

Managing Community Sports and Recreation in Local Administrative Organizations in Thailand

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Abstract

The objectives of this research are 1) to analyze administration context and problems in subdistrict administrative organization (SAO) pertaining to community sports and recreation management; 2) to analyze behavioral context and needs to receive sports and recreation services in a community; and 3) to propose guidelines to improve the management of a community sports and recreation in local administrative organizations (LAO) in Thailand. The research was conducted by mixed methods using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative data was collected through in-depth interview with 20 key informants who are the stakeholders in the community from 4 regions of Thailand. The qualitative data was analyzed by content analysis method. The quantitative data was collected through questionnaire from 906 samples who received sports and recreation services in their local communities. The qualitative data was analyzed by using frequency distribution, percentage, means and standard deviation. The result shows that LAO, especially for SAO, should devise these managerial approaches to improve community sports and recreation center i.e. 1) place an emphasis on community sports and recreation which reflects vision of executives and results in effective resources management for local sports and recreation; 2) apply marketing mix concept concerning demand in sports and recreation services; 3) develop management processes comprising planning, organizing, leading, controlling and evaluating; 4) treat output as indicators for organizing health and well-being activities for better quality of life of people in the community, enhancing inclusive services and creating good governance; and 5) analyze the context of national policy and national strategy concerning community sports and recreation, socio-cultural aspect, technology, economy and local politics.

Keywords: Sports, Recreation, Local Administrative Organization

Introduction

Sports and recreation play a very crucial role in improving health conditions and enhancing quality of human life as well as establishing physical, mental, social, and intellectual wellness. The Founder of the Modern Olympics, Pierre de Coubertin said that “sport is part of every man and woman's heritage and its absence can never be compensated for”.

Internationally, sports are regarded important for all ages and genders which they should not be completely replaced by other activities. Similarly, recreation is also important as evidently supported by Charter for Leisure that “all people have a basic human right to leisure activities that are in harmony with the norms and social values of their compatriots. Governments should ensure their citizens a variety of accessible leisure and recreational opportunities of the highest quality” (International Olympic Committee, 2014; World Leisure Organization, 2000)

Not only are sports and recreational activities significant in promoting individual health and quality of life, it also essentially creates social value and boosts national economy. Thus, investing in human capital, which is the core factor in developing the country, will eventually lead to strong, wealthy and sustainable country. (Department of Physical Education, 2017; Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017; Office of The National Economic and Social Development Board, 2016) Moreover, sport can be responsible for the wellbeing of people life, contributing not only to their physical health but to a better socialization, and sport activities having a large potential to contribute to problem solving and the enhancement of life quality of individuals and communities as well. (Baciu and Baciu, 2015; Coakely, 2011; Giulianotti, 2004)

However, the implementation of Thailand governmental development of sports and recreation for the public is still imperfect. According to the performance of the 5th National Sport Development Plan 2010-2016 and the 2nd National Sport Development Plan 2012-2016, it can be implied that all strategic plans regarding mass sports and recreation in these aspects i.e. awareness, equality, opportunities and facilities, still could not achieve the desired goals (Department of Physical Education, 2017; Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017). Moreover, according to the survey on Thai population behavior in exercising in 2003, 2004, 2007 and 2011, the proportion of population doing exercise slightly increased from 29.0% in 2003 to 29.1% and 29.6% in 2004 and 2007 respectively. However, the proportion reduced from 29.6% in 2007 to 26.1% in 2011 (National Statistical Office Thailand, 2007). Lack of exercise and physical activities remains a major cause of death from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in Thailand. In 2009, the statistics showed that 73% of Thai population died of such diseases (Ministry of Public Health, 2015).

Due to the current health statistics and problems, lack of health awareness in daily life, public sector's sport and recreation policies implementation, including the importance of sports and recreation as a tool for developing human resources which is the most important potential factor among the sources of “national power”, under the circumstances of people suffering from unhealthy conditions stemmed from lack of exercise. Furthermore, exercise has the potential to alleviate the health consequences of obesity, even in the absence of weight loss. All in all, exercise constitutes an indispensable for management of obesity which is the one of the most risk for healthy life (Petridou et al., 2019; Jemsittiparsert and Sriyakul, 2014). Local administrative organizations should attentively promote public engagement as they have a close relationship with Thai citizens and they are located in every region of Thailand. The organizations would be able to effectively and efficiently drive and promote national sports and recreation policies. Nevertheless, at present, sports and recreation facilities in community have not yet been explicitly developed by Government Back Office. Thus, the researcher believes that this research would provide a managerial guideline to improve a community sports and recreation center in Thailand in order that community sports and recreation operation is continually dynamic and sustainable in long run.

Literature Review

This research focuses on the following concepts and theories related to the development of community sports and recreation center.

System approach is a concept of managing an organization, based on relevant elements and collaboration, to ensure that organizational and mutual goals are achieved. Inputs from external environments are received and transformed by certain method. The outputs then are released to the environments. The system includes inputs, transformation process, outputs, feedback, and environment (Chelladurai, 2009; Daft, 2010).

Organizations are necessarily required to have initial resources in order to allocate those resources by transforming them to become organizational products or services, and eventually respond to the needs of buyers or service receivers. Chelladurai (2009) stated that management is similar to a collaboration to success which requires four necessary factors when organizing sports or physical activities i.e. 1) human resources such as clients, employees, and volunteers, 2) technologies such as knowledge to practical, new ideas, and materials, 3) support units such as human resources unit, finance unit, administration unit, and public relations unit, and 4) context or external characteristics affecting organizations such as interorganizational networks, government, culture, and community. Daft (2010) explained that system theory for organizational management and creating products and services comprises these inputs i.e. 1) raw material 2) human 3) financial data, and 4) information.

The management of community sports and recreation center necessarily requires heavy responsibility of organization to drive the organization and reach its expected goals. Chelladurai (2009) explained that the management concept was evolved from the Fayol's (1949) five basic management functions including planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling whereas the appropriate management approach for managing sports and physical activities comprises planning, organizing, leading, and evaluating. Daft (2010) defined management process as an attempt to achieve organizational success and goals effectively and efficiently. Managers in each function must perform their duties in planning, organizing, leading, and controlling organizational resources.

The concept of the marketing mix is used as a tool for organizational management in order to convince customers to purchase products, and to eventually achieve marketing goals in a target market. Controllable marketing mix factors should be deployed to respond to the needs of and gain satisfaction from target customers. Marketing mix is a communication link between seller and potential consumer with its aim to influence consumer's attitude and buying behavior. The marketing mix involves 4Ps of marketing including product, price, place, and promotion (Kotler, 2000). To successfully deploy the marketing mix in non-profit organizations as well as to satisfy the needs of service receiver, the organizations should set goals based on the perspectives of service receiver by following the Lauterborn's 4Cs (1990) comprising consumer wants and needs, consumer's cost to satisfy, convenience to buy, and communication that connects.

Research Methodology

This research used a mixed-methods approach consisting of qualitative and quantitative (Creswell, 2014) research methods. The objectives of this research are 1) to analyze administration context and problems in SAO pertaining to community sports and recreation management via qualitative methods such as document analysis and in-depth interview; 2) to analyze behavioral context and needs to receive sports and recreation services in a community via quantitative method by using questionnaire; and 3) to propose guidelines to improve the management of a community sports and recreation center in Thailand by analyzing the results with the content analysis in order to propose alternative guidelines.

Participants: This research collected the data from the following four regions of Thailand.

Qualitative research: 1) Key Informants were stakeholders involved in SAO sports and recreation operation. Five key informants in each region include, for example, executive,

operational staff, local person in the area, public and private officers in the area, and public sports and recreation networks in the area, totaling 20 people; 2) Select areas and collect data from SAOs which display good example in operating and promoting community sports and recreation (two out of four regions were selected) and the (the other two) SAOs which lack competence in operating and promoting community sports and recreation; and 3) snowball sampling was used to determine key informants in this qualitative research.

Quantitative research: 1) population was residents in local community of Thailand involved in SAO sports and recreation operation; 2) sample size was calculated according to Yamane's formula (1973) (significance level equals 0.05), amounting to 400 samples. However, to make the research more reliable, the number of samples was set to be 1,000 samples, higher than the calculated amount; 3) multi-stage sampling was used to determine the samples of quantitative research.

Data Collection: Qualitative research: 1) in-depth interview (semi-structured interview) with 20 key informants from four SAOs (each one from each region) was conducted, consisting of 3 main flexible issues: obstacles and problems of sports and recreation operation in local community, local administrative organization promotion on sports and recreation, and expectation of sports and recreation center in local community; and 2) data triangulation (Denzin, 2006) was used to check reliability of the qualitative data collected from different time, places, and persons from each SAO.

Quantitative research: 1) the data was collected from 906 samples, research questionnaire was aimed to survey usage behavior and needs in SAO sports and recreation services. The questionnaire used 5-level Likert rating scale, consisting of 5 parts: personal information, sports and recreation usage behavior, sports and recreation needs, management resources needs, and marketing mix needs.; 2) Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was applied to examine content validity (5 experts were asked to examine). The overall level of IOC was 0.86, representing an acceptable level of content validity; and 3) Cronbach's alpha was applied in the questionnaire with 30 samples whose qualifications were close to the real samples. The overall level of reliability was 0.95, representing an excellent level of reliability.

Data Analysis: The qualitative data: The data obtained from the in-depth interviews with key informants were analyzed by using the content analysis approach (Crabtree and Miller, 1992) and the following methods (Strauss and Corbin, 1998): 1) open-coding which is to divide data into segments in order to reduce its complexity and highlight significant data, 2) axial/theoretical coding which is to combine related codes or categories to each other, and 3) selective/focused coding which is to integrate all codes and develop the essence of the data.

The quantitative data: The data was analyzed by using frequency distribution, percentage, means (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (S.D.).

Results

Qualitative finding

The results from in-depth interview with stakeholders about SAO sports and recreation operation showed that, in terms of 1) Inputs: Government subsidy for sports and recreation is not sufficient and it lacks sports and recreation specialists. Private sectors as well as local people well support sports and recreational activities whereas SAO cannot manage to promote sports and recreational activities to outside. Sports and recreation center should prepare different sports and recreation areas. Volunteers from health agencies should be encouraged to involve in SAO activities. SAO staffs do not master in sports and recreation in which they mainly depend on volunteers to help on sports and recreation operation. SAO lacks sports materials or equipment the public to use or borrow. 2) Process: SAO sports and

recreation guideline is neither clear nor flexible. Central agencies do not well provide or directly cascade a plan to promote sports and recreation to SAO. There was no specific sports and recreation position and structure in SAO. A project should be planned based on participation/consensus-oriented approach in order to avoid any participation conflicts and to truly reflect needs of the public. Data system and SAO network to promote civil and private operations should be put in place. 3) Output: SAO currently organizes very few or none sports or recreation activities. SAO can only provide sports or recreational activities for certain group of people or certain ages. SAO styles of sports and recreational activities are repetitive and unattractive. 4) Feedback: Community people are not interested in participating in sports and recreational activities/projects. 5) Environment: No community sports and recreation policy is seriously promoted by central agencies. Lifestyle and occupation of local people in the community affects the engagement in sports and recreational activities in subdistrict. Because of technology, children and youths become to neglect outdoor physical activities. Academic-oriented policy obstructs children and youths in the community to receive physical activities.

Quantitative finding

- 1) Personal information: Subjects are mostly male (57.84%), aged 19-39 years old (48.01%), followed by 40-60 years old (26.71%). The highest education level is Bachelor's degree (37.86%), followed by diploma or equivalent (30.13%). Most of them are having very-low-paid job (29.14%), followed by being employee/staff in private companies (26.38%).
- 2) Sports and recreation usage behavior: Most of the subjects used SAO service areas for playing sports (41.06%), followed by exercising such as walk or run, aerobic dance (32.78%). Most of them used the services 3-5 days per week (45.25%), followed by 1-2 days per week (40.51%). The usage objectives are for fun and recreation (72.96%), followed by for better physical fitness (46.58%) and for better health (42.38%).
- 3) Sports and recreation needs: The most preferable sports and physical activities are badminton/table tennis ($\bar{x} = 3.34$), followed by walk or run ($\bar{x} = 3.33$). The most preferable recreational activities are music and singing activities such as karaoke, playing Thai and international musical instruments ($\bar{x} = 3.65$), followed by hobbies such as collecting and reading ($\bar{x} = 3.62$).
- 4) Management resources needs: Most of the subjects would like the SAO executives to place emphasis on sports and recreation policy ($\bar{x} = 4.72$), would like SAO to use annual budget to better promote community sports and recreation ($\bar{x} = 4.74$), would like SAO to take care of and maintain sports and recreation venues to always be in a good condition ($\bar{x} = 4.86$), would like SAO to provide a clear annual, monthly, and weekly sports and recreation calendar ($\bar{x} = 4.73$), and would like SAO to evaluate its sports and recreational activities to improve activities further ($\bar{x} = 4.73$).
- 5) Marketing mix needs: Most of the subjects would like SAO to organize sports and recreational activities to promote collaboration and harmony between local people in a community and local people nearby ($\bar{x} = 4.40$), would like SAO to establish a clear rule in charging service fee or membership fee so that the fees for using the sports and recreation center or venue are realistically appropriate ($\bar{x} = 4.49$), would like SAO to create central advertisement board to promote news and updates about sports and recreational activities ($\bar{x} = 4.37$), and would like SAO to organize sports and recreational activities at a convenient place ($\bar{x} = 4.71$).

Discussion

The key approach used as a guideline for to develop and manage community sports and recreation center is system theory (Chelladurai, 2009; Daft, 2010), allowing the community to achieve SAO sports and recreation operation goals. The goals can be achieved by relying

on different LAO management resources, together with management process to transform resources to become outputs that are relevant to goals and indicators for improving health and quality of life of local people, and being aware of the organization's peripheral environment as it provides feedback to other cycles of organizational sub systems. The results showed that the management of community sports and recreation center shall be comprised of the following factors.

1) Define community sports and recreation goals, vision and mission. Robinson (2010) suggested that the establishment of modern sport club should fundamentally place an emphasis on knowledge and understanding of why a club should be founded, what a club would like to achieve, and what products and services should be provided to club members. Sport club should prepare a club plan to demonstrate overall objectives and organizational structures. The plan should include these key elements i.e. philosophy, vision, and mission. In addition, increased globalization and modernization of people's lives, lifestyle behavior has changed substantially in many countries around the world. This change has brought two key behavior modifications: a reduction in physical activity and an increase in unhealthy eating patterns. Consequently, non-communicable diseases have overtaken communicable diseases as a key health risk area (Schulenkorf and Siefken, 2019). Therefore, community sports and recreation center should set the main goals to make people more active and focus on healthy life.

2) Marketing mix of sports and recreation service receiver is truly essential to convince local people to participate in community activities. When creating products or providing services in order to respond to the needs of service receivers, Lauterborn (1990) suggested considering consumer's marketing viewpoints i.e. consumer wants and needs, consumer's cost to satisfy, convenience to buy, and communication that connects. Furthermore, Varmus and Kubina (2015) mentioned that a different understanding of marketing communications by different customers based on their age, and also most popular communications tools and channels according to the age of customers.

3) Management process includes planning, organizing, leading, controlling, and evaluating. Chelladurai (2009) suggested that management process to organize sports and physical activity should consist of planning, organizing, leading, and evaluating. Nevertheless, controlling still plays an important role in managing community sports and recreation center due to the limited number of specialists. Thus, controlling and monitoring by a supervisor are necessarily required to such organizations.

4) Outputs or indicators are, for example, organizing health and quality of life enhancement activities for people in a community, which is a main goal of community sports and recreation center, in order to promote equality in accessing inclusive service, resulting in various types of activities for all genders and ages; and establishing good governance which is a core principle to effectively and efficiently drive the organizations and actively respond to the needs of service receivers. This supports the findings of Lock et al. (2013) reported that non - profit community sport organization should spend time developing understanding of the key dimensions that make them relevant to constituents and to decipher the values and beliefs that underpin what external audiences expect from organizations.

5) Analyze national policy and strategy context regarding community sports and recreation, socio-cultural aspect, technology, economy and local politics. The context of rural community and urban community might be different. Mair et al. (2019) suggested that motivations for sport participation can be seen as response to access to health services in rural areas.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This research found that, to effectively and efficiently achieve goals in enhancing health and life quality of local people, a guideline for managing community sports and recreation center in the context of rural community must acquire the following key factors: 1) community sports and recreation goals and vision, 2) marketing mix of sports and recreation service receivers, 3) management process comprising planning, organizing, leading, controlling, and evaluating, 4) outputs, which are the indicators, for example, organizing health and quality of life enhancement activities for people in a community, promoting equality in accessing inclusive service and establishing good governance, 5) analysis of national policy and strategy context regarding community sports and recreation, socio-cultural aspect, technology, economy and local politics.

Policy Recommendations

- 1) Transforming SAO to subdistrict municipality in the future might affect resources management, organizational structure and budget in some areas where there is a mixture of urban and rural communities. Prior to the implementation of a management guideline for community sports and recreation center in rural community, the environments of both rural and urban communities shall be carefully studied.
- 2) Department of Local Administration should revise, amend and establish guidelines, rules, and provisions regarding context of LAO sports and recreation operation to allow easy and appropriate implementation in rural communities.
- 3) Department of Physical Education, as a public organization responsible for promoting sports and recreational activities and sports science for all, should implement a project to promote and develop body of knowledge of sports, recreation and sports science in order to directly apply in SAO. Thus, knowledge shall be promoted and implemented as a tool to prevent diseases, take care of health and enhance quality of life.
- 4) Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture, and Ministry of Social Development and Human Security should together create a strategic and concrete plan to operate and promote sports and recreational activities in rural community. A mechanism to promote community sports and recreation shall be established in order to receive good collaboration from civil sector.

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