

A Comparative Study on the Concept and Curriculum of Physical Education between China and the United States

JiaYi Qin*

Institute of Physical Education and Training, Capital University of Physical Education and Sports,
Beijing, 100091, China

* Corresponding Author Email: rgodina65704@student.napavalley.edu

Abstract. In the context of globalization, it is valuable to examine the concepts and curriculum settings of physical education in China and the United States. These two countries, recognized as important sports powers in the field of education, offer insight into similarities and differences that can inform future research. By comparing their approaches, this study aims to provide valuable insights and suggestions. Through literature review and field research, this study found that there are certain differences in core values, teaching methods and evaluation systems, social impact and significance of physical education between China and the United States. Furthermore, there are variations in curriculum objectives, content, organization, implementation, evaluation, and improvement of physical education between China and the United States. This study concludes by offering relevant insights and suggestions for both countries, as well as acknowledging the limitations of the research and suggesting potential directions for future studies.

Keywords: China; United States; Physical education; Educational philosophy; Curriculum design.

1. Introduction

Physical education plays a crucial role in fostering students' physical fitness and overall development in both China and the United States. As influential sports powers, these two countries exhibit differences and similarities in their concepts and curricula for sports education. Conducting a comparative study on the concepts and curriculum of physical education between China and the United States not only enables a better understanding of the unique characteristics and advantages of physical education in each country but also promotes bilateral exchange and development in this field. This study aims to compare the concepts and curriculum settings of physical education in both countries, identify differences and commonalities, and provide relevant insights and suggestions. To achieve these research objectives, a combination of literature review and field research methods will be employed, ensuring an in-depth investigation from both theoretical and practical perspectives. The ultimate goal of this study is to offer valuable references and inspiration for the reform and development of physical education in both China and the United States, facilitating increased exchanges and cooperation in this domain.

2. Overview of Physical Education in China and the United States

2.1. Definition and Objectives of Physical Education

Physical education holds significant importance within the education systems of both China and the United States, and there are similarities and differences in how it is defined and its goals in each country. The definitions and goals of physical education in China and the United States are shaped not only by the unique characteristics of their respective education systems but also by cultural, historical, and societal factors [1].

2.1.1. In China

In China, physical education is defined as cultivating students' physical fitness, health awareness, and comprehensive development through physical activities and physical education courses. The goal of



physical education is to cultivate students' sports skills, teamwork spirit, competitive awareness, and self-management ability. In addition, Chinese physical education also focuses on cultivating students' sports cultural literacy and sports moral concepts, emphasizing the positive impact of physical education on students' physical and mental health and comprehensive development [2].

2.1.2. In the United States

In the United States, physical education is defined as promoting students' physical health, social skills, and personal development through physical activities and physical education courses. The objective of physical education is to enhance students' sports skills, knowledge, and literacy, while also fostering qualities such as teamwork, leadership, and self-confidence [3]. Physical education in the United States also emphasizes cultivating students' interest and awareness of lifelong participation in sports activities, as well as cultivating students' appreciation and understanding of sports [4].

2.2. The Development History of Physical Education

The evolution and development of physical education in China and the United States is a reflection of their respective education systems, influenced by cultural, historical, and social factors. This development process represents the accomplishments and experiences of both countries in the realm of physical education, offering valuable insights and inspiration for future advancements [5].

2.2.1. In China

In China, the development process of physical education can be traced back to ancient times. In ancient China, emphasis was placed on the cultivation and development of sports activities, such as martial arts and archery. However, before the establishment of the modern education system, physical education did not receive sufficient attention in China. Until the 20th century, with the advancement of China's education reform, physical education began to receive more attention. The Chinese government has implemented education policies and sports reform measures, recognizing the significance of sports education in promoting students' physical and mental well-being, as well as their overall development. Moreover, China has made significant efforts to develop various levels of physical education, encompassing school sports, community sports, and competitive sports, all aimed at fostering comprehensive growth in physical education [6].

2.2.2. In the United States

The development of physical education in the United States is intricately linked to the establishment and growth of the education system. Early physical education in the United States mainly relied on private institutions and social organizations, such as school sports clubs and community sports organizations. With the establishment of public schools and the promotion of educational reform, physical education has gradually become a part of school education. In the early 20th century, the US government began to strengthen the status of physical education in school physical education, introducing a series of policies and regulations to encourage schools to provide physical education courses and activities. Afterwards, physical education in the United States gradually developed into a complete system, including physical education courses, school sports teams, and competitive activities [7].

The development of physical education in China and the United States reflects the dedicated efforts and accomplishments of both countries in this field. China has prioritized the advancement and accessibility of physical education through educational reforms and policy measures. Similarly, the United States has focused on the comprehensive development of physical education through enhancements in the education system and governmental support. Despite encountering challenges and obstacles, both countries have made considerable progress [8]. A comparative analysis of the development of physical education in China and the United States can offer valuable insights and inspiration for the reform and advancement of physical education in both nations, while also fostering exchanges and collaboration in this domain [9].

2.3. Current Situation and Challenges of Physical Education

2.3.1. In China

Physical education in China demonstrates several positive characteristics in its current state. The Chinese government places significant emphasis on the importance of physical education and has implemented various policies and measures to enhance its accessibility and growth. Physical education at multiple levels, including school sports, community sports, and competitive sports, has been promoted and developed. Furthermore, China has placed increased emphasis on enhancing the training and professional development of physical education teachers, resulting in improved quality and standards within the field.

However, physical education in China also faces some challenges. On the one hand, due to the excessive focus on academic performance in school education, the status and time allocation of physical education in schools is still relatively low. On the other hand, there are still differences in the quality and teaching level of physical education teachers, and further strengthening of teacher training and educational reform is needed. In addition, society's excessive attention to competitive sports has also had a certain impact on students' physical and mental health and comprehensive development [10].

2.3.2. In the United States

Similarly, in the United States, there exist distinct characteristics and challenges within the current state of physical education. The nation places significant emphasis on the holistic development of physical education, with widespread support and engagement in school and community-based sports activities. Physical education has a relatively high status in schools, providing a rich and diverse range of physical education courses and activities. In addition, the United States also focuses on cultivating students' sports literacy and awareness of lifelong participation in sports activities.

However, physical education in the United States also faces some challenges. On the one hand, due to the diversity and regional differences in school education, there are differences in the quality and level of physical education. On the other hand, the excessive attention and commercialization of competitive sports in society have also had a certain impact on students' sports participation and comprehensive development. In addition, physical education in the United States also faces unequal distribution of funds and resources.

The present circumstances and challenges surrounding physical education in China and the United States not only mirror the characteristics of their respective education systems but also highlight universal issues encountered in physical education globally. By comparing these situations and challenges, valuable insights can be gained to inform the reform and advancement of physical education in both countries. This can also foster exchanges and collaboration in the field of physical education between China and the United States, while offering valuable experiences and lessons for other countries and regions to enhance the progress and development of physical education worldwide.

3. Comparison of Physical Education Concepts between China and the United States

3.1. Core Values of Physical Education

3.1.1. In China

Physical education in China upholds core values centered around physical and mental well-being, holistic development, and teamwork. It places significant emphasis on nurturing students' physical fitness and instilling a strong awareness of the positive impact that physical education has on their overall health, both physically and mentally. Additionally, Chinese physical education prioritizes the comprehensive development of students, encompassing intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education. Teamwork holds paramount importance, with sports activities serving as a platform to foster cooperation and instill a collective sense of honor among students.

3.1.2. In the United States

In the United States, the core values of physical education mainly include personal development, fair competition, and civic responsibility. Physical education in the United States focuses on cultivating students' personal development, emphasizing the cultivation of students' personal qualities and abilities through physical education. Fair competition is an important value in American physical education, emphasizing adherence to rules and respect for opponents in sports activities, and cultivating students' competitive awareness and teamwork ability through competition. Citizenship is an important value of physical education in the United States, which cultivates students' sense of citizenship and social responsibility through physical education.

3.2. Teaching Methods and Evaluation System of Physical Education

3.2.1. In China

In China, the teaching methods of physical education mainly include demonstration teaching, training teaching, and game teaching. Demonstration teaching emphasizes the exemplary and guiding role of teachers, and stimulates students' interest and motivation in learning through the demonstration of actions and techniques. Training teaching emphasizes the cultivation and training of students' skills, and through repeated practice and guidance, improves students' physical education level and skills. Game teaching emphasizes students' participation and interaction, and through game-based teaching, cultivates students' teamwork and competitive spirit.

3.2.2. In the United States

In the United States, the teaching methods of physical education mainly include exploratory teaching, cooperative learning, and individualized teaching. Exploratory teaching emphasizes students' active participation and self-directed learning, cultivating their exploratory ability and innovative thinking through problem-solving and practical activities. Collaborative learning emphasizes cooperation and collaboration among students, cultivating their teamwork and communication skills through group activities and team projects. Individualized teaching emphasizes providing personalized teaching and support based on students' individual differences and needs.

In terms of the evaluation system, China's physical education mainly adopts a combination of quantitative evaluation and comprehensive evaluation. Quantitative evaluation mainly evaluates students' physical education level and skills through tests and exams. Comprehensive evaluation takes into account multiple aspects such as students' sports performance, participation, and teamwork. Physical education in the United States emphasizes comprehensive and individualized evaluation, by observing, recording, and comprehensively evaluating students' performance and growth. It not only focuses on students' skill levels, but also on their personal development and social skills.

3.3. The Social Impact and Significance of Physical Education

3.3.1. In China

In China, the impact and significance of physical education on society are mainly reflected in the following aspects. Firstly, physical education helps to improve the physical fitness and health awareness of the entire population, and promotes the development of a healthy lifestyle for all. Secondly, physical education cultivates students' teamwork and competitive spirit, promoting social harmony and unity. In addition, physical education also cultivates students' self-discipline and self-confidence, improving their overall quality and professional competitiveness. Physical education also helps to inherit and promote traditional Chinese culture, and cultivate students' sports cultural literacy.

3.3.2. In the United States

The impact and significance of physical education in the United States encompass various aspects. Firstly, it plays a pivotal role in fostering personal development and leadership skills among students, facilitating their individual growth and accomplishments. Secondly, physical education promotes

teamwork and social skills through both competitive and cooperative learning, fostering social cohesion and progress. Additionally, physical education contributes to cultivating students' sense of civic responsibility and awareness of social participation, thereby enhancing the overall quality of citizens. Moreover, it is recognized as a crucial avenue for nurturing future sports professionals and athletes, thus holding significant importance for the advancement and competitiveness of the American sports industry.

4. Comparison of Physical Education Curriculum Offerings between China and the United States

4.1. Curriculum Objectives and Content of Physical Education

4.1.1. In China

In China, the curriculum objectives of physical education mainly include cultivating students' physical fitness, comprehensive development, and teamwork ability. Chinese physical education focuses on cultivating students' physical fitness, including the development of physical fitness, flexibility, coordination, and other aspects. Comprehensive development is an important goal of Chinese physical education, including the cultivation of multiple aspects such as intellectual education, physical education, aesthetic education, and labor education. Teamwork ability is an important goal of physical education in China. Through sports activities and teamwork, it cultivates students' spirit of cooperation and a sense of collective honor.

4.1.2. In the United States

In the United States, the curriculum goals of physical education revolve around personal development, fair competition, and the cultivation of social skills. Personal development is a significant objective, emphasizing the enhancement of students' individual skills and capabilities through sports activities and training. It also aims to foster confidence and leadership abilities among students. Fair competition holds a prominent place in physical education, emphasizing the importance of adhering to rules and demonstrating respect for competitors. Through competition, students develop a competitive mindset, while also honing their teamwork skills. Social ability is an important goal of physical education in the United States, which cultivates students' social and communication skills through sports activities and collaborative learning.

There are also certain differences and similarities in the curriculum content of physical education between China and the United States. In China, the curriculum content of physical education includes sports skill training, sports knowledge impartation, and sports culture education. Sports skill training focuses on the cultivation of students' basic skills and athletic abilities, sports knowledge impartation focuses on students' understanding of sports rules and strategies, and sports culture education focuses on cultivating students' understanding and appreciation of traditional sports culture. In the United States, the curriculum of physical education includes aspects such as sports skills, health knowledge, and social skills. Sports skills focus on cultivating students' basic motor skills and strategic abilities, health knowledge focuses on students' understanding of healthy lifestyles and nutrition knowledge, and social skills focus on cultivating students' cooperative and communication skills.

4.2. Curriculum Organization and Implementation of Physical Education

4.2.1. In China

In China, the organization and implementation of the physical education curriculum primarily rests with schools and teachers. Physical education courses are typically included in students' schedules and follow a set weekly timetable. Teachers are responsible for designing and delivering the curriculum, taking into account the teaching syllabus and the unique characteristics of their students. Physical education teachers help students master sports skills and improve their physical fitness through demonstration, guidance, and training in the classroom. In addition, the school will organize

sports activities and competitions to enrich students' physical education experience and cultivate their competitive spirit.

4.2.2. In the United States

In the United States, the organization and implementation of physical education curriculum are mainly jointly managed by schools, teachers, and community sports organizations. School physical education courses are usually arranged in students' schedules, with a fixed weekly schedule. The teaching content and methods of physical education courses are arranged and implemented by teachers based on teaching plans and students' needs. American physical education teachers focus on the individual differences and needs of students, using personalized teaching and group activities to promote their personal development and social skills. In addition, community sports organizations will also provide a variety of sports activities and competitions to expand students' physical education experience and cultivate their competitive spirit.

The curriculum organization and implementation methods of physical education in China and the United States reflect, to a certain extent, the variations in their education systems and cultural contexts. Chinese physical education places emphasis on centralized organization and teacher guidance, with schools playing a leading role. In contrast, physical education in the United States prioritizes individual differences and needs, focusing on students' personal development and community involvement. Nonetheless, there are also shared similarities in the curriculum organization and implementation of physical education in both countries. These include the emphasis on cultivating students' sports skills, scheduling courses, and organizing sports activities.

4.3. Curriculum Evaluation and Improvement of Physical Education

4.3.1. In China

In China, the curriculum evaluation of physical education is mainly conducted through exams and tests. Examinations and tests in physical education mainly evaluate students' physical skills and physical fitness levels. In addition, the school will conduct classroom observation and evaluation to assess students' participation, teamwork, and performance. The curriculum evaluation results of physical education are used for student academic evaluation and school performance evaluation. In terms of curriculum improvement, teachers will adjust teaching methods and course content based on the evaluation results and students' needs to improve teaching quality and students' learning outcomes.

4.3.2. In the United States

In the United States, the curriculum evaluation of physical education mainly adopts diversified evaluation methods. In addition to exams and tests, it also includes methods such as observation, recording, and student self-evaluation. The curriculum evaluation of physical education not only focuses on students' physical skills level, but also emphasizes the evaluation of students' personal development and social skills. In addition, schools and community sports organizations will conduct regular evaluations and feedback to evaluate the quality of teaching and course effectiveness. In terms of curriculum improvement, teachers and schools will adjust and improve teaching methods and course content based on evaluation results and feedback, in order to improve teaching effectiveness and students' learning experience.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Main Findings and Conclusions of Comparative Studies

Through a comparative study of physical education between China and the United States, the following main findings and conclusions have been drawn:

5.1.1. Differences in core values

There are differences in core values in physical education between China and the United States. Chinese physical education emphasizes physical and mental health, comprehensive development, and teamwork, emphasizing the shaping of students' physical fitness and moral values through physical education. Physical education in the United States emphasizes personal development, fair competition, and civic responsibility, emphasizing the cultivation of students' personal qualities and social responsibility through physical education.

5.1.2. Differences in teaching methods

There are differences in teaching methods in physical education between China and the United States. Chinese physical education emphasizes demonstration teaching, training teaching, and game teaching, emphasizing the exemplary and guiding role of teachers. Physical education in the United States emphasizes exploratory teaching, cooperative learning, and individualized teaching, emphasizing students' active participation and attention to individual differences.

5.1.3. Differences in curriculum objectives and content

There are differences in curriculum objectives and content in physical education between China and the United States. Chinese physical education focuses on cultivating students' physical fitness, comprehensive development, and teamwork abilities. The curriculum content includes sports skill training, sports knowledge transmission, and sports culture education. Physical education in the United States emphasizes personal development, fair competition, and the cultivation of social skills. The curriculum includes sports skills, health knowledge, and social skills.

5.1.4. Differences in evaluation and improvement methods

There are differences in curriculum evaluation and improvement methods in physical education between China and the United States. China's physical education mainly adopts a combination of quantitative evaluation and comprehensive evaluation, emphasizing quantitative evaluation methods such as exams and tests. Physical education in the United States emphasizes diversified evaluation methods, including observation, recording, and student self-evaluation, emphasizing comprehensive evaluation and individualized evaluation.

5.2. Enlightenment and Suggestions for Physical Education in China and the United States

Through a comparative study of physical education between China and the United States, the following inspirations and suggestions for physical education in China and the United States can be drawn:

(1) There are differences in core values, teaching methods, and course content in physical education between China and the United States, and they can learn from each other and complement each other's strengths. China can learn from the personal development and individualized teaching model of physical education in the United States, and strengthen the attention to students' personal qualities and individual differences. The United States can learn from the teamwork and cultural education of Chinese physical education to promote students' collective sense of honor and the inheritance of traditional sports culture.

(2) Both China and the United States should focus on comprehensive evaluation of physical education, not only focusing on students' sports skills, but also considering their personal development, social skills, and teamwork. Through diversified evaluation methods, it is possible to have a more comprehensive understanding of students' learning outcomes and teaching effectiveness, providing beneficial feedback and guidance for course improvement.

(3) Both China and the United States should strengthen the teacher training and professional development of physical education teachers. Teachers are the key force in physical education, and their professional competence and teaching level directly affect students' learning outcomes and educational quality. By providing professional training and development opportunities, teachers'

teaching ability and professional literacy can be improved, further enhancing the quality and effectiveness of physical education.

(4) Both China and the United States should focus on student participation and comprehensive development in physical education. Physical education is not only about cultivating sports professionals and athletes, but more importantly, it is about cultivating students' physical and mental health and comprehensive development. By providing diverse sports activities and course content, and encouraging students' active participation and personal development, students' interest and potential in learning can be stimulated.

5.3. Limitations of Research and Future Research Directions

The comparative study of this study mainly focuses on the core values, teaching methods, curriculum design, and evaluation system of physical education in China and the United States, but does not cover all factors related to physical education. Future research can further expand its scope and consider the impact of other factors on physical education, such as educational policies, sports facilities, and resources.

The comparative study of physical education between China and the United States in this study mainly relies on a literature review and existing data, without conducting in-depth field research and interviews. Future research can combine field research and interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the actual situation and educational practices of physical education in China and the United States, in order to obtain more comprehensive and accurate research results.

Reference

- [1] Young J L. Future trends in physical education and sport in the United States: A developmental perspectives of students' fundamental motor skill competence[J]. Academic Publishing Conference of the Korean Sports Education Association, 2021.
- [2] Phillip W, A. H L, Hans M D V, et al. Chapter 1: 21st Century Physical Education in the United States: Introduction to the Special Issue[J]. JOURNAL OF TEACHING IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION, 2021, 40(3).
- [3] Hans M D V, A. H L, Murray M, et al. Chapter 2: Reversing Policy Neglect in US Physical Education: A Policy-Focused Primer[J]. JOURNAL OF TEACHING IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION, 2021, 40(3).
- [4] Huo Jun, Zhu Wenhao. Comparative Study on School Physical Education Supervision between China and the United States [J]. Anhui Sports Science and Technology, 2020,41 (02): 1-5
- [5] Marani H V, Lima D C R, Lara M L. The recognition of culture in Latin American Physical Education: a reading from educational documents[J]. Motrivivência, 2019, 31(58).
- [6] Sydnor S. Living Statuary in American Physical Education: Greek Revivalism at Springfield College[J]. Journal of Curatorial Studies, 2018, 7(2).
- [7] Smith J N, McKenzie L T. Physical Education in the U.S.: Systematic Observations of Physical Activity, Lesson Length, and Class Size: 316 Board #157 May 30 9: 30 AM - 11: 00 AM[J]. Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise, 2018, 50(5S Suppl 1).
- [8] L T M, J N S. Studies of Physical Education in the United States Using SOFIT: A Review.[J]. Research quarterly for exercise and sport, 2017, 88(4).
- [9] Serhii M. Characteristic Features of Professional Study of Physical Education and Sports in the USA[J]. Physical education, sport and health culture in modern society, 2017 (2):38.
- [10] Zhang Shuchang. Comparative Study on the Differences in Physical Education Teaching between China and the West - Taking the United States as an Example [J]. Modern Education Science, 2015 (10): 113-114