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Cultural Inheritance and Health Promotion: The Integration Path of Dragon Dance into Adolescent School Health Education

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Abstract. Dragon dance is a precious intangible cultural heritage of China, featuring unique athletic value and cultural connotation, and it serves as an important carrier for traditional culture inheritance and quality-oriented education. In recent years, traditional sports have been gradually integrated into campus physical education, yet the popularization of dragon dance in schools still faces practical bottlenecks, including insufficient professional teachers, single teaching modes, limited venue and equipment resources, and low student participation enthusiasm, which restrict its sustainable development on campus. Based on literature review, field investigation and logical analysis, this paper systematically explores the feasibility, practical value and existing problems of introducing dragon dance into campus education. The research finds that the integration of dragon dance into campus teaching and extracurricular activities can effectively improve students' physical quality, cultivate their teamwork spirit and sense of national cultural identity, and enrich the diversified construction of campus culture. Furthermore, this study puts forward targeted optimization strategies from curriculum design, teacher training, activity mechanism and school support, aiming to provide practical references for the standardized promotion and innovative inheritance of dragon dance in modern campus education system.

Keywords: Dragon dance, campus education, traditional sports, intangible cultural heritage inheritance, school physical education

1. Introduction

As a core symbolic heritage of Chinese national culture, dragon dance has evolved from primitive sacrificial rituals into standardized competitive sports and campus cultural activities after thousands of years of folk inheritance. It has been inscribed on national intangible cultural heritage lists, bearing dual value of physical exercise and cultural inheritance. In recent years, national cultural revitalization policies have put forward clear requirements for integrating traditional folk sports into higher education quality education systems, making university campuses an important carrier for young people to inherit dragon dance. However, folk dragon dance is currently trapped in intergenerational talent gaps, insufficient communication exposure and unstable operating funds [1].

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Campuses can gather young participants, professional teachers and complete activity operation systems to ease such inheritance dilemmas.

Meanwhile, dragon dance training involves group cooperation and high-difficulty human tower stunts, accompanied by hidden sports injury risks including joint sprains and chronic muscle strains. It is necessary to systematically sort out the athletic characteristics, safety risks and educational value of campus dragon dance, clarify its operability in general universities, and propose targeted development paths balancing inheritance, physical exercise and safety management. This paper takes dragon dance promotion in ordinary undergraduate colleges as the research object, combining monographs, journal papers and graduate dissertations of national traditional sports to launch comprehensive analysis.

Domestic academic circles have formed three mainstream research directions around dragon dance: cultural inheritance, competitive technology and campus popularization. First, research on dragon dance intangible heritage inheritance. Scholars relying on folk field surveys pointed out that aging grassroots inheritors and single communication channels cause the broken inheritance chain of folk dragon dance. Relevant sports core journals analyzed the marginalized communication status of dragon dance compared with lion dance, and proposed relying on youth groups to realize living heritage transmission.

Second, research on dragon dance competition technology and sports characteristics. The monograph Teaching and Practicing Dragon and Lion Dance systematically recorded team configuration, basic footwork and stunt training logic, and clarified the high demand of dragon dance for team coordination and comprehensive physical fitness. Other literature sorted out the scoring standards of compulsory and optional routines in official competitions, and summarized the evaluation dimensions of difficulty, fluency and artistic expression.

Third, research on campus dragon dance development. Two journal papers verified the implementation conditions of campus dragon dance from venue, teachers, curriculum and fund dimensions, but most existing campus studies only focus on promotion feasibility, lacking systematic sorting of training injury risks and targeted teaching optimization schemes [2]. In addition, a small number of studies mentioned the transformation trend of modern dragon dance from ritual activity to fitness and competitive project, yet failed to combine campus scenarios to analyze its multi-dimensional social value.

Overseas research mostly focuses on overseas Chinese dragon dance culture communication and cross-cultural performance aesthetics, lacking targeted research on campus systematic teaching. Western scholars take overseas Chinatown festival dragon dance performances as research samples, discussing the identity construction function of dragon totem for overseas ethnic groups; Southeast Asian sports papers mainly study dragon dance competitive events held by local Chinese associations, only describing performance forms without exploring long-term youth inheritance paths. Few foreign literatures involve sports injury prevention and university curriculum design of dragon dance, forming an obvious research gap compared with domestic localized research.

Existing studies have covered dragon dance culture, competition technology and campus promotion, but three obvious deficiencies remain: 1) Separate discussion of inheritance value and sports risks, without balancing cultural popularization and safety control under campus scenarios; 2) Fragmented countermeasures for campus dragon dance development, lacking systematic teaching optimization strategies targeting insufficient teachers, simplistic teaching content and low student retention; 3) Insufficient integration of modern media and cultural tourism transformation paths into campus inheritance system, failing to build a multi-channel youth inheritance framework.

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2. Fundamental attributes and campus implementation conditions of dragon dance

2.1. Competition composition and official scoring standards of dragon dance

Dragon dance is a millennia-old national folk sport with mature technical and competitive systems formed through long-term folk evolution. Its core components include fixed team division, standard basic footwork, normative body postures, flexible formation transformation and high-difficulty stunt modeling. Official tournaments set unified limits on venue area and performance duration, dividing events into compulsory routines and optional routines. Compulsory routines adopt unified fixed movements, with scoring focused on movement standardization and overall team neatness. Optional routines allow independent design of formation layout, difficult stunts and artistic arrangement, and judges conduct comprehensive scoring based on technical difficulty, performance fluency, original formation design and overall artistic presentation. This paper systematically sorts out dragon dance origin, regional genre division, team member allocation and complete basic movement system, summarizes venue configuration requirements, performance time limits and unified scoring criteria of official competitions, and fully refines the competitive characteristics of dragon dance as a traditional folk sport.

2.2. Technical learning thresholds and athletic characteristics of dragon dance

Supported by monograph Teaching and Practicing Dragon and Lion Dance, dragon dance has prominent technical barriers for participants. First, complete performance effects depend entirely on seamless team collaboration. Even if individual participants master proficient skills, inconsistent rhythm among teammates will destroy the integrity of the whole show. Second, this sport raises comprehensive physical quality requirements for all performers: dragon head holders need powerful upper limb and lumbar strength, while dragon body operators must maintain stable pace for a long time, and long-term training tests participants' endurance and physical coordination. Besides, high-risk stunts such as stacked human towers greatly extend the training cycle of competitive-level performances [3]. New learners can master simple basic routines after short-term foundational training, while reaching competitive performance standards requires years of systematic training. Such characteristics endow dragon dance with wide popularization potential among college student groups.

2.3. Sports attributes and educational functions of dragon dance for adolescents

Dragon dance integrates physical exercise, aesthetic education and moral cultivation instead of merely serving as a fitness activity. Physically, regular training strengthens muscle strength, improves body coordination and cardiopulmonary endurance, and alleviates postural defects including kyphosis and lumbar weakness caused by long sedentary study. Mentally, repeated group rehearsals temper students' perseverance. Most importantly, unified pacing required by dragon body rotation and formation conversion forces all team members to cooperate closely, effectively cultivating students' collective honor and team awareness. Rooted in Chinese dragon totem culture, dragon dance enables students to contact folk intangible heritage during training and performances, continuously improving their humanistic cognition and cultural literacy.

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2.4. Implementation feasibility of dragon dance courses in general universities

Based on multiple journal papers, this paper verifies the operability of setting dragon dance courses and student clubs from six dimensions. First, the sport only requires ordinary playgrounds or indoor gymnasiums without professional dedicated stadiums. Second, more PE teachers receive standardized training of traditional national sports, and schools can invite local intangible cultural heritage inheritors to provide off-campus tutoring. Third, contemporary college students show strong interest in traditional culture and are willing to participate in related activities. Fourth, the curriculum can be flexibly set as public elective courses or after-school club activities. Fifth, daily operation costs of dragon dance clubs are low, which can be covered by university cultural construction funds. Sixth, inter-university dragon dance tournaments are held regularly nationwide, forming a complete hierarchical competition system. In general, general universities possess complete objective conditions to carry out dragon dance activities smoothly.

3. Intangible heritage inheritance barriers and campus inheritance value of dragon dance

3.1. Intangible cultural heritage status and cultural value of dragon dance

Dragon dance has been listed in the catalogue of intangible cultural heritage. It exceeds the category of performance and carries profound folk connotation, national spirit and artistic aesthetics. In agricultural civilization, dragon dance served as a sacrificial ritual praying for good weather and bumper harvests, representing the wish for national prosperity and people's well-being [4]. As the core totem of Chinese nation, dragon dance continuously strengthens ethnic identity at home and abroad. Different from pure competitive sports, it retains folk rituals and becomes a key carrier for the living inheritance of folk culture.

3.2. Inter generational gap and development dilemmas of dragon dance

Combining Reflections on the Inheritance of Dragon Dance from the Perspective of Intangible Cultural Heritageand another core journal article, dragon dance is facing multiple inheritance difficulties. First, elderly folk inheritors are aging year by year, while young successors are seriously insufficient, leading to talent gap [5, 6]. Second, young people have various entertainment choices, and few are willing to devote themselves to traditional folk arts. Third, dragon dance gains limited media coverage compared with lion dance, so cultural communication stays marginalized. Fourth, folk teams lack stable financial support and struggle to maintain long-term operation. All these factors restrict the development of this traditional art.

3.3. Carrier value of universities in intangible heritage transmission

Universities gather massive young people and naturally become the core platform to popularize intangible culture among youth. On one hand, higher education institutions cultivate young inheritors in large numbers to fill the talent shortage of folk dragon dance. On the other hand, campuses break regional limits and help this folk activity step out of small rural communities and attract young audiences. Supported by student clubs, art shows and sports games, dragon dance can realize living inheritance and adapt to the cultural environment of the new era.

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4. Sports injury risks of campus dragon dance and youth physical adaptability

4.1. Common injury types and inducing factors of dragon dance training

During daily training and performances, dragon dance team members often suffer sports injuries, mainly including muscle strain, knee and ankle sprain, lumbar strain and soft tissue contusion. There are several major causes: irregular movements and blind practice of difficult stunts; inadequate warm-up without activating muscles and joints; disordered team coordination leading to collision; physical exhaustion caused by overtraining; improper use of dragon props such as dragon balls and dragon bodies. These human-induced hazards are the main sources of campus sports accidents.

4.2. Risk control ability and campus safety guarantee conditions of dragon dance

Objectively speaking, dragon dance differs greatly from high-contact sports such as rugby and wrestling. There is no physical confrontation in dragon dance. Most injuries are mild strain and bruise, which are highly predictable and controllable [7]. Schools can greatly reduce safety risks by making scientific training schedules, standardizing stunt practice and equipping basic protective gear. Flat plastic playgrounds and standardized campus management further guarantee safe training.

4.3. Physical and mental promotion effects of campus dragon dance on adolescents

After balancing safety risks and physical benefits, we can confirm that dragon dance fits campus sports development perfectly. Under strict safety management, it improves students' physical fitness, correct poor posture and ease academic pressure [8]. Collective rehearsals build mutual trust and strengthen teamwork. It fully meets the objectives of school health education and quality-oriented education.

5. Modern transformation, developmental prospects and optimized strategies of dragon dance

5.1. Functional transformation traits of traditional dragon dance in modern society

Based on existing research, dragon dance is experiencing historic transformation. Ancient dragon dance centered on sacrificial rituals, while modern dragon dance has developed into multiple forms: university PE courses, mass fitness programs, cultural tourism performances and standardized provincial and national sports events [9]. Its core function shifts from ritual praying to entertainment, fitness and competition to adapt to modern social demands.

5.2. Diversified future development directions of dragon dance

Dragon dance has multi-channel development space in the future. First, its coverage will keep expanding on university campuses relying on elective courses and student cultural clubs. Second, simplified stunt-free versions of dragon dance can be promoted among ordinary mass fitness enthusiasts. Third, dragon dance performances can be integrated into cultural tourism as featured festival shows in ancient towns and scenic spots. Fourth, national hierarchical dragon dance tournament systems will receive continuous optimization to drive the standardized development of competitive dragon dance. Fifth, short-video new media platforms will become important carriers for online popularization of dragon totem culture. Supported by multi-channel development modes, the whole dragon dance industry holds broad growth potential [10-12].

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5.3. Multi-dimensional social value of dragon dance in the new era

From cultural perspective, dragon dance protects traditional totem culture, promotes living transmission of intangible cultural heritage and enhances national cultural confidence among young people. From sports perspective, it enriches public fitness resource categories and accelerates the standardized development of traditional national sports [13-15]. From economic perspective, wonderful dragon dance stage performances enrich festival celebration activities and drive consumption growth of folk cultural tourism industries. From educational perspective, long-term learning of dragon dance continuously shapes young people's team spirit and cultural identity. This single folk sport carries integrated cultural, athletic, economic and educational value simultaneously.

5.4. Optimized development strategies of campus and industrial dragon dance

At present, numerous universities have set up dragon and lion dance courses and clubs, yet insufficient professional coaches, simplistic teaching content and low student long-term learning willingness restrict long-term development. Schools can adopt targeted optimization measures: introduce external professional coaches and cooperate with local cultural centers to supplement teaching resources; increase investment in training venues and performance props; add folk history lectures to enrich teaching content and stimulate students' cultural recognition.

From the industrial perspective,] the whole dragon dance industry faces two prominent challenges: uneven professional literacy of practitioners and high production cost of customized costumes and props restricting large-scale popularization. Corresponding solutions include launching systematic vocational training to improve practitioners' comprehensive abilities, formulating unified industrial operation standards to guarantee performance quality, and combining digital new media technology for online promotion to attract more young inheritors of this outstanding traditional folk culture.

6. Conclusion

As a precious intangible cultural heritage of China, dragon dance boasts profound cultural connotations and unique artistic charm, showing bright development prospects while facing obvious practical limitations. In terms of future development, dragon dance has great potential for innovation and international promotion. With the integration of digital technology and modern art, traditional dragon dance performances can combine new music, stage lighting and creative choreography to cater to the aesthetic tastes of young people. It is also increasingly integrated into campus education, cultural exchange activities and global folk art events, effectively spreading traditional Chinese culture and enhancing cross-cultural communication. Besides, its team spirit and fitness value make it a popular mass sport, laying a solid foundation for long-term inheritance. Nevertheless, dragon dance still faces prominent limitations restricting its further development. First, cultural inheritance gaps exist. Young generations lack in-depth understanding of its historical and spiritual connotation, and most participants only master basic movements without professional systematic training. Second, theoretical research and standardized development lagbehind. Relevant academic studies are insufficient, and there is no unified and mature industry standard for performance and teaching. Third, regional development imbalance and insufficient commercial operation limit its influence. Many folk inheritance teams lack stable funds and professional operation teams, making it hard to achieve sustainable and large-scale development. To sum up, dragon dance needs continuous

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innovation in form and systematic improvement in inheritance mechanisms to balance cultural preservation and modern development.

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