

Title	Physical education in People's Republic of China
Sub Title	
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Publisher	慶應義塾大学体育研究所
Publication year	1966
Jtitle	体育研究所紀要 (Bulletin of the institute of physical education, Keio university). Vol.6, No.1 (1966. 12) ,p.57- 59
JaLC DOI	
Abstract	
Notes	Abstract
Genre	
URL	https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=AN00135710-00060001-0057

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Physical Education in People's Republic of China

*By Kohsuke Sasajima**

People's Republic of China is a young country formed in 1949. Ever since those days of great difficulty preceding her formation as a state, she has been placing emphasis on the eradication of illiterates and the improvement of national physical standard.

Communist Party of China which was organized in 1921 established Soviet Sector in 1927 following the severance of Communist School from Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang, formed the Red Army in 1928, established Chinese Soviet Sector in Juichin of Kiangcheng in 1931. In those days, although they had schools of their own, they encouraged people to participate in physical education, sports and recreations in the form of collective activities rather than in the form of school training, with a view to short-course mass training.

After repeated assaults by the Kuomintang, Communist Party of China became incapable of maintaining the Chinese Soviet Sector any longer, and migrated to the northern part of Shan-hsi Province following the great long-distance punitive expedition.

Even after Yen-an in Shan-hsi Province had become the capital, the emphasis of school education was focussed on the improvement of productive capacity. This ought to explain why the curriculum of middle schools did not include physical education in those days. Elementary schools did have physical education as a regular course, but, because of the backward cultural standard and depressed economical condition prevailing in the district, facilities for physical education were insufficient. Consequently, the contents of physical education were not uniformized and depended on originalities of local teachers and parents.

With the expansion of Sino-Japanese Incident which broke out in July of 1937, Communist Party of China kept on reinforcing its fighting capacity under the slogan of "Resist Japanese invasion and save the country", endeavoring to enlarge liberated

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district. Even under such conditions, assaults on the liberated district by the Japanese forces as well as Kuomintang's government forces were, in the least, lessened.

With the surrender of Japan in August of 1945 to the Allied Forces, the Pacific War came to an end. Immediately, hostilities aggravated between Kuomintang and Communist Party over the seizure of the districts once controlled by the Japanese Forces. Through the mediation of the United States, their hostilities came to a temporary ease which only lasted until March of 1946, when their relations were deteriorated. In October of the same year, the two entered into a wholesale war. In the early stage of the war, Kuomintang's government forces predominated over Communist Forces, but around the summer of 1947, the situation began to reverse. Since then Communist Forces took hold of one province after another in rapid succession from the hand of Kuomintang Forces. And in December 1949, the government of Kuomintang had to seek exile in Taiwan Province.

People's Republic of China which was formed earlier on October 1, 1949 has since advanced by leaps and bounds, while experiencing the expedition in the latter stage of Korean Incident which broke out in 1950, the nation-wide movement for the expulsion of reactionists at large in 1956, the formation of people's communes throughout the country in 1958, and the natural disasters in 1959, through 1961. Since the spring of 1966, the national movement for the great cultural revolution has been in full swing.

People's Republic of China promulgated the former educational system in 1951, and the existing system in 1953. In either of the systems, the dual system of day schooling and spare-time schooling has been followed for the purpose of eradicating illiterates.

It has always been the policy of People's Republic of China in her school education to attach emphasis to labor. Since the year of 1958, more emphasis has been placed on the combination of education and production, with the result that the number of school hours allocated to productive labor has been on the increase. Some schools go the extent of adopting the system in which half of the school time is spent for labor and the remaining half for reading.

As concerns the physical education of the nation, competent provisions are found in Article 48 of the "Joint Principles of Chinese People's Political and Economical Conference", adopted in 1949 as an in lieu of constitution, as well as in Article 94 of the "Constitution of People's Republic of China" promulgated in September 1954. From

this, it is learned that this country attached great importance to the physical education of the nation.

Mao Tse-tung himself has expressed this opinion: "Our policy of education is to help those receiving education to cultivate themselves thoroughly in the phases of moral education, intellectual training, and physical education so as to become workers who realize their socialistic missions to the fullest extent and who have high standards of mental refinement."

The school education of People's Republic of China consists of the five major branches—education on ideology and politics, intellectual training, education on productive labor, physical education, and education on aesthetics. They are believed to attach importance to physical education as one essential element of education.

Day schools are to follow provisions on the number of school hours allocated to the physical education, whereas no particular provisions exist to be followed by spare-time schools. In consideration of the fact that they take labor and physical education as two independent things, however, it is very probable that physical education is being given in some form or other on the level of individual school.

As regards the contents of physical education, pupils are trained on gymnastic exercise, sports, and excursion with bodily exercise, with the goal set for the achievement of the "Labor and Defense Program".

Instructors on physical education are educated at more than 10 special schools established exclusively for that purpose. For the purpose of training promising sport players, a host of junior spare-time athletic schools and youth spare-time athletic schools are established throughout the country.

The fact that the great cultural revolution is in progress all over the country and that the enrollment of university students is postponed by six months seems to suggest that the educational system may undergo reform.

In the light of these and other developments in that country, it will be very interesting to keep watch on the future course of physical education People's Republic of China will adopt.