

Exploring the Cultivation Model of College Basketball Talents from the Perspective of Holistic Education

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Abstract

Based on the concept of holistic education, this paper systematically explores the current situation, problems, and optimization paths of basketball talent cultivation in Chinese universities. It points out that existing practices in college basketball education are characterized by overly narrow training goals, closed curriculum structures, insufficient practical platforms, and one-sided evaluation systems. Excessive emphasis is placed on athletic performance while neglecting the comprehensive development of students' qualities. To address these issues, the paper proposes systematic innovations in four areas—training objectives, curriculum content, practice platforms, and evaluation mechanisms. It advocates building a “skills + literacy + character” integrated cultivation model, and promoting teaching collaboration, faculty development, open learning environments, and individualized growth. In this way, basketball education can shift from a “competition-oriented” to a “student-oriented” approach, ultimately fostering students' physical, psychological, cognitive, and social development.

Keywords

Holistic education; basketball education; talent cultivation; higher education; comprehensive development

1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of deepening reform in China's higher education system, sports education faces the important task of transforming from being “competition-oriented” to “student-oriented.” As a major discipline in university physical education, basketball is not only responsible for cultivating athletic talents, but also for promoting the all-round development of students. However, in reality, basketball talent cultivation in most universities still centers on skill training and competition results, while neglecting students' character, mental health, cognitive abilities, and social competence. This tendency to “value competition while neglecting literacy”

can no longer meet the requirements of cultivating talents with all-round development in morality, intellect, physique, aesthetics, and labor under the “people-oriented” vision of contemporary higher education.

The concept of Holistic Education, which originated from humanistic education theories in the 20th century, advocates educating the whole person, enabling development in physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual, and creative dimensions to foster truly complete individuals. (Liu, B. 2004) In recent years, this concept has been increasingly introduced into sports education and talent cultivation in Chinese universities. Basketball, with its inherent educational value, not only enhances physical fitness but also contributes to mental health, moral cultivation, cognitive development, and social growth. Therefore, integrating holistic education into basketball talent cultivation is not only an inevitable trend of sports education reform, but also an effective way to improve students’ overall qualities.

Nevertheless, the current cultivation of basketball talents in Chinese universities still faces a series of problems: narrow training objectives, rigid curricula, one-dimensional evaluation standards, and limited pathways for social development. Thus, it is urgent to optimize the existing system under the guidance of holistic education. By improving curriculum design, teaching content, evaluation mechanisms, and industry–education integration, a “skills + literacy + character” trinity model can be established to truly realize the educational mission of sports.

2. The Connotation and Significance of Holistic Education

Kuniyoshi Obara, a key advocate of holistic education, proposed the concept of educating the “whole person,” emphasizing the comprehensive development of intelligence, emotion, body, spirit, and social competence, while integrating art, sports, and moral education. He argued that education should respect students’ individuality and foster creativity and practical ability (Obara, K., 1993). Within this framework, collective sports such as basketball are not only platforms for skill training, but also important vehicles for personality development and social learning. Incorporating the principles of holistic education into the cultivation of basketball talents in universities broadens the scope and depth of traditional sports teaching, promoting the simultaneous improvement of both technical proficiency and overall competence.

2.1. Comprehensive Enhancement of Physical Fitness

In basketball, physical fitness forms the foundation of athletic performance. Traditional training models focus on the development of basic abilities such as speed, strength, and endurance. Guided by holistic education, however, fitness training should be more systematic and personalized. Since each student has different physical conditions and psychological states, training programs should take individual differences into account, adopting diversified approaches that promote

well-rounded athletic performance. Furthermore, improvements in physical fitness should also serve students' capacity to cope with stress and fatigue—stimulating intrinsic motivation through exercise and strengthening resilience and self-regulation. In addition, training should pay attention to enhancing cognitive and reaction abilities, thereby achieving an integrated “skills–body–mind” effect.

2.2. Cultivation of Personality and Character

As a highly competitive and collective sport, basketball provides rich contexts for the expression of individuality and the cultivation of character. Holistic education emphasizes the concurrent development of emotional growth and social adaptability through sports activities. In games and training, students are confronted with pressures of winning and losing, interpersonal conflicts, and challenges of cooperation—all of which are essential elements in shaping character. Through effective instructional organization and psychological guidance, basketball training can reinforce self-discipline, a sense of responsibility, and resilience, helping students form a sound and balanced personality.

2.3. Strengthening Social Responsibility

Basketball is not only a competitive sport but also a platform for social education. From the perspective of holistic education, basketball teaching should go beyond the transmission of technical and tactical knowledge to include the cultivation of social responsibility. By engaging students in community-based activities such as volunteer basketball coaching, charity matches, and sports events for people with disabilities, their sense of service and social belonging can be enhanced. In such practices, students not only come to understand the social value of sports but also experience the emotional rewards of “serving others” and “collective honor.” This contributes positively to the cultivation of civic awareness, collectivist spirit, and a sense of social justice. Moreover, reflective writing, group discussions, and other methods can help students process their experiences, internalize responsibility, and transform it into long-term behavioral habits, thus realizing an integrated educational process of “knowledge–emotion–will–action.”

3. Analysis of Problems in the Current System of Basketball Talent Cultivation in Universities

In recent years, with the continuous deepening of sports education reform in China, the teaching and training system of college basketball has gradually improved, and talent cultivation mechanisms have become increasingly diversified. However, from an overall perspective, many structural problems and outdated concepts still exist in the cultivation of basketball talents in universities. In particular, there remain significant shortcomings in the integration of the holistic education philosophy—“student-centered, all-round development”—into teaching practice. These

problems not only restrict the full release of students' potential, but also hinder the sustainable growth and social adaptability of basketball talents in higher education. The following analysis outlines four main issues.

3.1. Narrow Training Objectives: Emphasis on Competition over Holistic Development

At present, many universities continue to adopt competition results as the primary orientation of basketball talent cultivation, often regarding tournament achievements and skill levels as the core indicators of student development. While such objectives can enhance athletic performance, they largely neglect the improvement of students' overall qualities. Long-term exposure to high-intensity training and competition without systematic psychological support or personality development often leads to issues such as high psychological pressure, weak interpersonal adaptability, and poor self-management among students. Moreover, for non-professional basketball students or those participating in campus leagues, instruction is often limited to basic skills and game practice, lacking humanistic care and quality education elements. As a result, the pursuit of "holistic development" in education is difficult to achieve.

3.2. Monolithic Curriculum Structure: Lack of Interdisciplinary Integration

University basketball courses are generally dominated by technical skill instruction. Most courses emphasize fundamental techniques such as shooting, passing, and positioning, but lack systematic and hierarchical curricular design, as well as the construction of knowledge systems related to the cultural connotations of basketball, tactical theories, or psychological regulation. In addition, few courses integrate with disciplines such as psychology, education, or management, resulting in insufficient breadth and depth. Although students may achieve certain technical progress, they often display significant deficiencies in tactical understanding, emotional regulation, and teamwork. This "hard-skill-oriented" curriculum structure clearly deviates from the holistic education goal of integrating "knowledge + ability + literacy."

3.3. Insufficient Practice Platforms: Disconnection from Social Contexts

As a highly practical sport, basketball should provide diverse practice platforms to develop students' real-game capabilities and social engagement. However, in the current university environment, most basketball practice activities are confined to on-campus training and league play, with little collaboration or connection with external platforms such as communities, enterprises, or society at large. Such a closed training environment limits students' understanding of and adaptability to real-world contexts. Many graduates, despite possessing relatively high athletic levels, lack comprehensive abilities in event organization, team management, or sports

communication, making it difficult for them to meet the requirements of diversified careers in the sports industry. Furthermore, practice activities are often monotonous and lack elements of humanistic care and public service, thereby failing to effectively enhance students' sense of social responsibility and civic awareness.

3.4. Unscientific Evaluation System: Neglect of Comprehensive Qualities

The evaluation of basketball talents in universities remains overly simplistic, typically based on quantitative indicators such as physical test results, game performance, and training attendance. While such criteria are easy to operationalize, in practice they overlook non-cognitive factors such as critical thinking, teamwork, moral character, and leadership ability. Some students who perform well in leadership and communication are overlooked due to mediocre competitive results, while others with strong technical skills but weak sportsmanship or collective spirit are given priority cultivation. This utilitarian and one-sided evaluation standard fails to fully assess students' comprehensive abilities and runs counter to the holistic education philosophy of "student-centered, multidimensional evaluation."

4. Innovation of Basketball Talent Cultivation Models from the Perspective of Holistic Education

A talent cultivation model refers to the overall process of education in which, under the guidance of modern educational theories and philosophies, relatively stable teaching content and curricular systems are established to design comprehensive teaching subjects, management approaches, and evaluation mechanisms according to specific training goals and talent requirements (Wu, J. 2019). From 2018 to 2019, China's Party and state leadership emphasized adherence to the development path of socialist education with Chinese characteristics, putting forward new requirements for cultivating students in terms of moral education, intellectual development, physical education, aesthetic education, and labor education, and further refining and implementing the goal of cultivating talents with all-round development in "morality, intellect, physique, aesthetics, and labor". Therefore, in light of the problems existing in the current process of basketball talent cultivation in universities, it is imperative to construct a systematic model guided by the philosophy of holistic education. Such a model should address students' multidimensional developmental needs, integrate resources, and innovate teaching concepts and methods, thereby realizing the organic integration of skill cultivation and character development. Specific strategies include goal reconstruction, curriculum reform, practice expansion, and evaluation innovation.

4.1. Building a Multidimensional Goal System

Basketball talent cultivation under holistic education must fundamentally break away from the traditional, narrow focus of "skill-centered" objectives and establish a

multidimensional goal system oriented toward comprehensive quality enhancement. This means that cultivation goals should not only cover the improvement of athletic ability, but also the development of emotional regulation, team communication, leadership awareness, and social responsibility at the psychological and character levels. Under this new framework, the role of basketball talent should shift from being a “player” to a “socially engaged sports talent,” equipped with the capacity to exert influence in diverse environments. Such objectives better align with the new era’s requirements for “compound” sports talents with both internal cultivation and external adaptability, and more closely reflect the fundamental mission of higher education.

4.2. Optimizing the Curriculum: Emphasizing Both “Skills” and “Values”

In curriculum design, university basketball teaching should gradually move beyond the “skill-centered” training paradigm to build a comprehensive system that integrates technical proficiency with humanistic literacy, and physical training with cognitive growth. In addition to teaching essential skills and tactical thinking, the curriculum should highlight its role in value guidance, personality development, and psychological resilience training. Through embedded design, elements such as sportsmanship, team ethics, and individual psychological adjustment can be integrated into teaching contexts, allowing students to naturally absorb humanistic and social education while training. With this shift, the basketball classroom ceases to be a mere space for skill transmission, but becomes an important platform for cultivating students’ thinking ability, communication skills, and value judgment. Meanwhile, the incorporation of dynamic assessment and real-time feedback mechanisms enables continuous self-reflection and adjustment during the learning process, thereby realizing the teaching philosophy of “revealing values through skills.”

4.3. Establishing Multi-Level Practice Platforms and Expanding Social Connections

The educational value of basketball should not be confined to campus training grounds and competition venues, but should extend into broader social spaces and public life. To this end, universities should take the initiative to establish multi-level practice platforms that place students in more authentic and complex social environments for training and growth. Practice activities should not be limited to inter-collegiate competitions and training camps, but should also encompass diverse contexts such as community service, cultural promotion, and cross-disciplinary projects. In this way, students can not only gain technical experience, but also cultivate responsibility, management skills, and innovation through social practice—achieving a transformation from “athlete” to “sports promoter.” This practice-oriented model enhances the openness and adaptability of basketball education while laying a solid foundation for students’ diversified career development.

4.4. Constructing a Comprehensive and Multi-Dimensional Evaluation Mechanism

Educational evaluation is a crucial part of implementing teaching models. Therefore, the establishment of a corresponding, well-structured evaluation index system is of great importance. (Liu, C., & Shang, Z., 2016) The growth of basketball talents is not linear and should not be judged by a single dimension. Holistic education calls for a multi-dimensional evaluation system that emphasizes process, encourages growth, and respects individual differences, thereby more comprehensively reflecting students' performance and potential across multiple dimensions. The focus of evaluation should shift from merely competition results or training outcomes to also include aspects such as teamwork, leadership and organizational skills, psychological resilience, and self-awareness. In practice, multiple approaches can be combined—such as teacher evaluations, self-assessments, peer reviews, and project-based assessments—to form a well-balanced, content-rich, and timely feedback system. Moreover, the evaluation process should highlight positive guidance and personalized encouragement, recognizing students' willingness to grow and their capacity for transformation in the face of challenges. Such an evaluation mechanism can foster greater attention to experiential learning and character development, rather than a narrow pursuit of outcomes, thus making basketball education a genuine process of holistic personal growth.

5. Practical Pathways and Strategies for Cultivating Basketball Talents from the Perspective of Holistic Education

5.1. Synergizing Teaching Mechanisms: Establishing an Integrated “Teaching–Training–Guidance” System

To optimize the cultivation of basketball talents in universities, it is first necessary to realize an integrated design of “teaching–training–guidance.” Traditional models often separate theoretical instruction from technical training, whereas under the philosophy of holistic education, theory, practice, and psychological guidance should constitute a unified whole. In teaching arrangements, theoretical courses should not serve merely as supplementary background knowledge, but should closely align with training objectives—for example, reinforcing awareness of rules and collective responsibility by connecting lessons on game regulations and sports ethics with practice scenarios. In training, coaches should not only focus on tactical execution and physical condition but also guide students in developing effective communication styles and self-management abilities. Meanwhile, psychological guidance should permeate the entire teaching process: teachers must possess basic skills in psychological identification and intervention, enabling them to recognize students' emotional fluctuations during training and competition and provide timely support and feedback. This reconstruction of the mechanism—“guidance within teaching, education within training, and growth within guidance”—makes basketball education

more attuned to students' real developmental needs and enhances the overall effectiveness of talent cultivation.

5.2. Professionalizing Faculty Teams: Fostering Multifaceted Basketball Educators

The implementation of holistic education depends on a high-level, multifaceted faculty team. Currently, most university basketball teachers possess strong technical backgrounds, but often lack expertise in psychological counseling, curriculum integration, and humanistic guidance. Thus, a transformation is needed from "skill-oriented coaches" to "educator-coaches." This can be achieved through continuing education, interdisciplinary training, and inter-university joint development programs. Beyond mastering sports science and pedagogy, basketball educators should also acquire knowledge in educational psychology, organizational behavior, and cultural communication to enhance their comprehensive understanding of student development. For instance, regularly engaging faculty in student development seminars, observing interdisciplinary courses, or participating in student organizations can broaden their educational perspectives and foster more trusting, supportive teacher-student relationships. A faculty team with strong holistic literacy, communication capacity, and growth awareness is the cornerstone of cultivating basketball talents under holistic education.

5.3. Opening Educational Spaces: Creating Diversified and Integrated Learning Environments

Basketball education should not be confined to gymnasiums and classrooms but should extend into campus life and broader social contexts, forming a diversified, dynamic, and open educational ecosystem. On the one hand, basketball teaching should integrate with campus culture, student organizations, and general education resources, creating a seamless learning chain across "classroom-training-life." For example, during university basketball festivals, responsibilities such as event organization, publicity design, and post-game reviews can be student-led, allowing them to develop organizational, time management, and creative skills in practice. On the other hand, partnerships with external platforms should be strengthened to provide multi-level internships and practice opportunities, such as community sports services, assisting enterprises in organizing basketball activities, or volunteering in youth sports programs. These experiences not only enrich students' practice but also expose them to the public value and humanistic significance of sports in real society. By creating an "education without walls," basketball teaching can become a space for life-oriented, cross-disciplinary, and socially embedded growth.

5.4. Personalizing Student Development: Constructing a Growth Mechanism Combining Autonomy and Guidance

Under the philosophy of holistic education, individual differences are not treated as

teaching obstacles but as essential foundations for educational innovation. Basketball talent cultivation should therefore encourage autonomous exploration while respecting individual developmental rhythms. Concretely, diverse growth pathways should be offered, such as advanced athletic training, coaching preparation, sports management, or sports communication, allowing students to choose according to their interests and strengths. Universities should also establish personalized support systems—including career counseling, mentorship programs, and developmental assessments—so that students receive continuous feedback and adjustment in their choices. Modular course design can provide students with greater autonomy, such as offering elective modules in advanced tactical analysis, sports leadership workshops, or applied sports psychology, thereby meeting different levels and needs. This cultivation mechanism of “common support + individualized choice” not only aligns with the holistic education spirit of respecting differences and promoting self-realization, but also significantly enhances the inclusivity and adaptability of basketball education.

6. Conclusion

As an important educational philosophy in the new era of higher education, holistic education emphasizes the comprehensive, balanced, and sustainable development of students, bringing education back to its “student-centered” essence. Guided by this philosophy, the cultivation of basketball talents in universities is no longer limited to athletic and technical training, but has evolved into a systemic process integrating skill development, character formation, social engagement, and cultural understanding.

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