

# **A Study on the Influence of the May 4th New Culture Movement on the Transformation of School Physical Education in the Early Republic of China and Its Incentives**

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**Abstract:** By referring to relevant literature, we will deeply study the development of school sports in the early Republic of China, the rise of the New Culture Movement, the advocates and advocates of new culture, actively promote "new sports", and strive to overthrow the dregs of military nationalism education ideas and change the impact of Japanese gymnastics on school sports. With the outbreak of the "May Fourth Movement", the New Culture Movement not only had a greater impact on education and culture, but also accelerated the domestic political game to a certain extent, which ultimately led to the transformation of school physical education and the realization of Pragmatism education. In view of this, this article will start from an overview of the characteristics of school sports in the early Republic of China, focus on the analysis of the impact of the May Fourth New Culture Movement on the transformation of school sports in the early Republic of China, and then explore the incentives for the transformation of school sports under the May Fourth New Culture Movement, hoping to play a certain reference role.

**Keywords:** May 4th New Culture Movement; In the Early Period of the Republic of China; School Physical Education; Transformation; Inducing Factors

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## **Introduction**

The early Republic of China was a period of expansion and relatively stable development of modern education in China. Education gradually became standardized and stereotyped, which opened a window for Freedom of thought and provided a more relaxed environment for the development of education. However, reviewing and analyzing the development process of school physical education in the early Republic of China, the formation of correct physical education ideas has been quite convoluted. Among them, the May 4th New Culture Movement had a deep influence on sports thoughts, which eventually led to the formation of Pragmatism sports. At the same time of the May 4th New Culture Movement, the relationship between China and Japan, the United States changed, domestic political games and so on, which virtually affected school sports and promoted its transformation.

## **1. The Characteristics of School Physical Education in the Early Republic of China**

### **1.1 Pay attention to students' physical education**

Under the dual influence of the domestic and foreign environment in the early Republic of China, in order to meet the political needs, school sports were military and national sports, and students' physical training was strengthened, that is, Japanese gymnastics training was carried out. However, Cai Yuanpei put forward new culture and new thought that physical education should reflect the integrity of personality and highlight the social function of school physical education. And because of the role of the May 4th New Culture Movement, the "Renxu School System" was proposed, which rearranged the school physical education curriculum and class hours, such as stipulating that primary school physical education accounted for 10% of the total class hours. This fully demonstrates

that gymnastics is the main focus of school physical education, emphasizing the training and education of students' bodies.

## **1.2 Respect the nature of children**

With the introduction of Pragmatism sports thought and naturalism sports thought, the attitude towards students changed in school physical education in the early Republic of China. For example, the "Curriculum Standard Program" formulated explicitly states that primary school physical education curriculum education should promote the development of various organs inside and outside children; Respect children's active nature, carry out natural sports, and pay attention to cultivating children's good qualities and personal spirit; Physical education needs to focus on cultivating students' civic ethics, understanding unity, cooperation, perseverance, and so on.

## **2. The Influence of the May 4th New Culture Movement on the Transformation of School Physical Education in the Early Republic of China**

### **2.1 The Influence of Democratic Scientific Outlook on Sports Thought**

#### **2.1.1 Transition from the "old sports school" to the "new sports school"**

The transition from the "old sports school" to the "new sports school" is mainly due to the "new sports school" believing that the "old sports school" lacks scientific basis. The "new sports school", with Mac Lew, secretary of the Christianity in the United States, as the core, advocates physical education, that is, primary and secondary schools should complete the educational purpose of promoting the development of primary and secondary students through physical activities. The "New Sports School" places more emphasis on utilizing new inventions in the scientific community, namely the theory of biological psychology, to innovate physical education, which follows the laws of children's physiology and psychology and implements suitable physical education, such as muscle exercise. The "New Sports School" believes that the highest ideal of physical education is to achieve both physical and mental well-being. For this reason, McLeroy relentlessly criticized people who hold noble ideals but do not take action, believing that organizing natural activities such as games and dances can promote the connection between the muscles of the human body and consciousness, thoughts, and emotions, thereby achieving the effect of "physical and mental balance" after exercise.

The Far Eastern Championship Games held in Shanghai in 1915 showed that the competition between the "new sports school" and the "old sports school" became fiercer, and the two criticized each other. However, due to the coincidence between the "New Sports School" and the democratic republican ideology advocated by some intellectuals after the Xinhai Revolution, it received much attention and had a greater impact on school sports in the early stages of democracy. Some schools incorporated outdoor sports into their extracurricular sports activities. At the same time, the "New Sports Faction" actively established sports works, organized sports competitions, and vigorously promoted outdoor sports, gradually occupying the mainstream position of the "New Sports Faction".

#### **2.1.2 Sports ideology under the influence of democratic scientific views**

##### **2.1.2.1 Physical consciousness**

During the New Culture Movement, "human rights" was one of the topics of great concern. In New Youth, Chen Duxiu put forward that "Chinese people who want to get rid of the Jahiliyyah and are ashamed of being shallow people should catch up with them in a hurry and pay equal attention to science and human rights". At that time, new cultural figures reinterpreted "human rights" and believed that human rights should represent the integrity of personality and the liberation of the body, and be reflected in physical education. This side criticizes feudal ideas, such as foot binding; For example, patriarchy; For example, Fu Quan and so on. After the rise of the New Culture Movement, the promoters of new culture and new ideas actively advocated women's liberation, that is, the double liberation of body and spirit. Human rights should represent spiritual autonomy and physical consciousness. For example, Young Mao Zedong's "Research on Sports" believes that in order to ensure the effectiveness of physical education, the educatees need to actively participate in it and consciously carry out sports.

##### **2.1.2.2 Physical movement**

With the promotion of the New Culture Movement, a large number of popular science articles in the monthly journal Science published by the National Science Society have had a great impact on physical education. Physical education should establish a scientific concept of sports. Both Chen Duxiu, Yun Daiying, the domestic advocates of new culture, and Mike Le of the United States

all hold the same view that proper sports should be carried out according to their own physical conditions. More speed, less speed. Physical education should give play to its educational value. Cai Yuanpei, Mike Le and others agree with this view. They believe that suitable physical education should be implemented at different stages to maximize the educational value. For example, physical education in childhood should focus on the cultivation of quality and spirit.

### **2.1.2.3 Civic morality**

Western modern educators, thinkers Rousseau and Cai Yuanpei all believed that the implementation of the new sports school and the organization of western sports or competitive competitions would help students cultivate and improve civic morality, unite and cooperate, persevere, march forward bravely, and do not envy or resent.

## **3. The Inducement of School Physical Education Transformation in the Early Republic of China under the May 4th New Culture Movement**

The reason why school physical education thought changed in the early Republic of China finally determined Pragmatism education. There is a significant relationship between China and the changes in relations between Japan and the United States. In the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, Japan became a powerful country in East Asia, occupying a strong position in China, leading to an increase in students studying in Japan. At the same time, Japanese gymnastics entered new schools and was presented as new subjects. With the interest of the May Fourth New Culture Movement, new cultural figures vigorously advocated ideas such as human rights and democracy, and the people gradually rejected physical education such as Japanese gymnastics. At the same time, the sports ideas advocated by the Christianity in the United States YMCA coincided with those advocated by new cultural figures. During the same period, China–Japan relations further deteriorated, and the opinions around the "Shandong issue" were different. The United States was responsible for mediation, which enabled the "Shandong issue" to be resolved, which also made the United States have greater influence on Chinese society, while Japan has less influence on Chinese society. Finally, under the promotion of the May 4th New Culture Movement, school physical education has undergone a substantial change.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, the domestic situation in the late Qing and early Republic of China was complex and varied, and the national ideology was outdated. They did not truly recognize the shortcomings of Japanese gymnastics, nor did they have the ability to overthrow it. This made the mainstream ideology of school physical education military nationalism education. With the reform of the "old sports school" by Xu Yibing and other overseas students, the sports thought changed. Although it ended in failure, the school sports in the early Republic of China changed from military sports to Pragmatism sports under the promotion of the May 4th New Culture Movement.

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