Perspectives of School Physical Education Curriculum in Japan: Analyzing Changes in the Japanese Education Ministry's Course of Study after World War II¹

Prof. Dr. Takeo Takahashi
University of Tsukuba
Japan

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Address for correspondence:

Takeo Takahashi
Prof. Dr.
University of Tsukuba
Institute of Health and Sport Sciences
Tnenodai 1-1-1, Tsukubashi, Ibarakiken
305-8574 Japan
Tel: +81(0)298 53 2688

日本の学習指導要領は、小・中学校が1998年に、高校が1999年に改訂された。改訂の趣旨は、内容の精選と週5日制移行に伴う時間数削減、社会的要請への対応であった。そこでは、教科としての存在根拠が問われている。本発表では、戦後の日本の学習指導要領の変遷を紹介し、21世紀に向けて体育の抱える問題点について検討を加えた。

戦後日本の学習指導要領は7回改訂された。しかし、その基本構想という観点からみれば、その改訂過程は5段階に区別できる。民主体育志向（1947, 1953）、文化志向（1958）、体力志向（1968）、生涯スポーツ志向（1977, 1989）、心と体の一体化志向（1998, 1999）である。

これらの改訂の経過を踏まえ、学習指導要領の存在意義、教科の目標論、選択制の現実という論点から体育の存在根拠を検討した。体育の将来を考えると、教師教育システムの改革や競技主義の打破、保健と体育の関係、スポーツのための教育と生涯スポーツ志向のための体力の関係並びに体育の教科内容をめぐる論議が求められる。

The courses of study (national curriculum) in Japan were revised in 1998 for elementary school and junior high school, and in 1999 for senior high school. A focus of the revision was to reduce the curriculum contents and the time allotted to each subject in order to implement the school system of five-days per week and correspond to new social

needs for education. Surrounding this issue, the struggles among different academic disciplines and sub-cultures happened below surface, because all of the subjects was afraid of reducing the time allotment. Can physical education survive as a subject of school system in 21st century? What the theoretical rationales and curriculum system should we

develop to survive in school education system? We must answer seriously these issues.

This paper reports changes in the physical education course of study mandated by the Ministry of Education after World War II and examines some problems in school physical education in Japan on the edge of the 21st century.

In Japan, the Ministry of Education mandates a course of study which contains both the objectives and contents of physical education. Conceptually, the national curriculum gives minimum requirements, leaving creative practice to the schools. However, the Ministry of Education issues 'guidelines for teaching' and 'materials for teaching' which outline specific details about the contents, teaching materials, and the teaching methods. The Ministry also sponsors symposia for teachers' consultants from local school boards to help them to give instructions to the teachers of each school. Thus, the effect of the course of study on the practice of school physical education is so strong that it gives apparent influences on the present situation in Japanese school physical education.

Though the Ministry of Education has revised the course of study seven times since World War II, we can divide them into four groups in terms of each fundamental concept.

I. Democratic Physical Education (1947, 1953)

After World War II, the curricula of physical education were reformed under the supervision of GHQ (the General Headquarters). The basic objective was to replace the militaristic educational system by a democratic one. The actual curricula were formed by introducing American educational ideas, whose main concepts were as follows:

- 1) Centralized curricula were denied, thus the educational authority was decentralized. The course of study became a reference book without a legal basis. Schools and regional administrative bodies were encouraged to form their own curricula.
- 2) The concept of physical education was converted from 'education of the physical' to 'education through

physical activities'. New ideas from American physical education were actively introduced.

- 3) Multi-objective physical education aiming for physical, mental and sociological development and life with recreational activities was adopted along with the conceptional conversion. In particular, objectives such as sociological development and recreational activities became important.

- 4) The former exercise-oriented physical education was changed to physical education with a multi-activity program. Curricula were divided into 'credit units'.

- 5) Teacher-oriented uniform education was changed to physical education which emphasized child-centered problem-solving learning and small-group learning.

II. "culture-oriented physical education" (1958) and "fitness-oriented physical education" (1968).

These fundamental policies in physical education were further modified according to social transitions, such as independence, economic revival, the Tokyo Olympics and intellectual ability problems in educational circles from the late 1950s to the 1960s. Changes occurring during this era were as follows:

- 1) In the 1958 revision, courses of study were prescribed along a national standard, which all school had to meet.
- 2) The curricula (activities) eventually began to conform with a sport culture system.
- 3) The new policy emphasized systematic teaching methods which were more appropriate for the sport culture system than for child-centered problem-solving learning.
- 4) The 1968 revision stressed physical fitness as an objective in dealing with decline of youth fitness on the basis of the development of fitness sciences.
- 5) Fitness (exercise) area in the curricula was enlarged and the practices for improving fitness beyond physical education class (i.e. free time activities and extracurricular activities) were encouraged by the authority.

III. School physical education aiming for lifelong sport (1977, 1989)

In mid 1970s, a major change toward lifelong sport was observed throughout the advanced nations. Highly advanced industrial societies created various benefits, but also generated serious social problems. The conversions of 'industrial to post industrial societies' and 'material wealth to quality of life' became social indices. Individual persons started to realize the importance of leisure and lifelong learning. Journalists began to report on leisure, play and usefulness of life. The 'sport for all' movement expanded in Japan during this era and led to a remarkable development of community sport activity programs. The citizen's ideas and values of sports in their lives changed drastically. Ideas such as 'sports as life culture' began to hold.

Under these circumstances, the course of study was revised in 1978 and again in 1989, with a clear aim for lifelong sport. A summary of 1989's revision of the course of study is here described.

1) Changes in the concept of physical education

Physical education as 'education in sport', which emphasizes the intrinsic value of physical activities, has been accepted as a fundamental concept. However, the concept of 'education through physical activities' has also been adopted in Japan. The Ministry of Education aims of 'individualized and personalized physical education' correspond to a national policy of 'education which cultivates individuality and motivation for learning'. It is interested in educational methods in which students develop the ability to spontaneously handle and solve tasks that meet their interests and abilities in the course of study.

2) Change in objectives

The course of study emphasizes a 'pleasurable experience in physical education', since this objective may develop a lifelong appreciation of and involvement in sport activities (laying stress on affective objectives). Objectives of physical education are established on the same basis, although expressions may vary by scholastic stage. Objectives for

senior high school physical education are shown in Fig.1. The main goal is to develop the 'necessary ability for and attitude towards lifelong sport'. The development of sport skills and physical fitness, as well as sporting concepts such as fairness, cooperation and responsibility are considered important to accomplish this overall goal.

Fig. 1: Objectives of Physical Education in Senior High School

3) Classification of physical activities by type of pleasure

Properties of physical activities are now understood and classified on the basis of the theory of play (i.e., motivation of participating in sports in terms of sources of pleasure). It is a psychological classification. All types of physical activities are divided into either calisthenics (activities to satisfy needs) or sports and dance (activities to satisfy desire). The latter is further classified into "competition oriented", "conquest oriented", "record achievement oriented", "form achievement oriented" and "mimicry oriented" types. The national course of study (especially in the materials for teaching) advocates teaching methods to provide sufficient experience in such physical activities. That is the method which individual pupil decides his own object (learning purpose in the process).

4) Change of curricula composition

[Elementary schools]

Physical education in elementary schools is composed mostly of physical activities and some health education instructions. Activities practiced in each grade are shown in Table 1. The new course of study divides elementary school education into three grades, lower (1,2), middle (3,4) and upper (5,6),

instead of six, aiming for flexible practice of physical activities through selection and integration.

'Fundamental physical activities' and 'games' constitute the contents of physical education in the lower and middle grades. It is difficult for students at that developmental stage to sufficiently experience activity properties of calisthenics, sports or dance. 'Fundamental physical activities' are non-competitive individual plays and 'games' are competitive team plays. 'Exercise', 'apparatus gymnastics', 'track and field', 'swimming', 'ball activities' and 'dance' constitute physical activities for the higher grades. Percentages in Table 1 represent hour ratios to be instructed.

Table 1: Scope of Physical Activities in Elementary School

Grade	Lower (1,2)	Middle (3,4)	Upper (5,6)
Fundamental Physical Activities	* 70%	* 55%	* 30%
Games	* 30%	* 30%	* 30%
Exercise			* 15%
Apparatus Gymnastics			* 15%
Track and Field			* 15%
Swimming		* 10%	* 10%
Ball Activities			* 20%
Dance		* 15%	* 15%
Health Education			* 10%

Note: Hour ratios (%) were not suggested in the 1998 guideline for teaching physical education by Education Ministry

[Junior high and senior high schools]

Tables 2 and 3 show physical activities for junior high and senior high schools, respectively. The five groups in the former course of study (exercise, individual sports, team sports, martial arts and dance) were increased to seven to reflect the composition

of physical activities in elementary schools and to provide instruction with more emphasis on characteristics of the activities. The 'martial arts', which include Judo, Kendo and Sumo, were renamed 'Budo' to utilize their Japanese cultural properties in teaching.

5) Introducing selective programs

Intending to promote deeper connection with life-long sport and to offer individualized education, the course of study offers 'selective programs' in which students can select types of activities according to their own interests, abilities and capacities.

Selective programs are introduced in the second year of junior high school, with the range further expanded for senior high school students (table 2 and 3). In programs for junior high school students, only intra-activity selection and selection of an activity from a group are possible; however, senior high school students are encouraged to select activity groups. After 1970 the Ministry of Education introduced ideas from Western nations into the course of study.

Table 2: Scope of Activities and Range of Selection in Junior High School

Scope of Activities	1st	2nd	3rd	Range of Selection requirement
Exercise	*	*	*	
Apparatus Gymnastics	*			selecting 2 or 3 events from mat work, horizontal bar, balance beam, and vault horse
Track and Field	*			1 or selecting appropriately from short distance run, hurdle run, broad jump, and high jump
Swimming	*			2 selecting appropriately from crawl stroke, breast stroke, and back stroke
Ball Games	*			selecting 2 activities from basketball, handball, soccer, volleyball, tennis, table tennis, badminton, and softball
Budo				2 selecting one activity from judo, kendo, and sumo
Dance				1 creative dance and folk dance
Theory of Physical education	*	*	*	requirement

Note: * means requirement

Table 3: Scope of Activities and Range of Selection in Senior High School

Scope of Activities Exercise	Type of Selection requirement	Range of Selection
Apparatus Gymnastics selection	intra-activity	1 3-4 activities (selection from activity groups)
Track and Field	intra-activity selection	
Swimming	intra-activity selection	
Ball Games	2 activities from a group	
Budo	1 activity from a group	one group
Dance	dance	
Theory of Physical education	requirement	
Others	if possible, ski, skate, wrestling etc.	

Note: In Ball Games, selection from basketball, handball, soccer, rugby, volleyball, tennis, table tennis, badminton, softball. In Budo, selection from judo and kendo (if possible, sumo, naginata, kyudo).

IV. Physical education for mind and body (1998, 1999)

The courses of study were revised in 1998 for elementary school and junior high school, and in 1999 for senior high school. In advance of the revision, the Central Deliberate Committee of Education discussed the fundamental policies of education in Japanese society towards 21st century and advocated 'ability to live' as a key concept of school education that was embodied in three elements; 'ability to take the initiative in problem solving', 'plenty of humanity', and 'health and fitness'.

On the basis of the report by the Committee, we examine the direction of revision concretely. A focus of the revision was to reduce the curriculum contents and the time allotted to each subject in order to implement the school system of five-days per week. Surrounding this issue, the struggles among different academic disciplines and sub-cultures happened below surface. The academic societies forming the basis on respective subjects petitioned the Education Ministry to maintain the their time allotments. The members of the board of directors of the Japan Society of Physical Education made an extra meeting to report the rationales for maintaining 3 hours per week for physical education. The rationales were examined in terms of lifelong sport, health and fitness, and human relationship.

As a result, the time allotment of each subject was equally reduced, while a new subject named 'comprehensive learning' (problem-solving learning about contemporary social problems such as 'internationalization', 'computerization' 'welfare' and 'environment') was brought. Eventually, the time allotment of physical education (including health education) was reduced from 105 hours to 95 hours per year in elementary school and junior high school, and from 9 units to 8 units for 3 years in senior high school. The followings were only main changes.

1) Change of the objectives

The structure of the objectives is basically the same with the former course of study. Lifelong sport is also the most important objective. However we can recognized a big change in the description of the objectives. That is, in the instruction of physical education the importance of 'integrating mind and body' is stressed. What does it mean? Frankly speaking, it shows the attitude of physical education towards the problems arising in the school and students' life. Due to the drastic change of social environment surrounding children, serious problems arise in schools and among children; that is 'disruption of class', 'rejection of attending school', 'bullying (ill treating among students)', 'drug abuse', 'stress by excessive competition of entrance examination', and 'decline of fitness and general motor ability'. In these situations, it was reconfirmed that physical education has the important role to relieve mind and body of children and to assure plenty of human relationship. And also, it was discussed about better physical activities, teaching materials and methods for pupils to be able to learn 'more easily and more cooperatively'.

2) Change of the learning contents

Until this revision, physical activities were the first of all the contents of physical education shown in the course of study and the learning contents such as 'motor skills' and 'social attitude' were indicated in relation to respective activities. In this revision, 'the way of learning' was newly added with corresponding to the foundational policy of education

stressing 'the ability to take initiative in problem solving'. The change in contents also seems to reflect that the Education Ministry put emphasis on the 'thought and judgement' (way of learning) as a point of grading since the former revision. That is, the revision was an attempt to make objectives, contents, methods and grading consistent with each other.

3) Exercise for relieving mind and body (Karadahogushi)

In order to achieve the objective of 'integrating mind and body', the exercise for relieving mind and body (called 'Karada-hogushi' in Japanese) was introduced to the area of fitness. Karada-hogushi aims for awareness of the body, communication with others, and regulating mind and body. In other words, it is an exercise that encourages to feel pleasure in doing it, to relax mind and body, and to communicate with classmates. We can find out similar ideas in such programs as 'the body awareness', 'body work', 'dance therapy', 'adventure games', 'Körper Erfahrung' in Germany'.

4) Curricula of ball games

Basketball, Volleyball and Soccer used to be the big activities of school physical education all over the world. However, in an age of lifelong sport, various kinds of new sports and marginal sports have appeared and been introduced into school physical education.

It is a problem how we should make selection of activities with what criteria for the selection. In the process of revising, it was seriously discussed how we could overcome the 'activism' which insists on the independence of their activity or the supremacy in educational value over other activities. And then the ball games for elementary school were classified in terms of rules and tactics, which was a step forward to the reconstruction of ball games. The Author thinks that curriculum of ball games will be reconstructed on the basis of such game classification as 'invasion type', 'net/ wall type', 'fielding type', and 'target type' (Almond, L.) in future.

5) Expansion of selective program

In this revision, selective program was expanded.

In junior high school, the range of selection at second grade became the same with third grade. In senior high school, the number of required activities for each grade diminished from 3-4 to 2-4 (see table 2 and 3).

V. Existing problems of school physical education

The following section will discuss existing problems, taking into account responses from the actual educational field and also public opinions.

1) Discussion on national curriculum

The current course of study became the national standard in 1958. Governmental regulation of educational content played an important role in maintaining a national educational standard. However, such national rules impede the formation of unique and original curricula in each school and teachers acquisition of 'expertise'. The author recognizes the positive aspects of governmental regulations on sports facilities and time of physical education class, but believes it is more efficient to entrust educational content to schools for nurturing teachers' expertise and superior practice.

Despite the efforts of national and local boards of education to spread the content and methods of the newly revised course of study, they are not sufficiently succeeding. For example, although selective programs are encouraged by the ministry for lifelong sport activities as previously mentioned, they are rarely implemented and are positively accepted only in limited experimental schools and progressive schools. The substance and the development of school physical education depend on the teachers' consciousness and expertise.

In order to improve teachers' expertise, our present teacher education system of undergraduate and graduate programs in the university must be basically reformed as soon as possible. After world war II, the educational system was constructed on the basis of the philosophy; 'liberal arts and academic disciplines'. However the limitation of the system is already clear. It is not well functioning to produce the effective physical educators. It is an ur-

gent task for us to reform the system from 'the liberal arts and academic disciplines oriented' to 'the profession oriented'. Speaking from my experiences, I could find the fine models of teacher education system in Ohio State University in USA, Queensland University in Orstraria, and Chistchurch college of Education in New Zealand.

In addition, it is also critical task for physical educators to break with the athleticism. Many physical educators have much more interests in coaching in school sport club than teaching physical education class. Author thinks that championship sport club activity should be removed from school to community and that physical educators should devote themselves to teaching physical education class and school sport club as life time sport.

2) Discussion of objectives of physical education

Under the concept of 'education in sport', a fundamental role or goal of physical education courses is to create 'independent sportive persons' who value and accept sports all through their lives. However, some sort of conflict in 'education in sport' is seen among the general public. Different ideas of sports' intrinsic values are related to this conflict. In other words, conflicts, exist between people who understand the intrinsic values from a psychological and subjective perspective such as 'meaningful experience' and 'pleasure', and people who view them from an objective perspective such as techniques, tactics, norms (rules and manners) and scientific knowledge of sport culture. Objectivists are success-driven and attach importance to finding and solving problems related to sport techniques, tactics, norms, organization systems and ideas.

Discussion in detail must be continued for evaluating and connecting such 'subjective experiences' and 'acquisition of objective content' from the viewpoint of realization of lifelong sport activities.

Another problem is understanding the relation between intrinsic and extrinsic values of physical activities. The course of study takes the stand of maintaining the relevance between physical and health education and considers 'pleasurable experi-

ence' and 'physical fitness' as two objectives of equal weight. In more specific terms, it takes the position of functional allotment that sport classes give participants the opportunity to experience the 'pleasure of physical activities' and calisthenics classes develop 'physical fitness'. However, the author thinks that this position is too superficial. More persuasive philosophy and methodology must be developed to understand the relation between the two subjects, education for sports and physical fitness for lifelong-sport-oriented educational practice.

In addition, we have to examine more scientifically the possibilities of personality development and sociological development through participating in physical education activities. Though these possibilities have been told as ideals and expected as consequence, the methodology to realize them have not been explored seriously. If these possibilities are ascertained through scientific research, and socially recognized, the status of physical education in school subjects will become higher.

3) Discussion of selective program

Experimental schools and progressive schools offer selective programs and co-educational classes following the course of study's revision (1989). Even some elementary schools test selective intra-physical activity programs (e.g., selecting one event from track and field activities). However, most junior high schools or even senior high schools do not positively accept this system. Limited staff, sport facilities and equipment and necessary reformation of school curricula impede the implementation of this system.

On the other hand, quite a few people fear the expansion of the selective program which regards students' desire as most important. Their concern is whether it is appropriate for the students themselves to determine the types of physical activities and learning contents based on their own interests alone. Indeed, there must be a certain level of compulsory physical education taught to all students. If there is none, the foundation of physical education may disappear.

Discussions on the evaluation of selective pro-

grams also concerns what must be taught in physical education. Content and types of obligatory and optional physical activities must be decided through careful discussion to create 'independent sportive persons', but principles or guidelines to make decisions have not yet been established.

Methods for classifying physical activities need to be established by considering the similarities of and relationships among techniques, tactics, rules and content, especially for various kinds of physical activities. The national classification method based on play theory (classification by type of pleasure) cannot derive principles for formulating curricula. Objective classification methods are necessary to decide mandatory and optional physical activities.

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