

Introduction of Health and Sports Department At Niigata University of Health and Welfare

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1. Introduction

In April 2005, Health and Sports Department started with 13 faculty members, admitting 77 freshmen. This article is not only to take a broad view of the necessity of sports and physical exercises in modern society and the meaning of establishing the Health and Sports Department in this university but also to make suggestions hoping for further progress of the Department in the future.

2. Background of Establishing Health and Sports Department

2.1. Necessity of Sports in Modern Society

The necessity and potential of sports in modern society are increasing. This article is to consider the background of why sports are receiving much attention, highlighting the relationship between the society after the World War II and sports/physical exercises.

In Japan just after WWII, a healthy body necessary for a life, or even the minimum of it necessary to survive was not secured enough because of food shortage. In this age, the role (necessity) of sports and physical exercises is to build a robust body. As democracy had not penetrated into the Japanese society, students were forced to do 'push-ups' or 'marathon running' all together in physical education at school as if it were a military training in order to build a robust body and health.

After that, in 1960s when the Tokyo Olympic Games was held, competitiveness in doing sports including the items of the Olympic Games as a top (modern sports) was pursued. For the society

of high economic growth period, rationalized and uniformed people were needed, so people of our country were required to meet more rationally and uniformly the evaluation criteria which included 'more skillful', 'faster', 'jump higher', 'jump farther' than and 'win' over others. Physical education at school focused on the practice of techniques in sports, and 'skillful', 'win', 'jump higher' etc. were evaluated as a performance of students in the physical education.

When the high economic growth period passed and affluence in the economy of Japan was achieved, not work-oriented principle but leisure was valued more highly, and it has been pursued that individuals do sports and physical exercises appropriate for their own life style to live a good life. Furthermore, enjoying sports and physical exercises over a lifetime has become essential to lead a full life. The focus on such a value after the high economic growth period is continuing now. People has come to seek for not involvement in sports and physical like a military training, or rationalized and unified involvement in them by rating only based on techniques and skills, but 'involvement in sports and physical exercises as a life-long sport', i.e. enjoying sports depending on their own physical ability irrespective of their techniques and skills for the sports. However, adequate physical ability is essential for 'enjoyment' in sports and physical exercises, and the 'enjoyment' is not secured unless 'competitiveness' such as 'win or lose' and 'fast or slow' exists in doing them. In that context, it should be necessary to understand that we have secured the 'enjoyment' based on 'building

up a robust body and health' aimed for just after the World War II and 'pursuing techniques in sports' during the high economic growth period. These days, education for fostering the ability to enjoy sports through a lifetime is provided at elementary schools, junior and senior high schools, colleges and universities. In addition to that, measures for communities, such as a 'comprehensive community sports club', by which anyone can enjoy any sports anytime irrespective of ages, genders and items of sports, are being arranged.

As mentioned above, the necessity of sports and physical exercises has changed dramatically along with the ages until today. And at particular, what roles sports and physical exercises should play for 'health' is being asked now. In addition, it is said that sports as physical activities play an important role in solving current problems such as a lot of cruel matters or 'bullying' by younger boys/girls. It is necessary that children who live in modern society, lacking in physical senses as a living body living in a real society due to virtual senses perceived from virtual world and society on a PC or in a game, should foster their spatial perception, physical senses and understanding others actually through sports.

2.2. Concept of Establishing Health and Sports Department

This university aims for developing QOL supporters who give support to every person, including old people and handicapped people, in order to make his/her own 'life' more satisfactory in the hyper-aging society of Japan, through taking in purposes or goals of his/her own everyday life brotherly. So this university will develop human resources who can make full commitment to 'living well' including the preventive actions for 'living healthier' as well as actual medical care for diseases.

In particular, the Department was established for the purpose of 'developing human resources who can make full commitment to "living well" including the preventive actions for "living healthier"', the university philosophy. That is to say that the Department will develop QOL supporters in order for people to 'live healthier' by making use of 'physical exercises' as a key and focusing on 'rest', 'nutrients' and 'physical exercises' which are the three pillars of health. By adding the Health and Sports Department involving in 'physical exercises' to the existing departments involving in 'rest' and 'nutrients', this university has achieved an educational

The pillars of Health

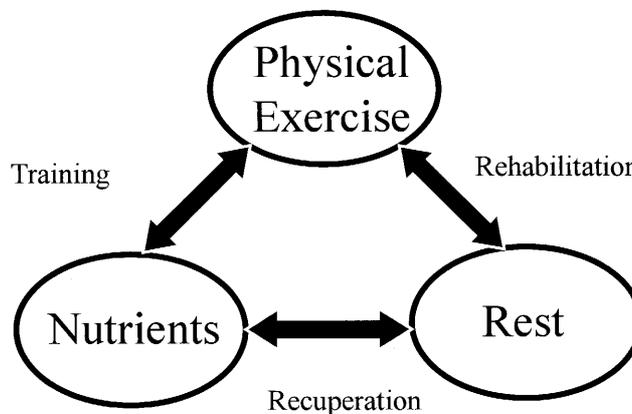


Fig.1 The pillars of Health

environment and an academic research function through which three pillars of health, i.e. 'rest', 'nutrients' and 'physical exercises' can be studied totally. From now on, it should be necessary to connect the three pillars, 'rest', 'nutrients' and 'physical exercises', more closely. (Figure 1)

Thus the Health and Sports Department has been established under the concepts based on the policy as follows, with taking account of the university philosophy as mentioned above and the connection between existing departments and the Health and Sports Department. 'Health Promotion' is a part of the concept. It is a new idea which was introduced at the first health promotion conference held in Ottawa, Canada, by WHO(World Health Organization) in 1986. The 'Health Promotion' is defined as 'the process through which people can improve and control their own health', while Ms. Ilona Kickbush mentions that 'Perfectly good condition in terms of physical, mental and social aspects is achieved only by recognizing the needs of individuals and groups, meeting the needs, improving the environment, and meeting the environment' and therefore 'Health is the resource of everyday life,

not the purpose of life' and 'Health is a positive concept highlighted as social and personal resources as well as physical ability'. That is, the Health Promotion involves in 'well-being on top of a healthy lifestyle, not limited to the responsibility of health departments'. Following the concept as above, the Department grasps the image of the Health Promotion as indicated in Figure 2 below. In the image, the concept traditionally introduced, i.e. 'health is to push up a stone meaning health', is expanded. Our concept it that health should be grasped also in terms of helping with pushing up the stone meaning health from behind, moderating a slope so that the stone can be pushed up easily (social and personal resources), and so on. That is, the Department will develop human resources that help with pushing up the stone meaning health from behind or to moderate a slope in order to push up the stone easily. Our concept is conformable to the two major policies related to health or sports of today in Japan. To help with pushing up a stone meaning health from behind is held up in 'Healthy Japan 21' by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, and to moderate a slope so that the stone can be

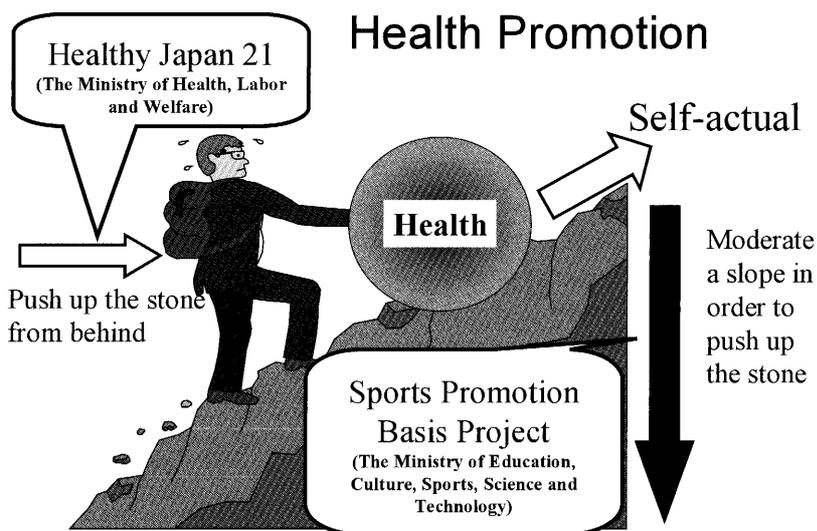


Fig.2 Concept of Health Promotion

pushed up easily is held up in 'Sports Promotion Basis Project' by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Both projects hold up specific numerical targets or goals to be achieved by 2010. In order to meet the numerical targets, 1) development of instructors who give direct guidance as to sports and physical exercises, 2) development of trainers who make sports and physical exercises more effective, and 3) development of managers who adjust the environment for doing sports and physical exercises more easily are needed.

The Health and Sports Department holds up educational missions conformable to social trend and the philosophy set at the beginning of our university as mentioned above, being expected to bring about a great synergistic effect in both education and research by considering 'health' comprehensively through mutual combination of functions with existing departments.

3. Feature of Curriculum

In order to develop the three-type human resources needed for the major policies of Japan mentioned above, the Department provides the curriculums as follows:

1. As to the development of instructors who give direct guidance as to sports and physical exercises, the curriculum is comprised of courses for developing teachers and instructors. By completing designated courses including Introduction to Teaching Profession, Principle of Education, Social System in Education, Educational Curriculum, Instruction Method for Physical Education, School Health, Student Instruction, Educational Consultation and Educational Practice, students can acquire a teacher's license for junior/senior high school (physical education)-first class at graduation. Furthermore, this curriculum is adapted for instructors of sports as well as teachers because Physical Training Practice course is prepared for each item of sports in order to learn about

practical coaching.

2. As to the development of trainers who make sports and physical exercises more effective, the curriculum is adapted for the qualification of candidacy for an exam of Japan Amateur Sports Association(JASA)-certified athletic trainers. Courses about theories and practices necessary for athletic trainers are prepared, including Theory and Practice of Physical Training, Exercise Physiology, Taping and Massage Practice, Theory and Practice of Conditioning, Sports Medicine and Treatment for Movement Disorder
3. As to the development of managers who adjust the environment for doing sports and physical exercises more easily, this university offers common courses authorized by JASA, and so this university is designated as one exempted from completion of the courses required for acquiring a qualification of club managers recognized by JASA. The common courses include Sports Business Administration, Sports Sociology, Sports Psychology, Health Care, Theory and Practice of Sports Management, Sports Policy and International Athletics Management.

As to the characteristic courses in each of three areas mentioned above, they are essential for the development of any of the specialized human resources. So those courses are not completely separated into each specialized curriculum so that students can study every area horizontally.

Another feature of this university is that swimming, soccer and basketball (three items in total) are designated as items of sports to be strengthened and the strengthening system for them has been established in the whole university. Students appointed to strengthen their ability in those items are expected to improve each of their own skills in the items and achieve excellent results. Furthermore, club activities of those items designated to be strengthen can be made use of as practical trainings in the curriculums of

the Health and Sports Department. For example, the ability valued highly in the qualification test for athletic trainers is that they possess adaptable fighting potential to give appropriate treatment. So pass/fail judgment of the test depends on how many times taping and massage are trained practically. The Department offers practical fields such as taping, massage and development of training menus because top athletes in the items of sports designated to be strengthened belong to the same Department. On the other hand, the clubs of items designated to be strengthen have an advantage that they can make use of advanced sports medicine, sports management and coaching. In addition, mutual reinforcement in human and facility resources between this university and professional sports teams such as Albirex Niigata (soccer) and Niigata Albirex (basketball), affiliated teams of this university, or sports colleges such as Apple Sports College and Japan Soccer College will generate greater power.

4. Conclusion

If the sports policies in Japan make progress further in the future, development of human resources (education) or basic/applied researches related to sports and health will evolve further to a higher degree. In the process of evolution, it should be believed that well-organized combination of the university philosophy, resources of this university including human/hardware ones such as facilities and resources of the whole group will be able to address advanced sports environment of the next generation. So it would be necessary to establish the management system for well-organized combination of the human/hardware resources in the Health and Sports Department/other departments of this university, Albirex Niigata, Niigata Albirex, and the sports colleges. The establishment is, of course, very difficult and may cause conflicts between those resources. However, the presence of the Health and Sports Department of our

university which is applicable for advanced sports environment will probably exist beyond the conflicts.