

Path Exploration and Practice of Undergraduate Physical Education Teaching Reform under the Background of "Healthy China 2030"

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Abstract: The promulgation of the "Healthy China 2030" Outline has elevated public health to the level of a national strategy, presenting new tasks and missions for physical education in higher education institutions. As a critical component in shaping young people's health literacy and cultivating lifelong exercise habits, undergraduate physical education has seen its traditional paradigm centered on skill transmission and meeting physical education quality standards struggle to meet the demands of the new era for "holistic development" and "active health" in talent cultivation. This paper conducts an in-depth analysis of the three core elements of the "Healthy China" strategy—"promoting comprehensive health," "focusing on lifelong development," and "advocating active participation"—and their value guidance for physical education in higher education. It systematically identifies the current challenges in undergraduate physical education regarding concepts, curricula, models, evaluations, and faculty. The study proposes that reforms should be guided by the overarching goal of cultivating students' "core physical education literacy," establishing a systematic approach encompassing "five dimensions": "goal redefinition, curriculum restructuring, model innovation, evaluation reform, and faculty optimization." Through multi-dimensional safeguard mechanisms such as strengthening top-level design, improving resource conditions, fostering a health culture, and leveraging smart technologies, a profound transformation can be achieved—from "physical" to "educational," from "classroom" to "life," and from "meeting standards" to "cultivating habits"—ultimately serving the construction of Healthy China and the cultivation of high-quality talents.

Keywords: Healthy China 2030; Undergraduate Physical Education; Teaching Reform; Core Competencies; Lifelong Sports

1. Introduction

National health is the fundamental condition for economic and social development, and an important symbol of national prosperity and ethnic rejuvenation. The introduction of the "Healthy China 2030" Plan Outline marks a new strategic phase in the development of China's health and wellness sector, themed "Joint Construction and Sharing, Health for All." This strategy not only focuses on disease treatment but also emphasizes the promotion of healthy lifestyles and health education for all, explicitly proposing to "intensify health education in schools" and "make health education a key component of quality education at all levels." As a critical period for shaping young students' worldviews, life perspectives, values, and behavioral habits, the effectiveness of physical education directly impacts the physical and mental well-being of millions of future social builders and successors, serving as an indispensable cornerstone for implementing the "Healthy China" strategy [1].

As one of the most extensive and mandatory general education courses in China's higher education curriculum system, undergraduate public physical education has long played a foundational role in enhancing students' physical fitness and imparting sports skills. However, a reality check reveals the widespread phenomenon of "students loving sports but disliking physical education classes," which reflects the inherent limitations of traditional physical education models: one-sided teaching objectives, monotonous course content, outdated teaching methods, and utilitarian evaluation approaches. This teacher-centered paradigm, which focuses on skill transmission and uses achievement tests as the endpoint, fails to fully stimulate students' intrinsic motivation and

struggles to effectively cultivate their habits of sustained exercise and health management capabilities. It falls significantly short of the goals advocated by the "Healthy China" strategy, such as "forming autonomous and self-disciplined healthy behaviors" and "providing health services for the entire life cycle of the people."

Therefore, under the guidance of the "Healthy China 2030" strategic blueprint, re-examining and systematically advancing the reform of undergraduate physical education is not only an inevitable requirement to actively respond to the national strategy, but also an urgent need to deepen the connotative development of higher education, fulfill the fundamental task of "cultivating virtue and fostering talent", and promote the all-round development of students. This paper aims to explore how to translate macro-level national strategies into micro-level teaching practices, and to construct a set of feasible reform pathways for undergraduate physical education that meet the demands of the times and adhere to educational principles.

2. The Value Guidance of the "Healthy China 2030" Strategy for Undergraduate Physical Education Teaching

The "Healthy China 2030" strategy embodies a new concept of health and development, providing fundamental guidance and direction for the reform of undergraduate physical education teaching. Its value leadership is mainly reflected in three dimensions:

2.1 Goal-Oriented: From "Enhancing Physical Fitness" to "Promoting Comprehensive Health"

The core objectives of traditional physical education often focus on the physical aspects of "improving physical fitness" and "acquiring skills." However, the "health" defined in the "Healthy China" strategy is "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being." This requires undergraduate physical education to transcend a singular biological perspective and shift toward a holistic health concept that integrates biology, psychology, and society. Teaching objectives should systematically integrate the development of motor skills, mastery of health knowledge, cultivation of positive psychological qualities (such as emotional regulation and resilience), and the development of good social adaptability (such as

teamwork, rule awareness, and responsibility). Physical education classes should become the core arena for enhancing students' comprehensive "health literacy" [2].

2.2 Time Dimension: From "School Sports" to "Lifelong Sports"

The strategy emphasizes comprehensive health management spanning the entire life cycle. For university sports programs, their mission must extend beyond the campus in both scope and duration. Rather than merely ensuring students pass physical fitness tests during their academic years, the focus should be on laying a solid foundation for decades of healthy living. The key to reform lies in whether undergraduate sports education can help students master one or two sustainable exercise skills, deeply understand the value of physical activity, and develop consistent exercise habits. This approach transforms the concept of "lifelong sports" into students' intrinsic motivation, turning it from an idea into a conscious pursuit.

2.3 Subject Role: From "Passive Acceptance" to "Active Health"

The "co-construction and sharing" philosophy underscores individuals' primary responsibility for their health. In physical education, this requires a complete shift from students' passive and compliant roles. A key reform objective is to cultivate students' sense of being the "primary guardians" of their own health, transforming their mindset from "being told to exercise" to "voluntarily engaging in physical activity." Teaching should fully respect students' interests and choices, creating diverse experiences that allow them to enjoy the pleasure and sense of achievement of sports, thereby internalizing physical exercise as a positive and autonomous lifestyle choice.

3. Core Dilemmas in Current Undergraduate Physical Education Teaching

Facing the new strategic requirements, the current undergraduate physical education teaching in practice exposed multiple deep-seated contradictions, restricting its full play of the educational function.

3.1 The lag of concept cognition and the marginalization of the status of "physical education"

Under the prevailing societal notion of

"emphasizing intellect over physical education" and the internal "major supremacy" evaluation orientation in universities, the educational value of physical education is often reduced to merely "enlivening campus life" or "preparing for physical fitness tests." The core position of physical education courses in talent development plans has not been truly established, while the sports department's limited resource acquisition capacity makes it difficult to fully implement the "health-first" educational philosophy across all aspects of teaching management and resource allocation.

3.2 The Rigid Curriculum System and the Mismatch Between the Supply and the Demand of Students

The curriculum has long adhered to a rigid, standardized model. While foundational courses for lower grades are outdated and lack engagement, upper-grade electives—though available—remain limited to traditional sports like ball games and track and field, severely constrained by faculty and facilities. The growing demand for emerging, personalized activities such as rock climbing, frisbee, outdoor team-building, fitness training, yoga, and dance remains unmet, resulting in diminished course appeal.

3.3 Traditional Teaching Model, Disconnection Between Ability and Literacy Cultivation

The teaching methodology still predominantly relies on teacher demonstrations, student imitation, and repetitive drills, excessively emphasizing the standardization and competitiveness of technical movements. This approach exhibits a pronounced tendency toward proceduralization and training-oriented instruction. Such a model overlooks individual differences among students, exploratory learning, and emotional engagement, rendering physical education classes monotonous and stifling student interest. Furthermore, the teaching of health theories remains disconnected from practical sports activities, failing to achieve organic integration.

3.4 The Evaluation Mechanism Is Biased, and the Summative Evaluation Dominates The Process

The evaluation system overemphasizes quantifiable summative outcomes, such as final

skill assessments and physical fitness test scores. This one-size-fits-all approach overlooks students' efforts, progress, engagement, teamwork, and health behavior improvements during the learning process. As a result, students with weaker athletic aptitude are more likely to experience frustration and disengagement, deviating from the original goal of "promoting the development of all students."

3.5 The Faculty's Competency Structure is Monolithic, and the Need for Enhancing Interdisciplinary Literacy Remains.

The existing faculty primarily possess professional backgrounds in traditional sports training, with relatively insufficient knowledge and skills in areas such as sports rehabilitation, health management, nutritional guidance, psychological counseling, and the application of information-based teaching methods. In response to the new requirements for cultivating students' comprehensive health literacy, some teachers face challenges in terms of knowledge structure, teaching methods, and instructional capabilities.

4. Systematic Path Construction of Undergraduate Physical Education Teaching Reform

To advance the reform of undergraduate physical education teaching, it is necessary to take the "Healthy China" strategy as the guidance, with the overall goal of cultivating students' "core physical literacy", and carry out top-level design and systematic reconstruction [3].

4.1 Goal Reformation: Establishing the Framework for Cultivating "Core Competencies in Physical Education"

The foremost mission of reform is to establish a clear and actionable framework for educational objectives. Drawing on international best practices and China's specific conditions, undergraduate education should prioritize cultivating students' "core competencies in physical education," which can be systematically structured into four dimensions: (1) Motor cognition and skills (understanding principles and mastering techniques), (2) Fitness habits and physical fitness (regular exercise and optimal physical condition), (3) Health knowledge and behaviors (acquiring health-related knowledge and adopting healthy lifestyles), and (4) Sports

ethics and emotional development (adhering to rules, teamwork, resilience, confidence, and enjoyment of sports) [4]. These four dimensions collectively aim to foster students' holistic development and lifelong health.

4.2 Curriculum Reconstruction: Building an Integrated, Personalized and Life-oriented Curriculum System

1. Basic General Education Stage (Freshman Year): Offer courses such as "Introduction to Sports and Health," integrating sports culture, fundamentals of health science, safety protection, and multi-sport experiences, aiming to disseminate knowledge, stimulate interest, and guide choices.
2. Independent Option Phase (Sophomore Year): Fully implement the "club system" or "project supermarket" model for course selection. Significantly expand the range of elective programs, actively introduce emerging, recreational, and traditional ethnic sports. Remove restrictions based on grade level and department, enabling students to autonomously choose programs, schedules, and instructors to meet personalized needs.
3. Advanced Development Phase (Senior High School and Graduate Students): Offer specialized courses including sports training enhancement programs, referee/coach certification training, physical health guidance, and outdoor sports activities. These programs will be closely integrated with sports clubs, school team training, and campus competitions to achieve seamless integration of in-class and extracurricular activities, as well as online and offline formats, thereby embedding sports into the daily campus life.

4.3 Model Innovation: Implementing a Student-Centered Diversified Teaching Model

1. Flipped Classroom and Practical Exploration: By utilizing online platforms for pre-class theoretical instruction, classroom time is dedicated to high-intensity sports practice, situational simulation, game competitions, and collaborative inquiry, thereby enhancing teaching efficiency and engagement depth.
2. Deep Integration of Information Technology: Utilizing tools such as fitness trackers, mobile applications (APPs), and video analysis to achieve real-time monitoring of exercise load, immediate feedback on technical movements,

and personalized guidance. Exploring the application of VR/AR technology in simulation training and tactical analysis.

3. Interdisciplinary project-based learning: Design comprehensive practical projects integrating knowledge from sports, physiology, nutrition, and psychology to cultivate students' comprehensive abilities in addressing complex health issues.

4.4 Evaluation Reform: Establishing a "Process-Oriented, Developmental, and Comprehensive" Evaluation System

Reforming evaluation systems is pivotal to redirecting teaching approaches. A comprehensive assessment framework should integrate multidimensional components (skills, physical fitness, knowledge, participation, and moral development), engage multiple stakeholders (teachers, students, and peers), and employ diverse methodologies (observation, portfolios, presentations, and assessments). Priority should be given to formative evaluation, which focuses on students' progress and effort, while performance-based evaluation should be introduced to assess real-world application skills. Additionally, value-added evaluation should be explored to scientifically evaluate the tangible contributions of teaching to students' health literacy development.

4.5 Faculty Optimization: Building a "Specialized with Multiple Abilities" Composite Teacher Team

Through on-the-job training, systematically enhance teachers' capabilities in health education, emerging programs, psychological counseling, and information-based teaching. In talent recruitment, prioritize attracting professionals with interdisciplinary backgrounds in sports science, rehabilitation medicine, and public health. Encourage the formation of a "Campus Health Guidance Team" composed of physical education teachers, school doctors, psychological counselors, and nutritionists to provide comprehensive health support services for students.

5. Support and Guarantee for Reform Practices

The implementation of systematic teaching reform requires a strong collaborative guarantee mechanism.

5.1 Strengthening the Top-Level Design and Institutional Guarantee

University decision-makers must genuinely integrate the "health-first" principle into institutional governance practices, ensuring sports-related initiatives receive due weight in talent development plans, resource allocation, and departmental evaluations. They should establish and implement incentive policies to encourage students' sustained participation in physical exercise (e.g., incorporating regular exercise records and sports club contributions into comprehensive quality assessments, excellence awards, and second-classroom credit recognition systems). Furthermore, the overall status and trends of students' physical health should serve as key performance indicators for relevant departments, thereby creating a stable institutional framework and cross-departmental synergy to support educational reforms.

5.2 Increasing Resource Investment and Improving Conditions

Continuously improve sports facility infrastructure, with particular emphasis on expanding multifunctional and intelligent indoor sports spaces. Establish dedicated funding to support the development of emerging curricula, updating teaching equipment, and teacher competency training. Develop a "Smart Sports" management and service platform to integrate functions such as curriculum management, physical fitness testing, exercise scheduling, and health data tracking.

5.3 Cultivating a Strong Campus Health Culture

We will establish a multi-tiered and sustained system of campus sports competitions and activities, while launching a flagship sports and cultural festival. By providing essential funding, facilities, and professional guidance, we will actively support various sports clubs to extend classroom instruction, foster shared interests, and cultivate organizational leaders. Through extensive promotion of exemplary sports figures and health concepts, we aim to cultivate a vibrant atmosphere of "everyone participates, lifelong exercise," making health culture an integral part of campus culture.

6. Conclusion

The implementation of the "Healthy China 2030" strategy has opened a historic window for

the reform of undergraduate physical education. This reform is by no means a minor adjustment, but a comprehensive and profound restructuring of the concepts, objectives, content, methods, and evaluation of physical education, based on national strategic needs and students' lifelong development. At its core, it aims to achieve a fundamental shift from "teaching-centered" to "learning-centered," from "transmission of sports skills" to "cultivation of core sports literacy," and from "curriculum achievement tasks" to "construction of a lifestyle."

The blueprint for reform has been drawn, but the challenges ahead remain formidable. A complete renewal of concepts, collaboration among different departments and stakeholders within the university, sustained and stable resource investment, and the transformation and enhancement of teachers' capabilities are all hurdles that need to be overcome. It demands that university administrators possess strategic foresight and firm determination to place sports at the foundation of talent cultivation; it requires physical education teachers to step out of their comfort zones and become guides and companions for students' healthy growth; and it calls for the entire university to unite in consensus, forming a work pattern of "all-staff education, whole-process education, and all-round education" in physical and health education. Only by adhering to systematic thinking, conducting holistic design, and advancing collaboratively can the blueprint be transformed into solid actions and continuous efforts. Only then can undergraduate physical education break through long-standing constraints, rejuvenate with new vitality, and truly shoulder the era's mission of cultivating physically and mentally healthy, robust pillars for national rejuvenation, and laying a solid foundation for the grand blueprint of "Healthy China." This is not only an inherent requirement for higher education to return to its essence of nurturing talents but also a strategic investment concerning the nation's long-term competitiveness and the well-being of the people.

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