

Research on the Path of Implementing the Fundamental Task of “Cultivating Virtue and Building Character” in Public Physical Education in Zhejiang Province’s Universities

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Abstract:

At the National Education Conference, General Secretary of China emphasized that “who to cultivate, how to cultivate, and for whom to cultivate are fundamental issues of education.” Universities, as the primary ground of higher education in China, must always adhere to the mission of “cultivating virtue and building character” in talent development, contributing largely to the country’s and society’s development. Physical education is an essential component of the university education system, playing a vital role in enhancing students’ physical fitness and promoting their mental and physical well-being. This paper takes Zhejiang Province’s universities as the research subject, analyzing the fundamental paths and current state of implementing the core task of “cultivating virtue and building character” in public physical education. It explores the factors influencing the implementation of this task and the challenges faced, and further proposes strategies for vocational colleges to effectively implement this fundamental task in their physical education teaching.

Keywords:

Public physical education
Cultivating virtue and building character
Path

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1. Introduction

As society progresses, talent demand has become the core issue in various fields. Fully implementing quality education and cultivating socialist successors requires “cultivating virtue and building character” as the

fundamental goal. Universities, as the primary ground for talent cultivation, are not only an essential part of China’s talent development system but also the main vehicle for implementing the fundamental task of “cultivating virtue and building character.” Physical education, as an

important part of university education, also shoulders an irreplaceable responsibility in this regard. Therefore, in the new era, attention must be paid to improving the quality and level of physical education in universities, especially in the context of continuous deepening reforms in university education, which impose new requirements on physical education.

2. The necessity and feasibility of implementing the fundamental task of “cultivating virtue and building character” in public physical education at universities

University physical education not only equips students with professional sports knowledge but also broadens the scope of education, enhances the value range of sports education, and enables the organic integration of moral education, physical fitness, and mental health education. This not only helps shape the personality of university students but also offers opportunities for emotional needs, ideological guidance, and willpower training. Establishing the value of sports education is a prerequisite for the implementation of the fundamental task of “cultivating virtue and building character.” It is one of the core goals of university sports education and plays a decisive role in shaping students’ worldviews, values, and character^[1].

2.1. Theoretical significance

University physical education courses are comprehensive, including both theoretical and practical aspects of sports, which differentiates them from other university disciplines. The teaching objectives of university physical education go beyond mastering professional skills; they play a crucial role in students’ physical and mental health. Effectively conducted physical education enables students to develop resilience and strong willpower when facing challenges. In areas such as character building, habit formation, and mental health education, physical education holds unique advantages that cannot be matched by other courses^[2,3].

- (1) “Cultivating virtue and building character” is the fundamental guarantee for the existence of universities. Universities must adhere to socialist principles, and the successors we cultivate must

have the correct worldview, values, and moral standards that align with the Four Cardinal Principles. The uniqueness of university physical education provides an inherent advantage in implementing this task.

- (2) “Cultivating virtue and building character” serves as a strategic support for talent development. Talent development is the core task of universities, and the ultimate pursuit of this mission permeates every aspect of education. University physical education provides the platform and conditions to achieve this fundamental goal while fulfilling the core task of talent development.
- (3) “Cultivating virtue and building character” is the soul of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The fundamental task, driving force, and scientific guidance of education revolve around this concept. Public physical education in universities enriches students’ knowledge, refines their character, and shapes their values, guiding students to form correct values during the initial stages of their personal development^[4].

2.2. Practical significance

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the educational philosophy of “cultivating virtue and building character” has permeated every aspect of education. In the university framework of fostering moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education, sports education plays a significant role, possessing an exclusive function of moral education. Therefore, in setting physical education goals, universities must integrate this educational philosophy into the practical aspect of teaching^[5].

- (1) Sports education contributes to cultivating students’ sense of competition. In today’s society, competition is omnipresent, and whether students possess a competitive spirit sets higher standards for their adaptability to social development. Many sports activities instill a sense of competition, which is vital for achieving personal value. Without a sense of competition, there is no spirit of transcendence, and thus, no vitality. Sports education adds vibrancy to

the mission of “cultivating virtue and building character.”

- (2) Sports education fosters students’ sense of teamwork. One critical element of physical education is the cultivation of teamwork. Many sports events cannot be completed solely by individual effort; they require strong team support. After entering society, students must adapt quickly, and teamwork is key to this adaptation, aligning with the core goals of “cultivating virtue and building character.”
- (3) Sports education promotes students’ sense of responsibility. Modern university students must possess a sense of responsibility, which is cultivated throughout their education. Responsibility cannot be fostered by a single course but rather requires repeated life experiences and social practices. The unique nature of physical education provides a platform for cultivating a sense of responsibility, allowing students to deeply understand its importance through sports activities, ultimately enhancing their social responsibility^[6,7].

3. Factors influencing the implementation of the fundamental task of “cultivating virtue and building character” in public physical education in Zhejiang universities

3.1. Campus sports culture development

Throughout Chinese civilization, patriotism has been a powerful force for unity, cohesion, and harmonious development, remaining a timeless topic. Even today, as China’s comprehensive national strength rapidly develops, it is still necessary to vigorously promote sports culture and deeply cultivate a sense of national pride and responsibility. As a complex social phenomenon, sports contain rich cultural connotations and serve as an essential channel for promoting sports culture and enhancing patriotic sentiments. Through participation in sports activities, students can experience the power of teamwork, gradually learn to sacrifice for the greater good of the team, and understand the history of progress and the philosophical culture embedded in sports, thereby

appreciating the depth of sports culture, enhancing their historical identity and cultural confidence. When watching sports events, students can perceive the athletes’ sense of responsibility and mission, striving for the honor of the motherland with relentless effort, while also expressing their expectations for the nation’s victory. Campus sports culture helps cultivate students’ sense of national pride and confidence, strengthening their awareness of national responsibility and fostering a deeper sense of duty and patriotism^[8].

3.2. Design of physical education classroom instruction

Traditional physical education classroom design often focuses heavily on teaching basic sports theories and skills, utilizing methods such as lectures, demonstrations, and practice to help students master fundamental sports techniques. However, traditional physical education classrooms are constrained by classroom order, with only the participation, supervision, and management of physical education teachers, lacking diverse extracurricular activities. In physical education teaching, where students are the main participants, it is essential to combine traditional classroom instruction with extracurricular activities effectively. Campus cultural construction, including the development of sports culture, uses diverse extracurricular activities as a vehicle, achieving an organic combination of classroom instruction and extracurricular sports activities. Students can apply the theoretical knowledge and sports skills learned in the classroom to extracurricular activities. Similarly, challenges faced during extracurricular activities can be effectively brought back into the classroom, where students can further enhance the quality of instruction through practice, ultimately achieving the fundamental goal of “cultivating virtue and building character.”

In designing physical education classroom plans, university sports teachers should give more consideration to the application and practice of sports education. To realize the educational function of university sports culture, purposeful, planned, and organized classroom teaching and extracurricular sports activities must be carried out in tandem, promoting mutual improvement. This approach plays a direct role in cultivating students’ competitive spirit, teamwork, and sense of responsibility.

Through the diverse practice of physical education, students can be guided to establish the correct worldview, values, and outlook on life ^[9].

University sports teachers should transform traditional teaching models by changing the one-way “teacher-to-student” transmission model into a two-way “teacher-student” interactive mechanism. This transformation meets students’ individualized learning needs, stimulates their motivation, and guides them to delve into the essence of problems, enhancing the practical education function of physical education ^[10].

3.3. Physical education evaluation system

Traditional physical education teaching has focused more on imparting knowledge and skills, often placing students in a passive learning state. In physical education classes, students’ enthusiasm for learning and physical practice is typically low, leading to a tendency to become bored with the subject. Therefore, physical education teachers need to shift traditional teaching concepts, understand students’ needs, meet their developmental requirements, and spark their interest in learning. Students are not merely “participants” in learning but are also “creators” of what they learn. Only by fully motivating students’ initiative and creativity can they gradually come to enjoy and love sports, develop the habit of consistent physical exercise, and cultivate an awareness of lifelong physical activity.

The overall goal of physical education and health courses is for students to master sports knowledge and skills, enhance physical fitness, develop the habit of regular exercise, and adopt a healthy lifestyle and positive outlook on life. However, university physical education teachers often teach multiple classes with varying levels of student athletic ability. Thus, physical education teachers must tailor different teaching goals for students with different levels of athletic ability.

Previously, physical education course goals were divided into three categories: cognitive, skills, and emotional goals. The new physical education curriculum standards divide the teaching goals into five categories: participation in sports, sports skills, physical health, mental health, and social adaptation. The emotional goals in the old system were relatively broad and lacked specificity, leading them to be easily overlooked during teaching. The new goals, which focus on student’s mental

health and social adaptation abilities, replace the previous emotional goals, making them more detailed and specific ^[11].

As a result, teachers need to pay closer attention to students’ psychological changes during the teaching process, listen to their inner thoughts, help them regulate emotions and stress, and guide them toward developing an optimistic outlook on life. This will improve students’ mental health and social adaptability.

4. Strategies and recommendations for implementing the fundamental task of “cultivating virtue and building character” in public physical education in Zhejiang universities

4.1. Strengthening Moral education training and promoting teacher development

Firstly, it is essential to reinforce moral education awareness and improve moral cultivation. A high-level teaching staff with both virtue and talent is a prerequisite for schools to implement the fundamental task of “cultivating virtue and building character.” Teachers should be encouraged to actively participate in theoretical training, academic seminars, special lectures, and experience-sharing sessions. They should thoroughly study national policies on “cultivating virtue and building character,” fully grasp its essence and connotations, and deeply understand the fundamental task of universities in this regard, along with the moral education advantages and necessity of university sports culture. This will help enhance teachers’ moral cultivation, increase their and their students’ moral education awareness, maintain a noble moral character, and strengthen moral guidance for students. Teachers should set an example through their integrity, influencing and inspiring students with their charisma, and becoming role models in moral character ^[12].

Secondly, it is important to cultivate the ability to integrate moral education and improve its effectiveness. By organizing special training sessions on “cultivating virtue and building character” and “integrating moral education into physical education,” as well as observing exemplary cases and engaging in peer review, teachers can receive systematic training and exchange ideas on

integrating moral education into physical education, including aspects such as principles, methods, content, tools, and evaluation. Teachers should be encouraged to improve their teaching methods and focus on students' potential for diverse development, enthusiasm for learning, and individual differences. This should emphasize the dynamic generation of teaching, mutual learning between teachers and students, and comprehensive integration, thereby awakening students' intrinsic motivation for moral development^[13,14].

4.2. Changing teaching concepts and improving self-competence

Some physical education teachers lack a deep understanding of the concept of “cultivating virtue and building character” and hold an indifferent attitude toward it. They perceive it as merely a term related to “virtue” and have little understanding of the relationship between virtue and education or the true meaning of “cultivating virtue and building character.” Moreover, they have not developed a strong emotional connection to it. In some cases, teachers incorporate moral education elements into physical education only to meet administrative requirements, often doing so mechanically and without considering the appropriate integration of these elements. As a result, the integration of moral education into sports becomes ineffective^[15].

Traditional teaching concepts, which focus on knowledge transfer and skill acquisition, have long overshadowed the development of students' moral education. Teachers rarely hone or enhance their skills in integrating moral education into their teaching. Many teachers rely on self-exploration and find it difficult to incorporate moral education effectively, leaving them feeling inadequate and uncertain about how to assess its impact. Students often have a weak sense of moral development and sports consciousness, perceiving physical education merely as the acquisition of sports knowledge and skills. They do not fully appreciate the moral aspects of sports, such as cultivating willpower, moral values, teamwork, honesty, and friendship. Even in a positive sports culture environment, the impact of moral education may be significantly diminished^[16].

4.3. Expanding the pathways for implementing

the fundamental task of “cultivating virtue and building character”

Firstly, it is crucial to accurately define moral education goals and guide its development effectively. In line with the concept of holistic education, moral education goals should be set according to the teaching content, students' developmental characteristics, needs, and emotional experiences. For example, goals such as “actively striving for good results for one's team in competitions” or “understanding and articulating the importance of teamwork” can be established to guide and inspire teachers' efforts in moral education and to assess its effectiveness.

Secondly, fully explore the content of moral education to enhance its effectiveness. Different teaching content contains different moral elements. Based on the characteristics of sports activities, students' development levels, and their learning and life experiences, the moral elements embedded in physical education content should be thoroughly explored and scientifically planned. These elements can be integrated into class atmospheres, skill learning, physical training, and interpersonal interactions. Through direct participation in sports activities, students' behavior can be guided, their willpower can be honed, and their character can be strengthened.

Thirdly, develop diverse methods for integrating moral education to motivate students' moral development. In teacher-student interactions, teamwork, and exploratory learning, methods such as role models, inspiring examples, and ceremonial rituals should be used to stimulate students' intrinsic motivation for moral development. This will facilitate effective spiritual communication between teachers and students, achieving a deeper level of moral engagement.

Finally, innovate teaching evaluation methods and include moral education assessment. Teachers must fully recognize the diagnostic, guiding, and motivational functions of evaluation. Both formative and summative assessments should be used simultaneously. Teachers should promptly praise or reward behavior that aligns with moral standards and criticize and analyze inappropriate behavior, providing targeted guidance. By emphasizing strengths and addressing weaknesses, students and teachers can experience deeper emotional connections to moral education, leading to the continuous

improvement of moral character and promoting the healthy development of moral education^[17].

5. Conclusion

In the context of the new era, university sports culture holds unique advantages in promoting students' moral development. Currently, universities are actively building their sports cultures and strengthening the integration of moral education for both teachers and students. Although some progress has been made, there is still a lack of mature experience for reference. This study, based on different forms of university sports culture, offers some insights into the integration of moral education for teachers and students, aiming to effectively enhance the moral and physical education of both through sports culture.

For universities to fulfill the fundamental tasks of "Health First" and "Cultivating Virtue and Building

Character," changes are needed in six key elements: teaching concepts, goals, content, methods, evaluation, and teacher competence. It is necessary to shift away from the past emphasis on physical fitness over moral education, and truly implement educational goals in the classroom. The content should evolve from "comprehensive experience" to "focused breakthroughs," utilizing the advantages of school sports and developing unique sports identities for each institution. The traditional lecture-style teaching methods should be replaced by situational teaching methods, and evaluation should shift from traditional outcome-based assessment to process-based evaluation. By improving teachers' creativity and ability to foster moral development, physical education courses can cultivate the essential qualities and key competencies students need for lifelong development and social progress, preparing successors for the modernization of socialism.

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