

Original Research Article

Research on the development value and optimized development paths of youth flag football

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Abstract: With the addition of flag football in the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics and the continuous reform of school physical education in China, flag football has begun to gain attention from young people due to its high degree of safety, strong emphasis on teamwork, flexible tactical application, and other advantages. It can help promote the healthy development of adolescents' bodies and minds. Based on the literature analysis and logical reasoning in the previous sections, this paper first identifies the basic value attributes of youth participation in flag football and then analyzes the practical problems that currently exist, such as public misconceptions, a lack of qualified professional teachers, an unclear curriculum system, an underdeveloped competition system, and insufficient venues and equipment. Based on the actual development needs of youth flag football, this paper puts forward the following optimisation directions.

Keywords: flag football; development value; optimization paths

1. Introduction

With the continuous implementation of China's policy to integrate sports and education, reforms in school physical education curricula and teaching have been deepening. The old teaching models and traditional sports programmes can no longer meet the various sports demands of today's students. Flag football is relatively safe and fun, and it has educational value, so it is suitable for broad application in schools. After its successful addition to the Olympic Games, flag football has gained more popularity and influence around the world, and the number of young players in China has been rising steadily.^[1] However, compared with established sports, flag football is still a relatively new one in China, and its entire development system has not yet been fully built. Based on the above, we will study the value, practical problems and development directions of youth participation in flag football in detail.

2. Research on the development value of youth flag football

2.1. Enhancing students' physical fitness

Recently, many Chinese adolescents have been facing issues such as prolonged sedentary behaviour, lack of exercise, poor physical condition, and increasing problems with overweight and poor posture. The previous physical education teaching model has been too uniform and lacks classroom appeal, so it is difficult to motivate students' enthusiasm for physical exercise. Flag football is a team sport that does not involve physical contact. It can help ensure the safety of the students during physical education and also enable them to choose suitable playing positions based on their own physical conditions and qualities. The sports can all develop the students' speed, strength, agility, reaction time, coordination and other general physical fitness and enhance their interest in sports.^[2] Provide some tactical ideas and have all the students take part; they will feel good about doing so.

2.2. Cultivating students' willpower and character

Flag football is a team sport that requires good cooperation among players. Offensive and defensive teams are formed, and the positions in these teams have different duties. The players need to cooperate with the quarterback based on tactical plans for the sport, and this requires good decision-making and thinking

as well as strong execution. Flag football has a strict set of rules, an abundant tactical system, and a very fluctuating speed of play. These attributes need to be proficient in rules, possess good critical thinking and communication skills, etc. By cooperating with and supporting one another in different positions, participants can strengthen the will to fight and morality through sports.

2.3. Improving social interaction skills

Flag football teaching activities are often held in the form of team training and group competitions to give adolescents a safe, healthy and stable social space at school. The students work together in class, discuss strategies for the game, and build good relations. There are exchange meetings at all levels, and people are talking, meeting and collaborating. It can help students improve their verbal expression skills and thinking abilities in the face of problems, as well as feel the sense of honour and shared hardship that comes from striving together on the field.

3. Practical challenges in the development of youth flag football

3.1. Public misconceptions

The public is more familiar with very confrontational forms of football, such as rugby and American football. In fact, there are many types of football-related sports, and flag football is a non-contact, attractive team ball game based on American football. There are also significant differences in the level of awareness of flag football between urban and rural areas in China.

3.2. Shortage of qualified professional teachers

Currently, the teaching of flag football classes in China is mainly carried out by regular physical education teachers taking on the role additionally or by coaches from training institutions. These teachers have a relatively weak sense of professionalism in terms of theoretical basis, tactical knowledge and risk control. In addition, rural teachers have fewer opportunities to participate in flag football training and limited channels for continuous learning, so the overall quality of teaching staff is not high enough to meet the demands of widespread promotion and popularisation.

3.3. An unclear teaching curriculum system

The development of youth flag football in China has reached a certain level now. However, there are no official unified curriculum standards, teaching syllabi or supporting textbook resources at present. At present, teachers' teaching is mainly based on their own teaching experience and specialisations; thus, it is difficult to build a progressive, systematic and well-organised teaching system.^[3]

3.4. An underdeveloped youth competition system

The System of China's Flag Football Competition Needs Improvement. There are problems of uneven distribution of competitions among regions and an underdeveloped tiered youth competition system. The above problems make it difficult for students to take part in competitions and limit their opportunities for higher-level competition; this will affect the development of the competitive sports talent pipeline and the enhancement of competitive results.

3.5. Insufficient venue and equipment resources

Support facilities for flag football in schools have not been fully developed yet. There is a shortage of basic flag belts, special footballs, referee teaching aids and other equipment that can be used regularly in class. This will directly affect the organisation of flag football activities in the school and the spreading of professional knowledge, making it difficult to meet the demands of large-group classroom teaching and intensive team training.^[4]

4. Optimized development paths for youth flag football

4.1. Carrying out comprehensive public education and promotion

To address the problem of one-sided public awareness and regional differences in awareness, a multi-party publicity and promotion model of "education authorities + sports associations + schools" should be actively built. Increase the publicisation and popularisation of work in township schools to reduce the gap

in urban-rural awareness, promote fairness and inclusiveness in physical education, and actively create a healthy and harmonious sporting atmosphere on campus.

4.2. Improving the teacher training mechanism

Public-interest training programmes for flag football coaches and referees should be organised actively for physical education teachers in schools and outside schools. Efforts should be made to enhance the basic knowledge and abilities of grassroots educators in theoretical foundations, special skills, officiating rules, competition etiquette and related areas. An online teaching and research platform should be built to organise regular classes and study groups, share teaching experience and problems, provide resources for frontline teachers, and so on.

4.3. Building a standardized curriculum system

Based on the resources of university experts in physical education, a "Guideline for Flag Football Instruction in Primary and Secondary Schools and Universities" needs to be issued to clarify the educational demands, teaching objectives, skill standards, assessment and evaluation at all levels of education.^[5] A teaching model of "basic classroom teaching + recreational club activities + specialized school-team training" should be established. This will meet the demands of all these groups and boost the overall competitiveness of the company.

4.4. Establishing a tiered competition platform

Considering the actual needs of the students, a four-tier competition platform consisting of "class recreational competitions", "school leagues", "regional circuit events" and "national youth championships" should be established to meet the demands of students at all levels. A tiered competition platform will be established to introduce more talented reserve athletes and thus strengthen the competitiveness of the national sports system.

4.5. Integrating existing campus resources

In addition to achieving the goals of teaching activities, schools should make good use of the facilities they have, such as sports fields and football pitches, allocate dedicated funds for sports reasonably, and provide basic footballs, flag belts, referee teaching aids and other equipment to meet the basic demands of teaching.

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