Sport Development in South Korea in the Aspect of Policy

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Korean sport not only has maintained within the top 10 in the Olympics but is also regarded as a powerful sporting nation in the aspect of elite sport (Ha & Ok, 2015). So far, many studies researched the tremendous improvement of the Korean sport system, focusing only on the aspect of elite sport and sport for all without the aspect of school sport that can also be the foundation of elite athletes (Lee, 2008). Therefore, this study will investigate Korean sport development in the following three policy aspects: elite sport, sport for all, and school sport.

For this study, the division of Korean history is necessary to research sport development. This study divides the Korean history, based on the characteristics of government, into the following three periods: (1) Authoritarian government (1961-1979) with an indirect presidential election system; (2) The transition period from authoritarian to liberal democratic government (1980-1992); (3) Liberal Democratic government (1993-2018) with a direct presidential election system.

Theoretically, the framework of macro and meso level theory is useful for examining the policy process and power distribution (Hill, 1997). Regarding macro level theories, this research will apply Marxism and corporatism to authoritarian government that means a close relationship between state and its agencies; and pluralism and liberalism to the liberal democratic government, which increases the participation of various groups in the policy-making process (Park, 2011). Furthermore, this study will utilize meso level theories: Multiple Stream Framework that explains policy problems, alternatives, and policy formation (Kingdon, 2003); Policy Networks that institutionalize the participation of interest groups in the process of policy formation; Advocacy Coalitions Framework which focuses on a coalition of advocates that shares their beliefs in a policy (Parsons, 1995). These meso level theories were used for developing sport-related policies in the United States and Western Europe; (Jordan, 1981; Sabatier, 1988). Some of the researchers can argue that it is not appropriate to apply Western theories to Korean policy. However, these theoretical approaches will be helpful to study Korean sport development because Korea has developed various sport policies based on the advanced sport policies of Western countries (Ha, 2010).

Methodologically, this research will use qualitative methods that allow researchers to gain “the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants” (Bryman, 2001, p.264). In detail, this study will review previous researches and government official documents and use a semi-structured interview, which covers a wide range of questions (Bryman, 2016), to get data from experts related to sport organizations in Korea.

Therefore, this research will describe sport development in Korea in the aspect of policy and the results will contribute to adding new literature to the category of sport developments as information about international comparative data in sport policy area. Furthermore, sport development in Korea, which has improved dramatically within a short period, will become a special example for developing countries that also need to improve their sport policy system.