

Enhancing the Physical Education Curriculum Evaluation System in General Higher Education Institutions in the Context of the Education Evaluation Reform in the New Era: A Case Study of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies

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Abstract: While the physical education (PE) curriculum reform at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies has progressed from a quality-oriented approach to an integrated in-class and extracurricular model, the intended outcomes of enabling students to master sports skills and cultivate lifelong exercise habits have not yet been fully realized. Physical fitness test results indicate a decline in students' overall physical conditioning. In response to the requirements for PE evaluation reform in the new era, this study draws on the university's practical experience in curriculum reform to explore pathways for constructing a multi-dimensional evaluation system. The research proposes incorporating ideological and political education content into final theoretical examinations and establishing a long-term implementation mechanism. At the same time, it recommends aligning physical health monitoring with course learning and final assessments, strengthening the supervision and evaluation of extracurricular exercise, and utilizing the integrated in-class and extracurricular curriculum model to enhance students' physical fitness and sports-specific skills. Through the interconnection of in-class teaching and extracurricular activities, and with physical fitness monitoring serving as a key indicator for evaluating curriculum effectiveness, these two components work in synergy to support students' acquisition of sports skills and the development of consistent exercise habits. This ultimately aims to improve overall physical health levels, providing both practical and theoretical insights for the evaluation system of PE courses in higher education.

Keywords: Physical education curriculum in general higher education institutions; Curriculum evaluation system; Education evaluation reform in the new era

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1. Introduction

In October 2020, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the *Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Education Evaluation in the New Era* ^[1], which called for strengthening physical education (PE) evaluation. The plan proposes establishing an evaluation mechanism that integrates regular participation, physical fitness monitoring, and sports-specific skill testing. It mandates the inclusion of students' physical health levels in overall assessment systems to guide them in developing good exercise habits and healthy lifestyles. In recent years, the successive release of policy documents such as the *Notice of the Department of Education of Guangdong Province on Further Enhancing Student Physical Health* ^[2] has provided specific guidance for strengthening the reform of the PE curriculum evaluation system in general higher education institutions. These policies outline reform directions aimed at improving the evaluation system, deepening PE reform, and enhancing students' physical health levels. In this context, actively developing and refining a scientific curriculum evaluation system ^[3], further deepening the reform of PE, and comprehensively improving the overall physical health of students represent urgent contemporary needs ^[4].

In the context of education evaluation in the new era, scholars argue that moral education must be integrated into the teaching process within schools, as academic education and moral guidance are inseparable. It is essential not only to impart disciplinary knowledge to students but also to provide ethical guidance. Fuxue Zhao contends that the ideological and political construction within the PE curriculum serves as a foundational project for school PE in fulfilling the “fostering virtue through education” mandate. This endeavor determines the direction and framework for PE talent cultivation at school, expands its educational function as a systematic project, and acts as a strategic initiative that shapes the reform process of PE curriculum in the new era ^[5,6]. The individual and social development functions inherent in the PE curriculum contribute to fulfilling the fundamental aim and task of ideological and political education, which is to promote the comprehensive development of both individuals and society. The cultivation of moral character and volitional qualities serves as a vital manifestation of ideological and moral quality education, and it constitutes one of the primary objectives of PE ^[7]. The content and format of PE curriculum and teaching exert significant influence on fostering students' self-discipline, perseverance, decisiveness, initiative, collectivism, and patriotism, as well as on permeating moral qualities ^[8,9].

Furthermore, to comprehensively implement the Party's educational policy and earnestly put into practice the guiding principle of “Health First,” the Ministry of Education, the General Administration of Sport of China, and the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League have jointly decided that the national Sunshine Sports Program for young students shall be launched extensively and deeply in schools at all levels and of all types across the country, starting in 2007 and in alignment with the full implementation of the *National Student Physical Health Standard*. In May 2007, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the *Opinions on Strengthening Youth Sports and Enhancing Youth Physical Fitness*, which explicitly stipulated that higher education institutions must incorporate extracurricular sports activities into their regular teaching plans. The policy mandates that each student participate in extracurricular physical exercise at least three times a week, engage in physical activity one hour a day, master at least two sports skills for regular exercise, and develop sound physical exercise habits, thereby tangibly improving their physical health ^[10]. The aim is to leverage the Sunshine Sports Program as a key mechanism to attract a vast number of young students to playgrounds, embrace the natural environment, walk under the sun, and actively participate in physical exercise. This initiative seeks to cultivate students' interest in and habit of physical exercise, effectively enhancing their overall physical health ^[11,12].

2. Research purpose and significance

2.1. Research objectives

This study aims to enhance students' physical fitness and sports skills, as well as foster the development of lifelong exercise habits, by establishing a multidimensional evaluation system that integrates ideological and political education and physical fitness monitoring into the curriculum, and by strengthening the linkage between in-class and extracurricular activities.

2.2. Theoretical and practical significance

Theoretical significance: This study is grounded in the current state of the PE curriculum evaluation system within general higher education institutions. By proposing improvement strategies, it contributes to the advancement of research on this evaluation system, thereby possessing certain theoretical significance.

Practical significance: This study is rooted in the practical reform of PE instruction. First, evaluating ideological and political education within PE teaching and strengthening students' ideological awareness advance the process of fostering virtue through education and reforming ideological and political education in sports. Second, the evaluation system constructed in this research can serve as an assessment tool for the evaluation of PE courses, reflecting the multidimensionality and practicality inherent in PE curriculum evaluation.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Expert interview method

Consultations with experts and meetings of the research group were conducted. Grounded in the practical experience of the university's PE curriculum reform, this method formulates a plan for strengthening and improving the PE curriculum evaluation system.

3.2. Literature review

This method was employed to determine the reform plan for ideological and political education in the PE curriculum. Ideological and political education content was incorporated into the final theoretical examination, and a corresponding question bank was established, thereby forming a long-term development mechanism for ideological and political education within the PE curriculum of general higher education institutions.

3.3. Mathematical statistics

Student physical fitness test results were incorporated into the final assessment. An evaluation mechanism integrating regular participation, physical fitness monitoring, and sports-specific skill testing was established.

3.4. Empirical research

Regular research group meetings were held to monitor progress and implementation effectiveness. At the end of the semester, the implementation outcomes were evaluated.

4. Results

4.1. Integrating ideological and political content into the classroom, advancing holistic education and moral cultivation

The Department of Physical Education designated "Swimming" and "Tennis" courses as model classes for

demonstrating ideological and political education in PE teaching. The successful experience from these courses has been extended to other specialized sports courses, aiming to forge students' strong willpower in overcoming difficulties, cultivate their sense of cooperation, and foster patriotism. Through this integration, students' cooperative spirit in sports activities has been enhanced, progressively realizing the goal of fostering virtue through education. In group activities, students demonstrate fair play, respect for opponents, care, solidarity, and collaboration among teammates.

4.2. Incorporating physical fitness testing into the final assessment

The Department of Physical Education at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies has reformed and adjusted the content and grading weights of the final PE course assessment. First, students' physical fitness test results are incorporated into the final assessment. While maintaining the existing 4:6 ratio between final exam scores and regular performance scores, physical fitness testing now constitutes the primary component of the final assessment, and the original specialized skill assessments have been repurposed as the regular performance scores. Second, the teaching syllabus and talent cultivation plan have been revised. A dedicated 20-minute session focused on physical fitness development has been incorporated into each PE class. Additionally, the requirement for extracurricular exercise has been changed to twice per week, with the content being related to either the student's sports specialization or physical fitness test items. Third, the course selection cycle has been adjusted from a semester basis to an academic year basis. Data shows that from 2021 to 2023, the student physical fitness test pass rate consistently remained above 90%, maintaining a high level. The rate of students achieving excellence in the physical fitness test increased from 2.56% in 2021 to 2.72% in 2022, and further to 5.68% in 2023, reaching 5.49% in 2024.

4.3. Optimizing the evaluation methods and standards for extracurricular exercise

To achieve the integration of extracurricular exercise, physical fitness testing, and specialized skill learning, the extracurricular exercise management group of the Department of Physical Education has updated the relevant evaluation methods and standards. Since 2021, the weekly exercise completion criteria have been revised as follows: "Students are required to complete five exercise sessions per week, with at least two sessions being related to their specialized courses. The daily goal of 10,000 steps may be substituted with practice on items related to the physical fitness test." This adjustment effectively and reasonably combines physical test content with extracurricular exercise.

Through the aforementioned measures, the evaluation of PE teaching has effectively integrated physical fitness testing, extracurricular exercise, and specialized teaching, achieving a preliminary synergistic effect where "1+1+1>3." This reform has not only enriched the content of student PE evaluation but also enhanced the management model of in-class and extracurricular exercise. Students have deepened their emphasis on physical fitness testing, leading to a steady improvement in overall physical health levels. According to statistics, the number of students at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies who failed the physical fitness test decreased from the original 1,377 (accounting for 7.29%) in 2020 to 1,232 (accounting for 6.3%) in 2021, resulting in a total reduction of 145 failing students. The effects of the educational reform are significant.

In summary, while the current reform of the PE teaching evaluation system at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies has progressed in accordance with the predetermined plan and achieved certain results, a gap remains in meeting the requirements for "high-quality development of PE in educational institutions" as

proposed at the 20th National Congress. In the new era, continuing to deepen the reform of the PE evaluation system in higher education will be the future direction of educational reform. The aim is to innovate in teaching reform while also creating a sound environment, both reasonable and scientific, for students' theoretical and practical learning in PE.

5. Conclusion

This research took the specific practices of the GDUF Sports Department as a case study to systematically explore three core pathways of public physical education reform in universities in the new era. The research results indicated that through structured design and integration, physical education not only enhances students' physical fitness and imparts athletic skills, but also effectively carries and fulfills its unique educational function, thereby achieving the synergistic goal of "cultivating people through sports and fostering virtue through sports."

The three reform measures are closely linked and reinforce each other. Course ideology explained why students should exercise, physical fitness testing clarifies what they should exercise, and extracurricular activities demonstrate how they can continue exercising consistently. Together, these measures form a systemic approach to physical education reform. However, the long-term success of these reforms depends on institutionalization. Temporary measures must be transformed into permanent systems to ensure continuity and to avoid disruption caused by other changes or shifting priorities.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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