

Study on In-Depth Integration of National Fitness and Outdoor Sports

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Abstract: An in-depth integration of national fitness and outdoor sports is needed to facilitate the construction of China as a sports power. It is found in this paper, however, that a number of issues exist in this process, including: government support is not in place; professional-level guidance is in lack and the public understanding of outdoor sports needs to be improved; professional outdoor sports talents are in shortage and more scientific innovations are needed; publicity efforts on outdoor sports need to be stepped up. Tentative solutions are also proposed in this paper as follows: government guidance needs to be strengthened to promote in-depth integration of national fitness and outdoor sports; we should follow a science-based approach in promoting in this process; more professionals should be cultivated to enhance the country's innovation ability; we should also step up our efforts on relevant publicity campaigns to engage as many participants as possible.

Keywords: National fitness; Outdoor sports; In-depth Integration

Sports is key to China's rise and rejuvenation. As China is now ever closer to its rejuvenation than ever, sports is also playing an ever more important role. A trend of national fitness that sweeps across China has now become a pronoun of its rejuvenation. Chinese President Xi Jinping wrote in the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China that China would accelerate the construction of China as a sports power by promoting sports activities across the country, which would also lay a solid foundation for 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics and Winter Paralympic Games. The inclusion of rock climbing, an outdoor sport, into 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics marks the beginning of outdoor sports into a new era that is indispensable for the rejuvenation of China. In such a background, promoting a more in-depth integration of national fitness and outdoor sports is therefore conducive to the development and popularization of national fitness programs, the flourishing of the sports industry, the advocacy of national fitness, and the construction of a healthy China.

1. Definition of outdoor sports

European scholars have given definitions on outdoor sports in as early as the 18th century: "Outdoor sports is recreational activities conducted outdoors." The earliest definition in China could be traced back to Wang Feng tong who proposed a concept called adventurous outdoor sports, which meant that people left their normal living space to elsewhere in order to have some adventurous outdoor sports.^[1] Obviously, all outdoor sports happen in nature including mountains, valleys, natural waters, forests, deserts, islands, caves, etc. In 2003, Li Shuping revised the concept, believing that "outdoor sports is a series of sports activities that happen in nature and are either adventurous or explorative."^[2] This definition covered two basic essential attributes: sports and exploration. Although some outdoor sport activities have been moved indoors, such as artificial rock-climbing walls, waters and turbulences, they simply extend the forms and approaches of outdoor sports instead of its essence.

2. Necessity of in-depth integration between national fitness and outdoor sports

2.1 Strategic role of outdoor sports in national fitness

Since the launch of National Fitness Program (2011-2015) and National Fitness Program (2016-2020), national fitness has been elevated as a national-level strategy. Such an importance imparted to national fitness is an inevitable choice in order to promote national health. The forthcoming 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics has made winter sports especially popular among the public and has also presented new opportunities and challenges for outdoor sports. China has now entered a crucial stage for the successful completion of a society that is moderately prosperous, with people's demands becoming increasingly diversified. It is therefore an important step to transform public sports from indoors to outdoors and make strenuous efforts to develop outdoor sports. This is also another step to fulfilling requirements of National Fitness Program (2016-2020), which carries significant heft to the health and well-being of Chinese people.

2.2 Realistic significance of the integration

As the living standard of Chinese people is continuously improving, people are also becoming increasingly enthusiastic about outdoor sports. By the end of 2016, China has had a total number of 160 million outdoor enthusiasts. The number is still increasing. The participation and recognition of outdoor sports are also continuously improving. Only by integrating national fitness programs with outdoor sports can we truly engage more people in close contact with nature so that they may fully relax themselves, build their

body and hone their will. In addition, it can also help build teamwork spirits, pursuit of justice and optimism, which has profound influences on developing perfect personalities, promoting core values of socialism and building China as a sports power.

3. Status quo of the integration

3.1 Development of outdoor sports lacks government policy support

National Fitness Program (2011-2015) points out that: “China will launch a series of characteristic national fitness programs such as winter sports, outdoor sports, mountain climbing, river crossing, etc.”

National Fitness Program (2016-2020) points out that: “China will strive to develop outdoor sports such as riding and mountain climbing, promote and popularize winter sports by taking the opportunity of preparing and holding 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics and Winter Paralympic Games.”

Plan for Health China 2030 points out that: “China will step up construction of facilities for fitness footpath and cycle path.”

In the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, President Xi Jinping said: “China will promote a national fitness program throughout the country and accelerate the construction of China as a sports power. We will also make thorough preparations for 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.”

Outdoor sports is in close relation to national fitness. China has launched a series of policies and guidelines on national fitness, which has also promoted the development of outdoor sports. However, there has been no national-level strategic guideline other than the Development Planning of Mountain Sports issued by General Administration of Sport of China in November 2019. It was proposed in the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China that the Party would comprehensively promote the rule of law and enhance the ability of the Party to utilize legal means to better govern and lead the country. However, the development of outdoor sports clearly lacks guidance from the country and policy support from all levels of governments.

3.2 Development of outdoor sports lacks government policy support

More people are engaged in outdoor sports thanks to the idea of “health”. In the third plenary session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, it was proposed that China would deepen the reform in ecology and accelerate the construction of an ecological civilization with beautiful China at its core. In the 19th National Congress, President Xi reiterated that China would remain resolute in promoting ecological construction and making beautiful China a reality. With the country and the Party emphasizing ecological construction, it makes sense to help achieve it by outdoor sports. Currently, the outdoor environmental protection principles that are widely accepted in the world are “LNT”, meaning “Leave No Trace”. It includes: (1) plan ahead and prepare, (2) travel and camp on durable surfaces, (3) dispose of waste properly, (4) leave what you find, (5) minimize use and impact from fires, (6) respect wild life, (7) be considerate of other visitors. Although they are comprehensive enough, the public have learned about them quite poorly. In reality, littering is still quite commonly seen, let alone respecting wild lives. It is the duty and mission of every one of us to live with nature in harmony and share the fruits of development together. However, we still have a long way to go.

3.3 Professionals and innovations on outdoor sports are in lack

According to the incomplete statistics of the task force on mountaineering accidents of Chinese Mountaineering Association, a total number of 311 accidents happened in 2016 alone, involving 1813 participants, 1268 participants who had accidents, 146 injured, 64 deaths and 3 missing. Compared with 2015, this was an increase of 83 in terms of injuries and an increase of 20 in terms of deaths.

Injuries and deaths have increased as the number of outdoor sports participants soars. Outdoor sports is risky and requires that participants should have relevant knowledge and skills in case of emergencies in the wild. In addition, falling is an extremely dangerous accident in outdoor sports, so extra attention is needed while having descending activities. Professional equipment is another important factor in preventing participants from falling, other than skills.

Although China has a large proportion of outdoor enthusiasts, it lacks sufficient numbers of professionals. These participants are poorly organized and experienced and are far from well prepared for emergencies in the wild. These factors have combined to increase the risk of tragedies.

3.4 Publicity of outdoor sports is insufficient

It is necessary to involve as many participants as possible in the construction and innovation of national fitness programs. The development of a national fitness culture is indispensable to the promotion and popularization of outdoor sports. As President Xi put it in the report of the 19th National Congress, China should consolidate cultural confidence and promote the flourishing of socialism cultures. In order to promote more effective integration of national fitness and outdoor sports, it is pivotal to stick to the development path of socialism culture with Chinese characteristics. We should strive to develop outdoor sports guided by this. So far, the proportion of outdoor sports participants is relatively small in comparison to the total population, so we need to step up efforts to popularize outdoor sports so as to achieve in-depth integration of national fitness and outdoor sports.

4. Suggestions on the in-depth integration of national fitness and outdoor sports

4.1 Stick to rule of law on sports and strengthen guidance of the government

Rule of law is a fundamental strategy of the Party in leading Chinese people to govern the country. As the Party and the country are deepening the reform and promoting rule of law, we also need to use the law to govern the development of sports. Rule of law on sports remains an important component of China’s socialism legal construction and practice of comprehensive rule of law. First of all, we need to revise relevant national standards and amend relevant laws. National standards on outdoor sports should be revised or developed based on the characteristics of it. Secondly, the government should improve their regulation systems and broaden social channels to engage more people in outdoor sports. Finally, a supervision system should be established and improved to ensure safe and effective outdoor sports.

4.2 Respect nature and share fruits with it

Outdoor sports is the one that has the closest contact with nature among all. It is especially important to stick to one scientific outdoor sports concept while doing outdoor sports. We have to abide by the following rules: (1) Constructing outdoor sports facilities should balance people and the environment as well as economy and ecology. For example, while constructing mountain footpaths, the original natural outlook should be maintained as much as possible to prevent any destruction to local ecology. (2) We should conserve resources. Resources should be used in a centralized manner. The way resources are used should be transformed. Supervision on resource conservation should be tightened to reduce pressure on land and water. (3) We should step up efforts to protect nature and the environment and to promote outdoor sports. Rules of no littering, no damaging wild lives and of respecting nature should be publicized to everyone. People and human beings are interdependent and promote each other. All human activities should be based on respecting and protecting nature.

4.3 Cultivate more professionals on outdoor sports and enhance the innovation ability

Outdoor sports is risky, which requires that participants should have professional guidance and be physically sound. As outdoor sports is promoted and made popular, more professionals and rescuers on outdoor sports are also needed urgently. Currently, training of such talents is achieved through higher education institutions and Chinese Mountaineering Association who would offer training courses. As outdoor sports is a new major, different higher education institutions may have different approaches and plans of talent cultivation. In general, we should expand the scale of talent cultivation, enhance the quality of those professionals, improve the training scheme, increase the proportion of outdoor practice courses properly and enhance the efficacy and efficiency of teaching, so as to ensure that the talents truly master necessary qualifications for handling emergencies. An assessment and qualification test mechanism should also be established and improved and outdoor sports practitioner should hold a qualification certificate. In this way, we are able to give outdoor sports an extra safeguard. In terms of innovation, we should invest more in outdoor sports to develop more products that better suit consumers' needs. Due to the heavy influence from natural environment, we have extremely high requirements on the quality of outdoor sports equipment, including personal clothes, technical equipment, communication facility, etc., which have to be multifunctional and easy to use.

5. Conclusions

The inclusion of rock climbing into the Olympics and the emphasis of central leadership on winter sports are bound to offer tremendous opportunities for the development of outdoor sports. It is therefore of profound significance to the rejuvenation of China to study the in-depth integration of national fitness and outdoor sports as well as to build China as a sports power.

About the author

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