Promoting Quality Physical Education in Korea: Connecting the Best of Physical Education Curriculum and School Sport

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There is an increasing demand on quality physical education in Korea. Physical education is expected to provide skills, knowledge, and attitude with students to obtain and maintain healthy and active lifestyle. In addition, the increase of school violence and violence-related suicide has expanded the horizon of physical education beyond development of physical aspect of children to social and character development (Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation, 2012). Physical education has strengthened the status as school subject due to the increasing risk discourse such as obesity and school violence. Unlike other subjects, the active, interactive, emotional, and dynamic nature of physical education makes it easier to learn and develop social skills and character of students (Martinek & Hellison, 1997).

The promotion of quality physical education has been pursued by connecting the best of the National Curriculum of Physical Education (NCPE) and other initiatives such as school sport clubs and before-and after-school physical activity programs. This paper will provide an overview of the NCPE and other initiatives to support quality physical education and school sport in Korea.

Korean National Curriculum of Physical Education *Overview of physical education curriculum*

In Korea, physical education curriculum is centralized by national curriculum of physical education. Currently, the 2009 national curriculum of physical education has been implemented in schools. Physical education is a required subject for 3rd -10th graders. For the first and second graders, physical

education is provided as a part of an integrated subject of art, music and PE, called *Pleasant Life*. Elementary students participate in 3 hours of physical education per week, while 4 hours of physical education classes, including one hour of school sport club activity, are required for middle school students.

The NCPE highlights the values of 'physical activity' as unique content of physical education that can be differentiated from other subjects. Physical activity is the essence of education as well as a tool for education. Physical activity is considered as an educational tool to make students understand and explore the world (Korean Ministry of Education, 2011). The goal of NCPE is to enhance students' fitness and motor competence through physical activity participation and to promote social and character development. Therefore physically educated person is expected to develop physical fitness and motor skills, creative thinking skills, sportpersonship, and community spirit.

The NCPE is organized around five physical activity values: health, challenge, competition, expression, and leisure. These five physical activity values are related to the core competences such as self-management, interpersonal skills, civil responsibility, creativity and problem-solving. The cultivation and development of these core competences can be achieved by internalizing the five values of physical activity such as values of health, values of competition, values of challenges, values of expression activities, and values of leisure activities.

The domain of 'health activities' includes knowledge on health, health management, problem solving on

health issues, fitness enhancement and management, and health and safety. 'Challenge activities' include challenge for personal physical excellence or record. The traditional sport contents are included in the domain of 'competition' which includes competition and cooperation, game performance, tactical awareness and acquisition, net/wall games, invasion games, and filed games. The values of 'expressive activities' are taught by -expression for aesthetic experience, movement expression, rhythmic expression, traditional expression, and creative expression. The values of 'leisure activities' are focusing on learning personal and social values of leisure and acquisition active leisure and lifestyle.

Teaching and learning methods of NCPE

The NCPE provides specific guidelines for teaching and learning of physical education. According to the NCPE, teaching physical education should: (a) adopt teaching methods for teaching creativity and character, (b) respect the individual differences, (c) establish self-directed learning environment, (d) integrate direct and indirect learning activities, and (e) use effective teaching strategies. The NCPE emphasizes creativity and character development not only as a goal of physical education classes but also as instructional methods and techniques. Students are expected to achieve dual outcomes of creativity and character development.

Respecting individual differences such as students' interests, levels of motor skills and fitness, gender, and preferred learning styles are critical to quality physical education. Physical education teachers should adjust the types and difficulty levels of tasks or differentiate the level of expectation depending on the individual differences.

The emphasis on self-directed learning is one of the critical points of the NCPE. For a long time, physical education instruction has been dominated by teacher-centered direct teaching style approach. Although this approach can be highly effective in learning new sport skills, learning other domains such as problem-solving skills or critical thinking skills require more student-

centered learning environment. Students should be encouraged to set goals, plan their own learning and monitoring progress, and also practice problem-solving. In this sense, students should be considered as not merely recipients of knowledge and skills. Rather, they should be considered as co-creators of learning as a valued partner of teaching and learning.

With emphasis on character and creativity development, the NCPE encourages teachers to use diverse direct and indirect learning experience. The direct teaching experience refers to direct physical activity experience such as skill practice, game play, or use of tactics during game play. Meanwhile, the indirect teaching experiences refer to use of sport movie, sport narratives, and sport-related novels and poetry. In addition, physical education instruction should adopt diverse learning activities such as appreciation, discussion, and reading and writing.

Promotion of quality physical education and NCPE

The NCPE has the following characteristics to promote quality physical education in Korea. First, it aims to develop a whole person who is well-rounded in physical, social, and cognitive domains. The overarching goal of the NCPE is to develop students' creativity and character as well as physical competence. The NCPE has a strong pedagogical orientation that physical education should focus on holistic development of children.

Second, the NCPE stresses the importance of acquisition of sport skills as well as life skills to lead a healthy life. There is a growing interest that school physical education should be a sound platform for lifelong physical education (Whitehead, 2010). To promote lifelong physical activity participation, children should obtain motivation, confidence, physical competence and skill, knowledge and attitude to values physical activities for health, social interaction, and self-expression. The NCPE stresses the importance of learning physical activity values such as health, challenge, competition, expression, and leisure because internalization of these values will provide motivation for lifetime physical activity.

Third, with the implementation of NCPE, elementary school students are provided 3 hours (120 minutes) of physical education classes per week, while middle school students are provided 4 hours (180minutes) of physical education classes per week. Although it is not enough for students, it can be a platform to learn new skills, knowledge, and attitude for participating physical activity outside the school contexts.

Finally, the quality of physical education teachers is critical to quality physical education. The NCPE provides guidelines for preparing physical education teacher candidates and designing and implementing continuous professional development programs. Teachers are expected to reorganize and adapt the NCPE to meet the needs of students and educational contexts. Currently, there is a growing emphasis on developing teachers' professionalism for implementing the NCPE. Teachers are not only transmitter of the NCPE but are expected to work as a curriculum developer in order to have a sense of ownership on their own curriculum.

Extra-Curricular Physical Activity Programs

School sport and physical education in Korea is composed of regular physical education, extra-curricular physical activity, and elite sport. The content and structure of regular physical education are specified in the NCPE while the extra-curricular physical activities are composed of diverse activities. The extra-curricular physical activities are composed of school sport club (SSC), after-school physical activity programs, Sport Day event, and short span of physical activity programs during break time, before-school, or lunch hours. The elite sport program is only provided for student athletes who are registered at Korean Olympic Committee as student athletes. These extra-curricular activities play a critical role to promote youths' participation in physical activity in combination with regular physical education classes.

School sport club system

School sport club (SSC) is provided with 2nd -11th

graders who have interest in sport and physical activities. Unlike elite sport programs, SSCs are offered for all students for promoting physical activity and health. SSC is focusing on reducing youth obesity, fitness improvement, and social development. The SSC system can be considered as sport-for-all movement within school context.

The SSC system has two main goals. The first goal of SSC is to provide all students with right to enjoy and play sport and to promote healthy and active school culture. The past Korean school sport has mainly focused on elite students while most of students have been marginalized from the school sport. The limited number of elite students has "played" the game while vast majority of students remained as "spectators". Encouraging all students to become the players of sport is one of the major goals of the SSC system. The second goal of SSC is to strengthen the link between elite school sport and sport clubs. The elite school sport has been insulated from school culture because there was no interaction between the two. The long-term goal of SSCs is not only promoting youths' participation in sport, but also identifying and developing talented athletes who can join the elite school sport.

Although the SSC has been started as an extra-curricular activity, it has been expanded as part of regular school curriculum due to its educational values and impact on positive youth development (Choi, Ahn, & Lee, 2013; Oh & Lee, 2014). The studies on impacts of SSCs have proved that sport clubs participation has enhanced health and physical development, students' psychological satisfaction, and social and emotional development(Fraser-Thomans, Cote, & Deakin, 2005). In the year 2012, the Ministry of Education has revised national curriculum to include one hour of SSC activities as a part of creative experiential activities. It signals the governmental effort to connect regular physical education curriculum and SSCs to enhance students' physical activities and health.

Other physical activity programs

Health and fitness outcomes are one of the crucial

goals of school physical education. Although there has been a great emphasis on health and fitness issue, the level of youth obesity has been increased since 2010. Given that physical activity is important for healthy and active lifestyle, there have been various approaches to promote physical activities within school. The 7560+ movement which has been widely implemented in school settings emphasized that students should be physically active at least five days per week, with at least 60 minutes of physical activity time. These movement helped teachers design diverse types of before-and/or after-school physical activity programs.

The 7560+ movement and design and implementation of diverse short span of physical activity programs helped students be more physically active even during short span of time. For the last five years, students who participate in vigorous physical activity at least 3 days a week has been increased from 45.8% in 2010 to 55.6% in 2014 in elementary school. Although the rate for middle school students was lower from 27.6% in 2010 to 35.1% in 2014 than that of elementary school students, there has been increase in physical activity participation (Korean Ministry of Education, 2015).

Closing Remark

For the last decade, there has been great governmental support to improve physical education and school sport. The support has been generated by interpreting social changes and issues such as school violence and increase of youth obesity, producing policy texts based on risk discourse, and implementing policy for enhancing the practice physical education and school sport. Physical education and school sport has been strengthened by incorporating the issues of education, sport, and health in a harmonious way through revision of the national curriculum for stressing character and creativity development, activating school sport clubs during after-school, and creating short span of physical activity programs and application of physical activity promotion system for assessing and developing youth fitness.

Given that the three main forces of sport, health,

and education are not equal, there should be caution how the nature and goals of physical education can be changed through the differing interplay among three forces. The governmental support in terms of funding and resources has been centered on activating school sport clubs rather than supporting regular physical education for the last five years. The trend can bring about sportization of physical education through which sport can take a central role in justifying and practicing physical education. A blurring line between school sport club and regular physical education can also be found from the inclusion of sport club activities as a part of official national curriculum. The complex nature of school system and physical education requires close scrutiny of the interrelationship, interaction, and interconnectivity among education, health, and sport elements (Green, 2008; Griggs, 2015). Quality physical education and school sport can be achieved by maintaining a good balance while each contributes unique ways to preserve the values of education, health, and sport.

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