

Strategies of Integrating of Physical Education and Academics

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Abstract: The new goal and approach to physical education teaching in vocational colleges is to promote the development of students' moral, intellectual, physical, artistic, and practical skills. To achieve this, physical education should be integrated with academics. Therefore, we analyzed the existing problems and their causes in our college's physical education teaching and developed basic reform ideas that incorporated physical education into academic education, interspersed physical education with academic education, and co-constructed the physical and academic education based on actual teaching experiences. Besides, each school should be given adequate physical education resources, and the management methods and regulations for physical education courses should be optimized. The integrated physical education curriculum system and content should also be improved and various extracurricular activities should be carried out. In addition, a new course evaluation index should be established, which will be used to determine new teaching goals and methods.

Keywords: Vocational education; Physical education; Integration of physical education and academics; Teaching reform; Reform strategy

Online publication: October 20, 2023

1. Introduction

The integration of physical education and academics is not only about integrating physical education and academics alone, but also integrating ideological and political education, intellectual development education, and aesthetic literacy, so as to meet the requirements of educational development and student growth in the new era. However, vocational colleges usually focus on talent training based on their academic attributes, while neglecting physical education. Therefore, vocational colleges must actively explore reform ideas and feasible physical education methods so that students have the physical fitness to cope with future career and life pressures.

2. Problems faced in integrating physical education with academics in vocational colleges and their causes

2.1. Teaching issues

There mainly three aspects involved in the integration of physical education with academics: teaching

management, curriculum setting, and extracurricular activities. In terms of management, even though there is a constant influx of new teachers, the composition of the teaching team remains somewhat inadequate. There is a shortage of physical education teachers with specialized skills, and there are insufficient sports facilities and equipment that align with the integrated development of physical education. Moreover, there is a noticeable absence of specific management measures in this regard. There are specific issues in curriculum design, such as an imbalance between theoretical and practical physical education classes, the absence of courses addressing regional seasonal variations, limited adjustments to the curriculum system based on student preferences and interests for an optimized classroom experience, a lack of diverse assessment criteria, and challenges in translating assessment results effectively. Concerning extracurricular sports activities, the problems include the relatively simplistic nature of conditioning methods, a focus on intra-school sports events and clubs mainly for sports majors, and limited opportunities for extracurricular exercise and learning for non-sports majors. Additionally, there is a quantitative and qualitative mismatch between the available venues and facilities for extracurricular activities.

2.2. Cause of the problem

The causes of many of the above practical problems mainly come from three aspects: schools, teachers, and students. For example, the school pays more attention to its vocational education brand, puts more teaching workforce, material resources, financial resources, and energy into students' professional shaping and skill improvement, and ranks physical education courses at the end of public introductory courses. The school's awareness of teaching management will directly affect teachers. Physical education instructors require additional classroom hours and lack both internal and external incentives to innovate teaching methods. They struggle to receive positive feedback regarding students' learning outcomes. Moreover, students in vocational colleges, especially those not majoring in physical education, often perceive physical education as optional. They view these classes as mere relaxation or recreational sessions. However, with a proper learning attitude, students can cultivate healthy exercise habits and reap the benefits of physical education classes.

3. Basic ideas for the reform of physical education teaching in vocational colleges under the integration of physical education and academics

3.1. Integrating physical education into academics

Under the concept of integrating physical and academic education, vocational colleges should ensure that the education system provides necessary moral support and scientific research services to optimize the content and methods of physical education, improve students' performance in sports, and cultivate talents for various sports projects. For example, ideological and political teachers should introduce stories and influential characters in sports so that students can learn the importance of physical education and change their stereotyped understanding of physical education. Schools should consider arranging additional interdisciplinary online and offline teaching and research events. These initiatives can facilitate the sharing of effective teaching methods and experiences among physical education instructors. They can also help refine classroom organization and activity design strategies for these instructors.

3.2. Physical education should be interspersed with academics

Integrating physical education with academics is crucial. The physical education system should aim to offer enhanced services that complement the academics system within schools. This shift is aligned with national policies and aims to revamp the training and education approach for sports talents. For example, knowledge and

techniques, sports, emotions, and culture during physical education lessons. Teaching resources can be drawn from traditional Chinese martial arts culture and intangible cultural heritage connected to sports. This approach allows students to gain a diverse understanding of sports, including disciplines like football and tennis, from a unique standpoint. It helps them achieve learning objectives related to knowledge and skills, encompassing the “four basics and four abilities.” Additionally, vocational colleges should enhance the talent cultivating system, so as to produce outstanding physical education teachers, professional coaches, and referees. This talent development cycle contributes to an overall improvement in teaching standards for the subject.

3.3. Co-construction of physical education and academics

The idea of co-construction of physical education and academics emphasizes the need to use sports events as a carrier to determine the common goal of integrating physical education and academics, forming a joint force in education, and improving the existing physical education model. For example, vocational colleges can collaborate with middle and high schools to create a one-stop talent training model. Before students enter vocational colleges, they can be informed of some of the sports available at school through admission notices and orientation. Training and school-specific sports activities can stimulate students’ interest and enthusiasm for sports. Alternatively, different colleges and universities can collaborate in organizing winter and summer water sports to create new models and activities for joint education, talent cultivation, and sports teaching in the same city, bringing a more novel sports learning experience to students and allowing some students to develop in sports as well as creating more opportunities for professional student athletes to improve their skills and broaden their horizons ^[1].

4. Feasible strategies for physical education reform in vocational colleges

4.1. Allocating teaching resources based on the “one school, one product”

The “one school, one product” concept means that each school has their own unique characteristics. This concept underscores the importance of each vocational college developing its distinctive physical education teaching style. Such an approach aims to narrow the gap in students’ biological education knowledge and skill development within the framework of integrated physical education. Hence, each college should allocate teaching resources with the support of various teaching promotions and preferential policies issued by the country, provinces, and municipalities. This will help revitalize traditional physical education teaching and sports projects in the new era.

Schools can choose track and field, basketball, swimming, badminton, table tennis, tennis, martial arts, or Sanda as their specialty sports; the selection should be based on the sports venues, and equipment and facilities available in the school, the quality of specialized physical education teachers, and the students’ interests. After the project is determined, resources must first be allocated to coordinate with traditional physical education classes: the duration of a lesson should be controlled to about 90 minutes, and at least two sessions should be arranged per week to focus on allowing students to learn the school’s brand projects and improve their special skills. Certainly, in the context of enhancing the integration of physical education, schools can employ morning exercises, recess activities, and physical sessions between classes to effectively promote a high-quality physical education curriculum within their institutions. Furthermore, resources from both within and outside the school can be coordinated to diversify teaching approaches. This may involve organizing specialized extracurricular activities on campus, establishing partnerships with professional sports clubs like football and tennis, or collaborating on inter-school competitions with other sports-focused institutions. On this foundation, efforts should be made to transform the school’s flagship sports projects into exemplary physical education activities.

This can be achieved by securing funding, mobilizing educational resources, and utilizing these initiatives to enhance the school's sports culture, boost students' physical well-being, and foster healthy, self-motivated exercise habits among students ^[2].

4.2. Optimizing course management methods and rules and regulations

Alongside promoting the reform of physical education in vocational colleges through specialized projects, there is a need to optimize the management approaches for traditional physical education courses. This gradual shift should aim to achieve systematic and large-scale improvements in teaching methodologies.

The first step is to reconstruct the internal management of the college. For example, a physical-academic integration office and a special team can be set up, headed by a physical education director and critical teachers, to manage of sports venues, physical education activities, and physical tests. There must be at least a two-tiered structure within the group, with professional physical education teachers, counselors, and party-building staff sharing responsibilities. Second, the construction and training system for physical education teacher teams should be improved. To achieve this, it is essential to ensure a more balanced composition of the teaching team concerning teacher age, teaching experience, academic qualifications, professional titles, and sports proficiency. Special attention should be paid to assessing teachers' practical educational competencies, as well as their expertise and track record in fostering students' sports skills.

Moreover, the teacher evaluation mechanism should be adjusted to mobilize their enthusiasm for teaching and research. Thirdly, it is imperative to revamp the management protocols for sports facilities and equipment, both within and outside the school premises, with a primary focus on optimizing their utilization. This can be achieved by pooling resources from various stakeholders to establish and maintain facilities such as track and field fields, football pitches, swimming pools, and tennis courts. Additionally, outdated equipment should be replaced with new ones. A dedicated physical-academic integration office should oversee the unified management of these facilities. This means making them accessible to on-campus students, the wider community, and sports clubs during non-scheduled physical education class times, holidays, and off-days ^[3].

4.3. Improving the integration of physical education and academics in terms of the curriculum

Building upon the established national or local unified curriculum, it is advisable to introduce supplementary elements of physical education that cater to the individualized and diverse needs of students. These additions should aim to infuse excitement and inclusivity into the curriculum, taking into account the distinctions between boys and girls while maintaining a holistic teaching approach.

The extensive curriculum system should include traditional physical education courses, like track and field, football, basketball, and physical education courses centered around one school and one product ^[4]. Under this system, the content of classes also needs to be adjusted. For example, a variety of sports activities can be introduced in courses that focus on training the students' physical coordination, muscle strength, and endurance. These activities can include winter sports, swimming, local martial arts, or traditional folk sports. Adaptive transformation of conventional courses can also be carried out. For example, if the school requires facilities and resources for curling, it can embark on land curling initiatives. These projects can harness student enthusiasm for activities while nurturing their sports skills. Moreover, efforts should be made to introduce new courses that can be carried out in different weather conditions and locations, ensuring minimal disruption to teaching activities. The curriculum can be expanded to include activities like skateboarding, rock climbing, and competitive cycling to cater to students' diverse sporting interests and enhance the overall curriculum ^[5].

4.4. Creating a variety of extracurricular sports activities

Effective physical education teaching not only helps students acquire in-class knowledge and attain subject goals, but also provides them with ample opportunities for extracurricular physical activity. This approach encourages the development of lifelong exercise habits through regular engagement in sports activities. To this end, vocational colleges should organize a variety of extracurricular sports events aimed at cultivating a vibrant campus sports culture, thereby encouraging student participation ^[6].

Campus sports clubs should be established and effectively managed, ensuring the inclusion of students with varying sports backgrounds and abilities, and promoting a sports-friendly atmosphere where friends, classmates, and partners are encouraged to participate ^[7]. The school should provide necessary support and help, such as ensuring that each club has its unique theme and direction, systematic sports activity planning, and using campus websites, public accounts, and offline activities to promote club activities. Besides, the star club of this college or school can also be mentioned every semester. Secondly, schools should play a central role and organize competitions to promote sports and health knowledge, improve students' sports skills, and instill the "health first" concept in the students' minds. The level of competition can vary, whether it is within a college, between societies or schools, or even between school sports teams and amateur or professional clubs. The competition events should also be diverse, regularly supplemented, and updated, including additions like fixed-point shooting, shooting, fancy shuttlecock kicking, rope skipping, and slow-speed cycling. The proportion of group and team competitions can be increased, and individual participation in projects can be made less challenging to enable greater student involvement. Additionally, motivation can be provided by acknowledging competition awards and outstanding group achievements ^[8].

4.5. Constructing a new course evaluation index

Teaching reform should involve the development of an evaluation system tailored to the integration of physical education and academics in vocational colleges. The evaluation results should then be used to iteratively adjust the teaching schedule and course selection or identify promising sports talents ^[9].

This evaluation index should cover several significant aspects: goal integration, ideology integration, resource integration, and measure integration. First, it should establish primary, secondary, and tertiary indicators for each aspect. For example, under the ideology integration aspect, it should include two main sections: "Sports as a Vital Component of Education" and "Education as a Crucial Function of Sports." Sub-indicators should evaluate the implementation of the "health-first" educational concept, the establishment of a concept of diverse, open, and integrated education, and the execution of the goal to comprehensively improve students' physical fitness. Under the measure integration aspect, it should assess educational measures targeting all students, approaches to physical education faculty development, and regulations governing facility and equipment planning. The assessment should involve input from the leaders and participants in the physical education-academics integration office, physical education teachers, specialized sports coaches, students, and teachers from other disciplines. The process and final evaluation feedback should be consolidated to create a record of the effectiveness of the teaching reform at this stage. Through collaborative research activities, problems identified in the results should be collectively analyzed, directing solutions to determine the focus and path of physical education teaching reform for the next stage. These should then be systematically implemented in terms of adjusting teaching content and optimizing teaching methods ^[10].

5. Conclusion

To effectively advance the implementation of the physical-academic education integration policy, it is crucial to

meticulously address the finer points of the policy, focusing on practical aspects of its execution. Adaptations to teaching methods should be made based on the current status of physical education and the specific challenges faced in vocational colleges. The reform efforts must encompass both the overarching framework and individual components, aiming to strike a harmonious balance between tradition and distinct characteristics. Systematic allocation of human and material resources should support these endeavors, fostering an environment conducive to teaching innovation and overall development.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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