

The Current Status and Challenges of School Physical Education and PE Teacher Training in South Korea, and Academic Exchange Between Graduate Students in the Department of Sports Education at Seoul National University and Graduate Students in School of Sports Sciences at Waseda University

The academic exchange at Seoul National University was conducted in three parts.

In Part 1, we conducted interviews with Professor Okseon Lee, Dean of the Department of Seoul National University, and Professor Euichang Choi, President of the Korean Society of Sports Pedagogy, both of whom specialize in Sports Pedagogy, regarding the current status and challenges of school physical education.

In Part 2, we observed a volleyball physical education class at a middle school in Seoul. In Part 3, three graduate students from the Graduate School of Sports Sciences at Waseda University presented case studies on sports pedagogy research in Japan and held a discussion with graduate students at Seoul National University who are also majoring in Sports Pedagogy.

School physical education in South Korea has shifted from a traditional focus on skill acquisition and physical fitness improvement toward a competency-based approach, aiming to refine curriculum content and enhance quality. In PE, the emphasis is not merely on ensuring a certain level of physical activity, but on “meaningful physical activity” that develops the students' abilities to think, make judgments, with the goal of further strengthening the connection to lifelong sports participation. Additionally, efforts are underway to integrate digital technology into PE classes and to link them with personalized learning. Small-class instruction has become widespread in schools across South Korea, with 24 to 25 students per class being the norm. Becoming a PE teacher is a challenging process; it takes approximately 10 years to be hired as a full-time teacher, during which time teachers typically gain training and experience as part-time instructors.

We observed a volleyball physical education class at a middle school in Seoul. Although co-ed classes are becoming more common in Korean schools, in sports like ball games where skill differences between boys and girls can be a factor, single-sex classes are still the norm, and this class was for boys. The students' skill levels were not particularly high.

A graduate student from Waseda University gave a presentation in English on his research topic in sports education. Professor Okseon Lee and the Korean graduate students showed interest in the presentation and asked several questions.

Although the new semester had just begun in Korea and the professors and graduate students were very busy, they treated us with great hospitality. Not only the professors but also graduate students from Seoul National University studying sports education joined us, allowing for a meaningful exchange. We were truly grateful for the opportunity provided to the Waseda University graduate students. The graduate students at Waseda University were eager to give a presentation at an international conference next time.



Fig1. Professors and graduate students from Seoul National University and Waseda University



Fig2. Gift exchange ceremony with Professor Lee Ok-seon, Dean of the Department of Physical Education at Seoul National University



Fig3. Volleyball Physical Education Classes at Middle Schools in Seoul



Fig 4. Volleyball Physical Education Classes at Middle Schools in Seoul



Fig 5. Graduate students at Waseda University's Graduate School of Sports Sciences (from left to right): Aoyagi (3rd-year Ph.D.), Chen (1st-year Ph.D.), and Aikawa (2nd-year Master)



Fig.6 Student Exchange Program for Graduate Students Between Seoul National University and Waseda University



Fig. 7 Research materials prepared for graduate students at Waseda University