A Comparative Study of Primary School Physical Education in China and the United States in an International Perspective

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Abstract

Through a comparison of primary school physical education in China and the United States, we initially summarize the similarities and differences in teaching objectives, organization, curriculum content, teaching evaluation and teacher-student relationship between the two countries, and combine them with domestic practice from an international perspective, in order to provide a review and enhancement of primary school physical education in China. The purpose is to provide useful references for the review and improvement of primary school physical education in China. A comparative study of the teaching objectives, teaching organization, curriculum content, teaching evaluation and teacher-student relationship between primary school physical education in China and the United States was conducted using literature and comparative analysis, to summarize the similarities and differences between primary school physical education in China and the United States, draw inspiration from the experience, make an outlook on the future development trend of physical education in China and the United States, and to identify methods of teaching primary school physical education that are beneficial to Chinese characteristics.

Keywords

Primary schools in China and the United States, physical education, teaching objectives, teaching organization, curriculum content

1. Comparison of Primary School Physical Education Teaching Objectives in China and the United States

1.1 Objectives of Primary School Physical Education in China

The teaching objectives of primary school PE in China are healthy physical and mental development. The teaching objectives are divided into three dimensions: knowledge and skills are the most direct and basic objectives, process and method are the requirements and implementation of students learning, completing the learning of knowledge and skills while learning methods and learning to learn. Emotional attitude and sense of value is the highest level of goals, reflected in physical and mental health and social adaptation, etc, must be achieved to achieve the process and method dimension goals to be possible. In physical education, specific activity situations are created for primary school students to develop their interest in participation.

The development of a sense of community is a major component of the Chinese primary school PE curriculum. The aims of primary school PE in China are both physical education and mental education. Mental education refers to the combination of different physical education content and physical education simulation scenarios to provide...
primary school students with both moral and psychological education.

1.2 Objectives of physical education in primary schools in the USA

The United States emphasizes the value of the individual and generally agrees that the individual and the collective are mutually beneficial and that the collective should respect the wishes of the individual. Therefore, the US primary school physical education curriculum places more emphasis on the development of the individual, with the individual as the core of motor potential development and self-image building (Junying Liu, 2020).

In the United States, the objectives of primary school physical education also advocate the physical development of the individual, but in the actual teaching, more emphasis is placed on the exploration of motor potential, and the implementation of primary school physical education into the process of movement itself, so that primary school students can vent their emotions and experience the joy of movement, and do not care so much about how well the primary school students complete their movements.

1.3 Similarities, Differences and Enhancement of Primary School Physical Education Objectives in the US and China

The apparent emphasis on the individual in American teaching objectives contrasts with our emphasis on the collective concept, which is linked to the basic values of Chinese and American societies. Our traditional values respect the subjective wishes and individual talents of the individual, but place greater emphasis on the social nature that the individual possesses.

The objectives of physical education guide the teaching of physical education and, formally, the objectives of primary school physical education in China are very specific, clear and have very detailed and well-developed evaluation criteria to test the achievement of the objectives. The physical development objective is a subset of the overall objective and includes four sub-objectives, such as basic skills and physical form (Ding Rui, 2018). Within each sub-goal, there are a number of sub-dimensions and specific evaluation indicators. Compared to China, the US primary school P.E. objectives are relatively simple, and there are no specific quantitative evaluation indicators for the content of the objectives.

In China, the objectives of primary school P.E. teaching take into account the physical development of primary school students while also strengthening the experiential teaching in the process of sports, reducing the specialization of sports and focusing on the development of the body and mind of primary school students. In the United States, the objectives of primary school PE are less collective and more focused on the individual's freedom to play and communicate in PE classes. With internationalization, the differences dictated by the different social cultures of the two countries are diminishing. The combination of body and mind, on the other hand, should have several caveats, first of all a harmonious combination of body and mind rather than formalism;

2. Comparison of the organization of primary school physical education in China and the United States

2.1 Organization of physical education in Chinese primary schools

Take jumping rope class as an example, Chinese teachers will set up a safe area for primary school students before the class, define the position of each student in the area, and stimulate students’ interest in jumping rope through a simple game or a short story. The teacher then guides the pupils to try the rope skipping on their own through demonstration and explanation, with individual guidance if any are unwilling to try. Thirdly, after the students have tried, they are praised for being able to jump rope consistently, and those who cannot jump rope consistently and lose interest are encouraged and given individual guidance or asked to help by their classmates. After the main lesson the teacher will also take the pupils to play some games of their own design to get them more interested in jumping rope through interesting games or to review and consolidate through small games so that the pupils can correctly master the method of jumping rope, and then a few minutes before the end of the lesson the teacher will briefly summarize or ask the pupils to evaluate the lesson themselves to conclude the lesson.

Scenario-based teaching is used throughout the primary school PE curriculum, for example, in a zoo scenario where pupils try to play different animal roles and imitate animal crawling; A fairy tale scenario where pupils are asked to do relay running can make pupils more active in PE lessons, reflecting the fun of primary school PE
teaching.

In outdoor lessons, Chinese primary schools use the class as a unit of learning, with specific items and several specific pieces of equipment provided by the teacher for each lesson.

2.2 Organization of primary school physical education in the USA

The same jump rope lesson in American primary schools is conducted in such a way that the teacher first allows the pupils to try out the activity by scattering the rope around the activity area beforehand, and the curious pupils take the initiative to touch and explore the rope while the teacher mainly observes and does not easily give instructions. When the majority of pupils begin to jump the rope, the teacher coaches those who do not know how to jump; finally, the teacher ends the PE lesson by evaluating the individual effort, degree and results as an observer (Mao ZM, 2002).

In the United States, primary school physical education does not involve games or scenarios to make it more interesting, and the process of teaching and learning is relatively simple. The teacher is usually not directly involved in the physical activity, but at most provides assistance to the pupils who need it, so the teacher is often a spectator observing the pupils' physical activity.

In the United States, the outdoor physical education programme is not divided into classes or grades, but into sports, and students are free to mix and match, mostly in competitive team sports such as basketball and football.

2.3 Similarities, Differences and Enhancements in the Organization of Primary School Physical Education in China and the USA

The example of skipping rope shows that the differences between Chinese and American primary school PE are that Chinese primary school P.E. is more planned and designed to introduce pupils' interest through the creation of scenarios and then through the substitution of games to complete the teaching process. In the US, the design of elementary PE is simpler than in China. In terms of teaching atmosphere, China emphasizes the importance of combining physical fitness with interest, and physical exercise is an important objective of primary school PE, while not neglecting the emotional aspect of the experience. The activities are designed with an emphasis on the opening of each activity and the fun aspect of the activity to spark the interest of primary school students.

Chinese teachers are more likely to use motivational cues in their instruction of primary school children's physical activity, and to use words and actions to influence students when they encounter difficulties. American teachers are only prepared to provide help at any time during an activity, and generally do not give direct instruction, preferring to let the pupils direct their own activities. For example, in rope skipping, they do not take direct action to motivate or help students who encounter difficulties, but let them figure it out on their own, thinking that they will naturally get it after a few more jumps.

The activity atmosphere in Chinese primary school PE classes is more active than in American primary school PE classes, mainly because Chinese teachers are generally more involved in physical activity. However, because the teachers themselves are involved in the activities, they are less observant than American teachers in terms of activity observation. Resolving this contradiction is going to be a major direction for us to improve the quality of physical education in the future.

3. Comparison of Primary School Physical Education Curriculum Content in China and the United States

3.1 Content of the Chinese Primary School Physical Education Curriculum

The overall content of the Chinese primary school physical education curriculum is detailed and in-depth, with detailed divisions that are easy for teachers to grasp and apply. The materials are dedicated to the systematic development of physical fitness and motor skills of primary school students, and are therefore holistic and systematic (Wang Lixin & Ji Liqun, 2016).

3.2 Content of the US Primary School Physical Education Curriculum

In the US, primary school PE materials are relatively general, divided into board and straightforward combinations, generally a sport is a unit (Wang Shuying, 2012), including movement techniques and activity styles, and do
not advocate comprehensive curriculum combinations, then there is less relevance between materials.

3.3 Similarities and differences in the content of the Chinese and American primary school physical education curricula

The Chinese primary school PE curriculum is broad in scope, with all the guts of a sparrow, and there is usually a complete link between activities, with a clear sense of overall development in the short 35-40 minutes of a PE lesson. In the USA, the content is simply categorized and more specialized, but the sections are more fragmented and less easy for teachers to grasp and apply in specific teaching situations, and less straightforward than Chinese primary school PE materials. However, the transition between activities is very straightforward and there is generally no linkage between activities. It is less holistic than our primary PE curriculum.

However, this straightforward form of instructional scheduling, which eliminates much of the language interface, can provide more physical activity time for primary school students.

4. Comparison of Primary School Physical Education Evaluation in China and the United States

4.1 Evaluation of Physical Education Teaching in Chinese Primary Schools

We generally review the content of the lesson to primary school students a few minutes before the end of each PE lesson, and refer to the life of the students for moral education, so that primary school students can also develop good qualities in their daily lives during PE lessons.

When assessing the overall performance of the primary class, they often use the phrase "We have learned in this lesson today through… how the children in our class behaved today…"

The assessment of physical education in Chinese primary schools has always been a conventional model-referenced assessment, i.e. a uniform assessment standard is applied to students of the same school section, without taking into account individual differences of students and without considering the foundation, so that those who score high marks are always those with good physical education foundation, while those with poor foundation always score lower marks, which tends to discourage some primary students with weak foundation. The greatest weakness of this type of assessment is that it does not reflect the level of effort and progress of the students.

4.2 Assessment of Primary School Physical Education in the USA

Teachers in the USA generally do not ask them to think about what they have learned from PE lessons. The teacher limits the assessment to a summary of the facts, and the main content is the individual student's performance in the lesson. The main content is the effort put in by the individual student in this PE lesson activity and the process and extent of that effort.

Primary PE teachers in the USA ask pupils to describe what they did today and how well they did it, and place great importance on pupils evaluating each other, combined with pupils evaluating each other in the same area during zoned activities. Teachers listen carefully to each student's account of their activity to show respect.

The assessment of physical education in American primary schools includes teachers' and parents' evaluations of students and students' self-evaluation to form a comprehensive overall assessment, which includes quantitative indicators and statements describing students' performance.

4.3 Similarities, differences and enhancements in the evaluation of physical education in primary schools in China and the USA.

The content of a lesson is evaluated differently by Chinese and American primary school teachers, the focus of the evaluation is different, and the form of teaching evaluation is different. If we take into account the starting base of primary schools, we use a combination of absolute and relative evaluation, and evaluate according to the base and progress, so that primary school students can clearly see their progress, which is conducive to primary school students gaining confidence and experiencing the joy of success.
5. Comparison of teacher-student relationships in primary school physical education in China and the United States

5.1 Similarities and differences in teacher-student relationships in primary school PE teaching in China and the USA and their enhancement

The relationship between teachers and students is teacher-led and student-led. In primary school PE teaching the focus falls on the learning of primary school students, focusing on the physical activities of primary school students in the classroom. Teachers cannot just see themselves as mere workers, but also act as multiple roles, such as managers, advisors and activity participants, in order to truly treat students as the subjects of learning.

The teaching process is a multilateral interactive process, advocating multilateral interaction between teachers and students, students and students, in the form of partitioned activities, the activities of the same primary school students arranged together, primary school students will have communication and influence between them, the activities of strong primary school students can play a role in teaching, invisible let primary school students This is a good way of peer education.

Although teachers are not as involved in the curriculum as they should be, their role as 'observers' in the classroom is worth learning from.

6. Reflections on the comparison of physical education in China and the United States

The common features and differences between Chinese and foreign primary school physical education include the following: firstly, physical education has shown stability in terms of teaching objectives, curriculum content and teaching methods. For example, physical development and the promotion of mental health development are among the objectives of primary school physical education in China, while the objectives of primary school physical education in the United States also include the objectives of individual physical development and individual mental development accordingly. Secondly, with the development of China's modernization and the progress of society, the cultivation of some of the psychological qualities necessary for modern man has also received much attention in physical education in China, in addition to the consideration of the cultivation of the quality of will and the spirit of collectivism. There have been some changes in the aims of teaching, curriculum content and methods, and the general objectives of physical education have tended to homogenize, with both Chinese and American primary school physical education striving to fulfill the educational function of physical education. In addition to physical education, the American primary school physical education curriculum also includes education involving the psychological quality of the individual, sports culture and social development. Thirdly, there is a high degree of agreement between Chinese and American primary school educators regarding the concept of lifelong physical education. The objectives of physical education in China clearly state that primary school students should develop an interest and habit in sports, emphasize the basic nature of primary school physical education and a sense of lifelong physical education, teach primary school students the learning ability to be physically strong, and lay some foundation for lifelong physical education. Physical education in the United States also explicitly requires the development of students' ability to participate in sports throughout their lives.

References


