

Research on Ma John's Sports Thoughts and Activities under the Background of Physical Decline

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Abstract: By using the methods of documentation, logical analysis, induction and summary, this paper studies the works and speeches of John Ma and the literature on John Ma's sports thought. It is concluded that John Ma is one of the representatives who first came into contact with western modern sports, and the physical education curriculum in Chinese universities was greatly influenced by his thoughts, which had a positive impact on the development of sports in universities and even the whole country at that time in different periods of his life. Up to now, John Ma's physical education thought still has important reference value for the development of college physical education curriculum in China.

Keywords: John Ma, Tsinghua University Sports thought and practice, physical decline

1. Introduction

In 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2014 and other years, the Ministry of Education, the General Administration of Sports and other relevant departments have organized seven national surveys on students' physical fitness and health. The results of the seventh national survey on students' physical fitness and health in 2014 show that the physical fitness of college students in China continues to decline. Some scholars have pointed out that the physical quality of Chinese college students has been declining for 20 years. According to the available data, the fact that the physical quality of college students continues to decline is indisputable. In recent years, the state has also promulgated a series of documents, such as "Opinions on Strengthening School Physical Education to Promote the All-round Development of Students' Physical and Mental Health", "Notice on Issuing the Outline of Building a Strong Sports Country", "Opinions on Strengthening Youth Sports to Enhance Youth Physical Fitness" and "Outline of Healthy China Planning 2030", in order to improve the physical fitness of College students.

Tsinghua University is a well-known university in China, and "no sports, no Tsinghua" has become a unique campus culture. From freshmen's "first physical education class", 20 kilometers camping and training, four-year undergraduate physical education class, forced exercise at 4:30 p.m., annual test of 3000 meters (1500 meters for girls), sunshine long-distance running twice a week, barefoot sports meeting, graduation long-distance running of life sailing, increasing physical test content for self-enrollment, building 3000-meter footpath, and compulsory swimming for freshmen. It can be seen that sports has become an important part of the spirit of Tsinghua. Under the background of the continuous decline of the physical quality of contemporary college students in China, Tsinghua students can be unique, which is inseparable from the fine sports tradition of Tsinghua University. When it comes to Tsinghua's sports, it is inseparable from a person, Professor John Ma, who has worked in Tsinghua for 52 years.

John Ma (1882-1966) studied at St. John's University in Shanghai from 1904 to 1911. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in literature. During his study, he was good at many sports and won the national 880-yard championship. In 1914, he was employed as a physical education teacher in Tsinghua University. In 1920, he was employed as a professor of physical education. After that, he served as the director of the Department of Physical Education. In 1919 and 1925, he went to Springfield University for further study. After the founding of the People's Republic, for the first, second and third The National People's Congress Representative, since 1954 China Athletics Association Chairman, All-China Sports Federation Vice President, President. A glorious banner of modern sports and physical education in China. The first professor of physical education in China, one of the main pioneers of modern sports, has been engaged in physical education for 52 years in Tsinghua

University. He has devoted his whole life to the development of sports. The year 2022 coincides with the 140th anniversary of the birth of Mr. John Ma. Under the background that the physical quality of college students continues to decline, it has certain theoretical reference value and practical significance for the reform of physical education curriculum in Colleges and universities.

2. Research objects and methods

This paper mainly uses the methods of documentation, logical analysis and induction to study John Ma's sports thought. In China HowNet, 273 and 208 documents were retrieved with the theme of "Ma John" and key words respectively. Thirty of them were selected for intensive reading. The existing research on Ma John's sports thought in the academic circles in the past 40 years was sorted out. The works, speeches and collections of memories of Ma John by people from all walks of life were studied. This paper reorganizes Ma John's sports thought and discusses the characteristics of Ma John's sports thought from different periods and stages.

3. Ma John's sports thoughts and practice in different periods

3.1 Early study in a church school and initial contact with modern sports (1904-1919)

In 1904, John Ma was admitted to St. John's University, a missionary university in Shanghai, and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1911. During his seven years of study, John Ma loved sports and had outstanding athletic ability. He was the main player of the school's football, tennis, baseball and track and field teams. He is good at middle and short distance running in track and field. He has won the school championships in 100 yards, 220 yards, 880 yards and 1 mile, and has won many times in off-campus competitions. In 1910, in the first National Games held in Nanjing before the founding of the People's Republic of China, John Ma won the runner-up of 880 yards national group and the champion of university group. In 1914, John Ma was recruited to teach in Tsinghua School, the predecessor of Tsinghua University. At first, he taught chemistry and English. Because he was good at physical education, he became a full-time physical education teacher two months later [1-3]. In 1918, he was promoted to deputy director of the Sports Department. From 1919 to 1920, he went to Springfield University in the United States to study sports during public holidays, and wrote his graduation thesis "Fourteen Years of Sports History". In this paper, he wrote, "China is one of the oldest countries and great survivors" The population is about 400 million, and the whole population is weak or sick, and experiences unsanitary and unhealthy living conditions. China needs sports like a tuberculosis patient needs treatment [1].

During this period, sports were not taken seriously in China. Running and jumping were regarded as unrefined behavior. Students lacked the knowledge of sports. They thought that they came to school to study in order to become a refined person, not a rude thief, because only thieves needed to run fast and jump high to escape capture[1-2]. From 1904 to 1911, John Ma attended St. John's University, founded in 1879. It was an American missionary school with two large stadiums and a simple gymnasium. It held two sports meetings in autumn and spring every year. John Ma was exposed to Western sports such as tennis, soccer, softball and track and field. At the same time, St. John's College, together with Suzhou Academy, Nanyang Academy and Nanjing Academy, has set up a sports organization of the "Inter-school Sports Federation". Four universities hold a track and field sports meeting and a football championship every year. John Ma has gained different emotional experiences by participating in various sports competitions inside and outside the school, and has initially realized the positive role of sports in training people.

In 1911, Tsinghua School was established. At the beginning, it did not attach importance to physical education. It was only because American schools had physical education classes and Tsinghua was a preparatory school for studying in the United States that physical education classes[5]were offered. At that time, there were 35 teachers in the school, 15 Americans and 10 Chinese teaching courses. There were four people in the sports department of Tsinghua School-one sports director and three assistants. The director of the Physical Education Department is Dr. Shoemaker (Dr. Shomemaker) of Springfield University in the United States. He is the real founder of the physical education work foundation of Tsinghua University. First, he has established various excellent modern sports training systems. Second, trained a winning sports team.[5,7]John Ma followed him as a teaching assistant for three years. He was very familiar with his work and came into contact with the concept of "all-round development of spirit, mind and body" of Springfield University in the United States. This may also

give him the idea of studying sports at Springfield University.

During this period, John Ma discussed sports work with Zhou Yichun, then president of Tsinghua University, and said: Tsinghua sends 100 students to the United States every year, and the students sent out must be decent, not the "sick man of East Asia", so the school only considers letting students study. Students should also do a good job in sports. From my point of view, I mainly consider the honor of the motherland, fearing that students will be bullied when they go abroad. So I often say to the students, you should exercise well, be brave, don't be afraid, be energetic, do it, others play baseball, football, you have to play, play, what they can play, you have to be able to play[1]. On June 3, 1919, in his application form for admission to Springfield University in the United States, John Ma's answer to the question "What is the job of a school sports director?" Epitomized his basic philosophy of physical education: to improve people's health and strengthen their physique, the most important thing is to impart the right spirit to young people [4].

To sum up, during this period, John Ma's understanding of sports was not yet mature. Under the social background at that time, he had a strong patriotic color. He realized the attitude of Chinese people towards sports and the differences with Western countries. He tried to cultivate the healthy body of Chinese people through sports, so as to achieve the goal of a powerful country and remove the "sick man of East Asia". During this period, he initially came into contact with western modern sports.

3.2 He studied in the United States twice, and his sports thought gradually matured (1920-1937)

The first two directors of Tsinghua University's sports department were both Americans. The first one was fired for corruption, and the second one worked at Tsinghua University for two years before taking office at Columbia University. In 1920, after returning from Springfield University, John Ma was promoted to professor and became the third director of the Sports Department of Tsinghua University. In order to carry out sports work and really regard physical education as an important organic part of training talents, John Ma made great efforts and thought of many ways. Tsinghua's sports tradition has also been developed since John Ma participated in sports work, especially since he took over as director of the sports department. During this period, the work mainly focused on the following three aspects.

3.2.1 Persuading and mobilizing students to participate in sports activities

At the beginning of the 20th century, modern sports had just entered China. Some people in society thought that there was no knowledge in sports. Sports was a matter of bouncing. Some people even satirized that physical education teachers were "well-developed limbs and simple-minded". Students in Tsinghua School did not attach importance to sports. At that time, there was a popular saying in Tsinghua: the first grade bought candles, the second grade bought glasses, the third grade bought spittoons, and the fourth grade bought coffins[1-5], which reflected the phenomenon that Tsinghua students attached importance to learning and despised sports. When communicating with President Zhou Yichun, John Ma said many times that schools should attach importance to physical education and mobilize students to develop the habit of physical exercise.

3.2.2 Improve the physical exercise system

According to President Zhou Yichun's idea of "education to cultivate complete personality", John Ma implemented two sports systems in Tsinghua University: one is breathing exercise, which takes ten minutes of breathing exercise every Monday to Friday morning to practice various calisthenics; the second is forced exercise, which is from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. from Monday to Friday every week (from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. every day in winter). During this period, all students must leave their dormitories and classes to participate in various kinds of sports outdoors. At the same time, the school system clearly stipulates: "Every student must pass the five minimum standard sports (swimming 20 yards, high jump chest, 100 yards 14 seconds, long jump 14 feet, rope climbing 15 feet, etc.) Before graduation. If any of them fails, the diploma will be withheld and the qualification to go abroad will be cancelled." Wu Mi, a pioneer of comparative literature in China, was postponed for half a year because he failed to reach the standard of long jump, and only after he reached the standard of sports did he go to the United States to study.

The Journal of the 20th Anniversary of National Tsing Hua University, published in 1931, published "Physical Education in the Past Twenty Years of Tsing Hua", which recorded that from the third year of Xuantong (1911) to the seventh year of the Republic of China (1918), although there were no regular physical education classes in Tsing Hua, compulsory sports were implemented. The method

is to lock the doors of all the dormitories, study rooms, libraries, food departments and other places in the school after four o'clock in the afternoon every day, so that all the students can go to the outdoor sports ground and engage in sports to their liking. This method is carried out until the Minqi Gymnasium has been completed and the physical education class has been changed to regular class[6]. In April 1919, the Roosevelt Gymnasium, a comprehensive gymnasium of Tsinghua University, was completed, and compulsory sports were replaced by formal physical education classes. At that time, physical education in Tsinghua University was compulsory for eight years, two classes a week, and eight points were required, and it was stipulated that "those who are not qualified in physical education are not allowed to take the graduation examination". At that time, physical education was not a compulsory course in most other universities in China, and few schools listed it as a whole-course education. Tsinghua became one of the earliest universities in China to set up formal Western-style sports. Even today, most of the public physical education courses in many colleges and universities in China are compulsory for two years, totaling 144 hours. Tsinghua attaches great importance to physical education courses.

3.2.3 Holding a sports meeting

Develop a number of sports competitions and promote the development of sports activities by means of competitions. John Ma once said, "Through sports and competitions, we can make young people healthy and graceful, smart and elegant, honest and brave, ready and adapted to do their duty and contribute to the development of the nation." Through sports, we can cultivate people's courage, perseverance, self-confidence, aggressiveness and determination [1]. At that time, there were many sports competitions in Tsinghua, such as football, basketball, volleyball, tennis, baseball, long-distance race, swimming, skating, martial arts and so on. There were both intramural competitions and interscholastic competitions. The winners of intramural competitions could represent the school in the interscholastic games and the North China Games. He believes that the key to developing sports is to arouse students' consciousness. Sports meeting is a means to promote individual skills and increase group interest, which helps to promote the development of sports.

Under his many initiatives, Tsinghua's sports development is better than other schools. In the first 14 North China Games, Tsinghua participated in 12 competitions and won the first place in the group total score[12]seven times. There was an episode in the middle. In 1928, Luo Jialun took over as the president of Tsinghua University. He paid little attention to sports and deprived John Ma of the title of professor and reduced his salary. The next year, John Ma led the Tsinghua football team to win the North China championship. When he returned, the students set off firecrackers and warmly welcomed him. John Ma was carried in from the school gate. Then Luo Jialun resumed his title of professor.

In sports, John Ma encourages students to "stick it out"! Never give up, and constantly strive for self-improvement. Regarding the sports competition, he also emphasized: "The ball may lose, the sportsmanship cannot lose." In the 1930s, in view of the fact that some units in Peiping did not pay attention to sportsmanship in sports competitions, John Ma, in conjunction with Professor Yuan Dunli of Normal University, initiated the establishment of five university sports associations (Tsinghua University, Peking University, Normal University, Yanda University and Furen University), with John Ma as its president, vigorously advocated noble sports spirit and sportsmanship, and promoted the healthy development of sports in Peiping.

From 1925 to 1926, John Ma went to the Graduate School of Springfield University in the United States for the second time to study for a master's degree. In 1903, he was a E. L. Of American psychologists. Thorndike and R. S. Woodworth put forward a theory of learning transfer, which holds that learning is a connection between stimulus and response. When the two kinds of learning have the same elements, the success of the former kind of learning can be transferred to the latter kind of learning, so that learning has a positive transfer effect. Influenced by this, John Ma applied the theory of learning transfer to sports and named his graduation thesis *The Transfer Value of Sports*. This is also the most famous representative work of John Ma, in which he comprehensively and thoroughly discussed the educational role and value of sports, and from the perspective of physiology and psychology, demonstrated that sports can provide practical training for personal moral and social qualities. And concluded that "sports are the most effective, appropriate, and fun way to produce good citizens"[1-5].

During this period, John Ma also participated in many world and national sports events as a coach or staff member. For example, he participated in the Fifth and Eighth Far East Olympic Games held in Shanghai in 1921 and 1927, served as the head coach of the Far East Olympic Games in 1930, and participated in the Fifth National Games held in Nanjing in 1933. In 1936, as the head coach of Chinese

track and field, he participated in the 12th Olympic Games held in Berlin, and then visited the Soviet Union and European countries.

After studying in the United States twice and participating in various sports events at home and abroad for many times, John Ma's sports thought became mature in this period. Many of them are consistent with the concept of national sports and lifelong sports advocated by us today, and still have guiding significance for today's university sports curriculum. Professor John Ma believes that physical education should be fair, sports is not "championship doctrine", a school's sports team has good results, does not represent the whole school, he said, "our ideal, do not expect our country to produce special players ... It is hoped that all young people will attach importance to sports and love sports. After class, everyone will choose one or two things to practice in the playground or in the field. They will do what they like and practice freely[1]. For the poor students in Tsinghua University, John Ma specializes in suitable sports practice methods to help them improve their physique, which fully reflects his idea of fair education and universal education. He hopes that students can develop the habit of sports, not only during school, but also after leaving school to work and continue to exercise. Mr. Ma once said proudly that if we look at the average situation of all students, the physical strength of Tsinghua students is "not inferior to that of any school in China"[8].

To sum up, during this period, Ma John took many sports reform measures to make schools and students attach importance to sports, improve students' interest in sports, let every student learn basic sports skills, let everyone participate in sports, let everyone develop the habit of physical exercise, and master certain means and methods of exercise[8]. Sports thought has become mature and put forward the term "sports moralist", which holds that "sports is the most effective, appropriate and interesting way to produce excellent citizens". During this period, his sports thought is mainly reflected in two aspects: first, education equity and lifelong sports thought; Second, the migration value of sports. This is basically consistent with the educational policy of "three-all education and five-education simultaneously" advocated today, and in line with the educational thought of "cultivating socialist builders and successors with all-round development of morality, intelligence, physique, beauty and labor" put forward by General Secretary Xi at the National Education Conference in 2018.

3.3 Sports practice in special period (1938-1946)

In 1937, under the influence of the war of aggression against China, Tsinghua University, Peking University and Nankai University established the National Changsha Temporary University in Changsha. In 1938, it moved west to Kunming, renamed as the National Southwest Associated University. The Southwest Associated University had been running a school in Kunming for eight years, and moved back in 1946. During this period, Ma John has been serving as the director of the Sports Department of the Southwest Associated University. After arriving in Kunming, Ma John found the following deficiencies in sports in Kunming through a period of observation: generally, he did not pay attention to sports, was not interested in sports activities, sports instructors lacked theoretical basis for sports, lacked new and reasonable teaching materials and methods, and lacked sportsmanship. Ma John realized that the teachers and students who moved from the northern universities to the south had a higher understanding of sports than the ordinary people in Yunnan, so he used the sports resources of the southern universities to establish four university sports federations in 1939, including the Southwest Associated University, Yunnan University, Tongji University, and the Air Force Military Academy. Through sports competitions, he raised the awareness of sports among ordinary young people and increased their interest in sports [9]. At the same time, due to the poor equipment conditions in this period, "most of the school sports grounds are borrowed from units outside the school in a guerrilla way, and classes can be held on whatever grounds you borrow" [5]. The quality of physical education teaching has actually declined greatly.

In this regard, Professor Ma John actively tried to overcome the difficulties. He used tennis as a medium to mobilize local political and religious officials and celebrities. With their sponsorship and support, he organized a number of sports competitions as the initiator or referee. Such as school level ball games (the first in 1939), Kunming Swimming Competition (the first in 1941), Kunming Sports Meeting (the first in 1941), and Sino US Track and Field Games (1944). At the same time, he, together with Zhang Siwei, Tu Wen and others, organized Kunming Sports Academic Research Association in 1940, committed to popularizing modern sports. In 1944, he was employed as the president of Yunnan Provincial Sports College, and trained a large number of sports teachers for Yunnan Province [9]. In the era of war, the sports of Southwest Associated University is still flourishing, and the sports associations in the school are booming. The famous sports clubs are the Iron Horse Sports Club, the King Kong Sports Club, the Spitfire Sports Club, and the Youyou Sports Club. There are also quite a

variety of school events. In addition to the May 4th Sports Meeting and the table tennis match of the whole school, there are also competitions between colleges, between school buildings, and even competitions between faculty and student teams. During this period, Mr. Ma John served as the director of the Sports Department of the Southwest Associated University, bringing the fine tradition of Tsinghua's sports to the Southwest Associated University. Although physical education was not included in the total score, it was stipulated that physical education should be taken from the first year to the fourth year of college. If you failed, you cannot graduate. Even if you fail in physical education after leaving the United Nations University, you still need to go back to the university to take make-up examinations before you can obtain the diploma.

In 1939, Tsinghua University held a public congratulation meeting to commend John Ma for his 25 years of service in Tsinghua. President Mei Yiqi, on behalf of the university, presented him with a gold watch guaranteed for 50 years. John Ma said in his reply, "You all want to know why I have been able to serve in the university for so long. In fact, it is because I have faithfully followed the sports principle: 'Fight to finish and never give in'."

The eight year history of the Southwest Associated University is also the historical profile of our country's eight year war of resistance against Japan. In this special period, the Southwest Associated University witnessed three waves of students joining the army to fight against Japan. In total, 834 students abandoned their peaceful campuses and took an active part in the war of resistance against Japan. Many people even sacrificed their young lives, which is inseparable from the excellent sports tradition of the Southwest Associated University. At the same time, Ma's series of social activities in Kunming also changed the relatively quiet sports circle in Kunming in the past. In 1946, the former three universities of Southwest Associated University returned to the north. The Southwest Associated University General Normal College was reorganized and established in Kunming. It was set up independently and renamed as National Kunming Normal University. In 1984, it was renamed as Yunnan Normal University.

3.4 Sports activities after the founding of the People's Republic of China (1947-1966)

In 1946, Tsinghua University moved back to Tsinghua Park. On the eve of liberation, many sports professionals were worried. Should the Communist Party do sports? What is our future? At this critical turning point in history, Ma John was mobilized to leave Peiping. John Ma said: "Although I don't know about the Communist Party, I am convinced that no matter which party or society in the world, it is necessary to carry out education and sports, which I firmly believe...". It was under the influence of John Ma that many sports professionals stayed in the mainland. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, John Ma was elected Vice President of the All China Sports Federation twice in 1949 and 1952, was appointed a member of the National Sports Commission in 1953, and was elected Director of the All China Sports Federation in 1956. In 1958, when Ma John was 76 years old, he cooperated with Mai Shuliang, a middle-aged professor in the Department of Civil Engineering of Tsinghua University, and won the Beijing Tennis Doubles Championships, and was rated as a national first-class player.

In 1961, teachers and students of Tsinghua University gathered to congratulate Ma on his eightieth birthday. Jiang Nanxiang, the headmaster, congratulated him on behalf of the school and said, "Over the past half century, Mr. Ma has always served the cause of sports and practiced it. He is the oldest in the school and has the best spirit." Rong Gaotang, the representative of the State Sports Commission, said, "Old Ma can still have such a body at the age of 80. Sports can promote health. Old Ma is a living proof." In 1964, Jiang Nanxiang, then the president of Tsinghua University, said in a speech commemorating Ma's 50 years of service at Tsinghua University: "We warmly congratulate Mr. Ma on his 50 years of service at Tsinghua University, that is, we should earnestly learn from him... We should exercise well, keep up with Mr. Ma, compete with Mr. Ma, and strive to work healthily for the motherland for at least 50 years." Now the slogan has evolved into "Exercise for an hour every day, work healthily for 50 years, and live a happy life".

In August 2020, the General Administration of Sport of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Education jointly issued the Opinions on Deepening the Integration of Sports and Education to Promote the Healthy Development of Teenagers. The Chinese youth sports education will follow the principle of "integrated design and integrated promotion". The sprout of the idea of integrating sports and education also appeared in the dialogue between Ma Qiwei and his son. Ma Qiwei, Ma Qiwei, Ma Qiwei's second son, studied biology and psychology at Southwest United University when he was an undergraduate. In 1948, he went to Springfield University to study for a

master's degree in physical education. Ma John hoped that he would go to middle school to promote sports. He said, "Middle school is a period when young people grow up. Physical training has a great effect. You can go to middle school. In this way, if you do it in middle school and I do it in university, we can link together and really start China's sports industry. [10]" From this paragraph, we can see that Ma John has long had the idea of "sports integration", However, instead of choosing campus sports, Chinese sports learned from the Soviet Union and established an Olympic gold medal winning assembly line in the mode of a professional team [11].

During this period, Ma John held many social posts related to sports. He published articles or comments such as "our understanding of sports", "health and sports", and "how my health came from" in *New Sports*, *New Observation*, *New Tsinghua* and other publications. He often participated in lectures in various units and schools, devoted himself to promoting sports, and compiled nearly 100 sets of free hand exercises with different contents, As a practitioner and leader of lifelong sports, he has truly achieved what he said at the CPPCC National Committee meeting: "I will devote all my energy to the development of the country's sports cause."

4. Conclusion

Mr. Ma John is one of the first people who came into contact with western modern sports in China. The modern sports and physical education circles are a glorious banner. During the 52 years of working in Tsinghua, his sports thoughts and activities have deeply influenced dozens of generations of Tsinghua students. At the same time, they have laid a solid foundation for the excellent sports tradition of Tsinghua University and promoted the development of national sports. He is a researcher, communicator, promoter of sports, and a lifelong practitioner of sports. In the context of the continuous decline in the physical fitness of college students in China, it is of great significance for college sports workers to study Professor Ma John's sports thoughts, summarize his sports spirit and keep abreast of the excellent sports tradition of Tsinghua University. The power of example is endless. Every college sports worker should learn from Professor Ma John and become a lifelong practitioner and communicator of sports.

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