

A STUDY ON DEVELOPMENT OF KOREAN NATIONAL POLICIES FOCUSED ON MULTICULTURAL YOUTH'S MENTAL HEALTH

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Abstract

South-Korea has been demographically transformed into a multicultural society for recent decades. Accordingly, Korean government has prepared the societal transformation through law and policy making. However, these laws and policies need to be reviewed in terms of multicultural counseling, which was recognized as one of the most necessary policies by immigrants. In this sense, this research intends to focus on multicultural youth's mental health while tracking and comparing the change of main multicultural policies like Multicultural Family Policy, Multicultural Education Policy, and Youth Policy. Therefore, this research can help expand the depth and width of discussion for the next 5-years policy plan (2023-2028) by measuring the past and current Korean policies in terms of youth's mental health.

Keywords: *Multicultural family policy, multicultural education policy, youth policy, multicultural youth, mental health.*

1. Introduction

Korean government's preparation for transformation as a multicultural country has been done within recently two decades. The first multicultural education policy began in 2006, and then the first foreigner policy and the first multicultural family policy followed up in 2008 and 2010 respectively. The demographical rate of foreigners who resided in Korea against total population in 2021 was almost 5%. And the rate of students with migration backgrounds in public schools reached to 3% in 2021. However, this statistical data does not certainly present the quality of Korean society's mature degree to accept foreigners as a full member of society or to seriously discuss their quality of life in Korea. Korea society have just now been experiencing the transition from the first generation of multicultural family to the second generation. In this sense, every sphere of life and every stage of life about so-called multicultural members in Korea is necessary to be seriously paid attention and discussed in academic and governmental circle. This study's research focus is on health area, specifically mental health of multicultural youths in Korea. This is because migration and its entire process can be a critical point for an immigrant's life and health (Lee & Oh, 2018). Especially, mental health which treats emotional area is also an essential factor of health of every human being including immigrants and residents. Recently, many academic papers and governmental documents have recognized more comprehensive approach as a full human beyond the previous interest in adaptation dimension of immigrants. Therefore, this study's research interest in mental health of multicultural youths is meaningful. This study's research questions are as follows: How have Korean national policies developed in terms of multicultural youth's mental health? And therefore what is the direction of next 5-years policy plan to promote multicultural youth's mental health?

2. Research methods

This study adopted literature research method. Thus, this study attempted to explore all of official documents from national policies on multicultural youths in Korea. Therefore, this study collected 23 national policy documents and extracted mentions about mental health issues from those document. Finally, this study attempt to show policy development on mental health in chronological order and in comparison with three policies. This research method is accepted, as it is appropriate to present a series of policy trend in terms of a specific theme like mental health.

3. Development of Korean national policies on youth mental health

Main national policies on youths with migration backgrounds are Youth policy, Multicultural Family Policy, and Multicultural Education Policy. As this study's focus is on multicultural youth's mental

health, this study recognizes policies related to the focus from three national policies' yearly or regularly plans. And this study also recognizes the importance of mental health in overall development of three policies as follows.

3.1. Youth policy and its interests in youth mental health

Youth Policy Plan (YPP, 청소년정책 기본계획) has been developed by several governmental ministries such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Government Youth Commission, Ministry of Health and Welfare, and Ministry of Gender Equality and Family since 1983. This policy has covered overall policies on youth, including youth with migration backgrounds and North Korean defection. This policy has been announced every 5 years, consisting of the current status of family with immigrant backgrounds, policy direction, goals, and main tasks. However, the discussion on youths with multicultural backgrounds have begun from the 4th Youth Policy Plan since 2008. This policy's focus on youth's mental health support has been developed as following Table 1:

Table 1. Youth Policy Development focused on Youth's Mental Health.

Period	4th YPP (2008-2012)	5th YPP (2013-2017)	6th YPP (2018-2022)
Status	- Appearance of multicultural youth (including North Korean defector youths) in crisis - Necessity of customized service	Accelerating multicultural socialization in Korea and marginalization of multicultural youth	Diversification of family structure and forms, including multicultural family
Main Policy Tasks	Reinforcement of support for self-reliance of youth in multicultural families - Emotional support by visiting instructors - Development of career exploration programs	Reinforcement of social adaptation through customized support for youths from migration backgrounds - Professional counseling service support - Development of specialized counseling programs and training of counselors - Community Integration Support System (CYS-NET) - Barracks environment for youths	Youth participation in society and rights promotion - Career education support - Identity recovery, career guidance, social development, and self-reinforcement

As the above Table 1 is seen, Youth Policy Plan (YPP) has focused on youth's mental health, according to three 5-year plans since 2008. First, the 4th Youth Policy Plan (2008-2012) was the starting point of discussion on multicultural youths. This phenomenon was consistent with the appearance of serious discussion on multiculturalism in Korea. The 4th YPP first recognized a necessity of customized support. Specifically, this plan considered emotional support by dispatching visiting instructors to children of multicultural families and development of career exploration programs through Ministry of Gender Equality and Family.

Second, the 5th Youth Policy Plan (2013-2017) paid more attention to professional and specialized counseling for marginalized youths from multicultural families. For this purpose, this plan considered reinforcement of professional counseling service support for multicultural children and adolescents through the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, development of specialized counseling programs for those youths and training of counselors, improvement of access to counseling services through the Community Integration Support System (CYS-NET), and creation of a barracks environment for those youths reaching the enlistment age through Ministry of National Defense.

Third, the 6th Youth Policy Plan (2018-2022) has been interested in participation and human right of multicultural youths as members of society. In this sense, this policy has considered reinforcement of career education support system, and provision customized programs for multicultural youth for identity recovery, career guidance, social development, and self-reinforcement through the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family.

3.2. Multicultural family policy and its interests in youth mental health

Multicultural Family Policy Plan (MFPP, 다문화가족정책 기본계획) has been developed by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. The first MFPP has begun in 2010, reflecting demographical transformation to multicultural society in Korea. This MFPP has mainly covered immigrant married women and their children. This policy has been announced every 5 years, consisting of the current status of family with immigrant backgrounds, policy direction, goals, and main tasks. This policy's focus on youth's mental health support has been developed as following Table 2:

Table 2. Multicultural Family Policy Development focused on Youth's Mental Health.

	1st MFPP (2010-2012)	2nd MFPP (2013-2017)	3rd MFPP (2018-2022)
Status	Rapid increase of children from multicultural families	Necessity to form a family relationship and provide academic support for immigrant youths	Change from a policy centered on early adaptation to a policy for long-term settlement
Policy direction & goals	Environment for healthy growth of children from multicultural families - Expansion of infrastructure to support maladjusted children in school	Supporting the growth and development of children of multicultural families - Universal services - Support for improvement of Korean language skills, provision of school information, and adaptation	Supporting the stable growth and strengthening capabilities - Career preparation and social advancement support - Customized support for immigrant youths
Main Policy Tasks	Regional base center to support multicultural children for their settlement in the local community and school - Comprehensive support through youth counseling, mentoring for learning, counseling hotline, identity program, and customized case management	- Support for early adaptation to school life - Reconstruction of the CYS-Net	Reinforcement of counseling support for adolescent children and parents - Professional counselors training - Utilization of the CYS-Net - Expansion of Rainbow School

As the above Table 2 is seen, Multicultural Family Policy Plan (MFPP) has focused on youth's mental health, according to three 5-year plans since 2010. First, the 1st MFPP (2010-2012) had begun in creating environment and infrastructure to support maladjusted children in school. Specifically, this policy considered expanding the regional base center to support multicultural children settling down in the local community and school life. And it also considered responsibility for comprehensive support for multicultural youth such as youth counseling, mentoring for learning support, counseling hotline, home country identity program, and customized case management.

Second, the 2nd MFPP (2013-2017) paid more attention to immigrant youths, who was not born in Korea and have entered from abroad in their adolescence. Therefore, the policy considered supporting the growth and development of those youths through universal services rather than special services, Korean language education and school information for school adaptation. The policy also considered supporting for early adaptation to school life, and restructuring of the CYS-Net, a social safety net for youth in the local community, to include counseling and welfare for youth with migration backgrounds.

Third, the 3rd MFPP (2018-2022) has focused on multicultural youth's stable growth and capability strengthening, according to those youth's long-term settlement in Korea. In this sense, the policy have prepared career exploration and social advancement support. Specifically, the policy considered training for professional school-counselors with knowledge of the characteristics of multicultural students, utilizing the CYS-Net to provide customized service for multicultural youths in crisis, and expanding Rainbow School to help early adaptation of immigrant youths.

3.3. Multicultural Education Policy and its Interests in Mental Health Support

Multicultural Education Support Plan (MESP, 다문화교육 지원계획) has been developed by the Ministry of Education since 2006. This policy has covered public education for the 12-grade students from elementary school to secondary school. As yearly plan, this policy has been announced every year, consisting of the current status of students with immigrant backgrounds and policy direction, vision and main tasks, and detailed plans. This policy's focus on youth's mental health support has been developed as following Table 3:

Table 3. Multicultural Education Policy's Development focused on Youth's Mental Health.

Period	1st 6-Years (2006-2012)	2nd 5-Years (2013-2017)	3rd 5-Years (2018-2022)
Yearly Policy Tasks	2006 MESP: Concerns about maladjusted students	2013 MESP: Separation of emotional status by types of multicultural students	2018 MESP: customized support by developmental stages from infancy to childhood and adolescence - Pilot project - Utilization of official manual - Multicultural education best practice contest

	2008 MESP: Customized educational support for positive identity formation through international college student mentoring	2014 MESP: No comments	2019 MESP: No comments
	2009 MEP: Training for professional counselors and interpreters	2015 MESP: No comments	2020 MESP: Strengthening the emotional support system - multilingual emotion test - School and community connection - Prevention of school violence
	2010 MESP: Training for professionals through WEE center, Support through mentoring and vacation camp	2016 MESP: No comments	2021 MESP: Same as 2020 MEP
	2011 MESP: After-school program.	2017 MESP: First appearance of emotional counseling support as main policy tasks - Designation and operation of WEE center as multicultural counseling base. - Empowerment of counseling support personnel - Collaboration with local multicultural institutions	2022 MESP: Same as 2020 MEP

As the above Table 3 is seen, Multicultural Education Policy can be divided with three periods, as the above two policies like Youth Policy and Multicultural Family Policy are divided with three 5-year plans since 2008. First, the 1st 6-Years policy plans (2006-2012) has begun with little and partial recognition of multicultural youth’s mental health. The first 2006 MESP recognized emotional difficulty of maladjusted students with migration backgrounds like North Korean defector students, but there was not systemic support. This tendency of partial recognition of multicultural youth’s mental health without support system had continued until 2016.

Second, the 2nd 5-Years policy plans (2013-2017) finally highlighted the issue of multicultural youth’s mental health as main policy tasks in 2017. However, although the policy seriously elaborated emotional status by types of multicultural students in 2013, no mention on mental health had unfortunately existed for three years from 2014 to 2016. In this sense, the 2017 year was the turning point in Multicultural Education Policy in terms of youth’s mental health.

Third, the 3rd 5-Years policy plans (2018-2022) have tried deepening mental health support for multicultural youths. The 2018 MESP customized support by developmental stages from infancy to childhood and adolescence through pilot project and official manual (A study on the status of professional counseling for multicultural students and case analysis), and multicultural education best practice contest. And the 2020, 2021, 2022 MESP have tried to strengthen the emotional support system through multi-lingual emotion test with 10 languages version, school and community connection, and school violence prevention.

4. Conclusion

This study can summarize national policy development in terms of multicultural youth’s mental health as follows: First, national policies have chronologically developed from the perspective of maladjusted youths in crisis to the perspective of youths as human resource. Korean policies have overall reflected assimilative perspective in which immigrants have to adapted Korean culture alone without reflecting their own cultural heritage. However, Korean policies gradually seem to reflect integrative perspective in which immigrants can adapt Korean culture alone with their own cultural heritage.

Second, national policies reflect each policy’s perspective of youth. Youth policy reflects an ideology to present multicultural youth with human rights and participation as a member of society. Multicultural family policy considers multicultural youth as a long-term settler and with capabilities. And Multicultural education policy considers multicultural youth as a human with emotion who cannot be approached with education alone, but can be effectively helped by emotional support like counseling. However, three policies take note of individualization and customization for several types of multicultural youths, and systemic infrastructure with local community’s counseling resource beyond school.

In the light of this national policy development, future policy needs to consider the situation after second generation. Current multicultural youth will settle down and pass on from generation to generation

in Korea. Their own health including mental health cannot be promoted without being guaranteed at the same level as residents. Moreover, academic research needs to be conducted in a wide range of theory and practice.

This study tried to analyze and spotlight contents from national policy documents, focusing on a specific theme like mental health, although those documents were not totally psychological reports. Those documents' original intent may not be captured by this study's researcher with different intent. Nonetheless, this study is meaningful in providing a serious attempt to promote national policy development and psychological research direction about multicultural youth's mental health.

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