

TALENT CULTIVATION, SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND SOCIAL SERVICE: THE PLACE OF UNIVERSITY SPORT IN CHINA

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SUMMARY

University sport in China has a long history, but until recently sport has not been a top priority of universities and has played just a supporting role in talent preparation. After the successful bid of Beijing for the 2008 Games, universities were more concerned about sport and changes took place in university sport. Firstly, a number of universities have established sports-related research centres and some have provided students with sport-related disciplines. Sport has won substantial academic recognition in many universities, which helps to raise the status of sport in educational institutions and to shift the emphasis in university sport from a talent-oriented function to the multiple functions of talent cultivation, scientific research and social service. In addition, the "Standards for Students' Fitness and Health" was promulgated. New objectives which stress sports participation, character-building, skills-learning, health care and fitness are replacing the previous skill-centred physical education. For example, the compulsory contents of PE classes are substantially reduced, and optional activities with appeal to students are added. Students are given autonomy to choose sports activities and credits accumulation. PE courses, which are extended from 2 to 3 or 4 years in a number of universities, comprise both theory and practice. More extra-curricular sports opportunities are provided to students. Moreover, the Education Ministry instead of the State Sports Administration organized the Chinese delegates for the 2005 Universiade. This will have huge impact on university sport and more elite sports talents will be produced in universities. To this end, new regulations on recruiting, training and the management of athlete-students are established. While the Beijing Games is under preparation, sports in universities is playing

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an increasingly important part in promoting the Olympic spirit, popularising sports culture and advocating sportsmanship.

Key words: University sport, talent, evolution, education, China

ÖZET

YETENEK GELİŞTİRME, BİLİMSEL ARAŞTIRMA VE SOSYAL HİZMET: ÜNİVERSİTE SPORUNUN ÇİN'DEKİ YERİ

Çin'de üniversite sporunun uzun bir geçmişi olmasına karşın, ancak yakın döneme kadar üniversitelerin öncelikleri arasında yer almamış olup sadece yetenek hazırlığında destek rolü üstlenmiştir. Pekin' in 2008 Olimpiyatları'na adaylığı başarılı olunca, üniversiteler sporla daha fazla ilgilenir olmuş ve üniversite sporunda değişimler başlamıştır. Öncelikle bazı üniversiteler spor araştırma merkezleri kurdular ve bazıları öğrencilere spora özgü branşlar sundular. Spor pek çok üniversitede akademik değer kazandı, bu da eğitim kurumlarında sporun statüsünü yükselterek üniversite sporunun önceliğini yetenek merkezli yaklaşımdan yetenek geliştirme, bilimsel araştırma ve sosyal hizmet alanlarına kaydırıldı. Ayrıca, "Öğrencilerin Fiziksel Uygunluk ve Sağlık Standartları" yaygınlaştırıldı. Spora katılımı, kişilik geliştirmeyi, yetenek edinmeyi, sağlığı ve fiziksel uygunluğu öne çıkaran hedefler yetenek merkezli beden eğitiminin yerini aldı. Örneğin, beden eğitimi derslerinin mecburi içerikleri oldukça azaltılıp öğrencilere çekici gelen seçmeli aktiviteler eklendi. Öğrencilerin spor etkinlikleri ve kredi toplama seçenekleri daha serbest oldu. Bazı üniversitelerde beden eğitimi dersleri, hem kuramsal, hem de uygulamalı olarak iki yıldan 3-4 yıla yayıldı. Öğrencilere daha fazla müfredat dışı seçenekler sağlandı. Ayrıca, Çin delegasyonunu 2005 Universiade'ına Devlet Spor Teşkilatı yerine Eğitim Bakanlığı hazırladı. Bunun Üniversite sporu üzerine büyük etkisi olacak ve üniversitelerde daha fazla sayıda elit spor yeteneği yetiştirilecektir. Bu amaçla, öğrenci sporcuların seçim, antrenman ve yönetimi konularında yeni yönetmelikler hazırlandı. Pekin Olimpiyatları'nun hazırlık safhasında üniversite sporları Olimpik Ruhu geliştirmekte, spor kültürünü popüler kılmada ve sportmenliği aşulamakta giderek daha önemli bir rol oynamaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Üniversite sporu, yetenek, gelişim, eğitim, Çin

INTRODUCTION

July 13, 2001 is an unforgettable day for the Chinese. On this day Beijing won the right to host the 2008 Olympic Games. When the news

was pronounced, Beijing and whole China were elated. Everywhere there were songs, flowers, fire works, celebrations and tears. Such a festival was never seen before in the Chinese history. This achievement reflected Chinese ambitions to revive its global influence and status.

Now the Games have our highest priority. To make Beijing's sky bluer, its water clearer, its environment greener, its roads wider, and its houses bigger for the Games is the city's major concern. The Beijing Games will have a huge impact on all aspects of life, including the universities, the sports university and sport itself.

1. The Beijing Games and transition of sport in universities

• Changing functions

For too long, sport has not been the top priority in universities, and has only played a supporting role in talent preparation. The successful bid for the 2008 Games has motivated universities to attach more importance to sport. In fact, some universities have established sports-related research centres since 2001. Examples are the Research Centre for the People's Olympics in Renmin University, the Research Centre for Olympic Culture in Beijing Union University, the Research Centre for Sports Law in Politics and Law University of China, and the Research Centre for Gender, Sport and Society in Peking University.

In addition, sport-related disciplines have been introduced in various universities, such as the Central Finance and Economy University and the Beijing Normal University which in 2003 enrolled students specializing in sports economy and sports journalism, respectively. Moreover, prestigious universities, including Tsinghua and Peking, have been awarded the title of "Key Research Base for Sports Social Sciences" by the State Sports Administration. PhD degrees in sports studies are available in Tsinghua and Beijing Normal Universities. All this signals that sport has won substantial academic recognition in some comprehensive universities. This can only help raising the status of sport in Chinese universities and shift the emphasis in university sport from a talent-oriented function to the multiple functions of talent cultivation, scientific research, and social service.

• Changing goals

Not long after Beijing won the right to host the 2008 Games, the State Education Ministry issued the "Teaching Instruction Programmes for the Physical Education Courses in Higher Education Institutions

throughout the Country". The Education Ministry and the State Sports Administration jointly endorsed the "Standards for Students' Fitness and Health". The promulgation and implementation of the Programmes and Standards pinpoint an exciting moment in university physical education. New objectives stressing sports participation, character-building, skills-learning, health care and fitness, will replace the previous skill-centred physical education.

• **Changing physical education**

University physical education will be reformed in this new century in the following ways. First, the compulsory contents of PE classes will be substantially reduced, and optional activities with appeal to students will be added. Second, to provide a measure of student autonomy in choosing sports activities and credits accumulation, PE courses will be extended from 2 to 3 or 4 years, and these courses will include both theory and practice. In addition, extra-curricular sports opportunities will be expanded and new regulations on recruiting, training, and the management of athlete-students' registration will be established in order to cultivate elite sports talents more extensively. For example, Nankai University in Tianjing won the women's volleyball championship at the 2003 Universiade and the deputy minister Zhang Xinsheng was elected to be the vice-president of the FISU. The Chinese delegates for the next Universiade will be organised by the Education Ministry instead of the State Sports Administration, which will facilitate Chinese universities to advance into the sport world.

2. The Olympics and the development of Beijing Sport University

• **BSU: fifty years of evolution**

November 1, 2003 will be the 50th anniversary of Beijing Sport University. On the foundation of New China and to be rid of the image of "the Sick Man of the East Asia", some former army officers and soldiers, sports workers and young PE teachers were asked to create the Central Institute of Physical Education and Sport. It was established in 1953, renamed as Beijing Institute of Physical Education in 1956, and Beijing University of Physical Education in 1993. After fifty years under the inspiring leadership of the Party and the Government and with the commitment of generations, BSU has become a major higher education institution in China. Specialising in physical education and sport, and affiliated to the State Sports Administration, it has multiple physical

education and sports courses, well-qualified teachers, produces elite athletes and undertakes sports research. It was awarded the key university title in 1960 and 1978.

The university had produced 34 Olympic athletes, 58 international sports masters, 444 sports masters, 42 world champions, 60 Asian champions and 607 national champions, broken 11 Asian records. It should not be overlooked that certain sports such rhythmic gymnastics and Taekwondo were first initiated in China by the BUS.

In addition to elite athletes, BSU has also produced a large number of top-level coaches some of whom have trained or are training the national teams of soccer, volleyball, athletics, swimming, gymnastics, taekwondo and rhythmic gymnastics. It has also nurtured many excellent PE teachers. The directors of the PE departments in the prestigious universities such as Tsinghua, Peking, Beijing Normal University, the Politics and Law University, the Science and Technology University are all graduates of BSU. Furthermore, numerous sports administrators, including the deputy minister of the State Sports Administration, the directors of many National Sports Management Centres, those of provincial and municipal sports administrations, and the grass-root sports administrators have also come from BSU.

BSU started to run post-graduate diploma courses for students specialising in sports physiology, volleyball, basketball and other sports in 1954. From 1988 onwards, it began to enrol PhD students with degree-awarding rights in the fields of sports studies and medicine. A number of disciplines such as sports physiology, sports theory, sports coaching, volleyball, basketball, football, gymnastics, swimming, athletics, table-tennis, rhythmic gymnastics have been awarded the status of key subjects of the national sports sector. Sports Science is the national key subject and sports social science is Beijing Municipal's key subject. Up to present, BSU has obtained eight National Research and Teaching awards as well as 160 provincial and ministerial awards. BSU has established relationships with 25 sister universities from 14 countries. It has become an important talent pool for high level sports specialists.

• **Construction of the “three-combination” base**

In February 24, 2001 “Adjusting the management system of colleges and schools under the leadership of the State Sports Administration” was endorsed jointly by the Education Ministry, the State Sports

Administration, the State Planning Commission and the Financial Ministry. According to the document, BSU would continue to be under the governance of the State Sports Administration, but it would develop into a high-level comprehensive base combining education, sports training and research. With Beijing's successful bid to host the 2008 Olympic Games, this base has been enlarged. In the year of 2002 - 2003, the state invested over 270 M Yuan to renovate the existing teaching facilities, building a modern teaching complex which can accommodate over 7600 students, and standard students houses as well as a campus computer network. In addition, between 2003 and 2006, over 830 M Yuan will be spent in a series of compounds, including a new athletic complex, a student apartment, a teacher building, training courts and halls, a research centre and a further education centre. This will make BSU a leading base for physical education, sports training and research. It is expected that with qualified teachers, researchers and coaches, BSU can take full advantage of these excellent teaching, researching and training facilities to cultivate elite talents of all kinds, and produce significant research. The goal of BSU is to become a world-class sports university with Chinese characteristics.

• Olympic education in the BSU

The Olympic Movement can play a great part in sustaining this morale, because it represents the competitive spirits of openness, fair play and justice – the aims of all mankind. As a world sports festival, the Olympic Games can portray the finest values of human spirit, civilization and aesthetics. When Beijing bid for the 2008 Olympic Games, three concepts “Green Olympics, People's Olympics and High-tech Olympics” were promoted. These will be of great significance for the success of the 2008 Olympic Games, and will project China forward to a more civilized society of harmony, order, morality, and compassion.

To popularise the Olympic spirit and promote Olympic culture, BSU established its Olympic Research Centre in 1994, which has attracted scholars and produced a number of Olympic studies. For example, Dr. Ren Hai is a member of the IOC Olympic Studies Council; Professor Sun Baoli is the editor of the Olympic Reading Books for Primary and Middle schools; Dr. Yi Jiandong has published over 30 articles on the Olympics; Dr. Huang Yaling lectures the Olympic Movement Course, Dr. Qiu Shaoyi is specialised in the study of the Olympic non-tangible capital and Xiong Xiaozheng is an expert of

Olympic history and has published among others “the Olympic Movement”, “Olympic Studies”, and “Encyclopaedia of the Olympics”.

As a sports university, BSU has duties to make contribution to the Beijing Olympic Games through the following ways:

1. Undertaking Olympic-related research projects funded by the State Science and Technology Ministry, the State Sports Administration;
2. Training the future Olympians for Taekwondo, Rhythmic Gymnastics, Athletics, Wrestling, Judo, Boxing, Trampoline and other sports;
3. Providing academic tutoring to the Beijing-based national teams;
4. Providing training courses for the Olympic coaches;
5. Planning and organising the training for competition administrators for particular sports;
6. Organising the 2005 World Sports Information Congress;
7. Organising the 2007 World Forum for Elite Sports Training Centres;
8. Bid to host the 2008 Olympic Scientific Conference.

3. Beijing Universities: the base for promoting the Olympic Spirit

The former president of China Jiang Zemin pointed out in his report to the Party’s Sixteenth Congress: “In the face of collision between cultures across the world, it is necessary to promote and nurture the national spirit and regard it as an essential task of cultural construction, incorporating it into the process of construction of spiritual civilisation to maintain people’s morale for advancement”. The Olympic Movement can play a great part in sustaining this morale.

“O, sport, you are Peace! You promote happy relations between peoples’ bringing them together in their shared devotion to a strength which is controlled, organised and self-disciplined. From you, the young world-wide learn self-respect, and thus the diversity of national qualities becomes the source of a generous and friendly rivalry” wrote Baron De Coubertin in his Ode to Sport.

“In the name of all competitors, I promise that we shall take part in these Olympic Games, respecting and abiding by the rules that govern them, in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of sport and the honour of our teams, committing ourselves to a sport without doping and without drugs” is the athlete’s oath in Sydney 2000 Games. “In the name of all the judges and officials, I promise that we shall

officiate in these Olympic Games with complete impartiality, respecting and abiding by the rules which govern them in the true spirit of sportsmanship” is the judge’s oath.

The Olympic motto is “Faster, Higher and Stronger”.

“Based on the concept of centring people’s needs, People’s Olympics advocate to promote culture, human development, international education, and peace through sport. First, it emphasizes the cultural exchanges between the East and the West, and popularise the Olympic Movement and promote the Olympic spirit across China. Second, People’s Olympics promotes the healthy development of the body, mind and moral through sport, and respects individuality and human rights and can help speed up the socialist democratic process. Third, to host the Olympic Games is undoubtedly a great opportunity to unite the nation and strengthen the cohesion of 56 ethnic groups”. The above message was delivered in Beijing’s bid to host the 2008 Games.

To maintain the sports ethics of “winning glory for the nation, selfless devotion, respect for truth, observe regulations and laws, team work and perseverance” is what universities should do and can do. To educate students in the spirit of constantly striving to become stronger and push him/her self forward in the classroom, extra-curricular activities, and elite sports training and inter-class competitions, as well as in other social contacts, sports teaching in universities can make its unique contribution to the socialist cultural development.

It is clear that to diffuse the excellent national culture, promote the advanced world culture and facilitating the socialist cultural development is the obligatory task for higher education institutions. Thus, to promote sports spirit, popularise sports culture and advocate sports morale become essential obligations and tasks for sports and physical education in universities. This is a mission that sport in universities should take up in order to retain and develop human civilization.

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