Physical education and sports sciences in Japan

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1. Higher educational institutes for physical education and sports science
   Two universities have long history in the field of sports and physical education: the University of Tsukuba founded in 1872 and Nippon Sports Science University founded in 1891. The University of Tsukuba is a national institution and Nippon Sports Science University is a private institution. The number of universities in the field has increased gradually over the past hundred years, and 31 departments and schools are currently recognized by the University Council of Physical Education Course as the specialized education programs for sports and physical education. Of the 31 departments and schools, 16 offer master’s programs and nine offer doctoral programs. The number of programs that specialize sports and physical education is still increasing since 2003.

2. Moving from physical education to sports science
   It is the common conception that the role of physical education is to practice sports and physical movements. Teaching physical literacy may be recognized as an additional role, but many other roles, such as providing knowledge about anatomical and physiological structure and function of human body, are not understood traditionally as a part of physical education. Due to the limited conception that the term physical education might represent, some universities have replaced, or are planning to replace, the term “physical education” from the name of the school with the term “sports sciences.” In addition, most of newly-established universities, schools and departments adopted the term “sports sciences” for naming their institution. The new naming might serve as a catchword for advertising their broader scope towards sports and physical education to recruit students.

3. Academic societies in the field of physical education, sports science and sports medicine
   There are two major academic societies in the field, which are Japan Society of Physical Education, Health and Sport Sciences (JSPEHSS) and Japanese Society of Physical Fitness and Sports Medicine (JSPFSM). The JSPEHSS was established in 1950 and has kept its leadership role in physical education and sports sciences in Japan. The number of active members is about 6,000. There are 15 specialized branches of which seven branches have their individual societies, e.g. Japanese Society of Biomechanics and Japan Society for The Pedagogy of Physical Education. Established in 1949, the JSPFSM takes its leadership role in the field of sports medicine. It now has about 5,000 members. Both societies as well as their associated branches publish academic journals on a regular basis to disseminate most current knowledge on physical education, sports sciences and sports medicine to the members of the societies and other audience.

4. Providing scientific support for elite athletes
   Administered by the National Agency for the Advancement of Sports and Health (NAASH), Japan Institute of Sports Sciences (JISS) was established in 2001. JISS is the primary national agency aiming to secure excellence in high-level sports performance. As the national center of excellence in sports, “Winning the Gold” is the ultimate goal of JISS. Highly qualified specialists and researchers in a wide variety of sport-related fields are appointed to join JISS, utilizing the most up-to-date facilities and equipment to deliver various services and advisory programs. On the basis of leading-edge research in the fields of sports sciences, sports medicine and sports intelligence, these services and programs are developed to enhance international competitiveness of Japanese sports.