AN OUTLINE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN JAPAN

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1. Short History

Before the Meiji Restoration in 1868, it may be said that there existed no organized physical education in Japan but only some military arts such as Jujitsu (Judo), Kenjutsu (fencing) and Sumō (a kind of wrestling) conducted among warriors.

In 1872, the "Education System Act" was enacted and physical education was taken up as a subject in elementary school curricula, and a little later, in normal school and secondary school curricula.

The program of physical education consisted mainly of gymnastics and play activities. Emphasis was laid upon the leadership training for the purpose of spreading the practice of physical education activities. As a matter of course, many books were written in order to enlighten leaders, but most of them were based on reference materials published in other countries and very few books were original.

The programs of school physical education from the beginning of this century through World War II consisted of gymnastics and play activities on elementary school level; military arts (Jūdō and Kendō) and military drills in secondary schools in addition to gymnastics and sports. Much emphasis was put on gymnastics to develop the body, and for the cultivation of "loyalty to the state" rather than aiming at the development of individuality.

Early in this century, various sports were introduced to this country from other countries and gradually popularized. In 1911, the Japan Amateur Athletic Association was founded by Jigorō Kanō (founder of Jūdō, and IOC member from Japan) and Japan's first participation in the Fifth Olympic Games, 1912, encouraged young athletes. They soon organized interschool athletics by themselves, and the Ministry of Education was forced to provide students with a physical education program which included sports activities in it when the syllabus of school physical education prepared by the Ministry was revised in 1926. Before the last war, though there were no regular courses of physical education in the institutions of higher learning, sports activities were very popular among students, and the top ranking athletes in various sports were college students.

Such gradual spreading of physical education and sports caused a great demand for researches among the educators in this field and as a result, in 1924, the Ministry of Education founded the Research Institute of Physical Education. The institute gave a great impetus to researchers in physical education. But, most of the studies pursued in this period were found to be physiological, anatomical and hygienic.

During the last war, inevitably, military drills were emphasized. After the war, Japan, with the establishment of the new Constitution, declared herself a democracy, and came to emphasize respect for the rights of the individual. She also made the purposes regarding

the health and education of her people clear in the articles of the Constitution that read, "All people have the right to maintain the minimum standard of wholesome and cultural living" and "All people shall have the right to receive an equal opportunity in education corresponding to individual ability as provided by law."

Based on these provisions in the Constitution, the Fundamental Law of Education was established, compulsory education for nine years starting at the age of six was stipulated, and the aims of education were made clear in the School Education Law.

2. Present Status

a. School Physical Education

The Ministry of Education sets up the objectives, time-allotments, and standards of curricula through issuance of the Course of Study. It publishes also handbooks and guidebooks for teachers as references.

The objectives of physical education are not the same in detail at the various school levels. But the three objectives, which are indicated in the Course of Study for Elementary School, differ little from those of other school levels. The objectives are as follows:

1) To help children attain a normal development of their bodies, and to increase their physical fitness.

2) To help children develop democratic ways of life through physical activities.

3) To help children use various physical activities properly as recreation.

Again, the objectives indicated in the Course of Study for High Schools are as follows:

1) To promote the wholesome development of mind and body through the adequate practices of various physical activities as well as to promote the understanding of the development of mind and body.

2) To cultivate the attitude and ability to make one's life rich and sound, making the students understand the importance of exercises in life as well as the improvement of skills in various physical activities.

3) To elevate the attitudes and abilities to cooperate with others, to take responsibility, to observe rules, to play fair, and the like necessary for social life, through the experiences of competition, cooperation and so on, in physical activities.

Time allotment. Three school hours a week are allotted to physical education in elementary schools, junior and senior high schools, and an additional 70 hours a year for the senior high school (10th grade) boys, (while girls learn home economics).

Contents. Activities included in the seven "areas" enumerated below are to be taught respectively in accordance with the developmental level and the sexes of boys and girls.

Calisthenics

Apparatus (self-testing acting activities for the low grade children)

Track and Field (running and jumping in elementary school)

Ball Games (lead-up games in elementary school)

Combative events (Sumō in elementary school, one sport selected from Sumō, Jūdō or Kendō for high school boys)

Rhythm and Dance

Aquatics

All the students of colleges and universities are required to take four credits successfully in health and physical education; two in theory and two in activity courses. Lectures in the theory courses include theories in both health and physical education. Several kinds of games and sports are usually provided for their choice in activity courses. Many institutions provide extension courses for activities, such as aquatics and mountaineering courses in summer, skiing and/or skating courses in winter.

Extra-curricula Activities. Extra-curricula programs in schools include many physical activities. In Japan, it may be said that there are no schools which do not provide the annual sports days and excursions.

Intramural sports are especially prevalent among junior and senior high schools.

Inerschool athletic contests, while they should be encouraged because of the valuable educational outcomes, are very likely to ensue undesirable results. The Ministry of Education, issuing instructions on "Interschool Athletics of Students", has suggested the principles of educational administration and supervision of interschool athletics. Some items of instructions will be cited here:

- 1) The elementary school pupil, as a rule, shall not take part in an interschool contest.
- 2) The Junior high school student, at a level where the emphasis is placed upon intramural sports, should make it a rule to compete against schools within the same prefecture as where his own school is located.
- 3) The senior high school student may take part in regional and nation-wide contests once a year or so.
- 4) The sponsors of students' athletic contests shall be educational organs such as the boards of education, or organizations relative to education such as the Japan Amateur Athletic Association and other national organizations of various sports. Organizations other than those mentioned above, when recognized by a specially organized council, may join as co-sponsors.

Baseball is one of the most favourite sports among students. The National Championship Tournament of High School Baseball which is held every August, boasts that a total of over 1,600 teams take part in the preliminary tournaments throughout the country, and that 400,000 enthusiastic spectators crowd into the Kōshien Stadium during the final tournaments for eight days.

b. Sports and Recreation in the Community

Clubs and associations for sports and recreation are organized at different places and have been operated democrally. Though their increase has been quite remarkable, they are short of leaders and poor in facilities and equipment. In 1961, the government enacted a law for the promotion of sports which aim at the training of leaders and providing with facilities and equipment. Business administration concerning sports and recreation is under the charge of the Ministry of Education together with business concerning school physical education.

Since the Ministry has made great efforts to establish adequate facilities and equipment for physical education, there is at least one official all-round playground today set up in each prefecture.

Works done by the Ministry itself for the promotion of sports and recreation, or help rendered by it to other organizations are as follows:

1) National Athletic Meeting

This is one of the most prosperous programs for sports in Japan. About thirty kinds of athletic sports are included in the competition. The Autumn Meet attracts ten thousand and more representatives from all the prefectures. In addition to the events competed in the Autumn Meet, aquatic events are held in summer, and winter sports contests in winter.

2) Annual National Recreation Conference

The National Recreation Association of Japan holds the All Japan Mass Meet of Recreation each year under the sponsorship of the Ministry to help develop healthy recreation movements, from 1941 onwards.

3) Fostering Leaders

As there is no organization for fostering leaders of sports and recreation, the Ministry of Education holds regular short training courses.

4) Appointment of Sports and Recreation Leaders of City, Town and Village.

Some 20,000 sports and recreation leaders have been appointed throughout the country.

The board of education of the district takes charge of physical education, sports and recreation activities for the citizens in each district.

Large companies and factories usually have a section in charge of safety, health and physical activities for their workers. Factories employing fifty or more workers are required by law to provide a health administrator who may not be a physician. Some of them employ physical educators or recreation leaders on a full time basis.

Japan Amateur Athletic Association.

The J.A.A.A. is composed of the thirty-four national organizations representing various sports organizations. There are two committees. One is the Japan Olympic Committee and the other is National Athletic Meet Committee. The former, composed of the nineteen organizations related to the Olympic Games, represents Japan for the matters of the Olympic Games, and the latter, composed of all the thirty-four organizations, plans and administers the National Athletic Meet.

c. Research Works

Under the new education system after the last war, each college and university took up physical education as a required course, and in 1950, the Japanese Society of Physical Education was founded. These events happened to be influential factors in promoting a remarkable research activity in physical education. In the beginning there were only less than 200 members in the Japanese Society of Physical Education, but gradually the number of the members has increased up to 1,500, and at the national assembly each year, about 500 papers (or reports) on various researches are read. These researches belong to one of the follo-

wing areas: natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences. This society has published an official journal, *The Research Journal of Physical Education*, in which all the original researches are published. At about the same time a medical society was organized and called the Japan Physical Fitness Society and its official journal, *The Japanese Journal of Physical Fitness*, publishes all the papers on fundamental researches in the field.

The most outstanding characteristic of the research status in physical education at present is that scholars from various other fields have joined in researches and as a result studies based on two or more fields of science have come to be popular. For example, kinesiology is based on dynamics, anatomy, and physiology, and tests and measurements are based on psychology and physiology; these two have come to organize one aspect in physical education research. There is a strong tendency to form joint works in which researchers from various fields cooperate in studying a project.

3. Teacher Training Courses in Physical Education

In elementary schools, classroom teachers teach physical education classes. In junior and senior high schools, there are physical education teachers professionally trained on full time basis.

Forty-six state colleges and universities and several private institutions provide training courses for elementary and junior high school teachers. Right after the war, because of the shortage of teachers, two-year training courses were adopted in addition to the regular four-year courses. Recently as problems of the shortage of teachers have been gradually solved, the two-year courses are being abolished. For the teachers in elementary schools, four credits in physical education activities are recommended for completion in addition to the four credits required for all students as general education subjects as previously mentioned.

In comparison with the pre-war professional training courses for physical education teachers, the inadequacy of semester hours for students majoring in this field may be pointed out here. There are many complaints from educational circles and voices from elementary school principals that newly graduated teachers are lacking in teaching ability in physical education. According to the current education law, colleges do not necessarily have to provide special training courses of physical education for training classroom teachers of elementary schools. Hence, the demand for special training courses for elementary school teachers to make up for these deficiencies has become acute by requiring four credits of activity courses.

Students who take physical education as a major or a minor in order to become junior high school teachers have to take at least sixteen credits in professional courses of physical education.

Physical education majors in order to become teachers for senior high schools, are required to complete thirty-two credits in professional courses in physical education. About ten institutions have professional training programs at this level.

In these teacher training programs, the following specialized subjects are required :

Introduction to physical education

Principles of physical education

Administration of physical education

History of physical education

Tests and measurements in physical education

Psychology in physical education

Anatomy

Kinesiology

Sociology in physical education activities

Physiology of exercise

Individual and public health

Administration of school health

Activities :

Gymnastics

Track and field

Ball games (basketball,, soccer, rugby football, handball, speedball, touch football, volleyball, etc.)

Combative activities (JŪDŌ, SUMŌ, KENDŌ)

Aquatics and life-saving

Dancing (modern dance, folk dance)

Winter sports (skiing, skating)