

Holistic College Outdoor Sports Education: A look into a China Educational Institution

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Abstract: *In most educational Settings, physical education is rarely strategically integrated into the curriculum. One way to increase student engagement is to combine diverse disciplines with real-world applications. This study mainly adopts the research methods of literature review, questionnaire survey and data analysis, aiming to analyze the current situation through the investigation of college teachers and students, and put forward practical suggestions, so as to provide references for the development of outdoor physical education courses and outdoor physical education in universities.*

Keywords: *physical education, outdoor sports, student development, educational innovation*

1. Introduction

In most educational contexts, physical education programs are rarely strategically integrated across the curriculum. Partnership with other groups, such as leisure or tourism companies, to develop more useful and engaging choices for young people is extremely rarer. One technique for increasing student engagement is to integrate diverse academic subjects with real-world applications, such as using adventure, nature-based learning, forest schools, or learning outside the classroom strategies. Apart from fostering social, emotional, and physical health, as well as self-determination, systematic investigations of diverse instructional methodologies have discovered a range of learning benefits.

Outdoor sports were still a relatively new sport in China, and there was no universally accepted definition. It took a long time for specialists to come up with a definition for outdoor sports. After years of philosophical dispute, the concept of outdoor sports was progressively entrenched.

Moving back to teaching outdoor sports and activities, because of the rigorous curriculum and delivery approach, most children have little interest in traditional physical education, and a rising number of students shun it for a variety of reasons. It will eventually have an effect on the physical and well-being of students. Outdoor sports bypass the limits of traditional physical education and attract children to them due to their particular unpredictability and excitement. Student involvement and interest in the subject matter is the basis and success element for implementing the reform of the physical education curriculum^[1].

Furthermore, it must also be recognized that outdoor recreation is a comprehensive, multi-faceted interaction between humans and their natural environment. Natural resources such as sunlight and air promote metabolism, cardiopulmonary resuscitation performance, and immunity in the body, of whether the activity is simple mountain climbing, mountain biking, diving, or skiing that requires expertise. Students assist one another and conquer problems as a group when they participate in activities. By removing their psychological obstacles, this experience aids in lowering the prevalence of mental illness in young people. The typical gym or playground are no longer the only places where outdoor sports training can be done as a continuation of physical education. In order to effectively mix outdoor learning with athletics, students can leave the classroom and enter the outdoors^[2].

Physical education instruction is currently too much influenced by curriculum design, and children have little option but to participate. As a consequence, only the teaching material was altered as a result of curriculum reform. Outdoor sports demand a more advanced learning environment due to the unique nature of their project. This unique teaching method cannot be used in conventional classrooms. We can only organize pupils into nature if we want to accomplish practical teaching. Consequently, instructors must do a practical examination of the pertinent aspects in advance before engaging in outdoor education, such as weather changes, the amount of time needed for a roundtrip, the geographic setting, and so forth. Nonetheless, the possible dangers still cannot be completely avoided because of project and environmental limits.

Continuous development, adjustment and updating must be conducted to achieve optimum learning and delivery of outdoor sports and activities under the Physical Education curriculum. However, the researcher resides and teaches in China, wherein such attention is only starting to be given to the discipline^[3]. Moreover, the available academic studies on such topic remain predominantly Western. In addition, the focus of education, even in physical education, remains in grades, rendering it more theoretical than practical; and given that it is physical education, the attention is fixated into physical development, which leaves other facets of development unnoticed or having insufficient attention in the academic field. As a teacher of Physical Education, it is important for the researcher to continue developing the curriculum offering of the discipline for it to not be limited in mainstream and general sports but extend into other similar activities^[4]. The researcher also aims to widen the scope that is used when talking about physical education, namely on the argument that it can only develop the physical aspect of students.

With the aforementioned, this study aims to investigate teachers and students, analyzing the current situation, and putting forward feasible suggestions, providing reference for the extensive development of outdoor sports education courses in colleges and universities and the development of outdoor sports.

2. Research method

2.1 Literature review method

Through the screening and analysis of relevant literature, the understanding of outdoor sports is deepened, the core elements are focused, the status quo and trend of outdoor sports are clarified, and the development path is analyzed.

2.2 Questionnaire survey

The respondents were mainly teachers and students of Guangdong Institute of Science and Technology. About 600 students participated in the survey, and about 30 teachers from other schools and colleges of the school.

2.3 Data analysis method

The Cronbach alpha coefficient was tested in the study to determine the reliability of the composite scale, which was determined by the average correlation between the variables. Because descriptive statistics was employed, the measurements to be used in the data analysis included percentages, weighted mean, and standard deviation.

3. Results, Analysis and interpretations

3.1 Interest and Participation

In terms of interest and participation, the assessment on outdoor sports yielded a composite mean score of 2.52 with a 0.91 corresponding standard deviation. This implied that the respondents commonly agreed on their assessments in their interests and participations to outdoor sports as revealed by the small value of standard deviation. As shown in table 1.

Table 1 Assessment on Outdoor Sports in terms of Interest and Participation

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Outdoor sports are one of my top priorities.	2.44	0.91	Disagree
I prefer to do academics than go outside.	2.28	0.85	Disagree
I see outdoor sports as a requirement.	2.79	0.97	Agree
Outdoor sports are a regular task for me.	2.51	0.89	Agree
Outdoor sports are more exciting to do than other activities.	2.60	0.92	Agree
Composite	2.52	0.91	Agree

Scale: 4.00-3.51=Strongly Agree; 3.50-2.51=Agree; 2.50-1.51=Disagree; 1.50-1.00=Strongly Disagree

Of all the indicators, the highest mean score was evident by seeing outdoor sports as a requirement followed by the excitement that respondents had experienced in doing outdoor sports. On the other hand, the respondents revealed that they disagreed on preferring to do academics than going outside

and saying the outdoor sports are their priorities.

3.2 Quality of available program

In terms of quality of available program, the assessment on outdoor sports yielded a composite mean score of 2.74 with a 0.87 corresponding standard deviation. This implied that the respondents commonly agreed on their assessments in the quality outdoor sports program as revealed by the small value of standard deviation. As shown in table 2.

Apparently, the highest mean score was evident by offering outdoor sports as programs rather than sports lessons followed by the respondents' perceptions in requiring discipline from the participants of outdoor activities. On the other hand, the lowest mean score was evident by the perceptions of respondents in seeing outdoor sports program in their school that is also the same with the other schools.

Table 2 Assessment on Outdoor Sports in terms of Quality of Available Program

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Outdoor sports programs offer more than sports lessons.	2.82	0.92	Agree
The outdoor activities that I do have good practices that I can absorb.	2.70	0.87	Agree
Outdoor activities require discipline from its participants.	2.80	0.88	Agree
The outdoor activities push me in all my aspects of development.	2.76	0.87	Agree
Outdoor sports program in our school is just like one from another school.	2.63	0.83	Agree
Composite	2.74	0.87	Agree

Scale: 4.00-3.51=Strongly Agree; 3.50-2.51=Agree; 2.50-1.51=Disagree; 1.50-1.00-Strongly Disagree

3.3 Variety of available program

In terms of variety of available program, the assessment on outdoor sports yielded a composite mean score of 2.60 with a 0.90 corresponding standard deviation. This implied that the respondents commonly agreed on their assessments in the variety of available program as revealed by the small value of standard deviation. As shown in table 3.

Particularly, the highest mean score was evident by featuring different physical activities of outdoor sports program followed by the outdoor sports program featuring land, water and even air-based activities.

Table 3 Assessment on Outdoor Sports in terms of Variety of Available Program

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
The outdoor sports program feature land, water and even air-based activities.	2.81	0.95	Agree
Outdoor sports program features different physical activities.	2.83	0.92	Agree
I do not have any choice in choosing activities for outdoor sports program.	2.40	0.87	Disagree
I am not aware of any outdoor sports program.	2.32	0.92	Disagree
Our outdoor sports program continues to adopt new activities to offer.	2.64	0.85	Agree
Composite	2.60	0.90	Agree

Scale: 4.00-3.51=Strongly Agree; 3.50-2.51=Agree; 2.50-1.51=Disagree; 1.50-1.00-Strongly Disagree

3.4 Emotional Development

In terms of emotional development, the assessment on the merits brought by outdoor sports and activities obtained a composite mean score of 2.77 with a 0.84 corresponding standard deviation. This implied an agreement in the assessment of respondents. As shown in table 4.

Of all the indicators, the highest mean score was evident by their experiences during outdoor sports and activities to acknowledge their feelings and share them with others. This was followed by learning to control the emotions of the respondents and reacting to problems and issues which make them to become more flexible. Contrariwise, the lowest mean score was evident by not being rattled in many workloads.

Looking at the findings, acceptance of the situation and flexibility are emotional merits being developed by outdoor sports engagement. It gives the respondents the ability to properly handle a situation – calmly and with an approach that focuses on taking a solution one-step-at-a-time. One noticeable concern, however, is the a rather low score on the scale, as reflected on the composite mean. This shows that the respondents are convinced but do not have enough confidence for the current program.

Table 4 Assessment on the Merits brought by Outdoor Sports and Activities in terms of Emotional Development

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I have learned to control my emotion.	2.79	0.85	Agree
My reaction to problems and issues have become more flexible.	2.79	0.84	Agree
I am not rattled if I have many workloads.	2.73	0.83	Agree
I can now easily concentrate while doing simultaneous activities.	2.77	0.84	Agree
I can now acknowledge my feelings and share them with others.	2.80	0.85	Agree
Composite	2.77	0.84	Agree

Scale: 4.00-3.51=Strongly Agree; 3.50-2.51=Agree; 2.50-1.51=Disagree; 1.50-1.00-Strongly Disagree

3.5 Mental Development

In terms of mental development, the assessment on the merits brought by outdoor sports and activities obtained a composite mean score of 2.74 with a 0.83 corresponding standard deviation. This implied an agreement in the assessment of respondents. As shown in table 5.

Specifically, the highest mean score was evident by understanding and following instructions more easily. This was followed by the fact that the communication ability of the respondents was significantly enhanced. On the other hand, the lowest mean score was evident by what the people tell to the respondents in thinking very maturely.

The results show that outdoor sports engagement truly helps in mental development, however, it appears it may have to focus more on establishing clear communication among those practicing it. However, similar to the emotional merits gained, it is still on a level that may be regarded as somewhat enough or somewhat satisfactory – something that is not enough to be offered to students who are developing their skills, talents and mindsets in certain disciplines.

Table 5 Assessment on the Merits brought by Outdoor Sports and Activities in terms of Mental Development

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
My communication ability is significantly enhanced.	2.77	0.85	Agree
People tell me I think very maturely.	2.67	0.83	Agree
My memory, mechanical memory and learning ability develop relatively rapidly.	2.70	0.83	Agree
My understanding of lessons has improved and I comprehend complex topics easier.	2.73	0.84	Agree
I can understand and follow instructions more easily.	2.80	0.83	Agree
Composite	2.74	0.83	Agree

Scale: 4.00-3.51=Strongly Agree; 3.50-2.51=Agree; 2.50-1.51=Disagree; 1.50-1.00-Strongly Disagree

3.6 Academic Progress

In terms of academic progress, the assessment on the merits brought by outdoor sports and activities obtained a composite mean score of 2.69 with a 0.84 corresponding standard deviation. This implied an agreement in the assessment of respondents. As shown in table 6.

Specifically, the highest mean score was evident by completing the assignments of the respondents' every time followed by the scores of the assignment that have better results. On the other hand, the lowest mean score was evident by making essay papers faster with clearer contents.

Although it was evident that the current program of outdoor sports helped in academic progress, it still appears that it only helped at a minimal extent if the answers of the respondents are to be evaluated. It may have improved their academic performances but this fact may not be true for every one of the respondents.

Table 6 Assessment on the Merits brought by Outdoor Sports and Activities in terms of Academic Progress

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
The grades of my test have improved.	2.66	0.84	Agree
I complete my assignments every time.	2.78	0.85	Agree
My assignment scores are better.	2.69	0.82	Agree
I make my essay papers faster and the contents are clearer.	2.64	0.84	Agree
I have been inspired to study my lessons even I do not have class.	2.68	0.85	Agree
Composite	2.69	0.84	Agree

Scale: 4.00-3.51=Strongly Agree; 3.50-2.51=Agree; 2.50-1.51=Disagree; 1.50-1.00-Strongly Disagree

3.7 Behavior and Attitude

In terms of behavior and attitude, the assessment on the merits brought by outdoor sports and activities obtained a composite mean score of 2.81 with a 0.84 corresponding standard deviation. This implied an agreement in the assessment of respondents. As shown in table 7.

Specifically, the highest mean score was evident by the effect of outdoor sports to push the respondents to be better in a general context. This was similarly followed by getting along better with peers, cooperate and play and having satisfied of what the respondents can get from outdoor sports and its ensuing activities. In contrast, the lowest mean score was evident by getting more interest in outdoor sports and activities and share them with others.

It may have been evident that the outdoor sports and activities improved the students' general behavior and attitude towards life through possible reflections while in the wilderness. However, it is still on a level which cannot be categorized as acceptable in an optimal context.

Table 7 Assessment on the Merits brought by Outdoor Sports and Activities in terms of Behavior and Attitude

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
My ability of understanding others' feelings, be considerate of others and adjust to changing circumstances is significantly enhanced.	2.81	0.83	Agree
I can get along better with their peers, cooperate and play.	2.82	0.84	Agree
I get more interest in outdoor sports and activities and share them with others.	2.78	0.85	Agree
I am satisfied with myself and what I get from outdoor sports and its ensuing activities.	2.82	0.85	Agree
Outdoor sports and activities push me to be better in a general context.	2.84	0.84	Agree
Composite	2.81	0.84	Agree

Scale: 4.00-3.51=Strongly Agree; 3.50-2.51=Agree; 2.50-1.51=Disagree; 1.50-1.00-Strongly Disagree

3.8 Overall Assessment

Overall, the assessment on the merits brought by outdoor sports and activities provided that respondents agreed on it in terms of behavior and attitude being on top followed by the emotional development, mental development and academic progress. As shown in table 8.

Based on the rankings of the results, it is evident that outdoor sports and activities have made its effect on its expected facets of the respondents. Given that behavior and attitude and emotional development are on the non-academic side of the points of advancement, these are the main points of growth of the said activities given that these are more on the physical, self-reflective and even spiritual side of training and learning. The academic side of the tasks may only be limited to application of renewed practices and behaviors and exposure to phenomena and creatures that were just heard of in academic endeavors.

Table 8 Overall Assessment on the Merits brought by Outdoor Sports and Activities

Variables	Composite		Interpretation	Rank
	Mean	SD		
Emotional Development	2.77	0.84	Agree	2
Mental Development	2.74	0.83	Agree	3
Academic Progress	2.69	0.84	Agree	4
Behavior and Attitude	2.81	0.84	Agree	1
Overall	2.75	0.84	Agree	--

Scale: 4.00-3.51=Strongly Agree; 3.50-2.51=Agree; 2.50-1.51=Disagree; 1.50-1.00=Strongly Disagree

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Outdoor sports and activities have been regarded as a practice that is solely for physical development. However, as the realm of education continues to explore and recognize different kinds, facets and levels of learning, it must be recognized that such practices have the potential to cater growth in mindset, behavior and even scientific and practical knowledge. Hence, such activities must be given proper recognition and maximized by utilizing it as a training medium for students – a more holistic learning opportunity for students and not just physical education.

The results of this study highlighted this potential of the said activity, showing multiple development being catered to. However, these points of growth remain in an average level. Looking at the answers of the respondents, there are gaps that could further develop the program in place and advance it into a more complete medium of learning among enthusiasts of outdoor sports and activities.

Considering the aforementioned, similar activities must be looked into by schools and valued more as a source of holistic, reflective learning among the student body, and at times, even an academic inspiration. This program, along with its upgrades in pedagogy and materials can provide a better learning experience for students, hence, further improving their speed and level of growth.

The study's findings revealed that outdoor sports and activities yield average satisfaction to students who practice it. Although it has the potential to be an excellent medium of development, it has yet to reach such level. There are phases that need to be addressed before it can be seen as optimal. Thus, the researcher proposes the following:

- (1) Schools need to constantly update the curriculum to adapt to the current development trend.
- (2) Schools should regularly update teaching methods for teacher training.
- (3) Government departments should constantly review and update their outdoor sports and activity programs.
- (4) The schools and outdoor teachers work closely with each other to listen, consider and analyse the views of experts, stakeholders and students.
- (5) Academics are constantly using other applicable physical activities or sports to expand the scope of research.
- (6) We need to keep exploring other aspects of development influenced by activities of a similar nature.

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