

Practical Career Training Program at the University of Tsukuba School of Health and Physical Education

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Abstract

Changes in society's economic conditions such as the declining birthrate and a stagnating economy have had a major impact on the sports environment, starting with physical education in schools. At the University of Tsukuba, reforms began with the reorganization of the School of Health and Physical Education.

In 1986 the Educational Curriculum Committee reviewed the major fields of study based on the education and sports disciplines of physical education, health education and exercise education, and a new educational curriculum has been implemented since 1990. During this time, the career paths of students was beginning to diversify, due to social and economical influences such as the reduced number of teachers recruited at the middle and high school level and worsening economic conditions.

A Future Planning Committee was set up in 1993 amidst these circumstances which began to review the educational curriculum and having separate entrance exams for different majors. The educational curriculum was reviewed with an emphasis on students' career paths, and an educational curriculum which combined disciplines and professions was explored. In the resulting curriculum, as of 1997 a course called “Introduction to Physical Education” is taken in the first year to provide students with an understanding of the academic and professional fields in physical education and sports. In the second year students select a major from the three choices of “Health and Sport Pedagogy,” “Health and Sport Management” and “Sport Coaching” to instill a sense of purpose in the students about their future, and in the third year the students select the area of research for their graduation thesis.

In the review of the new curriculum, and in particular the new majors, the committee looked at the educational curriculums at physical education and sports colleges in Japan and overseas and drew upon the competency-based approach used in North America. In particular, the curriculum guidelines of the North American Society of Sport Management (NASSM) were used as a major reference. The Future Planning Committee reviewed the new curriculum at 34 regular meetings over a period of four years and set up three majors, namely Health and Sport Pedagogy, Health and Sport Management, and Sport Coaching.

In addition to the introduction of distinctive courses in each major, practical training and other programs have been set up to provide the students with practical skills and information for when they try to decide on a career path. Specifically, in the Health and Sport Pedagogy major, pedagogical theory and practical training to pick up instructional skills are acquired by participating in general physical education and other courses in the school. In the Health and Sport Management major students get practical training in health and sport management by participating in internships at external sports organizations. In the Sport Coaching major, students research topics which allow them to analyze improvement in their own performance.

The practical training in the Health and Sport Management major includes both teaching practice and internships at external organizations and provides students with valuable experience. Health and Sport Management internships last from one to two weeks and may focus on private sports management (professional sports teams, fitness clubs, etc.), regional sports management (governmental organizations, local sports clubs, etc.), Health and Sport Management (hospitals and other locations), fitness management (rehabilitation facilities and other locations), sports management for disabled persons (facilities for disabled persons and other locations) or outdoor sports management (youth friendship centers and other locations).

In 2000 the new educational curriculum was evaluated. 53% of those who participated in the internships responded that “I discovered things which I need to learn at university,” and 28% responded that “I have kept in touch with the organization where I did my internship.” At the same time, there were many issues pointed out with the internal guidance structure. 78% responded that “I did not know what to expect going into the internship,” 79% responded that “I was not able to get in touch with teachers,” 65% responded that “I was unable to do the type of internship I had hoped to do,” 61% responded that “I was treated like a part-time worker,” and 79% responded that “I didn’t receive any instructions on how to write my report after the internship.”