The National Physical Education Leader’s Qualification System in Korea

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The National Sports Promotion Act was enacted in 1962 to promote a healthy life by improving people’s physical strength and cultivating a healthy mind, and thus the policy of nurturing national physical education leaders was initiated. Through the amendment of the law in 1971, the training of Sports Specialist began in 1974. The qualifications for Sports Specialist for Sports for all were newly established in 1986 through the enactment of the Exercise Specialist Training Act. However, this has led to the development of a quantitative increase rather than improving the professionalism of qualifications. Nevertheless, due to the persistent issues with leader training, professional reinforcement, usability, and job security, the National Physical Education Leader’s Qualifications System was drastically reorganized in 2015. It also focused on establishing a qualification system, enhancing professionalism, and improving the social and economic status [1].

The qualification system was subsequently reorganized. In the past, the qualification system was classified into sports instructors (professional sports) and instructors for sports for all, however, the qualifications were subdivided into instructional content (sports, exercise prescription), instructional subject, (children, elderly, and disabled) field (professional physical education, life sports), and level (Level 1, 2).

Previously, the “first-class life sports instructor” was called a “health exercise manager, and the field of responsibility was not in the guidance of sports for all, albeit in the creation, guidance, and administration of exercise programs for health promotion. A “health exercise manager’s” responsibilities include evaluating an individual’s health status, fitness, as well as counseling for customized fitness enhancement, health promotion, exercise rehabilitation, planning exercise, teaching exercise, monitoring exercise, and assessing exercise. These roles require a more complicated scientific education and functional duties [3]. To effectively utilize exercise experts, such as “health exercise managers,” active in the public health care field, it is necessary to have a health/medical field standard test and maintenance education system to improve related laws and systems to enable stable occupational activities.

In the case of Japan and Germany, the government is nurturing and distributing sports professionals based on the legal and institutional foundation for sports professionals to
solve the problems caused by people’s lack of physical exercise.

The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), in collaboration with the National Association of Exercise Health Practitioners, cultivates exercise health professionals who are skilled in teamwork, information processing, planning and evaluation, exercise business, and organizational skills. Hence, these professionals are well-versed in policy, environment creation, and teaching exercises [4].

The importance and effect of exercise for health promotion are growing as technologies of the 4th Industrial Revolution are rapidly being applied to exercise and sports. In addition, in the COVID-19 and the post-COVID-19 eras, people’s demands and aspirations for health and quality of life are continuously rising. It is believed that the mission of the times is to train and deploy exercise experts to promote people’s health. Many countries, including the Korean government, have a sports instructor qualification system that is responsible for the people’s health, and enforcing it is considered the first step toward people’s welfare.

Table 1. National Physical Education Leader’s Qualifications Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guidance Target</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Qualification Rating, Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sports</strong></td>
<td>Non-disabled person</td>
<td>Youth (3 years old ~ Elementary school students)</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adolescents/Adult</td>
<td>Professional Athletic</td>
<td>Sports/Exercise Specialist for Elite Athletes Level 1 ※ Coaches level 1(at current)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sports/Exercise Specialist for Elite Athletes Level 2 ※ Coaches level 2(at current)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An old person (65 years and over)</td>
<td>Sports for All</td>
<td>Sport for All Director’s Level 2 ※ Sport for all director’s Level 3(at current)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled person</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>Sports/Exercise Specialist for The Disabled Level 2 ※ Sport for all director’s Level 1(at current)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exercise performing method teaching management

※ 「The reform plan for physical education leader qualifications」 Research results from a public hearing held Sep. 5, 2013. (2)

References