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Reforms of the Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Development of Physical Education and Sports in the Far East Region of Russia

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Abstract– Recent discussions among researchers and specialists of the Far East region of Russia concerned with the relations between higher education, the future prosperity of the region, and its socio-economic and cultural development have led to the determination to strengthen the role that institutes of higher education play in regional development. This means that, in the future, institutes of higher education should act as regional centers for education and culture and be responsible for the future of their own region. In the current training system for physical education and sport instructors in the Far East region, politics and research topics are established in collaboration with academics. In the new social and economic conditions that exist in Russia, the training, re-training and in-service training of specialists should be considered to be part of the general economic strategy for each region.

While the geographical isolation of the Far East, its remoteness from the advanced educational and scientific centers in western Russia, is thought to be a major disadvantage for scientific development, its nearness to the Asia-Pacific region, the so-called "new centers of civilization", is an advantage for international exchanges in education and science. This proximity, and the contact between representatives from field of physical education, sports and tourism and the formation of a new open society in Russia allow, can help to solve the problem of management decentralization in physical education. It might also encourage the formation of new training systems in each region, and the in-service training and re-education of specialists engaged in physical education and sports to give them confidence in dealing with the specific problems of their regions and to allow them to conduct their activities within multinational and multicultural surroundings.

The scientific and business contacts between educators and specialists in the field of physical education and health science from Sakhalin and Hokkaido are of great importance to the study of modern scientific methods and to the development of Japanese-Russian relations. The use of these exchanges by Russia and Japan to strengthen mutual relations and to establish a long-term friendship would make a significant contribution to the stabilization of Asia - Pacific region.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The political and socioeconomic reforms undertaken in Russia at the beginning of the 1990s have resulted in dramatic changes in all spheres of social life, including the field of education. The weakening of vertical and the strengthening of horizontal links in management, administration and social development has inevitably led to the decentralization of old functions, resources, and activities and to the redistribution of them on a regional level. This process has led to increasing regional independence and to the subsequent regional integration of economic and social components.

Each region in Russia has its own specific economic model, communication system, educational infrastructure and development strategy. In accordance with these programs, each region has tried to develop its own appropriate education system, and usually this choice is made by intu-

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ition rather than by a scientific assessment of the region's needs. This means that educational development is limited by the prevailing conditions.

While the geographical isolation of the Far East, its remoteness from the advanced educational and scientific centers in western Russia, is thought to be a major disadvantage for scientific development, its nearness to the Asia-Pacific region, the so-called "new centers of civilization", is an advantage for international exchanges in education and science. This proximity, and the contact between representatives from field of physical education, sports and tourism and the formation of a new open society in Russia allow, can help to solve the problem of management decentralization in physical education. It might also encourage the formation of new training systems in each region, and the in-service training and re-education of specialists engaged in physical education and sports to give them confidence in dealing with the specific problems of their regions and to allow them to conduct their activities within multinational and multicultural surroundings.

2. PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Recent discussions among researchers and specialists of the Far East region concerned with the relations between higher education, the future prosperity of the region, and its socioeconomic and cultural development have led to the determination to strengthen the role that institutes of higher education play in regional development. This means that, in the future, institutes of higher education should act as regional centers for education and culture and be responsible for the future of their own region. In the current training system for physical education and sport instructors in the Far East region, politics and research topics are established in collaboration with academics.

Nowadays, training of teaching staff for physical education and sports is conducted at faculties of physical education at the pedagogical institute and universities in Blagoveshensk, Ulan-Ude, Ussuriisk, Khabarovsk, Chita, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, at Sakha University in the former Yakutiya and at the Khabarovsk State Institute of Physical Education. There are also training programs for physical education staff in colleges and other special educational facilities in Blagoveschensk, Komsomol'sk- on-Amur, Alexandrovsk-Sakhalinsk, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsk, and Spassk-Dal'nii.

Training programs are conducted for physical education staff, such as teachers for school of all levels and coaches, and specialists in pre-school physical and health education and tourism. For instances, the Khabarovsk Institute for Physical Education (established in 1967) has a special training course, 022300: Physical Education and Sports (the qualifications conferred is that of Specialist in Physical Education and Sport, Teacher-Coach). In this course students are able to specialize in track and field, gymnastics, swimming, skiing, wrestling, boxing, athletics, power- lifting, oriental martial arts, unarmed combat (Sambo), basketball, volleyball, tennis, physical education for pre-school children, physical education for students, health and physical education, and tourism. Students have also been enrolled in another specialized course, 022500: Adaptive Physical Education, since 1994. The students specialize in physical rehabilitation for the handicapped and sports for the disabled. Duration of study is 5 years, and planned enrollment is for 100 students.

The 25th graduation ceremony for specialists in physical education and sports (full-time day students) , was held in July 1995. At that time, the total number of alumni had reached 2,774 people, 423 of whom had majored in skiing, 386 in track and field, 283 in wrestling, 224 in basketball, 220 in volleyball, 213 in football, 183 in gymnastics, 147 in boxing, 127 in athletics, 123 in OMFORT, 49 in shooting, 29 in hockey and 19 in unarmed combat. The largest percentage of graduates were sent to the Khabarovsk region (52.5%), followed by the Primorsk region (14.6%), Sakhalinsk district (6.6%), Sakha (5.9%), Maradansk district (4.3%), Kamchatskii region (3.9%), Amur district (3.7%), Buryatiya (2.2%), Irkustuk district (2.1%) and other regions (1.7%).

The first two graduation ceremonies have been held by the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports at the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk State Pedagogical Institute (established in 1992). The first 59 alumni received diplomas of physical education. In the new social and economic conditions that exist in Russia, the training, re-training and in-service training of specialists should be considered to be part of the general economic strategy for each region. The activities of sports organization should aim to directly improve peoples' standard of living through offering a wide-range of professional, cultural and educational programs devoted to improving the cultural and educational level of the population, to developing professional training and re-training for the staff concerned in accordance with regional demands, to controlling unemployment and to helping people become professionally mobile.

3. INTEGRATION OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SCIENCE IN THE FAR EAST REGION

Scientific research is still of primary importance in the Far Eastern universities responsible for training physical education and sports staff. The main scientific resources are confined to the higher educational units of these universities, and in Science Centers, laboratories, and research

teams. New research staff are trained in the graduate schools of Khabarovsk State Institute of Physical Education, Khabarovsk State Pedagogical University, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk State Pedagogical Institute, and Blagoveschensk State Pedagogical Institute.

The Far Eastern research school was founded in the 1970s and 1980s. At present, more than 100 scientists and researchers, specializing in the theory and methodology of physical education, sports physiology and medicine, teaching and sports psychology, hygiene and biomechanics, are trying to solve problems related to physical and health education, sports training and the organization of leisure time for children and adults. As a result of this research, a large amount of data has been accumulated in a variety of areas, including the physical education and training of children and students; regional, cultural and national activities specific to Eastern Russia; and the methodology training for people such as skiing, track and field, volleyball, basketball, football, hockey, boxing, and wrestling. These scientists are continuing the tradition of prominent Russian universities of St. Petersburg, Moscow, Omsk, and Novosibirsk, from which most of them had graduated and at which they had began their research. Research conducted by scientists in the Far East regions falls into the following categories:

- Physical training in educational and pre-school institutions
- Physical training in sport and health organizations
- Physical training in local communities
- Physical training in sanatoriums, cooperation and enterprises
- Physical training for the disabled
- Physical training for the military and staff of judicial organizations
- Training of the professional athletes
- Modern educational systems and technologies for training and in-service training of physical education staff

In fact, applied and theoretical research is being undertaken in all fields of the physical education system as it exist in Russia with the aim of popularizing physical education, and of developing a system of professional training. The main problem, however, which faces the higher educational institutions of the Far East region and the rest of Russia, is the necessity for them to adapt to the new market economy. Indeed, the situation they find themselves in at present is critical. Financial support for research has decreased, most of the financial resources are now allocated for salaries and other expenditure, and the status of scientific research continues to fall. Highly qualified staffs are now leaving the universities for better opportunities in the private sector. Thus, the intellectual and ethical standard in the institutes of higher education continue to decrease. As a result, there is no public demand for Russian scientists and specialists to pursue their research interest, particularly in the field of physical education. The further development of physical education requires strong support from the government, on the other hand, and economically responsible administration and management of research activities on the other. This can be achieved through the involvement of not only local financial resources but also national and international resources from interested institutions, organizations, and individuals.

Far Eastern educators and researchers have become more consciousness of the need to strengthen the relations between universities responsible for the professional training of physical education staff in order to overcome the present situation. This requires the involvement of training human and research resources from all levels of educational institutions; such as colleges of physical education, vocational schools, departments of Olympic Reserves, departments of physical educational humanitarian, technical universities and other universities and colleges in the Far East region; and regional committees on physical education, sports and tourism.

At present, work is underway to form a new communication system to provide open access for all researchers, educators and scientists to the data resources of the universities in order to aid in decision-making, development and in opening international market.

One of the most important steps in the development of an integrated communications system for the Far Eastern universities was the establishment of the so-called Scientific and Methodological Commission on Physical Education of the Far Eastern Regional Learning Center in 1995. Commission, based at the Khabarovsk Institute of the Physical education, that institute, from the faculties of pedagogical institute and other higher educational institutions in the region, and of district committee on physical education, sports and tourism.

The main tasks of the Scientific and Methodological Commission are as follows:

(1) Coordination of research on physical education, leisure activities, rehabilitation and tourism
(2) Involvement of research activities and its development
(3) Practical use of the research results

In order to achieve the above mentioned aims, the Scientific and Methodological Commission are engaged in the following activities:

(1) The study, analysis and distribution of research on physical education conducted in Russia and abroad
(2) The contribution of new ideas and suggestions for forming research programs to deal with problems in physical education
(3) The organization of regional conferences, seminars and

meetings to deal with theoretical and practical problems in physical education
(4) The focusing of scientific and methodological expertise on the results of research to develop new ideas and suggestions on its practical application
(5) The support of universities and colleges in the Far Eastern region
(6) The organization of regional scientific conferences and competitions to nominate the best research projects dealing with physical education
(7) The coordination and organization of international exchange between the educators and scientists in the Asia/Pacific region
(8) The publication of scientific, methodical and educational literature, and the organization of the publishing department in the Center

An analysis of situation in Russian and international education systems has demonstrated the necessity of rejecting the traditional methods of conducting research in the Far Eastern universities, in which every institute had its own specific research areas and hold its own conferences often leading to duplication of research. The policy of "international autonomy" pursued by the administration and management, in which the responsibilities of each ministry were strictly determined and in which ministries were not expected to interfere with problems outside of their charge, was unable to promote and develop cooperation among regional universities. It is necessary for each university to develop its aims and strategies in accordance with the general directives of higher education reform in its own region, while taking into consideration the development of other educational institutions, the aims of vocational education and the needs of in-service training in specialized fields specific to the region. It is impossible to develop a general regional policy to cover all sectors without taking into consideration the above mentioned factors.

The cooperation of Far Eastern universities, whose prestige is continuing to grow, in setting ups common database as a necessary condition for their further integration, has been discussed at regional research conferences and symposiums. The topic themes of some of the conferences reflect the concerns of researchers in the region: "Problem of Physical Education for Schoolchildren in Sakhalin" (Alexandrovsk- Sakhalinskii, November 25-26, 1994), "Actual problems of Physical Education and Sports Development Today" (Ulan-Ude, September 12-15, 1995), " Physical Education and Health Problems of the Eastern Russia" (Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, October 19-21, 1995), "Physical Education, Sports and Health Education for the Population of the Far Eastern Russia" (Khabarovsk, March 18-20, 1997), and so on. The regional conferences give researchers an opportunity to clarify which problems have been solved by the combined effects of the Far Eastern universities and which still require further cooperation to resolve. A joint effort by universities and researchers is still necessary to provide answers to the following problems:

(1) Development of a general regional policy on training, re-education and in-service training of physical education and sports staff applicable to the present reforms in higher education and professional training and to the change to a multi-level system of staff training
(2) Development and introduction of regional programs on physical education and on the fundamentals of safety for children and youths, including the disabled
(3) Development and introduction of regional standards for physical training among the various ethnic groups in the Far Eastern Russia.
(4) Development and use of the alternative and traditional forms of physical training, recreation and rehabilitation, including forms and methods popular in the Far East region.
(5) International cooperation with countries of the Asia - Pacific region to organize an international joint research and to set up research centers for training and in-service training of physical education staff

The involvement of specialists with a wide-range of qualifications, such as educators, sociologists, economists, philosophers, and educational managers, in these regional conferences enables the key problems in the field of education to be examined from a range viewpoint.

This exchange of views and cooperation at all levels of research activities is itself an example of the integration of research groups in the Far Eastern universities not only on the research activities and rethinking of nature of a human being but also in formulation and realization of a general educational policy at the regional level.

4. THE MAIN DIRECTIONS AND INTEGRATION FORMS OF THE RESEARCH ACTIVITIES ON PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

The Northern Asia - Pacific region consists of the Far Eastern regions of Russia, Mongolia, the northern provinces of China, Hokkaido, Alaska and the West coast of the United State, Korea and Canada. Recently, economic, social and cultural integration within this region has seen rapid growth due to the new policy of openness pursued by Russia. A continuation of this cooperation is vital for the development of the Far Eastern regions.

One example of this international cooperation in the field of physical education is the participation of members of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports of the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk State Pedagogic Institute and of the Faculty of

Education of Hokkaido University in a joint study of "Lifestyle and Physical Activities of Residents in Northern Areas" begun in Sakhalin and Hokkaido in 1996.

The aim of this 3-year research project is to study the physical conditions of the different populations and to develop effective measures to enhance the physical resources and social activities of people living in different areas within the region. This project is funded by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports.

A part of this program, scientists from the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk State Pedagogical Institute took part in two international symposium, "Regional Development and Higher Education in the Northern Areas" (1995) and "Lifestyle and Physical Activities of People Living in Cold Snowy Regions" (1996), conducted at Hokkaido University. They also attended the 35th conference of the Hokkaido Society of Physical Education and Sports Science in Asahikawa (1996). These Russian researchers were the first foreign representatives to attend such a conference.

These visits were reciprocated by scientists from Hokkaido who took part in the 3rd Regional Scientific Conference on "Physical and Health Education Issues in Eastern Russia" (Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, 1995), and in the scientific and practical seminars "Training and In-service Training of the Physical Education and Sports Staff in Russia and Japan" (Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, 1997). Results of this joint research were presented by Japanese researchers at the 5th International Symposium (Suda et al.; Anchorage, USA, 1997).

The scientific and business contacts between educators and specialists in the field of physical education and health science from Sakhalin and Hokkaido are of great importance to the study of modern scientific methods and to the development of Japanese-Russian relations. The use of these exchanges by Russia and Japan to strengthen mutual relations and to establish a long-term friendship would make a significant contribution to the stabilization of Asia ? Pacific region.

Expansion of scientific contacts in the Asia - Pacific region in combating the negative trends developing in Russian research in the field of physical education. In fact, Russia has recently lost contact with a number of other international research organization, especially with those in Europe. Russian scientists do not actively participate in the international community and research institutions affiliated to the State Committee on Physical Education and Sports in Russia do not accept the research methods and results from institutions in the United State, Canada, Great Britain and Germany. Lack of equipment also makes it difficult to exchange research data because, unlike research laboratories in developed countries, Russian institutions are not provided with personal computers which make it easy to receive and transfer information through the "internet". All research laboratories in developed countries as a rule are provided with personal computers which make easy a process of receiving and transferring information through the worldwide network "Internet".

Taking into consideration its geopolitical location and its significance in the development of new international relations, the Far East region is in an excellent position to be a testing ground for Russian education through new research practices and training process for physical education, sports and tourism. International cooperation with Japan and with other countries of the Asia - Pacific region could also serve as an additional impulse to develop physical education and sports science in Russia on the threshold of the 21st century.

The following steps need to be taken in order to develop international cooperation.

(1) Revision of research plans and programs through further steps in international cooperation
(2) Development and implementation of the international scientific research projects in the fields of physical education, sports and tourism, recreation and rehabilitation
(3) Study of international experience of the functioning of education systems in changing socioeconomic conditions through conducting seminars and symposia.
(4) Coordination of management, organization and financing of research activities to improve research with other universities.
(5) Conducting regular research meetings (international conferences and symposia) of scientists and specialists in Far Eastern Russia and other countries of the Asia-Pacific region for joint discussion of regional problems and development of healthy lifestyle and physical activities for the people within the region
(6) Establishment of international research and science centers (laboratories and research teams)
(7) Development of a regional information system for physical education in the Far Eastern region and the provision to the Internet - a global computer network, providing with a direct and open access to data sources of the countries and territories included in Asia and the Pacific for free exchange of knowledge and information related among scientists and educators.

CONCLUSIONS

It is necessary to establish a self-organizing and self-developing regional system of physical education that will take into account the historic traditions, geographical locations, social, politic, and national peculiarities of the far Eastern regions. The development of such a system would be enable more appropriate decisions to be made concerning training and in-service training of teaching and research staff, and provide links with the history, ecology, and traditional cultures of the region. This system would be also aid

the integration of material, organizational and intellectual resources of the Far Eastern region into the Asia-pacific and world communities.

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