



## On Improvement of Physical Education Curriculum Setting in Higher Education

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### Abstract

As the last stage of students' physical training at school as well as the critical part in the formation of lifelong physical exercise, physical education in universities is an important part in the cultivation of student's overall qualities. Curriculum setting is the starting point as well as the axis of the whole physical education field hence having significance for it. Based on the survey over the actual situation of the present physical education curriculum in higher education, this article tries to reveal and analyze the defects in it and to further put forward some measures and suggestions to perfect it for relevant departments and colleagues' consideration.

**Keywords:** Survey, Analyze, Perfect, Distinctive pattern

### 1. Survey of Present Physical Education in Higher Education

#### 1.1 Physical Education Curriculum Setting

Generally speaking, there are altogether 60 to 70 periods every semester with two per week. In most cases, freshmen and sophomores as well as those first-grade students in junior college have physical classes while, in some universities, juniors and seniors also have access to physical education as optional courses. To be more specific, most universities have their physical education classes for freshmen set by the department of physical education and have their arrangement adjusted slightly after giving students several sports to choose first. There are also some universities who divide students into different sports from the very beginning and give students opportunities to apply for shifting when they are bored with their present sports. However, there is no universal standard for the setting of physical education content. Most universities arrange their classes according to their facilities, teaching faculty and fund. For example, in Southwest University of Political Science, a variety of sports including basketball, volleyball, football, table tennis, badminton, combat, martial art and swimming are provided for students to choose freely.

#### 1.2 Sports Culture in Social Communities

In addition to the arrangement of physical education classes according to relevant education laws and regulations, variable sports activities can be achieved in social communities, such as the annual sports meet and other small-scale competitions in diverse forms. Accordingly, different universities have different distinctive sports culture based on their actual situation.

#### 1.3 Physical Education Test

All universities have annual physical education tests in varied forms with some conducted by teachers themselves while others done by special testing groups.

#### 1.4 The Establishment of Various Sports Teams or Distinctive Teams

Some universities organize sports teams according to the requirements of the Ministry of Education as well as their individual provinces and cities, while some just decide to organize teams after taking that year's enrollment into consideration, which is quite popular now because it saves lots of money as well as makes it easy to achieve fame and gain.

### 2. An Analysis on Present Physical Education in Higher Education

#### 2.1 Unreasonable Arrangement of Physical Education Periods

The two-period physical education class seems insufficient compared with the law of sports demanding at least three one-hour periods every week with enough exercise. Since only one period can be spared every week for physical education in universities, other sources are called for to complement, support and serve physical education in order to create desirable atmosphere for its development in higher education.

## 2.2 Reduced Group Sports (Community Sports)

Here group sports include morning exercise, the exercise during the break, extracurricular activities, all kinds of activities organized by sports associations as well as some small-scale inside-school games. It is shown in present surveys that morning exercise, although conducted well in freshmen, declines in sophomores and then will be discarded by juniors and seniors. The exercise during the break is even worse due to the tight schedule of most freshmen and sophomores as well as students' rushing among different classrooms during the break. In addition, in order to increase their class hours for specialized courses, most universities arrange additional classes even after the seventh and eighth periods every day, hence occupying the time for extracurricular activities.

## 2.3 Problems in "Health Standard"

It is critical for the fulfillment of the last physical education stage at school to ensure the authenticity of the "Health Standard" test as well as the reasonable "Health Standard" instruction system. There are two key problems appearing here, one of which is the testing method of "Health Standard". For example, in 1000-meter running test, with a student giving orders and a teacher counting the time at the finishing line, some errors may be caused by some students failing to finish the complete rounds or taking a shorter route. Second comes the positioning of our present "Health Standard". Can it reach the ultimate goal of our physical education course to encourage students to own standard physical qualities or does it only aim at formalism in which every student will be given a passing grade? This critical problem calls for every worker in university physical education to reflect on and study carefully. Then we must think over this question whether the present "Health Standard" can test students' real physical qualities and encourage students to exercise spontaneously. Next let's clarify it by taking a look at the trial project of "Health Standard" and its actual implementation.

Since the trial implementation of "Health Standard", most physical education teachers think it hard to achieve its original purpose. It should even be responsible for the overall decline of students' physical qualities. A rough analysis on the grading standard in the original "Health Standard" will reveal that only finishing the whole test of certain sports students will achieve certain scores, such as 10 points for 1000-meter running, 7 points for height and weight, 10 points for vital capacity, 15 points for standing long jump, 10 points for sit-ups. Only by adding all these lowest scores will a student have 52 points, only 8 points lower than the passing grade. Obviously, such standard fails to reveal whether a student has done exercise hard and whether he has really reached the passing grade, hence discouraging students from doing regular exercise and leading to the decline of their physical qualities.

## 3. Reflection and Improvement

### 3.1 Finding the Supporting Point of Group Activities

In view of the reduced group sports (community sports), we should try to find out the supporting point of these activities, which employs quantitative targets to encourage students to spare as much time as possible to do sports. In addition, due to the great significance of physical qualities in students' overall qualities, universities should make efforts to guarantee students' time for sports. In spite of the importance of specialized courses, the setting of group sports activities seems more necessary. Even if its influence cannot be shown in a short term, its long-term significance and influence should be put importance on by universities.

### 3.2 Amending the Former "Health Standard"

With some problems found in the former "Health Standard", the present "Health Standard" makes some amendments in those unreasonable parts, which give the key points and neglected points clearly and enrich the content of the standard greatly. Here, let's take long-distance running as an example:

#### 3.2.1 Emphasis on Speed and Endurance

The Interpretation of National Health Standard for Students points out the importance to measure speed and endurance—endurance is one of the basic elements to measure a person's health condition and labor ability as well as an indispensable basic quality for all kinds of sports (p 95, The Interpretation of National Health Standard for Students). Long-distance running will promote the decomposition of fat inside the body, improve the body's ability to decompose and employ fat and hence make us healthier. In addition, long-distance running test, with its incomparably simple method, will reveal the testee's muscle endurance as well as the condition of his respiration system and circulation system. What's more important, this kind of sports can be employed as an exercise method to encourage students to pay more attention to their own endurance and cardio-pulmonary function and develop their endurance and improve their health condition by taking part in physical exercise more actively.

#### 3.2.2 Test Targets

According to the test targets given in "Health Standard", if a testee fails in 400-meter running (50 \*4 return running), 1000-meter running (male) and 800-meter running (female), his highest score only can be 59 points finally.

3.2.3 Minimum Scores

By fixing the minimum scores for physical education tests, the former disadvantages in this aspect will be avoided. For example, for 1000-meter running, the poorest performance, 5'08", will be given 10 points.

3.2.4 More Humanized Setting

In order to enhance the adaptability of the present "Health Standard", not only compulsory tests, but also optional ones, organized by different cities and regions in a reasonable way, have been set. There are also some alternatives for those items which have quite high requirements for sports sites. In this way, regions and universities with different economic conditions, sites and facilities will conduct the given standard more successfully, hence improving the feasibility and adaptability of "Health Standard".

To sum up, our present "Health Standard", starting from the reality of China and its high education, has greatly encouraged students to take part in sports activities actively. It is believed that this standard can improve students' enthusiasm for physical exercise and therefore contribute to the development of group activities at school. Now, it's up to us to conduct this standard strictly and try to achieve our ultimate goal by taking a down-to-earth attitude, effective methods and active thinking.

3.3 Establishing Physical Education Pattern with Characteristics

With the above two aspects aiming at solving present problems and improving physical education curriculum setting in higher education, innovation seems to be quite important for the establishment of a distinctive pattern for physical education. Three parts should be centered on in the physical education of our higher education, including focusing on teaching, having group competitions as the basic point and having sports teams as the leading part. Guided by the idea of "health comes first", we are expected to establish the physical education system with our own characteristics based on the present "Health Standard" and the spirit of Juvenile Physical Education Conference with the goal of developing physical sports and strengthening people's physical qualities.

First, the following principles should be followed when establishing such a pattern:

1. this pattern is relative instead of absolute;
2. this pattern must be established on the basis of the relevant regulations set by education departments;
3. this pattern must reflect special characteristics of different universities;
4. this pattern should have its reference value;
5. this pattern should have atmosphere for adjustment;
6. this pattern should have unchangeable framework;
7. this pattern should be established on the basis of "health come first".

Second, the idea about the setting of physical education pattern in higher education is as follows:

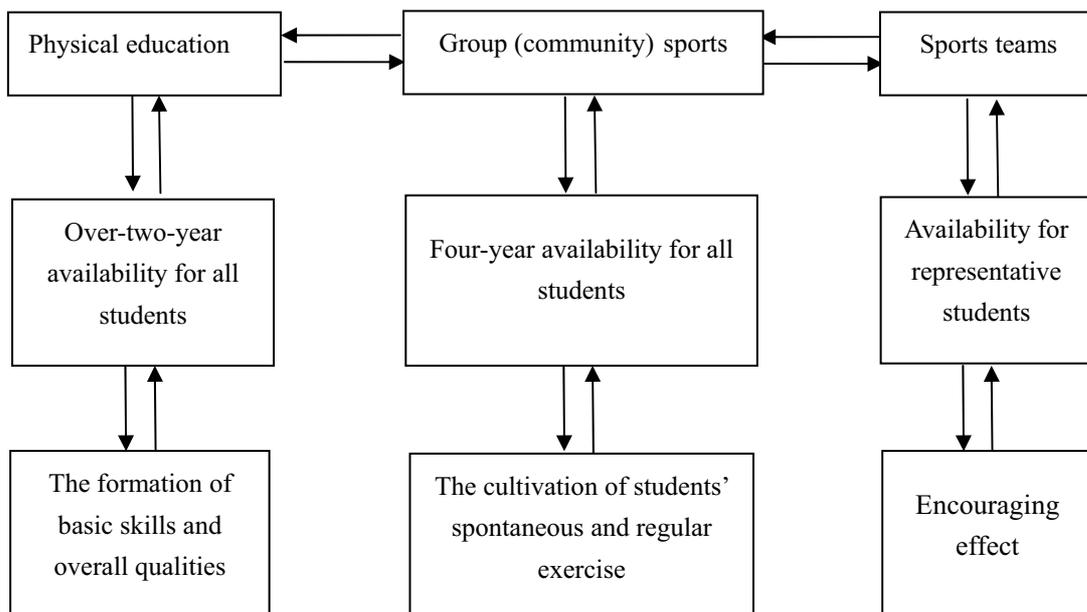


Figure 1

Third, this pattern is interpreted as follows:

1. centering on physical education class

Physical education class, the key point in the formation of students' overall qualities, helps to cultivate students' psychological qualities, moral consciousness, fighting spirits as well as determination and character internally, and teaches students some basic skills in sports and how to use them to instruct their future physical exercise externally. Accordingly, the idea of "health comes first", the actual situation of universities, including teaching faculty, students, sites, facilities, and even some relevant laws and regulations should be based on when designing the pattern of physical education classes. For example, in Southwest University of Political Science, freshmen's physical education class is set by the department of physical education, while sophomores will be given some sports to choose from, such as basketball, volleyball, football, table tennis, badminton, artistic gymnastics, martial art (fighting) as well as a compulsory one, swimming. About 20 minutes is spared in each period for physical quality exercise. The total physical education grade will be got by adding scores in the following aspects: attitudes (including 10 points for attendance), skills (50 points), physical qualities (30 points) and the knowledge of physical education (10 points).

2. centering on group sports (community sports)

Due to the importance of group sports in encouraging students to exercise regularly and spontaneously and cultivating students' organizing and managing abilities, the successful design of these activities seems to be the important point of physical education in higher education. It can be conducted as follows: on the basis of the present "Health Standard", tests are organized every year with special testing groups, which arrange the test timetable for different grades in different colleges and calculate the excellence rate, the rate of good performers as well as the passing rate. In addition, the rankings in different grades and different colleges as well as those in different sports should be given to stimulate students' enthusiasm for sports in order to earn honor for their units. Besides putting honors into students' documents, reasonable mental and material prizes can also be given to students.

In addition, some other measures can be taken to enhance students' enthusiasm for group activities such as some games organized by universities, colleges and grades including sports meet, basketball game, volleyball game, football game and so on. Different grades can select excellent players by organizing trails in the unit of class. These activities, coupled with some inviting games held by sports communities, have provided students with more opportunities to take part in games and more time for physical exercise, hence achieving the goal to enhance their physical qualities, to improve their organizing and coordinating abilities, to establish interpersonal friendship, to enlarge their knowledge and to develop their overall qualities.

3. being driven by sports teams and centering on the development of physical education of universities

Sports teams can be employed as a point to encourage the development of a larger range. Internally, sports teams will promote the development of sports in a university; externally, they are high lights to affect a university's image, which will promote the contact among universities and learning from each other to update their physical education.

All in all, the above three centers should be stuck to when establishing a physical education pattern with own characteristics.

#### 4. Conclusion

In view of the importance of physical education in higher education, I, devoted to physical education teaching for a long time, have analyzed some defects in present physical education starting from its curriculum setting. I believe, for the time being, in order to promote the development of physical education in higher education, we need to establish a special pattern of physical education for higher education on the basis of relevant educational laws and regulations as well as the reality of different universities.

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