

INTEGRATION OF FOOTBALL INTO UNIVERSITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN CHINA

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Abstract. In the new era of curriculum-based education development in higher education institutions, this is a strategic initiative aimed at realizing the fundamental mission of nurturing worthy and talented youth. Football, with its unique collective character, competitive spirit, rules-based structure, and cultural significance, has become an ideal environment for integrating ideological education. The analysis focuses on five aspects: restructuring teaching objectives, updating learning content, optimizing teaching processes, improving teacher qualifications, and creating assessment systems.

Keywords: football, students, physical education, moral education, university education.

ИНТЕГРАЦИЯ ФУТБОЛА В УНИВЕРСИТЕТСКИЕ ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНЫЕ ПРОГРАММЫ КИТАЯ

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Аннотация. В новую эпоху развития образования на основе учебных программ в высших учебных заведениях является стратегической инициативой, направленной на реализацию фундаментальной миссии по воспитанию достойной и талантливой молодежи. Футбол, с его уникальным коллективным характером, духом соперничества, структурой, основанной на правилах, и культурным значением, стал идеальной средой для интеграции идеологического образования. Анализ сосредоточен на пяти аспектах: реструктуризации целей преподавания, обновлении содержания обучения, оптимизации процессов преподавания, повышении квалификации преподавателей и создании систем оценки.

Ключевые слова: футбол, обучающиеся, физическое воспитание, нравственное воспитание, образование в университете.

The fundamental mission of higher education lies in cultivating virtue and nurturing talent. To comprehensively advance the integration of ideological education into curricula, we must seamlessly combine value shaping, knowledge transmission, and skill development, embedding ethical guidance within academic instruction and practical training. Physical education serves as a vital pathway for students' physical-mental well-being, robust physique, and holistic growth. Its inherent practicality, experiential nature, and social relevance make it uniquely effective in fostering perseverance, rule awareness, teamwork, and social responsibility [1]. As the «world's most popular sport» football enjoys widespread popularity in universities. More than just physical activity, it embodies educational values through its social-cultural significance. Systematically integrating football into ideological education curricula—identifying its inherent ideological elements and translating them into effective teaching practices – holds vital importance in cultivating new generations capable of driving national rejuvenation. In recent years, with the deepening implementation of the «Guidelines for Ideological Education in Higher Education Courses», sports education has become a key focus of institutional reform. Football's unique educational value positions it as a pivotal force in this transformation process.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the internal logical links between football and ideological education based on curricula, identify key problems in current integration processes and systematically propose practical approaches to the inclusion of football in the system of ideological education in higher education institutions.

By deeply analyzing the intrinsic logical connections between football's unique collective nature, competitive spirit, rule-based system, and cultural essence and the educational objectives of ideological education in curriculum, this study establishes a theoretical foundation for their integration. The research also addresses practical challenges in current integration practices, pinpointing prominent issues such as superficial exploration of ideological elements, monotonous teaching methods, lack of collaborative mechanisms, and outdated evaluation systems. This provides a clear problem-oriented approach for proposing solutions. Building on this foundation, the study aims to develop a systematic and actionable implementation plan. Through five dimensions – redefining teaching objectives, innovating content, optimizing processes, enhancing faculty development, and improving evaluation systems – it integrates ideological education organically into football instruction. This creates a new educational model deeply integrated with «value guidance, knowledge exploration, capability building, and character cultivation» ultimately providing a practical reference for universities to effectively implement the «Three-All Education» framework.

Material and methods. In this study, literature analysis was used to systematically review academic papers, experimental reports and case studies.

Results and their discussion. This study focuses on the practical integration of football into ideological education in higher education institutions, systematically establishing a research framework that progresses from theoretical analysis to practical implementation. The research first conducts an in-depth examination of the intrinsic logical connections between football and ideological-political education. It elaborates on football's unique advantages as an educational medium through four dimensions: cultivating collective spirit and teamwork, refining competitive determination and willpower, instilling rule-based values and legal awareness, and deepening cultural identity and national cohesion. Building upon this foundation, the study comprehensively identifies current challenges in integration processes, including superficial exploration of ideological elements, monotonous teaching methods and platforms, lack of collaborative mechanisms, and outdated evaluation systems. These findings provide clear problem-oriented guidance for subsequent pathway development. To address these challenges, the study has developed a five-pronged practical framework: At the teaching objectives level, it advocates shifting from «skill-oriented» to «people-centered» education, establishing an integrated system of knowledge, skills, and values. Regarding curriculum design, it innovatively proposes four-dimensional approaches – rule education, cultural identity, ethical decision-making, and craftsmanship spirit – to systematically integrate ideological-political elements. In instructional processes, diversified methods like case studies, scenario simulations, competition practices, and reflective discussions are employed to organically combine value guidance with sports engagement. Faculty development focuses on enhancing educators' ability to implement curriculum-based ideological education through capacity-building initiatives, interdisciplinary collaboration, and practical community development. The evaluation system establishes multidimensional metrics covering value cognition, moral practice, willpower cultivation, and cultural identity to achieve scientific and systematic assessment. By incorporating real-world cases like the «Xiangchao» football league and Shangqiu University's teaching model, the research provides empirical support for its theoretical framework, enhancing practical applicability. Finally, it outlines future directions for integrating ideological education into football courses, proposing innovative strategies including digital tool adoption, campus football-social welfare partnerships, and long-term institutional mechanisms. This comprehensive approach balances theoretical integrity with operational feasibility, forming a complete cycle from problem diagnosis to solution development, offering systematic solutions for ideological education in university sports programs.

The inherent nature of football aligns perfectly with the objectives of ideological education in academic curricula, forming a logically sound integration. This synergy is rooted in two fundamental aspects: cultivating collective spirit and teamwork. As a team sport where victory depends on seamless coordination among all 11 players, football naturally serves as an effective classroom for developing students' collectivism, collaborative skills, and selfless dedication [1]. Such teamwork development resonates deeply with the collectivist values emphasized in ideological education [2].

Cultivating Competitive Spirit and Resilience: Football matches are inherently combative, offering both the exhilaration of victory and the bitterness of defeat. This dynamic environment effectively hones students' tenacity, perseverance, and refusal to surrender, while fostering a balanced mindset that respects competition outcomes and maintains rational perspectives on success.

The sportsmanship demonstrated in Hunan's «Xiangchao» League serves as compelling material for ideological education, where players' steadfastness under adversity provides vivid examples of resilience [3].

Establishing Rule-Based Thinking and Legal Awareness: Football matches must be conducted under strict regulations (Football Competition Rules) [3]. This helps students develop a sense of rules and legal principles, understanding that both individuals and teams must pursue success within the framework of established rules. It also fosters a deep comprehension of the competition principles of «fairness, justice, and transparency». The football practical curriculum at Shanghai Yuannan Middle School centers on «rules» as its core theme, employing diverse activities to help students gain a profound understanding of the importance of adherence to regulations.

Cultural identity and national identity deepening: Football culture carries national spirit and collective memory, which can strengthen students' cultural confidence and patriotism. The regional pride stimulated by the «Xiang Super» tournament is a typical example of the role of football culture in ideological and political education.

Comprehensive and innovative ability cultivation: modern football emphasizes tactical arrangement and on-the-spot response. Learning football tactics can cultivate students' overall view, strategic thinking, problem analysis and creative problem solving ability, which are the essential comprehensive qualities of contemporary college students.

One of the main problems of the current integration process is the superficial study of ideological aspects. Some educators focus narrowly on generic concepts like «perseverance» and «teamwork», failing to explore football's unique educational values such as tactical discipline, leadership development, and resilience-building. For instance, they often neglect to explain fundamental principles behind match decisions like red and yellow cards, or how players manage emotional responses during conflicts. This superficial approach prevents football from fully realizing its potential as a vehicle for ideological education.

The second problem is a single teaching method and information carrier. Most courses rely on traditional skill-training models, lacking diversified approaches such as case studies, scenario simulations, and competition practices. In current university football education, only a few programs incorporate real-world match cases (like ethical controversies from the World Cup) for value analysis. This singular teaching methodology struggles to spark students' learning interest or emotional resonance [3].

The third problem is the lack of a cooperation mechanism. The lack of collaboration between ideological and political educators and soccer instructors has created a disconnect between teaching ideological elements and athletic skills. Some universities fail to establish joint research mechanisms, hindering the formation of coordinated educational efforts [4]. This absence of collaborative frameworks results in fragmented and inconsistent development of curriculum-based ideological education programs.

The fourth problem is the evaluation system. The current evaluation is mainly based on skills assessment (accounting for more than 80%), and there is a lack of quantitative tools to observe the ideological and political dimension such as responsibility, leadership and integrity consciousness. As a result, it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of ideological and political courses scientifically, which is not conducive to teaching improvement and quality improvement.

The fifth problem is the lack of teachers' skills to conduct training with the integration of ideological education. Some physical education teachers lack a proper understanding of integrating ideological and political education into their curriculum, lacking both the awareness and capability to proactively identify and incorporate relevant elements. Meanwhile, political education instructors have insufficient knowledge of football's unique characteristics and operational principles, making it difficult to find appropriate integration points. This results in rigid content delivery and suboptimal educational outcomes.

In order to realize the organic integration of football and curriculum ideological education, it is necessary to systematically reconstruct the teaching objectives and make the ideological and political education objectives specific and operable (Table 1).

Table 1 – Framework for reconstructing teaching objectives of ideological education in football curriculum

Traditional goals	Integrating ideological and political goals	Implementation carrier example
Master passing and shooting skills	Strengthen team spirit	Team tactical training
Understand the rules of the game	Establish the concept of rule of law and the spirit of fair competition	Case analysis and simulation of court decisions
Improve physical fitness	Develop perseverance and resilience to pressure	High intensity competition after reflection summary
Learn tactical theory	Develop strategic thinking and innovation ability	Tactical analysis and design exercises

Innovation of Teaching Content: Deep exploration of four-dimensional elements. Rule education dimension: deeply analyze the correlation between «red and yellow card system» and «VAR technology» in Football Competition Rules and the spirit of modern social rule of law, and guide students to understand the fundamental role of rules in social operation.

Cultural identity dimension: Based on regional sports cases such as «Xiangchao», this paper explains the promoting effect of football culture on urban cohesion and national pride. For example, Luhuhu Port Middle School in Wuhu city has effectively improved students' sense of collective honor and cultural identity through football culture courses.

Ethical decision-making dimension: Design simulated scenarios (such as psychological pressure in penalty kick, ethical controversy of diving) to guide students to make value judgment and ethical choice, and cultivate their moral judgment and sense of responsibility.

The dimension of craftsmanship spirit: Through star player training cases (such as Cristiano Ronaldo's self-discipline), it conveys a professional attitude of striving for excellence and persistent dedication. Shandong Sport University has effectively cultivated students' professional ethos by adopting the «dual-teacher co-cultivation» model, inviting industry experts to share practical experience.

To optimize the learning process, it is possible to integrate with various teaching methods. **Case teaching method:** Select classic game fragments (such as the performance of the «Fair Play Award» team in the World Cup), organize students to discuss «moral choice and victory relationship», and cultivate students' value judgment ability and moral sensitivity.

Situation simulation method: Create a scene of referee dispute and penalty, and let students play roles to experience the balance between the authority of rules and fair game. The practice of Shanghai Yuannan Middle School shows that this method can effectively improve students' awareness of rules and legal concepts.

The tournament-based approach: By organizing class league competitions, students are required to independently establish rules and manage schedules, thereby developing organizational skills and social responsibility. Wuhu Luhuhu Port Middle School has achieved the goal of «every class having a team and everyone participating» through its campus football league, effectively cultivating students' organizational capabilities and sense of social responsibility.

Reflective discussion method: write a «mental growth diary» after the game to record the breakthrough of emotional management in failure or the improvement of communication in collaboration, so as to promote the internalization and absorption of ideological and political elements.

Interdisciplinary Integration: Establish a two-way nurturing system between football and multiple disciplines. For example, liberal arts courses conduct «football match report» writing exercises while science courses analyze «shooting angles and goal probability», achieving comprehensive education.

An important aspect is the development of the teaching staff, increasing their level of competence. **Empowering ideological ability:** A workshop on ideological work for football teachers was set up, and experts from the School of Marxism were invited to interpret cases of value conflicts in competitions, so as to improve teachers' ability of ideological and political education.

Interdisciplinary collaboration: Establishing a «dual-mentor system» (combining ideological and political education instructors with football coaches) to jointly develop the «Football Course

Ideological and Political Case Library» [5]. The collaborative co-construction model between Tongji University's International Football College and the Base Center provides valuable reference for this initiative.

Practical Community: Establishing regional football ideological education alliances, sharing resources from events like «Xiangchao», and promoting inter-school faculty exchanges. Shandong Sport University's «Four-Dimensional Integration» model has effectively enhanced the overall quality of its teaching staff by building a diversified collaborative education system.

Professional development support: Establish a regular mechanism for mentor training, incorporate practical teaching ability and participation in industry projects into assessment indicators, and comprehensively improve the level of mentors. The three-level training system of Shandong Sport University is worth learning from.

The establishment of a scientific evaluation system is the key to ensure the effectiveness of ideological and political construction in football curriculum, and diversified evaluation methods and tools should be adopted (Table 2).

Table 2 – Multi-dimensional evaluation system of ideological and political education in courses

evaluative dimension	Specific indicators	survey tools
Value perception	Rule awareness	Simulate penalty scene behavior record
Moral practice	Team sacrifice spirit	Teammate evaluation + game video analysis
volitional quality	Resilience to stress	Physical and mental questionnaire for physical endurance test
cultural identity	Depth of understanding of the event culture	Theme essay + group defense
mixed ability	Innovation thinking and practical ability	Project results presentation and evaluation

Furthermore, emphasis should be placed on process-oriented evaluation that focuses on students' progress and transformation throughout the learning process, rather than merely focusing on final outcomes. Shandong Sport University has effectively promoted the improvement of students' comprehensive qualities by establishing a comprehensive assessment mechanism.

Conclusions. The integration of football sports with ideological education in curriculum represents an innovative practice of implementing the «Three-Aspect Education» concept. By resetting educational objectives to anchor pedagogical direction, innovating content to deeply explore ideological elements, activating value experiences through teaching processes, collaborating faculty members to overcome capability bottlenecks, and reforming evaluations to enhance effectiveness feedback, we can establish an educational ecosystem that «cultivates virtue through sports and stimulates critical thinking through competitions».

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