



# The Historical Process of PE Curriculum Status Change in the New Era Has Multiple Dilemmas and Appropriate Directions

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## Abstract

This paper focuses on the change of physical education curriculum status under the background of the new era, and deeply discusses its historical process, multiple difficulties and the appropriate direction of future development. The article first reviews the historical evolution of the status of physical education, pointing out that physical education has been marginalized due to the industrialization process and the prevalence of exam-oriented education, but in recent years, with the promotion of the strategy of “healthy China”, the importance of physical education has gradually been re-examined. However, the current physical education curriculum is still facing many difficulties, including the deep-rooted exam-oriented education, resource constraints, educational policy orientation deviation, misunderstanding of parents and society, and the lagging of curriculum content and teaching methods. These problems lead to the ambiguity of the educational mission of physical education curriculum, the impairment of students’ physical and mental health and social ability, and the challenge of educational equity. To this end, the paper proposes to solve the marginalization problem of physical education curriculum from multiple aspects such as policy guarantee, academic research, personality education, life trend and practical innovation under the background of “double reduction” policy, and emphasizes the irreplaceability of physical education curriculum in school education. By clarifying the fundamental mission of the physical education curriculum and promoting its integration with the development of The Times, physical education curriculum is expected to become a strong support for the all-round development of students, and contribute to the education reform in the new era and the construction of a healthy China.

## Subject Areas

Sports Science

## Keywords

Physical Education Course, Marginalization, Fundamental Mission, School Physical Education, Physical Education

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## 1. Introduction

The “Compulsory Education Physical Education and Health Curriculum (2022 edition)” issued by the Ministry of Education emphasizes that “physical education and health education is an important way to achieve the all-round development of children and adolescents. It has important practical and long-term significance for promoting students’ active participation in sports, developing a healthy lifestyle, perfecting personality quality, improving the comprehensive quality of the people, promoting social civilization and progress, building a healthy China and a strong sports country, and realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. [1]”

However, at present, physical education in schools has been neglected and even gradually marginalized. Based on this, this paper will discuss the causes of physical education marginalization, clarify the problems caused by physical education marginalization, and put forward corresponding improvement strategies.

## 2. The Historical Process of the Change of Physical Education Curriculum Status

The historical process of PE curriculum status change is a complex and multi-dimensional issue, and its evolution is deeply affected by multiple factors such as social concept, education policy, economic development and internal reform of education system. In the “five education” education system of morality, intelligence, physical education and labor, physical education is an indispensable “one education”.

Historically, physical education has been regarded as an important way to cultivate students’ physical and mental health, teamwork and competitive spirit. However, with the acceleration of industrialization and the intensification of social competition, the education field gradually tends to emphasize intelligence training, that is, “intellectual education”, while ignoring the importance of physical education in the overall development of education. This tendency has led to the gradual marginalization of physical education in the education system, especially in the context of the prevalence of exam-oriented education, where physical education is often regarded as a secondary or auxiliary subject.

In the exam-oriented education system, students’ academic performance and test scores become the main criteria to evaluate the quality of education and students’ ability. Because physical education is not regarded as a core examination subject such as the college entrance examination, its status and value are often ignored. In order to improve students’ test-taking ability, schools often cut the

time of physical education courses and put more time and resources into the teaching of “main subjects” such as language, mathematics and English. This phenomenon not only limits the development of students’ sports quality, but also causes non-negligible harm to their physical and mental health and even their overall growth.

It is worth noting that in recent years, with the proposal of the “healthy China” strategy and the rise of the national fitness movement, the importance of sports has begun to be re-examined. At the national level, a series of policy documents began to be issued, emphasizing the need to strengthen school sports work and improve the physical health level of students. For example, the “*Compulsory Education Physical Education and Health Curriculum Standards (2022 edition)*” issued by the Ministry of Education has comprehensively increased the weight of physical education in primary and junior middle schools, and the class time of “physical education and health” has exceeded that of foreign language for the first time, obtaining the “main subject status” [2]. This change not only reflects the country’s emphasis on sports, but also reflects the society’s concern for the healthy growth of young people.

At the same time, the academic circle also began to pay attention to and study the historical process and influence of the change of physical education curriculum status. Some scholars point out that the change in the status of physical education curriculum is not only related to educational policies and social concepts, but also closely related to the reform within the education system. For example, with the promotion of quality education and the implementation of new curriculum reform, PE curriculum has undergone significant changes in teaching philosophy, teaching content and teaching methods. These changes not only enhance the status and value of physical education curriculum, but also promote the comprehensive development of students’ physical and mental health [3].

In the future, with the deepening of education reform and the deepening of social cognition of physical education, the status of physical education curriculum in the education system will be further consolidated and promoted. At the same time, we should also recognize that the drawbacks of exam-oriented education still exist, and we need to continue to strengthen education reform and innovation, promote the comprehensive transformation and upgrading of the education system, and lay a solid foundation for the all-round development and lifelong development of students.

### **3. In-Depth Analysis of the Causes of the Change of Physical Education Curriculum Status**

#### **3.1. The Deep Rooted Academic Pressure and Exam-Oriented Education System**

In the current education system, students’ academic performance is an important yardstick to measure the quality of school education and students’ learning outcomes. This “merit-based” concept has been further strengthened under the

exam-oriented education system [4]. In pursuit of higher enrollment rates and a better social reputation, schools tend to devote more teaching resources and time to academic subjects such as math, Chinese, and English. In contrast, physical education has become the object of neglect.

### **3.2. Resource Limitation and Lag of Infrastructure Construction**

In addition to academic pressure, resource constraints constitute another significant factor contributing to the diminished status of physical education courses. The resource limitations referred to encompass teacher availability, facility and equipment provision, as well as financial investment.

First of all, the weakness of PE teachers is one of the key factors affecting the status of PE curriculum. The attention of relevant leaders to physical education is often lacking, which leads to the neglect of the recruitment and training of physical education teachers. In some schools, the number of PE teachers is insufficient and the teaching level is not high. This not only affects the teaching quality of physical education courses but also reduces the enthusiasm and interest of students in participating in sports activities.

Secondly, the lag of infrastructure construction such as venue equipment is also an important factor restricting the development of physical education curriculum. Due to insufficient funds or improper planning, some schools have backward sports facilities and lack of equipment. This makes PE curriculum unable to provide diversified teaching content and activity forms, which limits students' choice and development space. At the same time, the backward sports facilities also have security risks, which brings potential risks to students' physical exercise.

In addition, the lack of funding is also one of the reasons for the decline in the status of physical education courses. Limited by education funds, schools often put more money into the teaching and research of academic subjects, thus neglecting the investment in physical education courses. This makes the physical education curriculum in the school budget allocation is always at a disadvantage position, can not get enough support and guarantee.

### **3.3. The Deviation of Educational Policy Orientation and the Change of the Degree of Emphasis**

The influence of the change of education policy on the status of physical education curriculum should not be ignored. In some educational policies, there is too much emphasis on the importance of core subjects and insufficient investment in physical education curriculum. This policy orientation makes schools more inclined to academic subjects in curriculum setting and resource allocation, while ignoring the importance of physical education courses.

For example, in the educational planning of some areas, the physical education course is often marginalized, the class time arrangement is insufficient, and the teaching content is single. This makes the physical education curriculum unable to meet the diverse needs of students, and can not play its proper educational

function. At the same time, due to the deviation of policy orientation, some schools have also changed the importance of physical education curriculum. They pay more attention to the teaching and performance improvement of academic subjects, but neglect the comprehensive education function of physical education curriculum. This practice not only jeopardizes the proper status of physical education courses, but also has a negative impact on students' physical and mental health.

### **3.4. Misunderstanding and Prejudice of Parents and Society**

The misunderstanding and prejudice of parents and society towards physical education is also one of the reasons for the decline of the status of physical education curriculum. In the eyes of some parents and members of society, sports are just a waste of time and physical activity that cannot bring substantial help to students' future development and career planning. Therefore, they tend to pay more attention to their children's academic performance and discipline competition, ignoring the importance of sports.

### **3.5. The Lag of PE Curriculum Content and Teaching Method**

With the development of The Times and the progress of society, the content and teaching methods of physical education curriculum need to be constantly updated and improved. However, in reality, the content and teaching methods of physical education in some schools still lag behind the needs of the development of The Times. This makes the physical education curriculum unable to meet the diverse needs of students, let alone improve their interest in learning.

On the one hand, the content of physical education curriculum in some schools is too simple and outdated. They tend to focus only on the training and improvement of students' physical fitness and sports skills, while ignoring the role and value of sports in cultivating students' team spirit and social ability. This makes the physical education curriculum less attractive and interesting, unable to stimulate students' intrinsic interest and enthusiasm for participation.

On the other hand, the teaching methods of physical education in some schools are too traditional and conservative. They often use the "filling" teaching method to impart sports knowledge and skills to students. This practice not only limits students' initiative and creative space, but also weakens their learning effect and discipline cognition.

## **4. Multiple Dilemmas Brought About by the Change of Physical Education Curriculum Status**

### **4.1. Sport's Mission Is Not Clear at All**

At present, the orientation of physical education curriculum is facing severe challenges. Under professional pressure, PE teachers tend to focus on "entertainment" and adopt monotonous and rigid teaching methods. This led to the gradual formalization of the physical education curriculum, and students, while enjoying

sports or sports, lost interest in taking physical education classes. The root cause of this phenomenon lies in the destruction of the inherent cultural attributes of physical sports such as basketball and football, which are the carriers of the curriculum. As a result, the school physical education curriculum has deviated from the track of cultural inheritance and its foundation has been shaken [2].

The orientation of school, family and society towards sports is also biased. In the current education system, schools often focus on the enrollment rate as the main teaching task, so physical education is marginalized, becoming the so-called “secondary class”. Physical education curriculum and physical education teachers are facing serious marginalization problems. At the same time, parents are also blindly concerned about students’ academic performance, thinking that in the key stage of learning, physical health should also “step aside”, and sports are regarded as a waste of time, completely ignoring the physical and psychological needs of students.

#### **4.2. Physical and Mental Health Problems**

Students’ physical fitness is getting worse and worse, and lack of physical exercise will lead to a decline in students’ physical health level, increasing the risk of obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other chronic diseases. The marginalization of physical education curriculum may weaken students’ athletic ability and physique. Physical activity is not only good for the body, it can also help relieve stress and reduce psychological problems such as anxiety and depression. The prolonged absence of physical education classes can lead to a lack of opportunities for students to release stress and increase the incidence of mental health problems.

#### **4.3. Social Problem**

Physical education is an important place for students to make friends and build team spirit. Lack of physical activity may reduce students’ interaction with peers and affect the development of social skills.

#### **4.4. Education Equity**

Some schools may have unequal distribution of resources, resulting in some students not getting adequate sports resources. This will exacerbate social and educational inequities and will not help students gain equal opportunities for development.

### **5. The Proper Direction of the Change of Physical Education Curriculum Status**

#### **5.1. The Causes and Solutions of the Marginalization of Physical Education Curriculum**

To solve or improve the marginalization of physical education curriculum from the root, we need to take many ways. First of all, relying on mandatory policies, laws and regulations is a necessary foundation. The government should issue rel-

evant policies to clarify the status and role of physical education in school education, and ensure that physical education courses get enough resources and support. However, although this external force is mandatory, it is lack of sustainability and academic, and it is difficult to fundamentally change the status quo of physical education curriculum marginalization.

Secondly, it is an effective incentive to list physical education as an examination subject. The inclusion of physical education courses in the evaluation system can improve the participation and enthusiasm of students and promote the development of physical education in schools [3]. However, this approach also has limitations, it may lead to school physical education too utilitarian, ignoring the essence and value of physical education.

Finally, to clarify the fundamental mission of physical education curriculum is the fundamental way to solve the problem of physical education curriculum marginalization. This requires us to trace back to the source and analyze the essence and value of physical education curriculum from many angles. Historical perspective, international perspective and school perspective provide us with valuable analytical frameworks.

## **5.2. A Probe into the Fundamental Mission of Physical Education Curriculum**

From the perspective of history, the historical orientation of physical education curriculum has undergone a change from “education through the body” to “education through the body”. From the 14th century to the beginning of the 19th century, physical education, as a component of the school curriculum system, was still in the gestation stage. From the early 19th century to the 1920s, modern gymnastics education became the main content of physical education curriculum, but there were many problems and limitations in its development process. Since the 1920s, competitive sports have gradually replaced gymnastics as the main carrier of physical education curriculum. Whether this transformation has fundamentally solved the problems in the modern gymnastics era remains to be further discussed [4].

From the perspective of school theory, physical education curriculum and other subject curriculum have common and unique features. The common point is that physical education courses also undertake the task of cultivating students’ cognitive ability, emotional attitude and values; What is unique is that physical education courses take physical movement as the basic means, which directly affects the development of students’ physical quality and sports skills. Therefore, physical education has an irreplaceable position and role in school education [5].

## **5.3. The Value of Personality Education in Physical Education Course**

Personality education is the foundation of school physical education and physical education curriculum in schools. Sports not only pay attention to the development of students’ physical quality and sports skills, but also pay more attention to the cultivation of students’ emotional attitude, values and personality traits. Personality

education is about cultivating people as “subjects”, not as “tools”. Through the study and practice of physical education courses, students can learn to respect others, unity and cooperation, courage to challenge and other excellent qualities, which will accompany their lives and become an important cornerstone of their success.

#### **5.4. The Trend and Challenge of Sports Life**

With the progress and development of society, sports gradually become life, socialization and ideological and political. Dewey put forward the concept of sports in daily life, emphasizing that sports should be closely integrated with students’ daily life and become part of their life [6]. This trend requires us to pay attention to the connection with the actual life in the design of physical education curriculum, and improve the practicability and interest of physical education teaching. At the same time, the socialization and ideological and political transformation of sports also put forward new challenges for us. Physical education curriculum should not only pay attention to the development of students’ physical quality and sports skills, but also pay attention to cultivating their social responsibility, national consciousness and national spirit. This requires us to integrate more ideological and political elements into the physical education curriculum, and stimulate students’ patriotic enthusiasm and collective sense of honor through sports activities and competitions [7].

#### **5.5. The Practice of Physical Education Curriculum under the Policy of Double Reduction**

Since the “double reduction” policy was promulgated, the time for after-school sports activities has increased significantly, and students’ enthusiasm for participating in sports activities has increased [8]. This provides a good opportunity for the development of physical education curriculum. Schools should make full use of this policy advantage, strengthen the organization and guidance of after-school sports activities, provide students with more diversified sports activities to meet their different needs. At the same time, schools should also strengthen the cooperation with families and communities to form a good atmosphere of family, school and community education, and jointly promote the all-round development of students.

The change in the status of the physical education curriculum is a complicated and profound process that needs us to think about and explore from many angles. Through the construction of standardization, solving the problem of marginalization, exploring the fundamental mission, emphasizing the value of personality education, coping with the trend and challenge of life, and making full use of the advantages of “double reduction” policy, we can open up a new way for the development of physical education curriculum and lay a solid foundation for the all-round development of students.

### **6. Conclusions**

The comprehensive development of primary and secondary school students in

China has experienced the development process of “paying attention to the development of moral and intellectual education”, “attaching equal importance to the three aspects of moral, intellectual and physical education”, “the integration of the four aspects of moral, intellectual and physical education”, “the simultaneous development of moral, intellectual and physical education, the United States, labor and five aspects of education”, and the integration of the comprehensive development of different periods. Practice has proved that the value connotation of the all-round development of primary and secondary school students is a process of continuous development, enrichment and perfection. Therefore, it is necessary to constantly promote the reform of physical education curriculum in primary and secondary schools, and constantly explore the path to create high-quality physical education.

The influence brought by the change of physical education curriculum status is worthy of our deep thought and exploration. Clarifying the fundamental task of physical education curriculum is a powerful weapon for us to fight against the marginalization of sports, is to conform to the vast trend of “national sports”, and is a vow to embrace the beautiful China in the new era. Physical education should not be reduced to the background of language, mathematics, English and other major subjects, but should become a catalyst for students’ all-round development. In this way, it is the luck of students, the luck of education, and the luck of The Times.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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