a foundation for lifetime physical activities. It is also imperative to categorize subjects into more detailed groups in order to achieve its goals. Close cooperation with relevant agencies will be conducive to reducing operational costs for physical activities and maximizing the effect.

2-5. Promotion and vitalization campaign

National Fitness Award 100 consists of fitness certification and fitness promotion classes. The number of citizens participating in the fitness certification started at 4,583 in 2011 and recorded 211,807 in 2017, an increase of 50,685 compared to 2016. As for the fitness promotion classes, 1,250 took part in 2012 and grew to 9,492 in 2017, an increase of 1,928 year-on-year^[14]. As such, the participating population is growing by the year but is still very low when seeing the entire ratio. Therefore, it should attract more participants by collaborating with Integrated Health Promotion Program, which operates with a myriad of public health centers, a much larger number compared to the Citizen Fitness Assessment Centers, hold diverse events and provide various benefits (health mileage) to outstanding participants.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, legislative revision and establishment of operation system for cooperative operation of health policy projects will differentiate National Fitness Award 100. Moreover, such cooperative operation system will drive the development and advancement of the programs that could offer professional physical activity service, one that only National Fitness Award 100 would be capable of providing, resulting in high user satisfaction and motivating sustained physical activities. On top of this, continuing the strategic advertisement and campaign will also play a crucial role in building an environment where National Fitness Award 100 is more prevalent.

Ethical Clearance: Not required

Source of Funding: Self

Conflict of Interest: Nil

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