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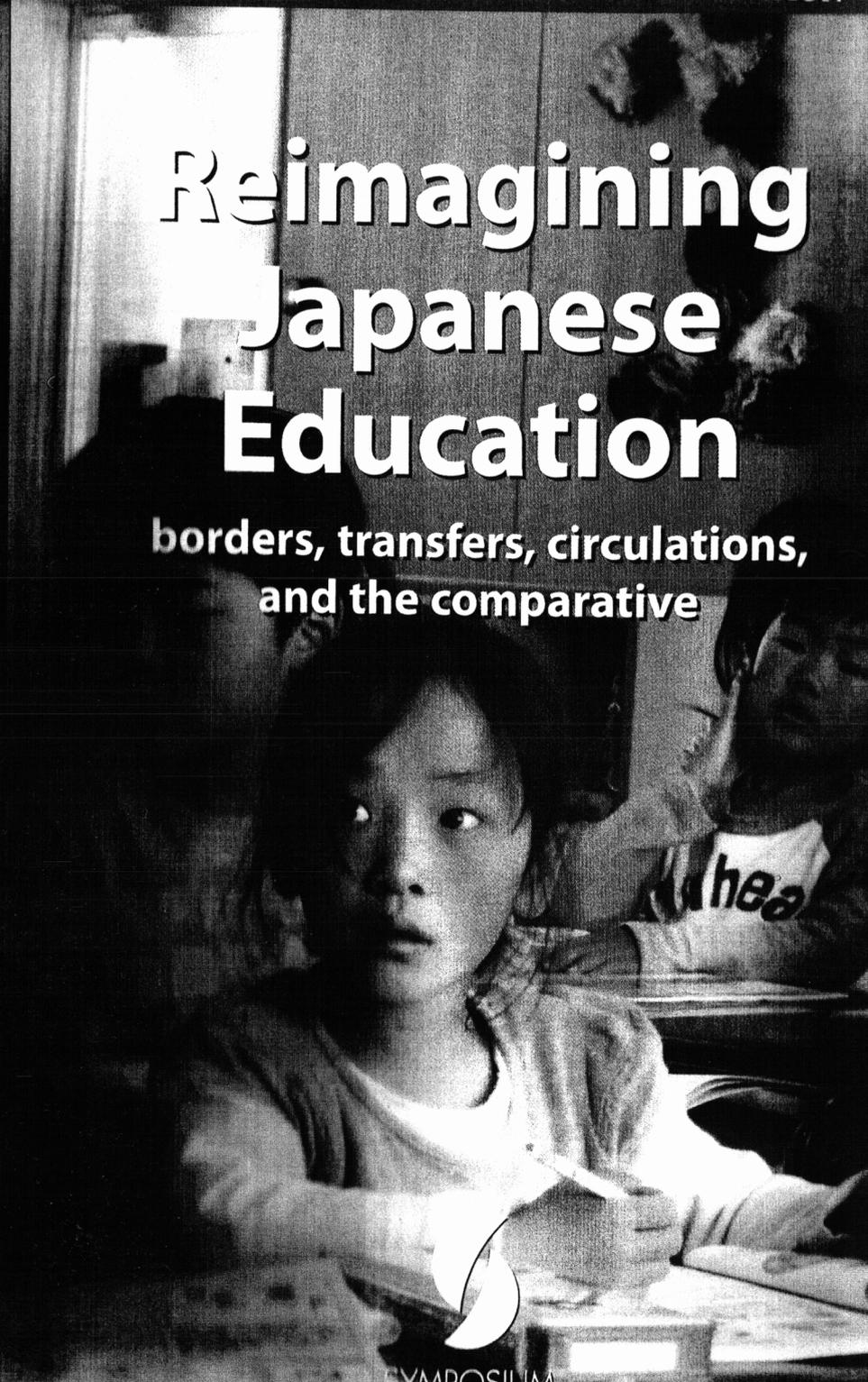
REIMAGINING JAPANESE EDUCATION

WILLIS & RAPPLEYE

SYMPOSIUM

# Reimagining Japanese Education

borders, transfers, circulations,  
and the comparative



SYMPOSIUM

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CHAPTER 7

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## **Beyond the Four Walls of the Classroom: ‘real’ and ‘imagined’ change in Japanese sports and education**

**AARON L. MILLER**

**SUMMARY** Ministry of Education bureaucrats, who write Japan’s sports policy, have actively looked to other nations to find new ideas. Sports policy reforms throughout modern Japanese history have reflected this global outlook, and although they have often been based on foreign policy precedents, they have also been adapted at the grassroots level to fit local Japanese needs. Based on an extensive review of Japanese sports and educational policy documents and observations from long-term (2008-2009) fieldwork with a Tokyo-area private co-educational university basketball club (men’s and women’s teams), as well as fieldwork at the Japan Sports Association’s coach training and certification courses (2009), this chapter argues that some foreign policies that Japan has borrowed have fostered ‘real’ change, while some, especially a recent policy reform aimed at ‘sports for health through science’, have as yet only ‘imagined’ it.

### **Japanese Sports Space as Educational Space**

Nearly all Japanese youth (90.3%) play some form of sports or take some sort of exercise on a regular basis. Almost half (46%) actively participate in a sports club of some kind (Sasakawa Sports Foundation, 2006). Most of these clubs are affiliated with schools, pointing to a clear link between sports and education (Kubo, 1998; Cave, 2004). This connection has deep historical roots. Japan, moreover, remains one of the few nations in the world to place sports under the auspices of a governmental ministry also entrusted to oversee education (Table I). For a nation widely perceived as the inheritor of

the martial arts traditions, Japan reveals much about itself and how it imagines its future in its approaches to sports and physical education, originally western constructs. These same areas also reveal a great deal about how Japan has 'borrowed' education from abroad, especially if one considers sports to be part of 'education', broadly conceived.

Nation	Governmental organization/individual in charge of national sports policy
England	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
France	Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports
Italy	Agency for Cultural Heritage and Activities
Sweden	Ministry of Culture
Denmark	Ministry of Culture
Australia	Department of Health and Aging
New Zealand	Ministry for Culture and Heritage
Korea	Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism
Japan	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology ('MEXT')*

\*There is currently a proposal to create an autonomous Ministry of Sports, which, if successful, would write and oversee Japan's National Sports Policy.

Table I. Governmental organization/individual in charge of national sports policy.

Indeed, from the very beginning of the modern era, Japanese sporting space has been explicitly associated with formal education. Today, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (*Monbukagakushō*; hereafter, MEXT [1]) continues to explicitly link sports in schools with state-sponsored education. Charged with the task of bringing about 'a fulfilled, lifelong sports life', MEXT allocated approximately US\$227 million of a shrinking fiscal resource base for sports-related outlays in 2010, primarily framed in terms of 'boosting international competitiveness' (MEXT, 2000). [2] Schools in Japan are thus entrusted with the task of cultivating the next generation of internationally competitive Japanese athletes and lifelong sports citizens. By looking beyond the metaphor of the 'four walls' of the classroom, sports become another lens through which we can re-imagine Japanese education. They also allow us to examine Japan's perceptions of the 'global' and its interactions with the outside world.

Sports like soccer, baseball and basketball were introduced around the time that Japan adopted a new 'western' education system (1872). They were quickly adopted by and spread through this education system, and were often controlled and popularized by it. Since that time, sports have been taught to young Japanese in school-affiliated sports clubs. School education in Japan today incorporates body movement in several ways, through formal 'physical education' (*taiiku*) classes, as well as 'extra-curricular clubs' (*bukatsudō*) [3], many of which are sports clubs, and school events such as the 'sports festival' (*undōkai*).

'Sports' (*supotsu*) have been considered a 'subcategory' of physical education since their adoption, but there is a less rigid distinction made between them and 'physical education' (*taiiku*) in Japan than there is in other nations (Guttman & Thompson, 2001, p. 90). Due to this association with *taiiku*, *supotsu* in Japan represents a form of body movement that originally came from outside Japan and that continues to be perceived as 'western'.

It is therefore ironic that sports have actually offered young Japanese the opportunity to learn various 'Japanese' values, from the importance afforded to hierarchy and respecting one's elders to the importance of teamwork, 'salutations' (*aisatsu*) and honor. My research on discipline in Japanese schools and sports (Miller, 2009a) has shown how 'hard training' serves to 'teach' these values. As Goodman asserts, 'hardship has always been seen as integral to the learning process in Japan' (Goodman, 2003, p. 10). Such 'hardship' need not necessarily be interpreted in a negative light, either. With an enduring emphasis on 'hard training', sports have served as a realm in which such hardship was offered to Japanese youth as an 'opportunity' to grow. As a result, sports have continued to be perceived as educational realms, and many Japanese look back on their days as members of sports clubs with a special fondness, even when they are talking about 'hard training'.

Japanese sports policy has often been determined by education bureaucrats at MEXT who actively follow the sports policies of other nations to generate new ideas. These sports and physical education policies actually have a large effect on 'education'. Sports policy impacts, for example, most forms of coaching and learning that take place on sports fields and in gymnasiums. The relative weight given to sports vis-à-vis classroom education, implied by national and local budgets, guides coaches and players in their search for purpose in sports, and has the effect of shifting budgetary outlays even further towards specific sports-related research agendas (e.g. sports science and sports medicine-based research projects). Housed within the same ministry as education, sports have been influenced by wider shifts in that area in Japan. This is true both historically and in the present, as this chapter will demonstrate.

Until recently, most studies of Japanese sports have been by physical education researchers affiliated with university education faculties. Lately, however, sports science research has begun to take precedence. The term 'sports science' (*supotsu kagaku*) was initially derived from the German term *Sportwissenschaft*, and thus carries a slightly broader connotation of sports being studied from both 'hard' and 'soft' science perspectives. While there are several established scholars currently researching Japanese sports in this latter category (see e.g. Kelly, 1998, 2004; Light, 1999, 2008; Spielvogel, 2003; Blackwood, 2008), there have been neither thorough accounts of why Japanese sports have historically been considered educational, nor up-to-date accounts of how or why this notion may currently be changing, to say nothing of what this change suggests about Japanese education more broadly.

In fact, the *idea that sports are or should be educational* has actually been contested by Japanese scholars and sports enthusiasts in recent years (see e.g. Tamaki, n.d.; Komuku, 1994; Sawada, 1994; Katsuta, 2002; Sanuki, 2005). Part of the cause, or perhaps effect, of this shift is that sports have increasingly been called upon to produce healthy Japanese bodies through the application of approaches based on sports science and medicine.

As the introduction to this volume reveals, Japanese education has changed, at least on a policy level, and the changes that seem to suggest 'globalization' are prominent. This is clearly the case with the introduction of scientific approaches to sports. In particular, ideas that originated in western nations have been adopted and adapted by Japanese coaches and athletes. Comparative education, notably the writings of Cowen (1997, 2000, 2002), Schriewer (2003) and Steiner-Khamsi (2004), provides us with conceptual lenses which may help disentangle education and globalization issues by focusing on (a) what policy is allowed in and what policy is kept out, and (b) what educational change is 'real' and what educational or sports change is 'imagined'. The cause of this educational transformation, however, is not a simple one-way process by which an entity called 'globalization' affects Japanese school sports directly, as some Japanese sports scholars have suggested (Kusaka, 2006). Rather, it is important to focus on how Japanese sports practitioners and commentators *perceive* the value of such 'globalization', what aspects they think worthy of letting in, and what aspects they would prefer to keep out.

This chapter explores sport policy reforms throughout modern Japanese history and responses to the latest reforms. It utilizes an extensive review of Japanese sports and educational policy documents, and to a lesser extent observations from long-term (2008-2009) fieldwork with a Tokyo-area private co-educational university's basketball teams (men's and women's) and from the Japan Sports Association's coach training and certification courses (2009). It argues that entities like sports and science, which are generally perceived to be inherently western, are initially adopted from the West but are often adapted to fit Japan's local needs. There is 'real' borrowing in terms of policy discourse and policy language, but while the actual policy that is implemented is 'imagined' to fit these local needs, it often does not. Policy reforms imagined at one level of Japanese society, where institutions like the Ministry of Education and the Japan Sports Association look abroad for policy reform ideas, do not always signal 'real' policy reform when they reach the local level.

Because sports were initially adopted as part of a modern and 'western' education system, and because current approaches to sports generally come from abroad, this chapter is directly relevant for discussions of what 'globalization' is, how it impacts policy borrowing and policy-making, and how foreign ideas can and cannot be adapted to fit local contexts. A detailed account of sport policy transitions, and the responses to them, can offer a more nuanced understanding of some of the deeper rifts currently being

created by the apparently heightened scope and pace of external influence. Precisely because it is situated outside the classroom, this study opens up new a vantage point missed by educational scholars who assume that 'education' is only activity that happens within these 'four walls'.

In the following sections, I will discuss various transitions in Japanese sports policy, which, as we have seen, is one dimension of education policy. These sections will show how many of these transitions and reforms were stimulated by ideas from abroad and often mirrored education policy reforms being written down the hall in other MEXT offices. Then I will draw some conclusions regarding how these reforms have been 'imagined', yet failed to effect 'real' change because the foreign ideas behind them have only permeated the minds of outward-looking policymakers, while many Japanese coaches and players at the local level remain immune to them and do not see their value.

### Meiji Origins: physical education and sports policy

Though 'western' sports were not introduced to Japan until the late nineteenth century, somewhat comparable physical activities have been part of Japanese society for centuries. Examples include the 'sports' of *mariuchi*, *kuyurumari* and *kemari* [4], all of which were written about in the *Nihonshoki* and the *Tale of the Heike*. There are also ancient traditions such as sumo and the martial arts of *kenjutsu* (fencing), *kyūjutsu* (archery), *bōjutsu* (staff wielding), *bajutsu* (horsemanship) and *suirenjutsu* (swimming) (Mizuno et al, 2004, p. 14).[5] Following the Meiji Restoration (1868), *taijutsu*, which literally means 'the technique of using a short weapon or bare hands to fight' (*Supa Daijirin*), was established as an official subject of elementary education in the 1872 School Law ('Educational Order' or 'Educational Code', the *gakusei*). At that time, Japan drew on both the Swedish and German systems of calisthenics, not on physical education or sports. Sogawa explains:

The main issue at hand was employing the right system that was beneficial in developing strong young bodies. The newly developed German and Swedish systems of calisthenics were considered the most efficacious for this purpose. At the same time, athletics, ball sports, and traditional Japanese *bujutsu* (martial arts) had not been evaluated by medical experts to assess their efficacy, and the Meiji government considered calisthenics as the only viable option for physical education (2005, p. 197).[6]

Foreign teachers invited to assist in Japan's mass modernization project in the Meiji period (1868-1912) had to lobby the Japanese government to push physical education and sport as part of an agenda for improving people's health, as Roden shows:

Early Meiji educators were not at all convinced of the need for physical education in any form. The preamble of the Educational

Code of 1872 ... made no mention of physical fitness; the code's articles assigned the lowest priority to physical exercise in the primary schools and ignored the subject entirely in establishing academic guidelines for secondary schools (1980, p. 514).

As Rappleye & Kariya (this volume) show, a debate raged at this time over how far western ideas should be allowed into Japanese education, and the same was true of the ideas involved in physical education and sport.

In 1882, however, Mori Arinori, Japan's first Education Minister, said that 'physical training is an indispensable element for character training' (LeTendre, 1994, p. 42). That sports and physical education could and should promote 'character development' was also espoused by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) at the time. Since YMCA officials and Japanese who had attended YMCAs in the USA spread 'American' sports such as basketball and volleyball to Japan, it seems likely that the idea that character could be developed through sports came to Japan around this time (Martens, 1997 [2004], p. 58). Indeed, the Education Ministry of that time established a special division to 'examine the educational value of sports and games' (Abe & Mangan, 1997, p. 190), showing its initial interest in these 'western' pursuits and their purported values. Although the educational function and educational value of sports has often been taken for granted in contemporary Japan and in much recent research on Japanese sports, it took time before these were widely accepted ideas within the Japanese government.

### Reforms to Sports and Physical Education Policy

#### *Pre-Second World War Transitions: the appropriation of physical education for militarism*

If we consider MEXT's 'Course of Study' (*gakushū shidō yoryō*), released every five years as a vision of the future of education, we can see that the various roles assigned to sports have changed over time. There have been at least eight turning points in sports and physical education policy since the Meiji Restoration (Table II). As western sports and ideas regarding exercise gradually entered Japan, the term *taijutsu* was replaced by *taisō*, which is usually translated as 'physical exercises' or 'gymnastics'. In 1891, elementary schools began to incorporate 'amusement exercises' (*yūgi*), 'regular exercises' (*futsū taisō*), and 'soldierly exercises' (*heishiki taisō*). In the same year, the Elementary School Manual Outline (*shōgakkō kyōsoku taikō*) declared:

The purpose of exercise is greater than just maintaining symmetrical growth of the body or becoming healthy; it is also for the purpose of making the spirit jovial and sturdy, as well as keeping the custom of order and discipline.

This last stated purpose was likely due to the influence of the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education, which emphasized Confucian ideals of filial piety, order and respect for laws, morality and the public good. While sports were often adopted and played for amusement by private clubs [7], by 1913 *judo* and *kendo* had become compulsory in the school curriculum, *taisō* had become 'military drill' (*kyōren*), and militarism, physical education and the school were increasingly linked. By the beginning of the Showa period (1926-1989), sports and physical education were increasingly used for the 'purpose of strengthening militaristic activities, including body training and 'cultivation of the spirit' (*seishin shūyō*) for the common people' (Mizuno et al, 2004, p. 15).

Year	Purported goal of sports/ exercise or physical education	Details of transition
1872	<i>Taijutsu</i> (a.k.a. <i>taisō</i> )	From 'one on one fighting techniques' to 'exercise' and 'gymnastics'
1891	'Amusement', 'Regular' Exercise and 'Soldiers' Exercise'	From 'enjoyment' and 'amusement' to 'training for war'
1913	Militarism #1	From 'exercise' to 'military drill'
1941	Militarism #2	From 'exercise' to 'training'
1947	Character Building, Democratic Teaching and Doing of Sport	From 'training for war' to 'training for character'
1954	Corporate/Team Responsibility	From 'American democracy' to 'Japanese corporatism'
1968	Scientific, Increasing Body Size, Strength	From 'Japanese corporatism' to 'scientific-based body strengthening'
1978	Enjoyment	From 'body strength' back to 'enjoyment'
1988	Internationalization, Individualism, 'Informatization' ( <i>jōhōka</i> )	From 'enjoyment' to 'individuality'
2004	Health	From 'individuality' to 'health'

Sources: Sugimoto (1995, pp. 152-156) and MEXT (1999 [2004]).

Table II. Chronological summary of MEXT's goals for sports.

While there were attempts at educational reform in the Taisho period (1912-1926), aimed at lessening the influence of the militarists on sports and physical education, in general such reformers were overwhelmed (Guttman & Thompson, 2001, p. 154). As Rappleye (2009) shows, although one might expect foreign educational ideas to have had greater effect in this era of 'Taisho Democracy', they were not always well received due to complex debates between advocates of nativist, Confucian and German ideas.

Before long, physical education was increasingly viewed as a useful tool of the military, American and English sports were banned or restricted, and Japan was heading towards full-throttle fascism. A physical education council, established in 1929 with the Education Minister as chairman,

'ordered all educational institutions to obtain the ministry's permission for any and all organized baseball games' (Guttman & Thompson, 2001, p. 156), and even the term used to refer to baseball was changed from one which sounded like the English term (*besuboru*) to one that was written in Chinese characters (*yakyū*). People still played the same game, of course; they simply used different language to refer to it. This shows how, in Japan, 'imports' like sports can simultaneously remain in original 'foreign' form (i.e. the basic rules of the game remain the same) while having their 'foreign' origins contested or erased.

The martial arts were appropriated to instill the spirit necessary to support the nation, first in 1913 and then again in 1931 (see Table II and Guttman & Thompson, 2001, p. 156). Just before Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, 'liberal, individualistic, and autotelic' physical education was completely abandoned, and a 'militaristic, collectivist, instrumentalist view of sport became predominant' (Guttman & Thompson, 2001, p. 129). In 1941, the Japanese government decided to change the name of the school subject 'exercise' (*taisōka*) to 'training' (*tairenka*), emphasizing the common duty all Japanese had to their country. In the same year, the 'Important Instruction Points on School Training' (*gakkō tairenka kyōju yōkō*) were released, explaining that *tairenka* aimed:

at the cultivation of the necessary abilities of a loyal and patriotic imperial subject; in other words, one who can fight for the country by putting into practice dedicated service through the discipline and training of the body and spirit, with understanding based on experience, especially in regard to the necessary matter of protecting the country. (Sugimoto, 1995, p. 153)

The Japanese scholar of education and sport Sugimoto Atsuo interprets this development in the following way: 'With the rise of nationalism, the [Japanese] body was more than ever in the hands of the state' (Sugimoto, 1995, p. 153). Japanese bodies had also become weapons of war, and the education system was entrusted to train them using 'physical education'.

*Post-Second World War Transitions: from American democratic ideals to European ideals of a healthy body*

The Course of Study released in 1947 declared that physical education should follow the tenets of 'democratic education', 'aim for the integration of life and exercise that takes seriously the desires and demands of the children', and 'plan for human development through the practice of hygiene and exercise'. It also called for 'character development' (i.e. *ningen keisei* ['human formation'], or *jinkaku keisei* ['personality formation']), signaling the first explicit statement by MEXT of the educational value of sports.[8] The term *tairen* was dropped in favor of *taïku*, which means 'physical education', implies the 'nourishment of the body' through exercise, and has fewer

militaristic connotations than these other terms. *Taïku* is a *kanji*-based term derived from the German '*Körperliche Erziehung*', and was originally conceived on the basis of a Spencian model of educating mind, body and soul (Sogawa, 1997, p. 8). We can see a strong desire here by the US occupying forces, which helped draft this Course of Study, to develop 'democratic' Japanese sportsmen with 'character', rather than athletes with a 'warrior spirit' (Sugimoto, 1995, p. 154). The end of the war and the US Occupation therefore brought with it the end of the connection between sports/physical education and militarism, in policy text at least, and ushered in Japan's era of 'sports as education'. What brought about this change?

After the war, Japanese leaders found that the nation lacked the sufficient natural resources it had once stripped from its Asian colonies. This is one factor that led MEXT in the 1954 Course of Study to focus increasing attention on developing 'human talent' (*jinzai*) in order to elevate nationwide living standards. It did so by declaring the ideal goals toward which exercise and physical education should strive:

To fulfill personal responsibility and cooperate mutually, and to keep promises and follow rules; to instill techniques of exercise, to encourage the development of a healthy body and mind, and to cultivate exercise abilities.

This was immediately before Japan began its High Economic Growth period (*kōdo keizai seichōki*, 1955-1973), in which sports became one of the main socialization mechanisms sending strong, healthy and diligent workers into the companies that demanded their labor. During this time, sports coaches used 'hard training' (*shigoki*) to prepare pupils for the competition they would face in the increasingly competitive industrial sector (Sugimoto, 1995, p. 154). This was not the first time that sports were used to teach young Japanese about 'collective responsibility' (*rentai sekinin*), but the methods which once were used to train young people for the war now trained them for corporate Japan. This, coupled with 'exam hell' (*juken jigoku*) and increasing competition in the labor market, produced powerful educational machinery to instill the values that would drive Japan's blistering GDP growth until the late 1980s.

It was not until after the 1964 Tokyo Olympics that Japan truly began to introduce 'scientific' approaches to sports in a systematic, widespread way. The 1964 Olympics changed Japan in many ways. For example, many Japanese involved in sports began to believe that their 'small' and 'weak' bodies could not compete with those of foreigners. One particular incident that drove this supposed 'fact' home came when Japanese Kaminaga Akio lost to Dutch Anton Geesink in judo, the first 'sport' that Japan had itself invented (see Buruma, 2004, pp. 5-7 for an interesting account of the match and its significance). Soon many began calling for the need to cultivate healthier and stronger Japanese bodies through superior scientific-based training. The 'Survey of Body Strength and Exercise Abilities' (*tairyoku/undō*

*nōryoku chōsa*) was also established in 1964, and has continued to the present day. It represents an explicit attempt to quantitatively measure in a 'scientific' manner the strength of Japanese bodies over time.[9] The 1968 Course of Study clearly shows this perceived need to strengthen the body when it argues that physical educators should strive to teach 'the attitude and abilities necessary to manage one's life healthily and safely, cultivate an attitude attuned to fairness, habits familiar with exercise, and learn exercise techniques to improve body strength and the cultivation of a body in robust health'.

In 1978 the next major shift occurred, from 'body strength' to 'enjoyment', though the reasons for this are not entirely clear. Perhaps Ministry of Education officials began to realize that the Japanese body could not be manipulated to produce international victories in sports in the same way that the education system had produced Japanese minds that could excel for corporate Japan. Perhaps Japan had reached a level of economic comfort and no longer saw sports as the necessary engine to fuel growth. Perhaps people had grown weary of 'exam hell' and 'hard training' and related pressures in both school and sports. Whatever the reason, in the revision to the 1978 Course of Study, an emphasis on sports being for 'enjoyment' was declared: 'Along with getting children familiar with exercise, [we need to] make them understand health and safety and foster an attitude that plots the improvement of body strength and the promotion of health towards an enjoyable and bright lifestyle.'

Reforms to the Course of Study in 1988 again brought physical education into elementary schools, focusing on 'understanding' (*wakaru*) and the 'ability to do' (*dekiru*). Around this time, Japan was being criticized for its inability to raise 'creative' children equipped for an increasingly 'international' world, and it is likely that this reform was made as a response to this criticism. The Course of Study's emphasis was now on children's 'individuality' rather than on one's responsibilities to the group. It is rather striking that in just three decades the Course of Study changed so much. Whereas the 1954 reforms aimed at producing strong student-athletes able to make seamless transitions into corporate Japan, the 1988 reforms asked Japan's youth to think of themselves as 'individuals' in an increasingly 'international' world.

These goals were in lockstep with the educational policy more generally, and MEXT was simultaneously drawing on foreign models as it looked to reform. Though US President Eisenhower established the Council on Youth Fitness in 1956, it was not until Germany announced its Golden Plan in 1960 (to start sports facilities in order to eliminate lack of exercise among its people) that Japan followed suit by passing its own Sports Promotion Law, in 1961. Japan again followed Europe in advocating a 'Sports for All' policy. This trend began in 1975, when the very first article of the European Sports for All Law declared that 'everyone has the right to participate in sports'. In 1978, UNESCO made 'Sports for All' international

law (UNESCO, 1978), aiming to extend sporting opportunities to female athletes, and to limit violence, drug taking and excessive commercialization (UNESCO, 1989). The decade from 1978 to 1988 was labeled 'UNESCO's Decade of Commitment to Physical Education and Sport'. Japan followed UNESCO by employing its own 'Sports for All' rhetoric in the late 1970s and 1980s, and in 1988, MEXT opened a special 'Sports for All' Division. Even today, MEXT sports policy and the Course of Study trumpet the term 'lifelong sports' (*shōgai supotsu*), a very clear adaptation of the 'lifelong learning' language used widely in educational circles around the world. These policy transitions show that between 1960 and 1990 Japan paid significant attention to the sporting policies and language of European nations and international organizations like UNESCO. Japan clearly allowed these 'foreign' ideas to permeate its borders; some might say they were intentionally employed by policymakers to catalyze change in a scientific and/or 'international' direction.

In recent years, Japanese sports policy has seen yet another significant shift. This has also come from abroad. Sports have increasingly being discussed in the context of health, often by using this policy language of the aforementioned 'lifelong sports society'. Japan's Health Promotion Law (*Kenkō Zōshinpō*) passed Japan's Diet (Japan's bicameral legislature) in 2002. It fashioned itself as a 'movement to create a healthy populace' (*kokumin kenkō zukuri undō*) and widely cited the health benefits of sports. The 2004 reforms to the Course of Study advised students and teachers:

1. to emphasize the cultivation of a base for lifelong sports,
2. to understand that the mind and body are one and be able to realize when the body needs fine tuning,
3. to think about the way games and practices are played and find solutions for both personal as well as team matters, and
4. to make the most of the health promotion philosophies in order to manage lifelong health. (MEXT, 1999 [2004], p. 8)

The 2004 Course of Study makes these recommendations against the backdrop of various social problems:

In contemporary society, it is believed that there is an increase of mental stress, the lack of exercise, the expansion of both an aging and increasingly regionalized society, the increase of free time, along with changes in social life styles due to the aging society and a decline in the population of those people making up society.... in such an industrial society, it is important to both understand the diversely effective ways in which exercise and body formation and the importance of sports in this changing society [can help us] pursue the matter and meaning of sports as culture, in order to make our lives richer. (MEXT, 1999 [2004], p. 63)

Although articulated in a very different way, the 2004 reforms can be seen as continuing the 'scientific' paradigm started after the Tokyo Olympics. Yet, instead of using sports to achieve the goals of the Japanese state or the Japanese corporation, sports are today aimed at keeping the Japanese body healthy, especially the rapidly aging Japanese body. This could be interpreted as a governmental attempt to use sports to keep people healthy in order that their illnesses do not take a financial toll on Japan's tax-based national health care system. This makes sense given the fact that the Course of Study has also recently placed the onus on Japanese individuals to manage their own bodies and live a healthy lifestyle.

MEXT has therefore appropriated sports for various purposes over the years, and it is clear that the Second World War was to sports what it was to so many other areas of life in Japan: a major disjuncture. The end of the war brought an end to the emphasis on sports/exercise/physical education for military training, and it was replaced by the foreign ideas of 'democracy' and 'character development'. The Americans thus tried to use sports in Japan to further their goal of spreading democracy. That period was short-lived, however. Because Japan remained in dire economic straits between 1945 and 1954, it took some time before MEXT began to think about the ideal purposes for *doing* and *teaching* sports. They finally settled on the goals of 'corporatism' (1954-1968), 'scientific-based body strengthening' (1968-1978), 'enjoyment' (1978-1988), 'individuality' (1988-2004) and 'health' (2004-2010). Along the way, MEXT has borrowed policy ideas and policy language from abroad, most often from European and international organizations.

Moreover, these distinctive periods seem to mirror general reform trends 'inside the four walls of the classroom'. There was the period of 'education for economics' (1952-1960s), that continued Prime Minister Ikeda's 'income doubling plan' (*shotoku baizō keikaku*). This plan was proposed in 1960 and aimed at sustained economic growth for ten years. This gave way to a strong emphasis on doubling the number of scientists and engineers, which was aimed at making Japan more competitive internationally and rationalizing Japanese society along 'scientific' lines. Japan at this time was seeking membership in the league of 'advanced' industrial nations. Criticism of 'exam hell' in the early 1970s led to increasing calls in the late 1970s and 1980s to let children relax and escape the rigors of testing, momentum that pushed through an emphasis on individuality and creativity in the late 1980s and 1990s. Recently, however, funding for sports by the central government has decreased and the rhetoric of 'sports as education' has given way to the rhetoric of 'sports for health' or 'sports as culture'. The ultimate end of sports is now health through science, and the justification is that sports equate to 'culture', not education. Individuals, local governments and private clubs are asked to support themselves in staying healthy by taking up these 'cultural' activities.

MEXT also has a new proposal to 'make Japan a Sports Nation' (*supotsu rikkoku*) and to establish an autonomous 'Ministry of Sports' (*supotsusho*). This would in theory shift sports policy-making out of MEXT's hands and would perhaps help the Japanese government gain a more efficient hold on budget outlays for sports.[10] MEXT writes:

Sports are a form of human culture, common around the world and contributing to the formation of a bright, vibrant and lively society, all the while further enriching lives and promoting the healthy development of our 'bodies' and 'minds'. (2010b, p. 2)

In this 2010 'Sports Nation' policy proposal, MEXT offers five strategic goals:

1. To create sporting opportunities in line with various life stages
2. To strengthen and cultivate top athletes for global competition
3. To create a 'virtuous cycle' of cooperation and coordination [between sports organizations] in the sports world
4. To improve the fairness and justice and transparency in the sports world; and
5. To establish a foundation for supporting sports in society as a whole

The first point is a response to Japan's aging society and associated rising health care costs, and explicitly refers to the importance of a 'lifelong sports society' (MEXT, 2010b, p. 6). The second is a response to what is perceived to be an insufficient number of Olympic medals earned in recent Olympic Games (MEXT, 2010b, p. 10). The third is a response to a lack of efficient coordination of roles between various governmental, quasi-governmental and private sports-related organizations, as well as schools, so that the best young athletes will have a relatively easy system to navigate as they develop into Japan's top athletes (MEXT, 2010b, p. 13). The fourth aims to promote 'fair' sports in which there is no doping or cheating (MEXT, 2010b, p. 16), and the fifth is a response to the increasingly difficult economic times Japan faces (MEXT, 2010b, p. 18). As it stands, many Japanese people believe that tax money need not be spent on sports as they are activities that people will spend their own money on.

Since the Second World War, many in Japan have asserted the value of modern sports as tools for education, but as we have seen, Japanese sports have also been used as tools for political, corporate and even military agendas. Moreover, an increasing number of Japanese scholars are beginning to note that the rhetoric of 'sports as education' has had negative consequences for Japanese youth (Tamaki, n.d.; Komuku, 1994; Sawada, 1994; Katsuta, 2002; Sanuki, 2005). Although the critique of 'sports as education' has therefore begun, the critique of 'sports for health through science' has yet to take shape. The following section will hopefully serve as a starting point for these critiques.

### 'Real' and 'Imagined' Change in Japanese Sports

As far back as the Meiji period, Japanese sports policy has borrowed significantly from the western world, but how have seemingly similar motives behind recent policy transitions been perceived at the grassroots level? If such policy has originated in different socio-cultural contexts, has it met local needs in Japan?

From the outside looking in, it appears that Japan is currently embracing this most recent (global) sports policy articulation, 'sports for health through science'. There has been a recent increase in the number of university sports science departments which propound the importance of scientifically tested sporting practice aimed at cultivating a healthy body. Moreover, the Japan Olympic Committee (JOC), the Japan Amateur Sports Association (JASA), the Japan Institute of Sports Science (JISS), and these universities' sports science departments all promote a similarly scientific approach.

While scientific sports policy may have originated abroad, the reasons given by the government for why it is necessary are generally domestic in origin and justification. These influential organizations and the individuals who work within them justify their existence on the grounds that Japan's population is aging, that children are moving their bodies less than they did a generation before, and that there is an increasing number of illnesses associated with sedentary lifestyles (e.g. 'metabolic syndrome').

Japan has thus been permeable to the idea that sports can and should be for done 'for health through science', but it has been immune to, or at least has ignored, the specific contexts in which these sports science-based policies have originated, instead choosing to justify them on the basis of domestic concerns. The methods and policy discourse have been borrowed, but the foreign ends toward which these originally aimed have been left standing at the gate. One important example of this is the comparatively severe obesity problems affecting many western nations where such 'sports for health' policies originate, but that are seemingly not as serious a problem in Japan, where people are comparatively thinner.

Because of this disconnect between policy rhetoric and the socio-cultural context in which it is supposed to be implemented, recent sports policy reforms have not always fit well in Japan. Influential institutions like JASA and JISS 'imagine' and adopt science-based policies, suggesting that Japanese sports policy is changing, but at the local level we find a more nuanced 'reality'. It is important to remember that MEXT, JASA and JISS are institutions where sports and education policy or policy recommendations are made, not the places where such policy takes effect. Whereas, with their adoption of such 'global' policy, these institutions may be evincing a 'failure of the public imagination' in their inability 'to conceive of a future different from that discovered in the more developed nations' (Leheny, 2003, p. 178), there are grassroots-level responses to such 'globalization' that are rather imaginative.

For example, the introduction of this scientific approach to sports has had the perhaps unintended consequence of making coaches question, and then solidify, their own pedagogies, suggesting that in some ways Japan is perhaps not really changing at all. In many cases these coaches have assumed that their pedagogies were inherently 'Japanese'. Many Japanese coaches coach with little regard for MEXT's sports or education policy, many are untrained, and many draw on indigenous wisdom to construct their own pedagogies. These models include insights from the martial arts and Zen Buddhism, and 'Bushidō' (the 'samurai warrior code') has become a common refrain in Japanese baseball (see Blackwood, 2008). With the recent introduction of scientific approaches presenting a challenge, many Japanese coaches have decided that they actually prefer to continue to follow a 'traditionally Japanese' approach.

Similarly, many athletes do not understand these new scientific approaches and want something that is easier to understand, something they already know. Up until they came to play for 'scientific' coaches, most of the players I observed had played under 'commander-style' coaches and strict upperclassmen who had dictated their every last move (Miller, 2009b). Some of these players even preferred this 'strict hierarchy'. While JASA, JISS and other influential organizations want coaches to use a scientific approach, many players want to continue to be taught under old pedagogies that emphasize such 'strict hierarchy', a commander-style of coaching (because all they have to do is listen and obey), and the importance of 'spirit' (*seishin*) over 'science'. This is in part because many players do not understand the 'scientific' paradigm of coaching that expects them to think for themselves, manage their own bodies and training regimen, and keep detailed records of their progress. This is similar to the resistance Bjork found in his research on the so-called relaxed-education reforms (*yutori kyōiku*) (Bjork, this volume). These education reforms similarly placed emphasis on 'thinking for oneself' and 'managing one's own learning'.

Although science-based sports policy reforms aimed at improving the health of the populace are perhaps well intended, many local coaches (often at the school, rather than university, level) remain wedded to idea that sports are for the purposes of education, not health, and that scientific methods are a waste of time, money and energy. Organizations like JASA and JISS therefore 'imagine' the need for pedagogical change in Japanese sports, but many coaches and players are still wary; here the prospect of 'real' change is called into question.

### Conclusion: the role of (sports) science in a globalized world

One cause of this disconnect between policy text and policy implementation is the complicated role of science in Japan. Although the Japanese today produce some of the best science in the world, 'Science' itself is still

perceived to be largely a western entity. This is also the case with 'sports science'.

As many scholars have pointed out, the way that science in China and Japan was received has given it a very different flavor from 'science' as we know it in the West. For example, Needham (1954-2008) showed that early western scientists often sought to understand the 'laws of nature', something Chinese and Japanese scientists were less interested in. Western science is also founded on the premise that old ideas will constantly be challenged, not something that Nakayama (1984) says has generally been important in Japan, a society that values respect for and deference to one's elders. Science was instead utilized instrumentally in East Asia to 'catch up' with western technological superiority, but perhaps this never catalyzed a deeper epistemological shift. In a sense, science has functioned more as a facilitating appendage that could never fully replace the spiritual core or goals of these nations. This is likely one reason why there is current and recurrent tension between 'western scientific' and 'indigenously Japanese' approaches to sports (Miller, 2009b).

This issue speaks to a wider debate in the fields of comparative education and anthropology. Specifically, there has been much recent talk of an emerging 'world culture' (Meyer et al, 1997; Ramirez, 2003) where policies and practices, educational and otherwise, are converging globally because of shared values, and understandings of and faith in rationality and science. Along these lines, Drori et al (2003) assert that a 'world culture of science' has recently emerged:

Science, throughout its history, has a universalizing character...

The science that spreads around the world is quite homogenous in content and in focus... despite enormous economic and cultural variation around the world, general abstract models of actorhood and scientized environment are remarkably similar. (pp. 40-41)

This is, however, not always the case on the ground. Sports science may originally come from abroad, but even if it permeates the influential levels of Japanese society, where sports policies are made, it is not always able to permeate down to the local level. Science, much like sports, must contend with a fundamentally different set of core epistemological assumptions when it is exported, as my fieldwork findings show. Just as it took time for the idea of 'sports as education' to take hold in Japan, so it will take time before scientific approaches to sports become established, if they do at all.

Although the Japanese coaches I observed used scientific methods similar to those in the United States and Europe (e.g. the employment of body-mass indexing, a common scientific measurement used in sports training around the world today to measure whether athletes are in shape or not), the ways in which these scientific approaches are adopted and adapted continue to be myriad. One day, I found a men's team coach prodding himself with a metal rod, watching various buttons light up on the black

façade of a suitcase-sized machine. This was a device that found one's 'pressure points' (*tsubo*) and stimulated them like an acupuncturist. He described it as the 'ultimate technology device for the human body', but said it could only be purchased by mail for approximately ¥400,000 (US\$4000). He poked himself as he spoke highly of the device, and seemed mesmerized by a red light on the machine flashing 'healing' (*chiyu*). This coach's use of such a machine, built on the premises of western science and technology but also on the wisdom of the eastern tradition of acupuncture, shows how a global institution like 'science' can be adapted and changed to fit particular needs in local contexts. Sports science, like education and sports policy, can and often is adapted after it is borrowed from abroad in ways that prevent us from essentializing where the 'western' ends and the 'Japanese' begins.

It is said that there are generally two kinds of models considered by those trying to reform Japanese education: indigenous, internal and temporal models on the one hand, and foreign, external and spatial models on the other (Goodman, 2003). In Japanese sports policy, which, as we have seen, is educational policy, the models employed have generally fallen into the latter category. Then again, this is not surprising given the fact that sports are originally 'western' in origin, so it makes sense that Japanese government officials would continue to look overseas for sports policy ideas. On the ground, however, many Japanese sports coaches apply 'indigenous' wisdom derived from the samurai, Zen Buddhism and the martial arts, and if they use 'western' scientific approaches, they often adapt them to fit local needs.

As we have seen, sports and physical education in Japan have almost always been used *instrumentally* as tools for some other end, powerful symbols deployed for gains in other arenas. This was the case for 'sports as education', as it was for 'sports for militarism' and as it is now for 'sports for health through science'. This instrumental value afforded to sports is to some extent the product of an enduring internal debate between outward-looking sports enthusiasts within Japan who seek to infuse 'western' ideas (e.g. 'rational scientific thought') into Japanese physical activities, and those more traditionally minded educationalists who see Japanese history, not the West, as the only sufficient wellspring of knowledge, information and pedagogy. No matter what sports policy MEXT or a new sports ministry enacts, this debate seems likely to continue.

## Notes

- [1] Previously, this Ministry was called the Ministry of Education (*Monbushō*). In this chapter, it will be referred to as MEXT for convenience.
- [2] In this budget, US\$163 million, or almost three-quarters of all sports-related budgets, was allocated to 'upgrade international competitiveness'. One must keep in mind, however, that many sports coaches are not paid for their work explicitly, relying on their income as teachers to compensate (the total budget for teachers' salaries for the fiscal year 2010 was US\$16.4 billion). It should

also be kept in mind that MEXT's total budget for the same fiscal year was US\$57.6 billion, and Japan's total governmental expenditures were US\$470 billion, meaning that education expenditures constitute 10% of the national budget. (See MEXT, 2010a; exchange rate used is 100 yen to US\$1).

- [3] There were also 'club activities' (*kurabu katsudō*) which started in the late 1970s and lasted until 2002, but these were not mandatory. *Kurabu katsudō* were for the stated purpose of 'having fun once per week', and in that respect they contrasted with extra-curricular clubs (*bukatsudō*), which demanded a greater time commitment and dedication.
- [4] *Kemari*, an artistic demonstration of one's kicking technique, was introduced to Japan from China and has taken place at the Shiramine Shrine in Kyoto for hundreds of years. Popular among the nobility, it gradually spread to the general public. Games similar to *kemari* have existed all across Asia for centuries.
- [5] All Japanese-English translations are by the author, and where potential confusion exists, the Japanese terms are offered in *romaji* for reference.
- [6] There were also American influences at this time, the introduction of American-style physical education being attributed to the personal relationship between the American doctor George A. Leland and Tanaka Fujimaro, head of the Ministry of Education at the time (Duke, 2009, p. 249). Tanaka also had close ties with Rutgers professor David Murray (Miller, 2009a), an important early figure in Japanese educational policy borrowing.
- [7] Sports such as baseball, soccer, tennis and basketball spread throughout Japan towards the end of the Meiji period and into the Taisho period, during which time various national sports federations were established (Mizuno et al, 2004, p. 14).
- [8] The coaching studies expert Martens labels the concept 'character education' (1997 [2004], pp. 52-67).
- [9] This test, sometimes referred to today as the 'old test' (*kyū tesuto*), was replaced by a 'New Body Strength Test' (*shintairyoku tesuto*) in 1999, which is administered to every fifth-grade elementary school student and every second-grade middle school student. If a prefecture lags behind the national average, it is given an improvement program to strengthen its students' bodies.
- [10] Outlays for sports currently come from various divisions of the Ministry of Education, making the total amount of tax money spent on sports difficult to calculate.

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The collections of these specimens provide varied examples of the phenotypes of modernity. All observable social phenomena in modern history are phenotypes of modernization under which the genotypes of modernity – namely, alleged ‘universal’, ‘progressive’ and ‘rationalist’ values – operate through capitalist market economies and democratizing politics. Only comparative social researchers, including comparative education scholars, are equipped to deliberately investigate how genotypes of alleged modernity are working, and how they are diverted or even produce unintended results. Within such a project, data collection is crucially important, especially data from sites richest in ‘unique’ diversity. As the Galapagos Islands once preserved and provided ample living specimens of peculiar species that helped developed research surrounding evolution in biology, so Japan, with its rich self-portraits and specimens of hybridized modernization, is also crucially important for data collection vis-à-vis research surrounding modernity throughout the social sciences.

This becomes a good reason for writing about Japan in non-Japanese languages: to make known and available the stock of well-collected and richly documented specimens of a modernized society and its societal consequences. Japan thus has distinct ‘comparative advantages’ for social science research. The value of this goes beyond just ‘Japanese’ or East Asian Studies in a narrow sense. It even goes beyond just Comparative Education, a field largely dominated by Anglo-American scholarship. This is because Japan’s well-researched collections of specimens of modernization are valuable for all those who have experienced and continue to experience, under globalization, their own hybridized modernity, perhaps being most valuable for non-Western scholars who are more acutely aware of the hybridity of the modernity project.

This book is one of those showcases that shares the use of specimens collected from Japanese experiences, in education in particular, but extending much deeper into issues of society, politics, economics, and even culture. It is my hope that readers of this book will come to understand their own modernity in education better by observing Japan’s experiences and the rich data of social engineering-cum-experiments and the unintended consequences that all of the chapters included here address. So long as we believe in the value of such an endeavor, it is worth writing about and discussing Japan’s education in other languages than Japanese. As a relatively experienced collector and analyst of specimens of Japanese modernization, I wish to continue contributing to better global understandings of the multifaceted evolutions inherent in the modernity project the world over. If such an endeavor provides fresh insights on Japanese education and society from new comparative ‘mirrors’, the Japanese educational research community will, I hope, open its doors and join in our newly found ‘dialogic spaces’.

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