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## Research on Sports Activities Development in China “Half Past Four School”

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### ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** “Half past four School” provides a possibility to link school sports with community sports. Through investigating situations of “Half past four school” sports activities development, the research presents relative suggestions on perfecting a new mode -linkage between school sports and community sports. **Methods:** field investigation, interviewing, documents literature survey and so on. **Results:** “Half past four School” may be a junction point between school sports and community sports, which is important for optimizing structural elements of school sports, and promote the students' healthy both physical and mental. There are also several problems in developing sports activities, mainly including fund shortage, insufficient sports playgrounds and facilities, severely inadequate volunteers, demands on further strengthening linkage between school and community. It suggested integrating and utilizing various social resources, improving running conditions of “Half past four School”, establishing a linkage mechanism with universities and constructing a steady group of sports volunteers.

**Keywords:** half past four school, sports activities, school sports, community sports, health promotion

### INTRODUCTION

“Half past four School” refers to a service that relies on community, utilizes current playgrounds and personnel conditions thereof to organize children in communities without parents care due to work, and implement concentrated coaching in studies, psychology and behaviours from 4:30 to 6:00 after pupils leaving school in the primary stage of compulsory education (Gao, 2017). As a kind of quasi-public good hosting service, “Half past four School” has recently not only been rather rapidly developing in Shanghai, Wuhan, Tianjin, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhengzhou, Lanzhou, Shijiazhuang, Ningbo and other cities or metropolis in developed areas, but also put into certain practices in small and mid-sized cities, such as Dezhou, Changde, Xinyu, Zunyi, Wuzhou and even villages (Gong, 2015). In general, through field investigation on “Half past four School”, the sort of “school” is further implementing sports and cultural recreational activities rather than mainly giving guidance on the studies of cultural courses. In this way, it provides a possibility for linking school sports with community sports, and is no doubt a mode that can be further explored in ensuring pupils' extracurricular sports activities time and enhancing the quality of such activities and promote the primary school students' healthy both physical and mental (Zhang *et al.*, 2016).

“Efforts should be made to ensure students' physical education curriculum and extracurricular activity, effectively improve school sports quality and perfect school sports' network that closely combines school, family

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#### State of the literature

- The "Half past four School" study is a gap in the world.
- The research of "Half past four School" provides a feasible idea for the healthy and sustainable development of education.
- "Half past four School" may be a junction point between school sports and community sports, which is important for optimizing structural elements of school sports, and promote the students' healthy both physical and mental.

#### Contribution of this paper to the literature

- Proposed a new model of school sports and community sports connection.
- The "4:30 school" sports activities are of great value to promote the physical and mental health of primary school students.
- The "four-thirty school" sports activities are carried out to explore new paths for youth sports.
- Provide a new field for social force intervention in school sports development research.

and society." Pointed out in Ministry of Education "Some suggestions to improve school sports" forwarded by China's General Office of the State Council (Li, 2007; Gao & Wang, 2017). Therefore, the study carries out investigation on situations of "Half past four School" sports activities, in the hope of putting forward relative suggestions on perfecting a new mode -linkage between school sports and community sports. This is of certain practical significance.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Main research methods are field investigation, interviewing, document literature and survey.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSES

### **"Half Past Four School" Becomes a Junction Point between School Sports and Community Sports**

According to the survey, "Half past four School" in different regions has academic counseling -mainly counseling students with homework, however, they are mainly for entertainment rather than learning. Interest is the best teacher of children. It may be difficult for "Half past four School" to attract students if it only counsels students with homework. After developing for a certain period, "Half past four School" lays its emphasis on recreational and sports activities to create a healthy and recreational environment for students after school now, from which sports activities become important contents in "Half past four School" (Zheng, 2015).

Construction of "Half past four School" in Qingshan district, Wuhan takes the lead in China. It ran one school in 2005, two ones in 2006, 65 ones in 2007, 93 ones in 2008. By 2009, it has had full coverage -every community in Qingshan District has its own "Half past four School" with a total of 124. There are over 150 personnel as district, street and community three-level leaders and "Half past four School" cadres participating in "Half past four School" work, and also more than 800 volunteer counselors. There are over 30 thousand primary and secondary school students go in for "Half past four School" learning activities every year. "Half past four School" in Qingshan district is listed as china's community education demonstration project by China Ministry of School, and becomes "Livelihood project" of Qingshan district committee and district government (Xia *et al.*, 2007).

Recently, Qingshan district of Wuhan has adopted a method of combining school, parents and community and secured remarkable achievements in "Half past four School" sports activities. Sports department of Wuhan gives vigorous support to "Half past four School". As early as 2006, Wuhan Sports Bureau has begun to set up devices in "Half past four School" for free, and Style Council of Qingshan district has invested funds to install

sports facilities for youth, such as basketball stands, table tennis table and also selected counselors to guide and organize recreational and sports activities (Xia, 2011). An area of over 400 square kilometers' small square with four basketball stands, two outdoors table tennis table, near to No.119 community residents' committee, Steel flower village street of Qingshan district, is always the paradise for children. Residents with personal skills in community, serve as volunteers, implements volunteer counseling on these students in basketball, table tennis, calligraphy, chess and others, which attracts more and more students to join in "Half past four School" (Zhang, 2011; Liu, 2017). Ping Yan, a volunteer, chess coach, has ever cultivated children to win a prize in world competitions. She is quite appealing and children are willing to learn under her guidance (Zhou *et al.*, 2011); Jin-huan Liu, a table tennis enthusiast, has a very high playing level and has achieved excellent performance in table tennis competition hosted in Wuhan Iron and Steel Group Corporation. Thus, children who are fond of table tennis, wholeheartedly follow him to learn his "unique skills". Modern garden community, located in Metallurgy Street, Qingshan district, relies on "Half past four School", employs community's retired teachers, cadres, recreational and sports enthusiasts as volunteer past-time teachers to give guidance on students' homework, carry out revolutionary and traditional education on children, organize sports enthusiast's volunteer groups to lead them to play table tennis and basketball. In doing so, they offer a sound activity environment for children. Targeting at conditions of many children like playing basketball, the community specially employs basketball coaches from sports school to give a volunteer counseling on basketball for children. As the counseling is for free and meanwhile strengthens children's physique, many parents in community quite support children's engagement in playing basketball, and organization of basketball training class is well-received in parents and children. Besides, there are also supports from sub district office on recreational and sports activities in the community "Half past four School"-it contacts with teachers and students in neighborhood schools and district recreational and sports bureau to organize teaching practice activities, which increasingly improves levels of "Half past four School" recreational and sports activities. Relying on "Half past four School", the community also organizes sports games as table tennis, badminton, selects players to participate in sports games hosted by district and street. In addition, it also cooperates with neighborhood schools to hold cultural and sports competitions. The implementation of competitive activities further stimulates positivity of children in this community to go in for sports.

Recently, Shenzhen "Half past four School" has also been rapidly developing. For instance, "Half past four School" of Minzhi Street, Shenzhen, bases on Minzhi cultural and sports center, makes full use of training classes, library, device, personnel and other resources therefore, is open completely to students nearby, from 4:30 to 6:00 every week day, in the form of public service (Zhou *et al.*, 2011; Mi & Shen *et al.*, 2015).

As shown in **Table 1**, site arrangement of Minzhi street cultural and sports center activity classes in 2011, cultural and sports activities are main contents of the "Half past four School". In sports and health promotion, it sets up a special course-judo and arranges a sport activity.

Changde city of Hunan province has adopted a method of government-led, community-based and school supported education. Since 2014, it has begun to launch experimental "Half past four School" in main communities of urban area. As it required, every large-size community should set up a classroom of around 20 square meters with well-equipped education devices, employ over three teachers inside community or in neighborhood schools, or community volunteers with personal specialty in four arts, sports and music as part-time counsellors to give guidance on children's academic work, common sense of life and cultivation of recreational and sports activities. By far, most of the communities in major urban area of Changed have set up "Half past four School", chess, go, table-tennis table and other educational and fitness equipment has become standard configuration - there is an average of 10 sets in every "Half past four School".

In recent years, some well-operated "Half past four School", following the principle of "relying on community, cooperating with schools, serving to families, facing to society", has established a set of rather perfect interactive feedback mechanism, expanded radiation range of community education, and created good external environment. These "Half past four Schools" have made full use of community resources, taken sports ad main activity contents, which could make up with students insufficient physical exercising at school to a certain degree. "Half past four School" takes interest as starting point, allows students to choose sports events and join in training, exercising and even competitions based on their own interest under the circumstance of proper field conditions

**Table 1.** Site arrangement of Shenzhen Minzhi Street cultural and sports center activity classes in 2011

Date	Course	Site	Time
Monday	Yangko and Waist drum team rehearsal	Function hall	09:30-11:00
	"Half past four school" specialized course- Dancing	Function hall	16:40-17:20
	"Half past four school" schoolwork counseling	Comprehensive classroom	16:30-18:00
Tuesday	Dance team rehearsal	Function hall	14:30-16:00
	"Half past four school" sports activities	Function hall	16:40-17:30
	Chorus rehearsal	Calligraphy and paintings classroom	09:30-11:00
	"Half past four school" specialized course - vocal music	Calligraphy and paintings classroom	16:40-17:20
	"Half past four school" schoolwork counseling	Comprehensive classroom	16:30-18:00
Wednesday	Beijing Opera community rehearsal	Function hall	09:30-11:00
	Zither team rehearsal	Function hall	14:30-16:30
	"Half past four school" specialized course -Judo	Function hall	16:40-17:20
	"Half past four school" schoolwork counseling	Comprehensive classroom	16:30-18:00
Thursday	Mulan fan training	Function hall	09:30-11:30
	Model team rehearsal	Function hall	14:30-16:30
	"Half past four School" watching excellent youth television programs	Function hall	16:40-17:30
	Chorus rehearsal	Calligraphy and paintings classroom	09:30-11:00
	Aging calligraphy and paintings training	Calligraphy and paintings classroom	14:30-15:30
	"Half past four school" specialized course-Art	Calligraphy and paintings classroom	16:40-17:20
	"Half past four school" schoolwork counseling	Comprehensive classroom	16:30-18:00
Friday	Traditional instruments orchestra rehearsal	Function hall	14:30-16:00
	"Half past four school" specialized course-English corner	Calligraphy and paintings classroom	16:40-17:20
	"Half past four school" schoolwork counseling	Comprehensive classroom	16:30-18:00

and faculty. Thus, it contributes to form students' sports interest to a certain level. For schools with poor sports play grounds, organization of youth-based community sports activities relying on "Half past four School" may make up for their deficiency to a certain level.

As shown in recent years' development situation of "Half past four School", the school may become a junction point between school sports and community sports if it is proper guided and well-supported. And meanwhile, it may also play its role in constructing a united school sports network with integration of school, community and family, which is very important for optimizing structural elements of school sports, and promote the school students' healthy both physical and mental.

Recently, with the increasing government financial resources, some regions on good economic conditions have gradually increased input into community cultural and sports facilities construction, and community supporting facilities have been therefore increasingly perfected, which provides better material guarantee for "Half past four School". In some regions, "Half past four School" has not only restricted in opening from 4:30 to 6:00 in weekdays but expanded to weekends and holidays and started to run "Holiday School". The service objects have also, not only restricted in pupils but expanded to youth including primary and secondary students. Development of sports activities in arising community education system backed by "Half past four School" has explored a new road for three-dimensional youth sports.

## The Existing Problems in Developing “Half Past Four School” Sports Activities

### *General problem-fund shortage*

Despite some regions with good economic conditions or high emphasis of government, most “Half past four Schools” have by far confronted with fund shortage, which directly restricts coordination between organization of activities and various aspect including sports and healthy promotion.

“Half past four School” is public good, generally not charging fees and has no income. They are mainly depended on donation from government and social communities. The schools have greater reputation would receive more donation and vice versa. Government input mainly reflects in purchasing hardware in the beginning of founding “Half past four School”. Little consideration is taken to subsequent operation problems. There is uncertain expenditure of basic water, electricity, books, activity materials and labor charges on the condition of no or deficient source of income. With only enthusiasm of community and volunteers, normal operation of the “school” may not sustain.

### *An urgent problem-insufficient sports playgrounds and facilities*

As far as rather more communities in city, there are insufficient essential sports playgrounds and facilities, especially available playgrounds for sports facilities. Even as Qingshan district of Wuhan with good development of “Half past four School”, there is insufficient sports playgrounds and facilities -anytime and anywhere can be seen long queues wait in front of limited table tennis tables. Many communities have not outdoors sports playgrounds, but only indoors cultural and sports activity rooms and chess and cards rooms that may only be available for children doing homework and basically impossible for developing cultural and sports activities. The limited playgrounds and facilities themselves confront with conflicting problems with community residents’ activities. Insufficient sports playgrounds and cultural activity spaces lead to more single activities contents in “Half past four School”, lacking attractions to children.

### *Severely inadequate volunteers*

“Half past four School” mainly focuses on public benefit; a group of steady and high quality volunteers is needed for its development. By far, more “volunteers” in “Half past four Schools” are not “voluntary” but “dispatched” by relative government sectors; they are neither positive nor stable. Compared to steady “faculty” team, “Half past four School” comprises of aging uncles and aunties in community, they are of high enthusiasm but not professional, mostly capable of looking after children. As far as sports activities are concerned, children may only play by themselves without necessary guidance in case of fewer professional volunteers. Coaches and other sports professionals serve as coaches of volunteer counseling in “Half past four Schools”, mainly base on favor. Long-term mechanism that attracts “volunteering” services has not yet built.

### *Demands on further strengthening linkage between school and community*

“Half past four School” is not traditional class education, and should also not become the continued school education as it goes against quality-centered education and “alleviating burdens on students” policy in China. “Half past four School”, however, serves as a beneficial exploration in the construction of three-dimensional education network integrating school, community and family, and undertakes important responsibility of community education that offers beneficial supplement to school education. Therefore, school should establish communication and resources sharing mechanisms with community. “Vigorously promote public stadiums and athletic facilities to open to adolescent students for free or at discount as well as impel school stadiums to open to students after class and on holidays” pointed out in China Ministry of Education “Some suggestions to improve school sports work”. According to the spirit, sports activities should establish sports playgrounds and facilities resources sharing mechanisms to solve possible insufficient sports playgrounds problems in these two- linkage in the aspect has by far been little. The establishment of school sports teachers’ participation in “Half past four School” volunteer counseling mechanism (including counseling form, affirmation of necessary work performance) could

solve deficient professional guidance in "Half past four School" sports activities. Relative mechanisms in the field have not yet been effectively set up.

## ENLIGHTENMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

### Enlightenment

#### *Government supports and social participation-effective guarantee for developing "Half past four School" sports activities*

Investigation on "Half past four Schools" suggests that the ones with good sports activities may not develop without vigorously supports by government in capital and playgrounds and facilities. As "Half past four School" has solved worries of community staffs, made outstanding contributions for social stability, youth security and healthy, indirectly made contributions to the development of youth parents' institution. Some social forces that are closely linked or zeal about public benefit, have therefore engaged in the construction of "Half past four School", purchasing sports equipment and other cultural and school supplies. These provide guarantee for developing "Half past four school" sports activities to a certain degree. Tracing back to the development of school sports, many problems could be readily solved only when it attracts real attentions of government, society and school, achieves sufficient fund and good conditions and activity time.

#### *Respect youth interest can effectively promote efficiency of sports education*

In well-operated "Half past four School", they lay stronger emphasis on youth happiness, security and interest formation. The participation in sports activities is wholly relies on interest. In addition, "compulsory counseling" volunteers tend to have stronger appetency, and so it stimulates pupils' enthusiasm in participating in sports activities. Regular school sports education should learn its experience, look for a proper balance point between education planning and respecting students' interest, take equal consideration in overall education arrangement and students demands. Sports teachers should improve their teaching capacity and personality charm; positively explore how to give a vivid class with current textbooks to enhance students' interest in sports class. From the perspective of "Half past four school" students' participating in sports activities, students prefer to participate in fewer restricted extracurricular sports activities comparing to classroom teaching. Therefore, positive planning of colorful campus sports activities, establishing diversified campus activities carriers such as clubs, and ensuring students' duration in participation of campus sports activities are very important for enhancing school sports education efficiency.

#### *Community - a utilizable position for school sports development*

Developing school sports should make breakthrough limitation of thoughts of "school", expand its vision to community and family. The formation and development of "Half past four School" illustrates that social demands will promote communities to undertake certain education task including sports education spontaneously on certain periods and social conditions. School sports work should make the best use of circumstances, fully utilize and positively intervene in such spontaneous community sports education, strengthen linkage with community, and utilize school's faculty, actively provide volunteer service for community. Construct three-dimensional network through development of school sports, utilize multiple positions and diversified forms to enhance youth life-long ability in sports participation so as to improve youth physique and health conditions.

### Suggestions

#### *Integrate and utilize various social resources, improve running conditions of "Half past four School"*

Community youth education is a system project that needs common participation of the whole society, and it should integrate and make full use of various social resources to solve fund shortage and insufficient

playgrounds and facilities. Besides, it should put equal consideration on government, community, school, enterprises and other social strength to carry out resources integration. At first, it should strive for government supports, "Half past four School", as public-benefit public service, its development ought to be supported by government in policies and funds, community and street working committee should reinforce linkage with relative functional sectors and positively fight for financial supports; Secondly, efforts should be made to positive strive for supports from enterprises and all sectors of society through multiple coordination and broad mobilization. For instance, through various coordination, Qingshan district of Wuhan develops "Half past four School" - Wuhan iron and steel group corporation has input 15 thousand Yuan to build small activity squares for communities, donate book cabinets, books, school supplies and clothes for school; China South Metallurgical Prospecting General Bureau has collected funds and built three indoors basketball courts, one outdoors basketball courts, installed one set of fitness equipment and are open to youth for free in whole year; Thirdly, efforts should be made to strengthen linkage with community neighborhood schools, sufficiently utilize these schools' playgrounds and faculty. By integrating various resources, it can make up for fund shortage and enhance "Half past four School" hardware and software levels to a certain degree.

### ***Make a linkage mechanism with colleges and establish a group of stable sports volunteers***

Colleges possess numerous sports specialties and earnest students at social work. In particular, advanced sports institutes have a great deal of students with higher and professional sports skills and education skills, they need to promote their professional skills in practice. Government should build a bridge-establishing linkage mechanism between community and colleges, encourage students in college sports major with sports specialties to make use of spare time to participate in compulsory counseling of "Half past four school", effectively solve issue of inadequate professionalism of counselors in "Half past four School" sports activities, and meanwhile is beneficial to promote students' social practical ability. Colleges may also make records of students go in for "Half past four school" compulsory counseling as valid performance of assessing their social practice. By establishing linkage mechanism, it constructs a group of rather stable and professional sports volunteers in community "Half past four School".

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