

Practical Study of the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament in Japan—Sports Events to Solve Social Problems

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Abstract: The Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament is a sports event that incorporates elements of competition into cleaning activities, as opposed to traditional cleaning activities. As of the end of December 2016, a total of 552 Sports Garbage Pickup Tournaments have been held, mobilizing a cumulative total number of 62,989 people. As each tournament brings a revenue of over 300,000 yen, the total sales so far would be more than 165,000,000 yen. This game was recently reported on the International Olympic Committee channel. The garbage issue, a social problem for local communities, should be solved by residents, visitors, and workers themselves through sports, cooperating with local governments. This is an eco-friendly sport aimed at “solving local social problems through sports.” Sports Garbage Pickup Tournaments can be held anywhere, inside the city or in a natural environment. In addition, the competition allows participants to visually understand the environmental capacity of garbage produced in the community, as the points are weighted according to the types of garbage. The Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament is an educational program for sustainable development with emphasis on experience, pursuit, and practice, and also an action-based program aimed at promoting spontaneous action. This is an optimal competition for participants to acquire skills through mutual communication. As children, adults, and people with disabilities can play together, the competition will promote communication across the generations.

Key words: Sports garbage pickup tournament, sports event, sports innovation, environment, social problem.

1. Introduction

As of the end of December 2016, a total of 552 Sports Garbage Pickup Tournaments, which is a fusion of sports and environmental activities, had been held with a total cumulative number of participants reaching 62,989. As each tournament brings a revenue of over 300,000 yen, the total sales so far are estimated to be more than 165,000,000 yen. Sports Garbage Pickup Tournaments are aimed at solving social problems of the community through sports; the garbage issue, a social challenge for the local community, should not be left to the local government or a handful of people, but should be solved by the residents themselves through sports. The competitions

have already been held internationally, including in Russia and Myanmar. At the same time, as social issues of local communities are not limited to the reduction of garbage, the principles of Sports Garbage Pickup Tournaments are applied to other social problems in order to solve diverse local social challenges through sports. The tournament won the fourth Social Contribution Award of the Japan Institute of Eventology (2009), the Japan Sports Health Industries Federation and Japan Sport Tourism Alliance Award (Sports and Urban Development Award), the Chief of the Commerce and Information Policy Bureau, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry Award (2013), and the first Cool Japan Matching Award (Special Jury Price) (2017) [1]. Recently, the Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games has implemented this competition and presents it on the International

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Olympic Committee (IOC) Channel and the official website of the Paralympic Games [2].

2. Background

2.1 Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament in the Framework of Outdoor Sports

Sportsmanship refers to respecting the opposing players, rules, and referees. A game can be considered a sport if there are opposing players, rules, and a referee [3]. As the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament is composed of opposing players, rules, and a referee, it can be considered a sports event. The Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament is organized according to the predefined official rules with local governments, companies, resident associations, and NPOs joining the tournament secretariat.

Each team is composed of about five players, and teams compete by picking up garbage within the predefined area and obtaining points according to the quality and quantity of the garbage collected. The game normally lasts one hour, and the points to be attributed are weighted according to the nature of the garbage; for example, 10 points for 100 grams of

plastics or 100 points for 100 grams of cigarette butts. The ranking is determined with the total points calculated based on the garbage collected by each team. As the game area is predetermined, it is also important to make strategies, including which route to take for picking up garbage. The team is always accompanied by a referee, in order to prevent players from running or picking up garbage from trash cans. The referee holds a yellow card and a red card. The organizer is provided with prizes by sponsors and the award ceremony of the tournament is held (Fig. 1).

Therefore, the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament is considered a sports event, as it is composed of opposing players, rules and referees.

As for the positioning of outdoor sports, all activities carried out in outdoor fields are considered outdoor activities (nature-experiencing activities), and outdoor sports are considered a part of such activities. In other words, outdoor sports are physical activities performed in nature by benefiting from the natural environment, aimed at encouraging players to learn about nature [4].



Fig. 1 Flow of tournament day.

The Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament is considered an outdoor sport. The game has the following three principal features. (1) It is possible to organize the competition anywhere, because the game can be carried out anywhere, including in the city area, in the beach, or in mountains. Next, (2) small children, school-aged children, adults, and senior citizens can enjoy the game together, regardless of sex and age. Finally, (3) it is possible to involve the local community, as the activity is based on cooperation at the community level between the administration, the local government, schools, and companies. While most outdoor sports need a natural environment such as the mountains or the sea, the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament can be held in urban environments as well. The Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament contributes to the enlargement of the sphere for outdoor sports.

2.2 Effects of the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament on Environmental Education

Between 2011 and 2013, the National Institute for Environmental Studies (Japan) conducted a survey on environmental consciousness, focusing for example, on the reactions and impressions of participants after the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament. According to the survey result, the effects obtained through environmental education turned out to be larger and more persistent among children who participated in the event than adults [5]. Children who have participated in the tournament are less hesitant to pick up and separate garbage and are less likely to litter. On the other hand, more people notice the presence of garbage, and interest in the garbage issue has risen through participation in the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament. In addition, children who have taken part

in the tournaments tend to have higher general awareness of the environment and to take more environmental-friendly actions; for example, by diligently turning off the lights. As they are highly willing to join future competitions, it can be said that the Tournament encourages continued participation (Fig. 2).

2.3 Purpose & Method

In the field of outdoor sports, there have been efforts to promote education for sustainable development as part of environmental education [4]. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) refers to educational activities aimed at building a sustainable society [6].

However, there are no examples of ESD activities incorporating sports that have been practiced in Japan. According to the National Institute for Environmental Studies [5], the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament has a high educational effect as an environmental educational activity. Therefore, we will analyze an implementation of the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament as a part of ESD.

We conducted a semi-structured interview with Mr. Kenichi Mamitsuka, representative of the SPORTS GOMIHIROI Association (Social Sports Initiative), on April 3, 2017, and analyzed previous work on ESD [7] with respect to the implementation of the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament. On the basis of the survey result, we focus and reflect on informal education according to the Bonn Declaration adopted in Germany in 2009 as the interim summary of DESD (United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development) as well as on proper efforts by local communities.

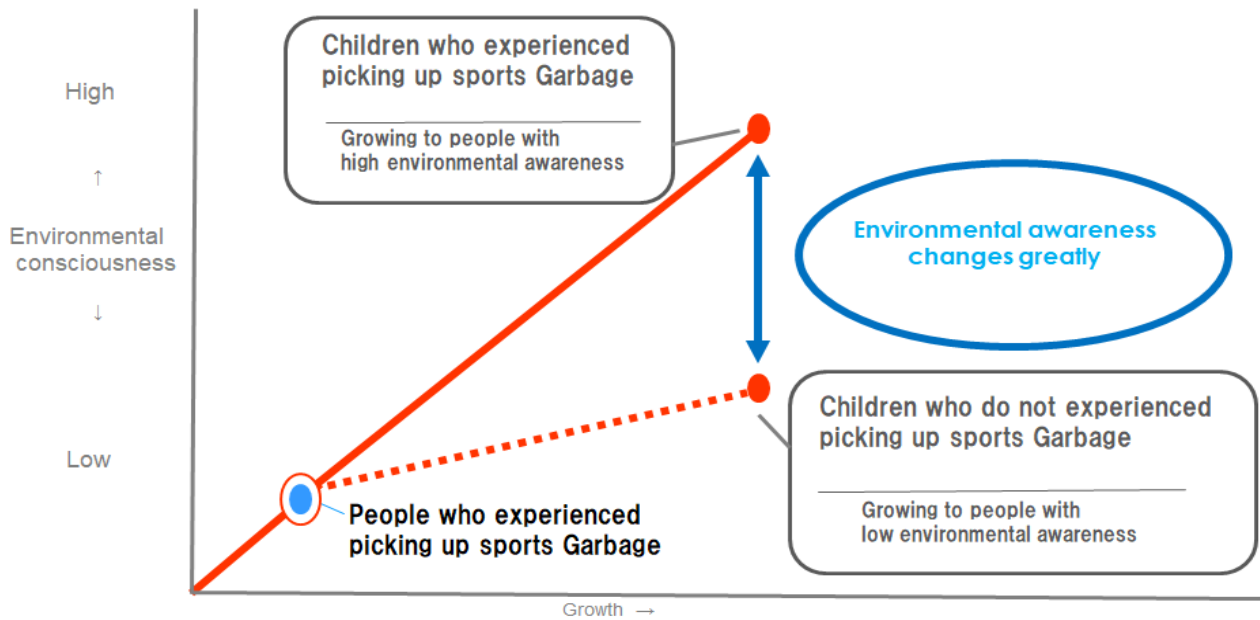


Fig. 2 Change in the environmental consciousness of children.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Process That Has Led to Education for Sustainable Development

More than 20 years has passed since the notion of sustainable development was proposed. Numerous studies have been conducted on this notion, and with its meaning becoming gradually clear, it has become a common goal for all humankind. Sustainable development was defined in 1987 as “meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (Brundtland Commission).

In the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development stated the importance of promoting the enlightenment and participation of people on environmental issues. Agenda 21, adopted as the action plan, is a program that identifies actions to be coordinated worldwide in order to reconcile the maintenance of Earth’s ecosystem (environment) and

development (economic development) and to overcome poverty. Chapter 36 of this document indicates the necessity to promote education, public awareness, and training, stating that “Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues.” In order to verify Agenda 21, Japan proposed it at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Summit) in 2002 and it was adopted in the UN General Assembly in 2002 [4].

As for international efforts on ESD, the United Nations passed a resolution that the 10-year period from 2005 would become the DESD. In this UN resolution, UNESCO, nominated as the promotional agency of DESD, prepared the UN International Implementation Scheme in 2005 [8] and hosted the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development in 2009 to give an interim summary on the DESD and adopt the Bonn Declaration for the resolution of future issues [9].

In the Bonn Declaration, the interim summary document of DESD, the importance of lifelong learning in the formal, non-formal, and informal

educational systems and the necessity of involving all social sectors were pointed out. The declaration focuses on the necessity to support the systematic and continuous adoption of themes related to sustainable development in formal education, namely school education, as well as in non-formal and informal education at all stages [10].

Formal education refers to institutionalized school education mainly targeted at those approximately 5 to 25 years old. Non-formal education means systematic educational activities that are carried out outside the framework of regular school education and is also referred to as out-of-school education. These are activities that are designed to meet the needs of all people in basic education through complementary and flexible approaches that consider a situation in which primary education is not perfectly available to all through formal education (school education).

On the other hand, informal education refers to the learning process that stretches over the lifespan in which attitudes, values, knowledge and technology are learned incidentally from the surrounding environment including daily experience, family, workplace, playing, market, library and mass media due to the limits in education.

4. Findings

4.1 Informal Education through the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament

Continued learning over a person's lifetime through informal education with an emphasis on experience-based and action-oriented activities that support education for sustainable development is important. The Japanese National Commission for UNESCO [8] puts an emphasis on encouraging concrete action by cultivating interest, comprehension, attitudes, and capacity for problem solving and eliciting spontaneous action by learners through participative approaches that attach importance to experience, pursuit, and practice.

In this regard, the ESD elements adopted in the

Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament offer a truly experience- and participation-based educational program and make the game an optimal opportunity for participants to acquire skills through mutual communication.

The tournament is based on experience, as players try to pick up garbage to win the game over the opponent team. There is time for holding a strategy meeting to decide on which route to pick up garbage within the designated area, and in this sense the game can be considered action-oriented. As the tournament is not an individual but a group competition played by team members, communication among members is required.

People in all generations, including children, adults, senior citizens, and people with disabilities, can join the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament. In December 2017, the "Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament Wheelchair Challenge" was organized in cooperation with the Toyota Motor Corporation and Mr. Daisuke Uehara, Vancouver Paralympic silver medalist, who constituted an important action toward the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. People with wheelchairs can also join this competition, together with people who do not require such assistance.

The Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament allows participants to cultivate the capacity and attitude to identify ESD-related challenges and to resolve them, including the ability to understand environmental capacity and to distinguish between quality, quantity, and value [11, 12]. In the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament, the point values are weighted according to the types of garbage; for example, 10 points for 10 grams of plastics and 100 points for 100 grams of cigarette butts. The ranking is determined with the total points calculated based on the garbage collected by each team. This will enable participants to visually understand the environmental capacity, as shown by the garbage in the community.

In Japan, for example, garbage in the natural environment, including beaches and mountains, is

different from garbage in cities [13]. You can see the difference in garbage types across the world. For example, in Nepal, as a result of rapid economic growth and a corresponding increase in industrial products, petrochemical garbage, including plastic bags, has begun to be scattered across the cities. By learning about the current situation of garbage at the local level, it would become possible to summarize the reality of environmental pollution, as the American biologist Ms. Rachel Carson did.

4.2 Local Nature of the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament

The Bonn Declaration requires involvement by all social actors. In addition, the same document points out the importance of respect and fair evaluation of the positive roles played by traditional knowledge and proper efforts made at the regional level, and to attach importance to various cultural contributions that have been made for ESD promotion. While sports activities originally had a private and individual character, communities have been created through collective sports activities. Once a community has been formed, various actors, including players, watchers, and supporters, begin to interact, thus contributing to the formation of human relationships [12].

The Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament is organized according to the predefined official rules with local governments, companies, resident associations, and NPOs joining the tournament secretariat. Therefore, as the activities are based on local cooperation among such actors and the administration, local government, schools, and companies, it is possible to implement activities involving the local community.

The Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament has already been implemented abroad as well as inside Japan.

4.3 Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament Now Organized Abroad

When the governor of Tomsk Oblast, Russia, who

had obtained information about the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament, visited Japan, he showed interest in this competition, paving the way for the game to be held in Russia. We were invited by the government of Tomsk Oblast and we held the competition in Tomsk Oblast in June 2016. Except for one face-to-face meeting, we relied on e-mail exchange throughout the entire arrangement and preparation process until the tournament took place. Such an approach was possible because the competition is simple, and easy to understand and prepare for. On the day of the competition, it was covered by many media, the news was spread across Russia and we received the message of gratitude from the governor of Tomsk Oblast. During our visit, we also made a conference at the university, had meetings with citizen groups and appeared on local TV and radio programs. In addition, we also held the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament in Yangon. The story started in June 2016 when municipal employees of Yangon visited Japan for a training course on industrial waste and had the opportunity to experience the tournament thanks to the proposal by Tokyo Environmental Public Service Corporation. It was those municipal staff who experienced the game that made a request to hold the tournament. Apparently, it was the first time for Yangon City to take initiative in appealing the citizen and holding an event for picking up garbage, and the event attracted a lot of attention, while there were numerous problems from the preparation stage. Under great contribution by the municipal employees of Yangon City, participants in the tournament got very excited. Immediately after the end of the tournament, Yangon City consulted with us for the second game. The tournament will also be held in the next fiscal year.

After hosting the event in these two countries, what was the most impressive was that “people of both countries had great pleasure in preparing for the tournament”. We had already noticed good reactions during the games held in Japan, but we received even

more favorable reactions during the overseas events.

4.4 Solving Social Issues in the City with the Power of Sports

The aim of the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament is to ensure that the garbage issue, a social issue for local communities, is not left to the local government or a handful of people but are solved by local residents, workers, or visitors through their own efforts and sports. Of course, the social problems of the community are not limited to garbage reduction. However, we believe that the principles of the garbage pickup tournament can be applied to other social problems (Fig. 3). We now introduce typical examples in which social problems of a municipality can be solved through sports.

4.4.1 Sports Kaki Pickup Game

In December 2012, a competition was held in Matsukawa Town, Shimoina County, Nagano Prefecture, where depopulation had been going on. In this event, participants competed with each other to pick up *kaki* fruits that were sporadically left on the trees after the harvest. Until then, the local government collected these *kakis* left after the harvest at its own cost, in order to keep birds and beasts that feed on *kakis* away from surrounding fields. After having consulted the local government, we first defined the rules and called for the event organization. As a result, many people, including students of Shinshu University and family members from Nagoya,

joined the competition, and we would like to express our gratitude toward the warm hospitality of the local people. Ultimately, we succeeded in holding a very exciting game.

4.4.2 International Sports Snow Shoveling Game

The aim of this game is to solve the problem related to snow shoveling in front of houses of single-living senior citizens by means of sports. The game was held in Otaru in January 2014 to target foreign tourists visiting Japan during the snow season. People from 12 countries, mainly tourists from ASEAN countries who were not familiar with snow and who were visiting Otaru during snowy winter, joined the game. On the first day, a competition was held to allow them to experience the weight of snow, the use of shovels and unicycles while having fun. On the second day, from early in the morning, all participants traveled to the zone where single-living senior citizens lived to engage in snow shoveling. Participants tried to enlarge the road width and make stairs using snow under the guidance of local people. They felt a sense of great satisfaction and a refreshing sense of fatigue, and saw the moment when a social issue was solved through sports.

4.5 Formal and Non-formal Education in the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament

Formal education incorporating the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament has played an important role as part of the courses in public high schools. Since 2014,

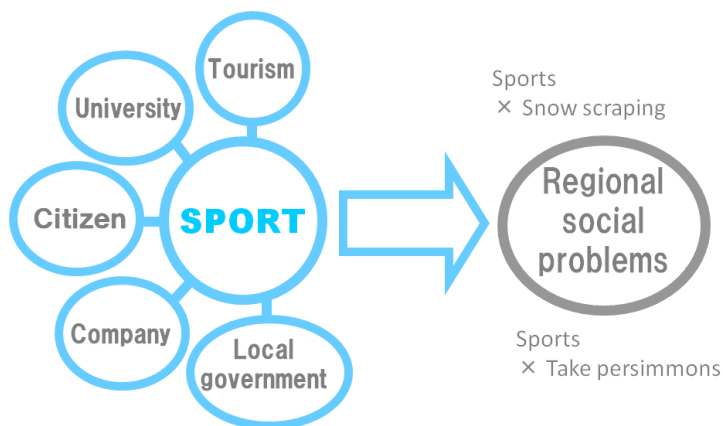


Fig. 3 Solving social problems of the community through sports.

the Sports Management Division of Yokohama Commercial High School has been integrating the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament in its courses from the viewpoint of sports management. Mr. Mamitsuka, representative of the Sports GOMIHIROI Association, stands at the front of the classroom 10 times a year to teach high school students about community sports promotion. The goal is that students themselves host the game, involve people in the local community, and obtain their understanding to make the tournament a success. Every year, they achieve wonderful results, as shown by the award conferred by Minami Ward, Yokohama City in 2017.

Non-formal education using the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament is conducted at M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University and also for elementary school children in Moscow.

4.6 Final Goal of the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament

In the future, the Sports GOMIHIROI Association will continue to solve numerous social problems, both at home and abroad. The association intends to solve local (and national) social problems through the force of sports.

The goal of the Sports GOMIHIROI Association is that the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament will disappear from the world. That is, if there is no more garbage on the planet, it will certainly be impossible to hold the Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament. At that time, this social issue will have been solved permanently. This is one of the rare competitions in which the ultimate goal from the moment of invention is its disappearance. However, it will be a great pleasure for us if the social problem disappears. For further development, the Sports GOMIHIROI Association will extend its activities to find new solutions [14].

5. Conclusions

The Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament can be

held anywhere, inside the city or in a natural environment. In addition, the competition allows participants to visually understand environmental capacity as shown by the garbage produced in the community, as the points are weighted according to the types of garbage.

The Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament is a participative educational program for sustainable development with an emphasis on experience, pursuit, and practice, and also an action-based ESD program aimed at promoting spontaneous activity by learners in sports activities. This is an optimal competition for participants to acquire skills through exchange. As children, adults, and people with disabilities can play together, the competition will promote communication across generations.

The garbage issue, a social problem for local communities, should not be left to the local government or a handful of people but should be solved by local residents, visitors, and workers themselves. The Sports Garbage Pickup Tournament can be referred to as an eco-friendly sport, if we can turn the act of picking up garbage into a sports competition and solve the social problem for the city.

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