

# THE DIRECTION OF SPORT PROMOTION POLICY IN JAPAN FOR THE COMING DECADE

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The year of 2011 was a turning point for the Japanese sports promoting legislation. This is due to the fact that under several revisions done between 1961 and 2011 the Sports Promotion Act, which had served as the fundamental law in sports promotion, was thoroughly changed by the Basic Act on Sport.

The Preamble says that an establishment of a sport-oriented nation is indispensable for the development of the 21<sup>st</sup> c. Japan, which means that a sports policy is to be comprehensively and systematically promoted as a national strategy. To establish a sport-oriented nation, Article 9 stipulates that the Sport Basic Plan, which aims to promote comprehensive and systematic measures for the sport, shall be established by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Therefore, in the present study, by examining the first Sport Basic Plan, which was established in March 2012, pursuant to the Basic Act on Sport, I have decided to discuss the direction of policies to promote sport in Japan.

For the establishment of the Plan, the Central Education Council which engaged in intensive deliberations for approximately six months, following consultation by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, has submitted a report on this issue. As a result of analysis of the current social situation in Japan, the report pointed out the rapid change in values and social environment in which Japan finds itself, such as 1) progression of declining birth rate, aging society and weakening of human relationships, 2) activation of international cooperation and exchanges associated with globalization, and 3) growing international competition. The report also pointed out that through the process of reconstruction after the Great East Japan Earthquake that occurred in 2011, which resulted in an unprecedented damage, the Japanese have reaffirmed the "social bonds".

In addition, based on such changes in the environment, the Central Education Council emphasized that sports also play an important role in the attempt to create a society where all people can enjoy a happy and fulfilled life. Finally, as basic issues in sport policy, the Council proposed the following terms: "creating sport environments enabling participation in sport by a wide range of people in accordance with their specific interests and aptitudes, regardless of age, gender or disabilities". For the realization of this policy issue, as key principles of sport promotion for the coming decade, following seven points have been included in the Sport Basic Plan:

- (a) Increasing sport opportunities for children;
- (b) Promotion of sport activities in line with the life stages;
- (c) Improvement of community sport environments where residents can actively participate;

(d) Training human resources and developing the sport environments in order to enhance international competitiveness;

(e) Promotion of international exchanges and contributions through bids for and holding of international competitions such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games;

(f) Improvement in the transparency and fairness/equity in the sport world;

(g) Creation of a virtuous cycle in the sport world.

Summarizing the above items, we can classify them into four groups:

- (1) Promotion of sport activities in line with the life stages for everyone from infant to senior;
- (2) Enrichment of community sports;
- (3) Reinforcement of international competitiveness and promotion of international exchanges;
- (4) Improvement of governance of sport organization. The above four points can be distinguished as being important for Japanese sport policy for the coming decade.

Incidentally, considering the achievement of the above policy goals, we need to resolve some of the problems that exist in Japanese society, such as long working hours (the number of people working over 50 hours per week is the highest in the world: 28.1%), which prevent the achievement of the goals. The reason is that where there is no leisure time sports activity, which is a leisure activity, cannot thrive. To sum up, we need to view the problem as being more complex and apply broader perspective in order to meet the challenge and achieve the above policy goals.

## References

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