

# Investigating Japan's physical education assistance to other countries: extraction of major categories and examination of their relevance

Japan's PE assistance to other countries

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aims to provide the history and overview of the major categories of physical education (PE) assistance that Japan has provided to other countries by extracting the major categories from the various materials.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This study is divided into two phases, Phases 1 and 2. Surveys and analyses were further conducted. In Phase 1, a web browser-based survey was conducted to ascertain the major categories of PE assistance that Japan has provided to other countries. The practices and projects investigated were classified inductively, and the major categories were extracted. In Phase 2, a literature review was conducted to organise the history and overview of each category extracted in Phase 1.

**Findings** – Six major categories were extracted: (1) dispatch of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers engaged in PE assistance, (2) assistance through training for those involved in PE, (3) revision or formulation of a PE curriculum, (4) preparation of textbooks or instructional materials for PE, (5) organising sports event and (6) maintenance of PE equipment and facilities.

**Originality/value** – Japan has a long history of providing PE assistance to other countries. However, historical materials on the practices and projects of PE are becoming scattered. Little literature addresses this gap, which this study seeks to address. This study can help policy makers in other countries, who can use Japan's PE assistance practices and policies for reference, to assist them in formulating their own policies.

**Keywords** International educational cooperation, International development, Physical education, Sport, Japan

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Japan has long been providing international cooperation in the field of education to other countries, mainly through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japan's official development assistance (ODA) agency (Sawamura, 2002). International cooperation in the field of education is referred to as international educational cooperation. Japan's history of international educational development dates back to 1954 (Saito, 2019). From the 1950s to the 1980s, Japan's international educational cooperation focused on technical education, vocational training and higher education. However, in 1990, the United Nations Development Programme (1990) began publishing human development reports, and international cooperation began to shift from promoting economic growth to emphasising human development. Additionally, the "World Conference on Education for All" (UNESCO, 1990) was held in Jomtien, Thailand,



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resulting in a worldwide orientation of international educational cooperation focussing on basic education (King, 2016). Consistent with this social trend, Japan's international educational cooperation policy has also shifted to emphasise basic education (Kamibeppu, 2002). Since then, Japan's international educational cooperation has been promoted under the influence of international goals settled by the General Assembly of the United Nations, such as the millennium development goals (MDGs) in 2000 and sustainable development goals (SDGs) in 2015, as well as frameworks for action agreed on by the World Education Forum, such as The Dakar Framework for Action (FFA) in 2000 and The Education 2030 FFA in 2015 (Ogisu, 2021).

The historical transition of Japan's international educational cooperation has been reported in previous studies and literature reviews along with those cited above (e.g. Kayashima, 2021; Kuroda & Kayashima, 2019; Nakazato, 2020). However, while Japan has focused on the education of school subjects in international educational cooperation, there are few studies on the history and achievements of assistance for each school subject based on the unique and special characteristics of each school subject. Research in the field of international educational cooperation is slightly similar to comparative education because it deals with phenomena related to education in foreign countries. George Z. F. Bereday, a pioneer researcher in comparative education, proposed a four-step model of comparative education: description – interpretation – juxtaposition – comparison (Adick, 2017). In short, in the field of international educational cooperation, it is important to first describe the whole picture that is the history and achievements of each assistance.

This study focuses on the school subject of physical education (PE). Based on the field of PE in schools currently in international educational cooperation, JICA (2018a) has argued that “Japan has a large empirical base and can use technology and know-how, in which Japan has strengths” (p. 19) regarding its PE assistance to other countries. This assertion shows that Japan has continued to emphasise external assistance for PE. This is because PE is regarded as a crucial subject in Japan. To review the definition of PE, “PE” is different from “sport”: “PE” is generally defined as educational activities through “sport” or physical activities. PE in Japan includes the following five characteristics: (1) democratic PE, (2) culturally oriented PE, (3) fitness-oriented PE, (4) lifelong participation in physical activity and (5) PE for mind and body (Sato *et al.*, 2022, p. 194). PE positively impacts intellect, morality and physical fitness for a long time in Japan (Nakai & Metzler, 2005). The importance of “human capital” in a rapidly changing and unpredictable society has long been recognised (OECD, 1998). In the international educational cooperation that Japan has been providing, PE has been emphasised from the perspective of human development, as it is expected to have a positive effect on the “mind” and “intellect” while developing healthy physical capital.

A review of the English-language literature on PE assistance for other countries shows that international organisations such as the OECD (2019), UNESCO (2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2021a, 2021b) and United Nations (2006) have made recommendations on curricula and policies to several countries based on extensive research. However, as there are no documents stating that the institutions in countries other than Japan are providing assistance for the PE development of other countries. UNESCO (2015a, 2021b) argues that “inclusion” needs to be emphasised in PE worldwide. In this regard, the latest Japanese PE curriculum also includes the phrase “inclusive” (*kyousei* in Japanese), which aligns with UNESCO's (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) plan for PE. Therefore, Japan is in a position to provide PE assistance to other countries, and the compilation and accumulation of this whole picture will not only provide a foothold for Japan's future PE assistance but may also provide suggestions for PE policies that should be promoted in recipient countries. This international PE assistance is an effective measure for both showing Japan's presence in these countries' governments and communities that are getting involved in PE and increasing the influence of Japanese agencies, universities and companies. Such material could also be

meaningful in explaining the outcomes and challenges of PE assistance primarily funded by the ODA and other public funds (Saito, 2012). However, historical data on the practices and projects of Japan's ministries, JICA, universities, NGOs, private companies and other organisations that have provided PE assistance to other countries have been scattered.

Therefore, the research questions guiding this study were: "What kind of PE assistance has Japan provided to other countries?" and "How do different types of Japan's PE assistance relate to and complement each other?" The purpose of this study was to consolidate the numerous materials on the international PE assistance provided by Japan, extract the major categories, and provide a history and overview of these categories. Furthermore, this study examined the relevance of these major categories and discussed the characteristics of Japan's international PE assistance and its prospects. Disseminating Japanese knowledge and experience to the world is important, because most of Japan's educational research is written in Japanese (Takayama, 2018). Hence, this study aimed to organise and analyse Japanese materials as well and collect this body of research in English. This will help this study to reach policy makers in other countries, who can use Japan's PE assistance practices and policies for reference to assist them in formulating their own policies. Therefore, this study could contribute to the development of international educational cooperation in Japan and worldwide.

To achieve this goal, this study was divided into two phases, Phases 1 and 2, because two different methodologies were used during data collection and analysis, making it easier to understand the process. In Phase 1, a web browser-based survey was conducted to identify the major categories of PE assistance that Japan has provided to other countries. The practices and projects investigated were classified inductively, and the major categories were extracted. In Phase 2, a literature review was conducted to organise the history and overview of each category extracted in Phase 1. Based on the results of the two-phase survey and analysis, the relevance of the various major categories was analysed, and the characteristics of Japan's PE assistance to other countries were derived and discussed for future measures. This study covers Japan's assistance to other countries; the 145 countries with Japan's ODA track record (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018) were set as "other countries".

## **Phase 1: extraction of the major categories of PE assistance provided to other countries by Japan**

### *Method*

In Phase 1, following a qualitative methodology, we attempted to extract the main categories of Japan's PE assistance to other countries by inductively categorising the data collected using an online survey. First, to determine the search terms that can be used in web browsers, the 145 countries listed as of May 2018 in a table based on Japan's ODA country results shown by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2018) were organised. An AND search was further conducted using Google's search engine, integrating the names of the 145 countries with "PE assistance" (*taïku shien* in Japanese), such as "Afghanistan PE assistance", "Albania PE assistance" and "Angola PE assistance" in Japanese. From the web pages, research and reports found in this search, we organised the identified practices and projects implemented by Japan's ministries, JICA, universities, NGOs, private companies and other organisations related to school PE assistance that were consistent with the aim of this study. These searches and arrangements were conducted on 18 and 19 November 2021.

It is important to note that web browsers, have low stability and validity of search results, as the number of hits in the search engine fluctuates depending on the date and time of search execution and the offset of search start. In contrast, "millions of users type in trillions of characters to create billions of web pages" (Cilibrasi & Vitanyi, 2007, p. 370) on the web; therefore, conducting a Phase 1 survey to obtain comprehensive information was appropriate.

According to Statcounter (2022), the Google's search engine accounts for more than 90% of the global search engine share (as of August 2022) and has the most hits. The search engine used in this study was configured with an extension facility to also display search results on Google Scholar, so that searches for related previous studies could also be performed. The number of hits during a search varied significantly depending on the country being searched. Thus, no restrictions were set on the number of pages, but the search results were reviewed and the relevant web pages explored until no other associations with the country's or school's PE were found.

The search results obtained from the survey were categorised by similar content following the KJ method (Kawakita, 1967) and focussing on each type of content. The KJ method is a qualitative analysis method developed by Jiro Kawakita, a Japanese cultural anthropologist, that creates groups through inductive categorisation and conceives new ideas from the relationships between the groups (Scupin, 1997). Regarding the specific procedures, the contents of each form of assistance were written as sticky notes. Sticky notes (sub-groups) with similar content were grouped and designated as Group 1. The aggregate organised as Group 1 was also collected in the same way for similar content (sub-groups) to form Group 2. Thus, steps were taken to proceed from small to large groupings, and inductive grouping was conducted until no further classification was possible.

### *Results*

As a result of the survey, 42 items of PE assistance were analysed (Table 1). Since there was overlap in the leading provider of each content, Table 1 is organised based on the leading provider.

The results of the analysis are shown in Table 2. When organising Group 1, some practices and projects where assistance was implemented involved multiple aspects. Therefore, PE assistance that can be applied to more than one group was classified into all applicable groups by creating multiple sticky notes. In organising Group 1, 16 sub-groups were produced. In organising Group 2, 14 sub-groups were produced. At this time, contents that could not be grouped together were retained. In organising Group 3, six sub-groups were produced. At this time too, those that could not be grouped together were retained. Further grouping was determined as impossible, and the following six groups were the final results: (1) dispatch of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) engaged in PE assistance, (2) assistance through training for those involved in PE, (3) revision or formulation of a PE curriculum, (4) preparation of textbooks or instructional materials for PE, (5) organising sports events and (6) maintenance of PE equipment and facilities. Based on these results, the six groups were considered the major categories of Japan's international PE assistance.

## **Phase 2: history and overview of each type of PE assistance**

### *Method*

Although the six major categories were extracted in Phase 1, no studies organised the history or overview of each category. In Phase 2, therefore, following the literature review methodology, we described the history and overview of the major categories extracted in Phase 1. This literature review can be a means of "demonstrating an author's knowledge about a particular field of study, including vocabulary, theories, key variables and phenomena, and its methods and history" (Randolph, 2009, p. 2). The application of this methodology was useful in this phase because one of the study's objectives was to obtain a history and overview of each type of PE assistance from the diverse materials.

The literature was collected using three sources: (1) web page searches, to search the web again based on the keywords extracted in Phase 1, (2) the collection at the Japanese National

No.	Year	Recipient country	Content	Leading provider
1	1954-	Worldwide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Knowledge Co-Creation Program for Group in Japan</li> </ul>	Japan International Cooperation Agency
2	1965-	Worldwide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dispatch of volunteers in JOCV program</li> </ul>	
3	2014-2021	Myanmar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curriculum revision for elementary education, assistance with the development of textbooks and instructional materials for teachers</li> <li>Training for in-service teachers to introduce the new curriculum</li> <li>Training at teacher training schools</li> </ul>	
4	2016-2019	Bosnia and Herzegovina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assistance in the creation and introduction of a curriculum for health and PE in target elementary schools</li> </ul>	
5	2017-2020	Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment system and human resources of (1) National Institute of PE and Sport, and (2) Department of PE and Sport for Student in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport</li> <li>Dissemination of PE classes using teaching guidelines and curriculum</li> </ul>	
6	2017-	South Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holding National Sports Festival</li> </ul>	
7	2017	Rwanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holding Undokai at elementary schools</li> </ul>	
8	2018	Nicaragua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanding awareness of PE through radio calisthenics</li> </ul>	
9	2019	Vietnam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visits to PE facilities in Japan by PE stakeholders</li> </ul>	
10	2006-2016	Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formulation of curriculum for elementary school PE and preparation of instructional materials for teachers</li> </ul>	
11	2015	Fiji	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvement of PE and prevention of lifestyle-related diseases by assistance in the formulation of policies related to PE and sports</li> </ul>	Japan Sport Council (one of the central organisations)
12	2017-2021	Peru	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building a training program for PE teachers</li> </ul>	
13	2018-2019	Brazil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assistance in the introduction of judo in public education</li> </ul>	
14	2018	Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction of Japanese PE for in-service teachers</li> </ul>	
15	2018	Bhutan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation in lectures at Japanese universities by university faculty</li> </ul>	
16	2015	Guatemala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holding Undokai at elementary schools</li> </ul>	
17	2016	Malawi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holding Undokai at elementary schools</li> </ul>	
18	2018	Bhutan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holding Undokai at elementary schools</li> <li>Implementation of "The Trainer Program" for local teachers</li> </ul>	
19	2015-2016	Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formulation of curriculum for junior high school PE</li> </ul>	
20	2016	India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holding sports day and implementation of radio calisthenics at public schools</li> </ul>	
21	2003	Tunisia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth leadership training program</li> </ul>	Nara prefecture

(continued)

**Table 1.**  
Japan's PE assistance  
to other countries, as  
extracted via web  
browser search

No.	Year	Recipient country	Content	Leading provider
22	2003	Dominican	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase of equipment for gymnastics which is a public education subject</li> </ul>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
23	2012	Mozambique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PE environment improvement through the construction of four junior high schools</li> </ul>	
24	2014	Bolivia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PE environment improvement through the construction of an elementary school</li> </ul>	
25	2014	Micronesia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donation of funds for the construction of a gymnasium</li> </ul>	
26	2014	Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance for organising Undokai at elementary schools</li> </ul>	International Budo University
27	2015	Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance for organising Undokai at elementary schools and distribution of operation manual</li> </ul>	
28	2016	Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance for organising Undokai at elementary schools and distribution of operation manual</li> <li>• Improvement of PE environment through the provision of PE materials</li> </ul>	
29	2017	Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance for organising Undokai at elementary schools and distribution of operation manual</li> </ul>	
30	2018	Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance for organising Undokai at elementary schools</li> </ul>	
31	2019	Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance for organising Undokai at elementary schools</li> </ul>	
32	2016	Malawi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holding Undokai at elementary schools</li> </ul>	University of Tsukuba
33	2019-2021	Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formulation of PE instructional materials for teachers</li> <li>• Organising workshops on teaching methods for PE</li> </ul>	Nippon Sport Science University
34	2017	India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holding Undokai at elementary and secondary schools</li> </ul>	Japan Sports Communications (NGO)
35	2018	Saudi Arabia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holding Undokai at public schools</li> </ul>	
36	2020	Rwanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holding Undokai through online</li> </ul>	
37	2017	Romania, Korea and Hong Kong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of Creative Dance in PE</li> </ul>	MIYAZAKI C-DANCE CENTRE (NPO)
38	2021	China, Romania, Singapore and Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of Creative Dance in PE</li> </ul>	
39	2017	Laos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holding sport event at elementary schools</li> </ul>	SPW (student group)
40	2018	Myanmar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holding sport event at elementary schools</li> </ul>	
41	2015-	Vietnam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of teaching materials into curriculum</li> </ul>	Mizuno Corporation
42	2017	Costa Rica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holding training workshop for the introduction and implementation of base-ball type into the curriculum</li> </ul>	Yomiuri Giants (professional baseball team)

Table 1.

Diet Library and (3) the collection at the JICA Library. In a general systematic literature review, the literature is selected for analysis by setting criteria and screening. Since this current literature review was used to organise the history and overview, no specific criteria were set to gather comprehensive information from a few sources, and the literature was collected through a snowballing method (Wohin, 2014). Specifically, we used previous studies

Group 3	Group 2	Group 1	Classified activities (numbered in Table 1)	Japan's PE assistance to other countries
Dispatch of JOCVs engaged in PE assistance				2
Assistance through training for those involved in PE	Training in Japan	The Knowledge Co-Creation Program (KCCP) for Group		1
		Holding workshop in Japan		14, 15
		Holding workshop in developing countries		3, 5, 10, 18, 33
		Establishment of a training program for PE teachers		12
Revision or formulation of the PE curriculum		Complete revision or formulation of curriculum		3, 4, 10, 19
		Introduction of specific areas in the curriculum		13, 37, 38, 41, 42
Preparation of textbooks or instructional materials for PE		Preparation of textbooks		3
		Preparation of instructional materials		3, 4, 5, 10, 27, 28, 29, 33
Organising sport events		Holding National Sports Festival		6
		Holding Undokai in the schools		7, 16, 17, 18, 20, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36
		Holding sport events		39, 40
		Conducting radio calisthenics		8, 20
Maintenance of the PE equipment and facilities	Assistance with PE equipment	Provision of PE equipment		28
		Financial assistance for purchases of PE equipment		22
		Improvement of PE environment through school construction		23, 24, 25

**Table 2.** Classification of the types of Japan's PE assistance to other countries

or reports that were found in Phase 1 as a base, traced the previous studies and literature cited in the studies in this base, and covered new previous studies and literature.

*Results*

*Dispatch of JOCVs engaged in PE assistance.* The JOCVs programme is a system wherein a candidate can select a job category based on a volunteer's own speciality from more than 190 different job categories. Although JOCVs are called volunteers, their responsibilities and duties are close to employment, as ODA provides them with minimal financial support. This job category involving volunteers engaged in PE assistance is referred to as "PE"; moreover, several studies on volunteers engaging in "PE" have been conducted (e.g. Saito, 2006; Shiraishi, Saito, Yamahira, & Shimomiya, 2020). As of 18 February 2022, JICA has set forth three perspectives on the activities of JOCVs in "PE" on its website: (1) instructing PE classes, advising colleagues, preparing teaching manuals and materials, and supporting the extracurricular activities and sports events at elementary schools, junior high schools, high schools and teacher training schools, (2) support for curriculum revisions and the implementation of teacher training workshops (e.g. at the ministry of education, sports bureau), and (3) support for sports awareness-raising activities for disabled people and residents at local health and sports bureaus.



According to the [JICA \(1967\)](#), 182 volunteers were dispatched in the first three years of the JOCVs programme, which started in 1965. Among them, two were sent to Malaysia, two to Laos and one to Kenya in the job category of “PE”. The number of dispatched PE volunteers was further summarised in [Shiraishi, Saito, et al. \(2020\)](#). As of 31 December 2019, a total of 45,000 people were dispatched in the JOCVs programme, including approximately 1,300 volunteers under the PE category. Moreover, categories related to sport, including PE, accounted for a large percentage of the total JOCVs. These sport-related categories were notable owing to the “Sport for Tomorrow (SFT)” programme that was announced during the 125th Session of the International Olympic Committee when the decision was made to host the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It is an international sports contribution programme that began when former Japanese Prime Minister, Abe, declared his international commitment to bring the value of sport from Japan to more than ten million people in 100 countries worldwide if the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games can be held. Conversely, in 1990, after the World Conference on Education for All, the proportion of volunteers belonging to the PE category increased among the sport-related categories as the demand for the education sector increased ([Shiraishi, Saito, et al., 2020](#)).

*Assistance through training for those involved in PE.* Since 1954, JICA has accepted trainees from different countries and developed training projects in cooperation with relevant domestic organisations. These training projects encompassed “The Knowledge Co-Creation Program (KCCP) for Group”, a training programme designed to solve problems related to specific areas of expertise. According to [JICA \(2018b, 2019\)](#), the target organisations for training in the area of “PE in basic education” that was implemented in recent years were the Ministry of Education and other related ministries, local administrative agencies of education or teacher training institutions. Additionally, (1) managerial officials or specialists in charge of PE, (2) with more than ten years of job experience and (3) with a bachelor’s degree or more, were listed as target groups. Moreover, three specific goals were identified: (1) comparing the current situation of PE in Japan and participatory countries, (2) the problems of PE in each participatory country are identified and analysed based on the understanding of improvement policies of PE in Japan, and (3) practical measures were proposed towards the education problems related to PE in each participatory country.

These findings suggest that from the implementation of the training for influential people in each country, a ripple effect is expected after they return to their own countries. The PE stakeholder training was also related to revising and creating curricula and instructional materials, which will be discussed later. When new curricula and instructional materials are developed, the curricula content and how to use the materials can be learned through training.

In contrast, along with conducting training for PE professionals, there was the assistance that focused on a Japanese teacher training method called “lesson study” (*jogyo kenkyu* in Japanese) and aimed to build a PE teacher training system in Peru ([JSPS San Francisco, 2020](#); [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2019](#); [Sport for Tomorrow, 2018](#)). Lesson study has long contributed to improving teacher quality in Japan and has been applied in numerous countries ([Ono & Ferreira, 2010](#)). However, as PE lesson study in Africa and Latin America has only been conducted since 2020 ([Saito & Shiraishi, 2021](#); [Shiraishi, Iwata, & Saito, 2020](#)), such measures have only begun to be used in the field of PE in international educational cooperation.

*Revision or formulation of the PE curriculum.* The curriculum has several levels, such as “national, local or school level” ([UNESCO, 2016](#), p. 8); however, we referred to the curriculum at the “national” level here. As part of the practices of JOCVs engaged in PE assistance, volunteers assigned to the ministry of education and the sports bureau worked to support the curriculum revision. Therefore, JOCVs have helped revise the PE curriculum in various countries. Apart from that, three cases involved a PE curriculum revision being implemented as a project: Cambodia, Myanmar, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.



The Cambodian curriculum revision was the oldest of the three examples and included systematic assistance from Japan (Hearts of Gold, 2010, 2021). For 11 years since 2006, the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Japan's JICA, University of Tsukuba, and Hearts of Gold (a non-profit organisation) have collaborated to revise the elementary school curriculum. After the elementary school curriculum was disseminated throughout the country and the foundation was laid, junior high and high school curriculum development began in 2015 (Kubota, 2020). Such long-term assistance was possible because of the existence of Hearts of Gold, a non-profit organisation based in Cambodia. In Myanmar, the JICA was responsible for a project to revise the entire primary education curriculum between 2014 and 2021. In this project, the PE curriculum was also revised (Kubota, 2020). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the entire primary education curriculum was revised between 2016 and 2019 to unify the curriculum with the different educational content in each region. In this context, JICA was responsible for revising health and PE (Tanaka, 2018). The two projects in Myanmar, a country with a long military regime, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a multi-ethnic country, were expected to emphasise cooperation and teamwork among peers, which are important in the Japanese PE curriculum and classes (Mitsuishi, 2020).

*Preparation of textbooks or instructional materials for PE.* Of the three curriculum revision projects previously listed, those in Cambodia and Myanmar were tied to the creation of textbooks and instructional material (Kubota, 2020; Tanaka, 2018). This connection may be because textbooks must be re-designed along with the revised curriculum and the necessary instructional materials for teachers would alter how they teach.

Additionally, in Cambodia, there was the practice of preparing instructional material and video instructional materials for teacher training school students, and in Uganda, there was a project of developing instructional materials for elementary school teachers. The Cambodian practice was driven by the assistance of the sports event led by International Budo University in 2014, which is described later, to create a manual that teacher training school for the students' reference to further revitalise PE classes. Furthermore, focussing on the cell phone ownership rate in Cambodia, video instructional materials available on YouTube were also created and provided to Cambodian teachers (Yamahira, Takami, Matsui, Kimura, & Tokunaga, 2016).

The project in Uganda was led by Nippon Sport Science University starting in 2019 under the SFT programme. In this project, local workshops educated Ugandan teachers on how to teach PE while simultaneously preparing instructional materials (Sport for Tomorrow, 2021). Therefore, teacher training on the intention and use of textbooks and instructional materials sometimes occurred.

*Organising sports events.* In South Sudan, JICA and other organisations supported the holding of a national sports event titled "National Unity Day", which aimed to create opportunities for national unity in countries that had on-going civil war (Furukawa, 2019). In contrast, numerous practices for school-based sporting events were held instead of such large-scale initiatives, which were called *Undokai*. Undokai is a school-based sporting event with a history of more than 150 years in Japan and has a Japanese name. It has been regarded as a place to present the outcomes of PE classes, making it significantly related to PE (Akiyama, 2020); thus, its Japanese name is often used in other countries.

According to Kaneko (2020), Undokai in other countries began to be held by sport-related volunteers shortly after the JOCVs programme started in 1965. Since then, it has been positioned as one activity for the volunteers engaged in PE assistance. According to JICA's survey, a total of 79 Undokai, involving 31 countries, were held in the three years from January 2014 to April 2017 (Kaneko, 2020).

Along with these practices organised by JOCVs, there were also several cases of universities and Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) using their local connections to organise Undokai. Among them, Undokai, which has been implemented by the International Budo

University in Cambodia for several years, has been summarised in several studies (e.g. Kimura & Yamahira, 2019; Yamahira, 2014; Yamahira, Kimura, Matsui, Doi, & Tokunaga, 2015; Yamahira, 2017). This practice was approved by the SFT programme and provided an opportunity for students to gain experience in international exchange. Furthermore, by creating a manual, they set a goal to create a system that was managed by local residents alone, rather than a one-off activity that could only be realised with Japan's guidance and participation. Moreover, Undokai aimed to help Cambodians enjoy exercise and experience its various benefits, thus, helping them continue their PE classes (Yamahira *et al.*, 2016).

*Maintenance of PE equipment and facilities.* Since 1975, Japan has provided sports-related facilities and equipment to other countries through Cultural Grant Assistance (a type of Grant Aid) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021b). Based on the recent Cultural Grant Assistance provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2019, 2020, 2021a), assistance has been provided for sports facilities, such as athletic, judo and soccer fields. These forms of assistance are for the sports field rather than PE in schools. Additionally, the PE environment in schools could be improved along with school construction projects, such as Numbers 23, 24 and 25 in Table 1. Notably, in 1980, the schools were built in Tonga and the Maldives through the first Grant Aid school construction. Moreover, more than 5,500 elementary and secondary schools were built using Grant Aid and Bilateral Government Loans deployed by JICA from 2000 to 2015 (Okitsu, 2019). However, it would be difficult to recognise this as being direct assistance for PE.

In contrast, JICA is developing a programme referred to as “Smile for All in the World”, in which Japan provides disused tools in Japan to the organisations that are involved with the JOCVs. Because of the wide variety of job categories in the JOCVs programme, there were some cases where equipment was provided for use in school PE classes; however, they were not only those related to PE. Regarding material assistance, while the lack of sustainability is often pointed out, support for minimum tools will be essential. Based on this perspective, International Budo University provided sports equipment from a sponsored company to the elementary school after the Undokai (Yamahira, 2017).

## Discussion

An overview of the relationships between the six major categories regarding Japan's PE assistance to other countries shows that “supporting self-help efforts” (*jijo-doryoku* in Japanese) (Sunaga, 2004, p. 13) was a concept that has long been important in Japan's ODA. The term refers to helping the people of a country accomplish things on their own without relying on other countries. Since 1990 “supporting self-help efforts” was a concept emphasised in Japan's international cooperation policy when Japan became the world's top donor. Compared with other donor countries, Japan has given this remarkable importance (Sawamura, 2002, 2004).

For example, Japan is not only conducting the revision or formulation of counterpart countries' PE curricula, but also creating textbooks that should be changed accordingly and organising teacher training. This indicates that the focus is on top-down measures from the government to the school. Additionally, inviting people who are expected to have ripple effects in each country and send them to Japan to follow some training that allows the participants to understand the intentions of Japan's PE curriculum and to incorporate these intentions into their own countries. In some areas where PE classes are not sufficiently conducted, instructional materials have been prepared to help teachers when implementing Undokai, which may seem to be a transient practice. Moreover, the presence of volunteers and NGOs supporting the practices and projects in the recipient country was also apparent. These Japanese people have contributed to maintaining the motivation of local residents. Particularly, the JOCVs have played a central role in Japan's PE assistance. There have

also been cases where the connections and trust with local residents that the JOCV built have been used in national projects. In contrast, implementing PE classes in countries considered “developing countries” remains poor. There is an urgent need to improve the quality and capacity of PE teachers (UNESCO, 2014). In international cooperation generally, it has been pointed out that too much cuddling and excessive interference can result in aid dependency in the country (Moyo, 2009). However, in countries where independent governance and PE classes have not yet been developed, it would be desirable for Japan to continue standing by and providing assistance.

By tracing the historical evolution of each type of assistance, the support, except for JOCVs, can be shown to be underpinned by a large national project. For example, the aforementioned SFT programme, spearheaded by Japan Sports Agency, has provided some PE assistance with the promotion of development through sport (Okada, 2018). The impact of this SFT programme has been significant, and Table 1 identifies the numerous practices and projects started after 2014. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has developed a programme called “EDU-Port Japan” to develop the appeal of Japanese education overseas, which further supports PE and other school subjects. In other words, projects like these that act as financial resources are notable in initiating factors of international educational cooperation. However, when a project ends, that is, when the financial resources are exhausted, the relationship built with the recipient country must be considered important. Although Japan is now supporting PE in various countries as a donor, former recipient countries may easily become donors, or entirely new donors may emerge in the future (King, 2016). Moreover, UNESCO (2015c) contends that education should be shared globally. The future may not be so far away when countries are able to develop “self-help efforts” and share knowledge on PE.

In contrast, doubts regarding the multiple financial resources for PE assistance, such as JICA, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, and the Japan Sports Agency are inevitable. For example, although the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology is not listed as a leading provider in Table 1, it implemented several PE assistance projects in the “EDU-Port Japan” mentioned above as it proceeds with the consignment to other organisations. “EDU-Port Japan” promotes the development of the “Japanese style”, which can be considered to carry the ideas of “neoliberalism” and “cultural imperialism”, which have been rendered taboo in Japan’s history of international educational cooperation (Hashimoto, 2019). Perhaps this is against the will of JICA, which has long played a central role in Japan’s PE assistance provided to other countries. Moreover, Numbers 12, 33 and 41 in Table 1 were developed both in “EDU-Port Japan” and the SFT programme. PE can be situated within “education”, but it can also be situated in “sport”, which is another of its characteristics. International cooperation in the field of sport has come to be based on the concepts of “development through sport” (Darnell, 2007; Levermore, 2010) or “sport for development and peace” (Burnett, 2015; Giulianotti, Hognestad, & Spaaij, 2016; Kidd, 2008), with sport being used as a tool to help improve social issues. This trend is also seen in Japan, and although the specific activities listed differ, distinguishing the source of the outcomes is challenging. In addition to understanding the intentions of those involved in PE in recipient countries, the validity and reliability of Japan’s PE assistance would be enhanced if all of Japan’s multiple financial resources (JICA; the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; and the Japan Sports Agency) share a common intention and cooperate.

## Conclusion

In this study, after consolidating various materials on Japan’s PE assistance to other countries, major categories were extracted, and we aimed to convey the history and overview of these categories, as well as the characteristics and issues derived from their relationships.

Consequently, six major categories were extracted, and their history and overview were discussed based on various sources. The relationship between these major categories was also examined. Apparently, “supporting self-help efforts” is likely to be formed by the complementarity between these six categories. What is currently considered PE assistance from Japan to other countries can be expected in the future to become a horizontal position, so to speak, wherein Japan and other countries are partners with whom knowledge is shared. Nevertheless, the existence of multiple providers is considered a slight challenge. Accordingly, these partnerships could be important in future. These results may provide insights into the future development of Japan’s PE assistance to other countries and the development of cross-border cooperation in PE. No other study has comprehensively summarised Japan’s PE assistance to other countries, making this study useful as basic material for developing future research in this field.

However, this study used a web browser search, inductive classification and literature review as its analytic methods. When organising and analysing historical materials, there is a tendency for the researcher’s perspectives and arbitrary interpretation to be involved in the methodology. This is one of the issues noted in this study. Future studies must increase the evidence confirmation could be enhanced by conducting interviews with the relevant stakeholders based on the motivations, context, and the process with which the policy choices were made. They must include PE stakeholders in each country as survey participants, but it is also desirable to conduct more international joint studies as partners in improving PE in each country. Besides, we focused on PE assistance in this study. To claim the unique characteristics of the subject of PE, it will be essential to compare it with the assistance given in other subjects in the field of international educational cooperation in the future.

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