

Comparing with Germany, the Problems in the Integration of Mass Fitness and Universal Health in China and the Contributions of Sports Universities

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Abstract. By employing the literature research method and comparative analysis method as the primary research approaches, this paper conducts a comprehensive comparative study with Germany's internationally recognized model of mass fitness and health promotion. Through systematic examination, it not only identifies and analyzes the existing issues and underlying causes in the deep integration and coordinated development between China's mass fitness initiatives and universal health objectives, but also investigates in depth the potential contributions that specialized sports universities can make in this process. Furthermore, based on empirical evidence and theoretical analysis, the study provides constructive suggestions and offers a forward-looking perspective on the future development path for achieving integrated growth of mass fitness and universal health in the Chinese context. The research aims to provide valuable insights for policy-making and practical implementation in this important field.

Keywords: Mass Fitness Campaign; Universal Health; Germany's Measures; Sports Universities.

1. Introduction

With the continuous improvement of Chinese people's living standard, the public's health awareness is gradually increasing, and the demand for using sports to promote health is also increasing. In October 2016, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council jointly issued an outline for the "Healthy China 2030" initiative, which puts forward the concept of great health, transforming the focus on medical treatment into the focus on people's health, and promoting the deep integration of mass fitness and universal health. The integrated development of mass fitness and universal health is not only conducive to enhancing Healthy China initiative and improving the health of people but is also of great significance to increasing the participation rate in physical exercise, helping to attract non-sports people to participate in sports activities and narrowing the gap in sports participation rates between groups of different ages and different physical conditions. Germany is a country with a high level of development of mass sports, and its experience is worth learning from.

2. Problems Statement

2.1. Lack of Awareness of Promoting Health Through Sports

With the development of society and the continuous improvement of people's living standards, the health needs of Chinese residents are also growing, but the problem of insufficient awareness, action and knowledge of promoting health through sports is still widespread, and the number of people participating in physical exercise is still a certain gap with some sports developed countries, including Germany.

According to the "2014 Mass Fitness Activity Survey Communique", the proportion of people who regularly participate in physical exercise (participate in physical exercise 3 times a week and the duration reaches 30 minutes or more, while the intensity of physical exercise reaches medium or above) is about 33%. The data released by the State General Administration of Sport show that In 2020, the proportion of people who regularly participate in physical exercise will reach 37.20%. In 2019, nearly 70 percent of the population over the age of 15 participated in sports at least once a week

(as the Figure 1 below shows). And according to the report published by the European Union in 2022, 9% of Germans and residents of Germany exercise at least five times a week, 32% of Germans and residents of Germany exercise one to four times a week, and only 17% of Germans and residents of Germany exercise three times a month or less.

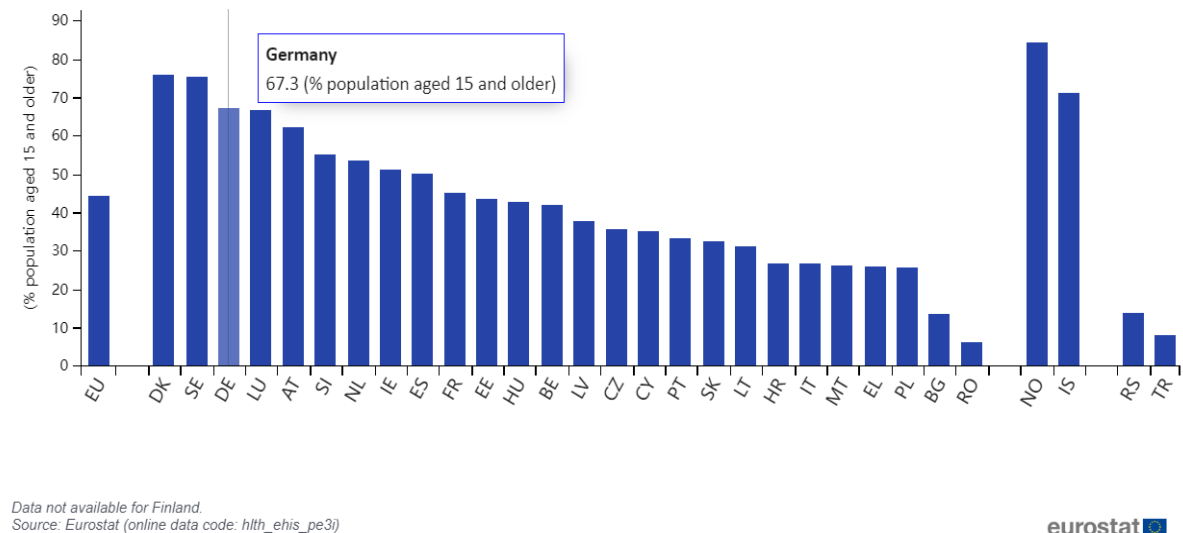


Figure 1. Practicing sport, keeping fit or participating in recreational (leisure) physical activities at least once a week, 2019 [1].

2.2. Insufficient Sports Facilities and Unbalanced Sports Resources

First, China's mass fitness facilities per capita occupancy is still in the initial stage of development. As of December 31, 2021, according to the "China's Sports Venues Statistical Survey System" approved by the China's Bureau of Statistics, the total number of sports venues in China is 3.9714 million, with an area of 3.411 billion square meters, and per capita sports venues are only 2.41 square meters; According to the data of the 15th International Olympic Committee World Mass Sports Congress in 2013, Germany has a total of 230,000 sports facilities, equivalent to 28.52 sports facilities per 10,000 people,[2] and the per capita sports field area of other developed countries such as the United States, Britain and Japan is also greater than 10 square meters.

Second, there are regional differences in China's sports and fitness resources. Taking the per capita area of sports venues as an example, the development of sports venues in four major regions of China presents a relatively obvious imbalance phenomenon. According to the information published on the websites of sports bureau of provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government, by the end of 2023, the per capita sports venue area of Jiangsu Province in the east was 4.32 square meters, [3] that of Shanxi Province in the central region was 2.65 square meters, [4] that of Heilongjiang Province in the northeast was 2.47 square meters, [5] and that of Gansu Province in the west was 2.45 square meters. [6] The per capita area of sports venues in Jiangsu Province ranks first in China. In addition, there are significant differences between different provinces and cities within the same region (as Figure 2 below shows).

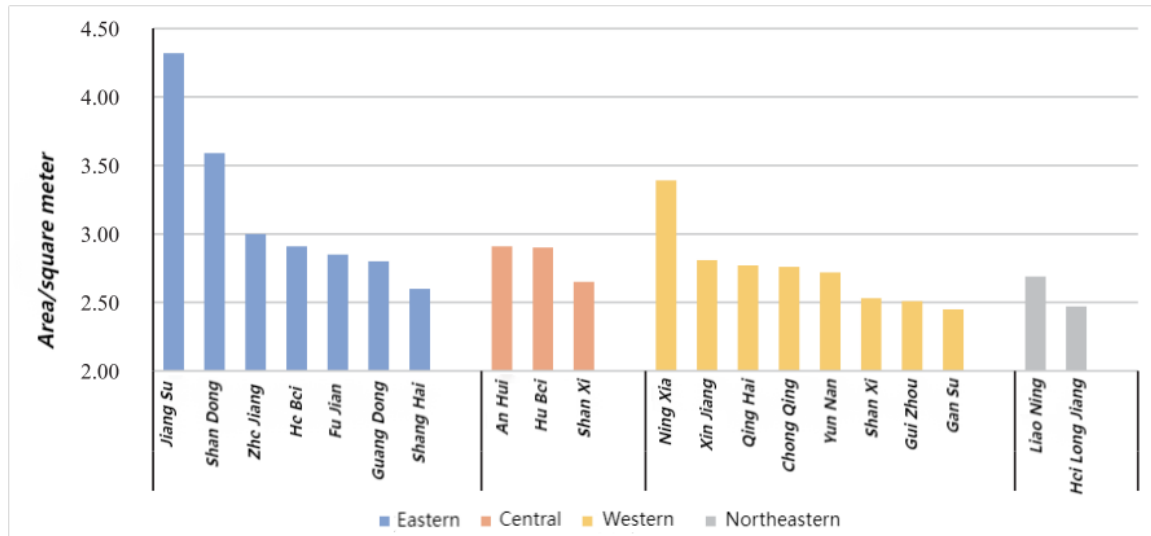


Figure 2. The per capita area of sports venues in some provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities in 2023 [7].

In contrast, Germany launched a series of "gold plans" after World War II and built a large number of different kinds of sports venues and facilities throughout Germany according to the needs of the people. At present, Germany has a total of about 230,000 sports facilities, including about 66,000 sports venues, about 36,000 indoor stadiums, 370,000 kilometers of sports fitness routes, and 38,000 clubs with sports facilities. These sports facilities all over the city and countryside have created good conditions for the German people to exercise.[8]

2.3. Lack of Uniform Standards and Professional Guidance

At present, in the grass-roots pilot of physical and medical integration in China, the physical and medical integration model of chronic disease prevention and control led by sports departments or medical departments has problems such as inconsistent construction standards of demonstration sites, low technical relevance, and incompatible development models.

In addition, the lack of professional fitness knowledge and scientific exercise methods is also a big problem, which will lead to many people in the exercise process easy to get injured or can not achieve the desired effect. According to the data of the 2020 Survey Bulletin on the Status of Mass Fitness Activity issued by China's Center for Fitness Monitoring, it can be seen that the way adults get physical fitness guidance is mainly from colleagues and friends instructing each other, accounting for 27.5%, and guidance from professionals (social sports instructors, professional coaches, etc.) accounting for only 19.6% [9].

While according to the results of a sample survey published by the German Federal Institute for Scientific Research in December 2021, more than one-third of sports clubs in Germany (about 30,300) offer courses aimed at health promotion, disease prevention and physical recovery. In addition, 13 of Germany's 16 states have adopted exercise prescriptions to make people truly aware of the positive role of physical exercise in improving their health. [10].

3. Causes Analysis

3.1. Social and Cultural Concept Barriers

In China, many people's cognition of sports is still in the traditional concept, and sports activities are only regarded as entertainment rather than a necessary way of life. This concept leads some people to ignore sports activities, thinking that they are not as important as other cultural activities or academic development, [11] or many people only see the competitive side of sports. Not aware of the importance of sports to the health of the masses. The existence of this cultural concept has become a hindrance, slowing down the popularization of sports in society.

In Germany, sports club culture is very developed, Germans through the club activities to find the sense of participation and equality of the traditional community, and under the influence of exercise prescriptions and various sports to promote health activities, attach great importance to the role of physical exercise in improving health.

3.2. Economic Level Restriction

The level of economic development has a direct influence on the mass sports investment.

In China's economically backward regions, due to limited fiscal revenue, the funds invested in sports are often insufficient, which affects the construction and maintenance of sports facilities.

In contrast, as an economically developed country, Germany can invest a lot of money in the construction of sports facilities and the promotion of mass sports activities, which not only improves the quality of public sports services, but also promotes the overall development of sports.

3.3. Legal and Organizational Shortcomings

First, in terms of sports management institutions, China adopts the model of mass sports development led by the government and coordinated by all social groups; Sports in Germany are managed by social sports organizations and sports associations.

Second, in terms of the legal system, the subject of mass fitness policy promulgation is The State Council, the State General Administration of Sport, local governments at all levels and sports departments, and the policy text is mainly named after plans, programs, notices and opinions, and the number of policies and regulations is limited, and the level is low. So far, China's mass fitness in the legislation still does not have a special legal provision, the only document with legal effect is the People's Republic of China Sports Law (hereinafter referred to as the "Sports Law"). According to the literature review, China has only 17 nationwide policy regulations and 172 local policies and regulations. Local policies and regulations have become the main body of the current documents of the mass fitness policy, and the content of their policies is mostly written after the nationwide policy text, and the authority and pertinency of the top-level design are weakened. In addition, most of the mass fitness policies promulgated at present are mainly macro guidance documents and lack specific implementation standards. In contrast, Germany withdrew from the "Golden Plan" after World War II, systematically guided the development of sports in the federal states, and the promotion of sports for health is clearly stated in the Prevention Act and the Social Code.

4. Measures for Sports Universities

4.1. Measures to Promote Awareness of Sports for Health

4.1.1. Sports and Fitness Themed Activities

Well-designed activities that integrate building for all and health for all can greatly educate and inspire people.

For example, the current "Sports against Cancer" project, which is jointly launched by the German Olympic Sports Federation, the German Cancer Aid Foundation and the Cologne Institute of Sports in Germany, aims to make people understand the importance of sports for cancer prevention and encourage more people to participate in sports.

Inspired by this, sports universities in China should also actively launch related activities. This can take the form of a mass sports competition or club Open Day with the theme of disease prevention and health promotion, or local sports clubs can be contacted to integrate the theme of sport for health into their existing activity programmes.

4.1.2. Incentive System

A proper reward system can motivate more people to participate in sports.

Germany, for example, has a sports medal system that honors those who pass tests and are above average in physical fitness. In 2022, a total of 487,857 people in Germany were awarded MEDALS for their sporting achievements.

Inspired by this, sports universities in China can take the lead in trying to implement this kind of sports incentive mechanism on campus, and students with sports foundation in the school can actively set an example to drive the whole school youth to actively participate in mass sports, and then gradually promote this system to the community, provinces and cities as well as the whole country, so as to make more people participate in mass fitness.

4.2. Contribution of Sports Facilities

A key part of the integrated development of mass fitness and universal health is to ensure an effective supply of fitness venues and facilities. With the popularization of the concept of healthy living and the improvement of people's awareness of the importance of physical exercise, the public's demand for convenient and high-quality fitness facilities is growing. Therefore, from the government to all sectors of society, we should work together and take multiple measures to meet the needs of the general public.

According to a survey report by the Beijing Institute of Technology, the utilization rate of free sports fields such as schools is not high among middle-aged and elderly people (as Table 1 below shows).

Table 1. Chinese people of different ages choose sports venues [12].

Fitness Venues	Youth /%	Middle-aged /%	Elderly /%
Free venues in schools or units	11.59	9.02	6.81
Parks or squares	14.77	16.16	18.54
Community fitness centers	14.12	11.70	11.94
Public sports venues	11.55	10.18	9.38
Gyms, etc.	10.63	8.66	7.01
Roads and other public spaces	6.67	8.54	10.49
Facilities built with residential areas	11.50	15.17	17.57
Home fitness	17.30	17.65	16.11
Others	1.87	2.91	2.15

Therefore, the facilities at universities are open to the community during non-teaching hours. At the same time, attention should be paid to the maintenance and management of facilities. Regular inspections, repairs and updates not only ensure the safety and functionality of the facility but also extend its service life to better serve the public.

4.3. Contribution to Talent Development and Policy Monitoring

4.3.1. Fitness Guidance Personnel Training

Sports universities should strive to cultivate a team of fitness instructors with professional knowledge and skills. These instructors should be able to provide personalized exercise programs and guidance based on the physical conditions, exercise needs and fitness goals of different groups of people. [13]

At the same time, sports universities should establish relevant training and qualification certification systems, do a good job in personnel training and qualification certification, and formulate training programs and certification standards for physical exercise instructors for different prevention and treatment goals.

Students and teachers of sports universities can also provide online fitness guidance, exercise prescription and other services for the public through the Internet, mobile applications and other media, so that more people can obtain professional fitness guidance anytime and anywhere, and use big data and artificial intelligence technology to monitor and evaluate the physical condition and

exercise effect of exercisers in real time, so as to provide more accurate and scientific guidance for exercisers.

4.3.2. Courses Offering

Sports prevention and sports rehabilitation courses can not only teach sports skills and help participants strengthen their bodies, but also meet the social needs of participants, relieve their psychological pressure, and produce spiritual feelings such as pleasure, expectation and satisfaction.

Germany, for example, offers "healthy physical activity classes." The short-term goal of the course is to promote physical and mental health and avoid risk factors such as overweight and high blood pressure, and the long-term goal is to develop the habit and ability to maintain good health through physical exercise, especially to guide those who have never or have not done physical exercise for many years to change their lifestyle and prevent diseases through scientific exercise.[14].

Inspired by this, China sports universities can call on students and experts in sports rehabilitation and sports training on campus to open relevant courses to the public, or jointly with local sports clubs to launch a series of sports to promote health, so that more people realize the importance of mass fitness and scientific physical exercise.

4.3.3. Policy Monitoring

Sports Universities in China should actively cooperate with the government, enterprises, clubs and so on to build a new model of sports to promote health.

For example, sports universities can establish think tanks for sports scholars, randomly assign temporary "third-party" supervision and evaluation teams to evaluate the scientific nature of policies, supervise the implementation of policies, and establish a long-term system for feedback on mass fitness needs.

5. Future Prospects

In the field of sports promoting health, Germany has formed a relatively mature organizational framework and implementation standards, and its service level and quality are among the top in the world. Therefore, in the process of promoting the deep integration of mass fitness and universal health, China should refer to the experience of Germany, timely correct existing problems, make full use of the main body of sports universities, and achieve steady development.

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