

Study on the Opening of School Sports Facilities under the National Fitness Programme

Rong Li

School of Sports Economics and Management, Central University of Finance and Economics, Beijing, China, 102206.

How to cite this paper: Rong Li. (2023). Study on the Opening of School Sports Facilities under the National Fitness Programme. *The Educational Review, USA*, 7(1), 39-44.
DOI: 10.26855/er.2023.01.010

Received: December 18, 2022

Accepted: January 12, 2023

Published: February 1, 2023

Corresponding author: Rong Li, School of Sports Economics and Management, Central University of Finance and Economics, Beijing, China, 102206.

Abstract

In recent years, with the continued promotion of the national fitness programme, the motivation of people of all ages to participate in daily fitness exercises has been significantly enhanced. The higher demand for national fitness obviously needs to be matched with more supply of sports venues and sports facilities. The lack of sports facilities in China has led to a growing conflict between the growing demand for sports and the relatively poor public sports services. As a major component of China's public sports facilities, school sports facilities are an important vehicle for the implementation of the national fitness programme. The opening of school sports facilities is directly related to the solid foundation of facilities and venues for the national fitness programme in China. This paper studies the opening of school sports facilities in the context of the national fitness programme, explores the difficulties and challenges faced by the opening of school sports facilities, and proposes practical countermeasures and suggestions for the opening of school sports facilities.

Keywords

School sports facilities, supply and demand, public management, fitness for all

In the wake of the outbreak of the new coronavirus in early 2020, the National Fitness Programme and the Healthy China Strategy have been given a higher mandate. At the national level, the Chinese government is adhering to the principle of "people first, life first". At the individual level, people have become more conscious of their personal health and physical fitness has become popular. The higher demand for national fitness obviously needs to be matched by a greater supply of sports venues and facilities. As a major component of public sports facilities in China, school sports facilities are an important vehicle for the implementation of national fitness programmes. The opening of school sports facilities is directly related to the adequacy of the facilities and venues for the national fitness strategy in China. However, on the other hand, the opening of school sports facilities also faces many difficulties and challenges. This paper will focus on the opening of school sports facilities in the context of the national fitness programme.

1. The contradiction between supply and demand of sports facilities

1.1 National fitness programme and increased awareness of physical exercise among the population

The laws of history show that socio-economic development leads to a greater concern for people's health. China's development path also confirms this pattern. With the rapid growth of the national economy in recent years, the composition of people's consumption has gradually changed, with the focus shifting from basic consumption related to survival to consumption for enjoyment, including the improvement of one's health. With people's increasing concern for health, people's health has become one of the themes of the times. In response to the call of the times, in October 2017, the report of the 19th Party Congress listed "Healthy China" as one of the important strategies for national development

for the first time; subsequently, the State Council also issued relevant documents and established a promotion committee to actively implement the implementation of the Healthy China Strategy (Wang Zimeng, 2017). After economic prosperity, people's health is seen as another measure of a country's wealth and strength. With the gradual elevation of people's health in the overall strategic status of the country in the new era, a series of strategic plans on physical fitness and people's health, represented by national fitness, are increasingly given a more prominent position by the Party and the State. In particular, after the outbreak of the new coronavirus in early 2020, national fitness and a healthy China have been given a higher mission, and physical fitness has become a popular trend.

1.2 Imbalance between supply and demand of sports facilities

The supply of sports facilities is particularly important in the context of the national fitness strategy. Only when there are sufficient sports facilities equipped to meet the fitness needs of the people can the potential for fitness be fully stimulated and the motivation for sport be mobilised. However, there is currently an imbalance between the supply and demand of sports facilities in China, with a significant contradiction between supply and demand.

The problem of contradiction between the supply and demand of sports facilities has not always existed, but has been gradually exposed in recent years with economic development. In fact, the supply and demand for sports facilities can be deduced from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory and the objective laws of economic development. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory divides human needs into different levels, pointing out that human needs are progressive and differential, with different levels of demand for the same thing at different economic stages. In economics, Maslow's hierarchy of needs means that people are more inclined to prioritise the satisfaction of expenses incurred for their own survival needs, which will in turn give rise to more higher-level needs (Yu Zhihong & Wu Lili, 2018). Health is the second level of the hierarchy of needs, and the need to maintain one's health is, to a certain extent, an enjoyment type of consumption. Therefore, only after the needs of the first level, such as food and water, are met will people's level of concern and demand for health rise. At the same time, the level of economic development matches people's standard of living. When the level of economic development is low, people's standard of living is low and they tend to focus more on physiological needs, while people's demand for health belongs to the upper part of the pyramid of needs, so only when the economic and social development reaches a certain stage will people gradually start to pay more attention to their personal health. In other words, in the early stages of economic and social development, people pay more attention to the consumption of survival needs represented by the bottom of the pyramid, while neglecting to pay attention to their own health.

It can be seen that at the beginning of the reform and opening up, China's economy was still in the gestation period of rapid development and the economic level was low, therefore both individuals and the government were relatively less concerned about health, and the supply of sports facilities, although more scarce, still managed to reach a low level of balance for the lower level of demand. However, with the rapid development of China's economy in recent years, people have gradually moved away from the miserable days of worrying about subsistence consumption and have become more concerned about their health and other higher-level needs, and the level of demand for sports facilities has increased rapidly, while the corresponding supply is still at a low level of growth, see Figure 1.

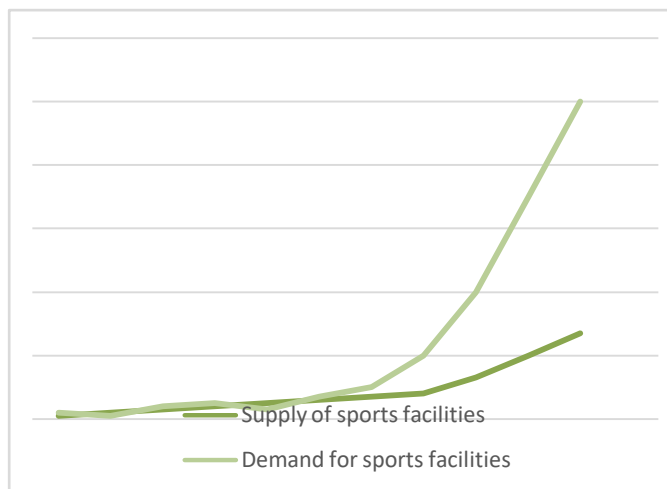


Figure 1. Supply and demand for sports facilities are in great conflict with economic development.

1.3 Current status of sports facilities in China and school sports facilities

In recent years, as the government and other public sectors have gradually increased their support for the national fitness strategy and realized the huge contradiction between the supply and demand for national fitness, policy documents and laws and regulations on sports facilities have been issued one after another, financial support has been increased and the construction of sports facilities has entered a period of rapid development. The latest statistics show that both the area of sports venues per capita and the number of sports venues per 10,000 people in China have shown a steady and rapid growth in the past 20 years, see Figure 2. The annual growth rate of the number of sports venues per 10,000 people has shown a rapid increase in recent years (Yu Shumei, 2016).

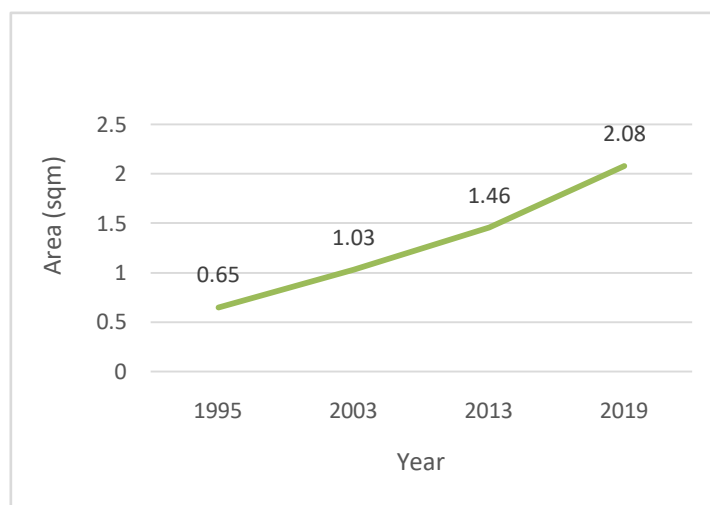


Figure 2. Sports space per capita.

Although the quantity and quality of sports facilities in the country have improved to a greater extent than before, in general, compared to the huge demand for sports facilities, there is still a lack of sports facilities and venues and a single category of sports facilities, which cannot fully meet the growing demand of the people for fitness.

Specifically, the current sports facilities in China present a dilemma of uneven institutional distribution and uneven geographical distribution in terms of quantity and area, as shown in Table 1. It is evident from the statistics of the 6th National Sports Venue Census that the regional distribution of sports facilities and sports-related venues presents a situation of less in the west and more in the east (Weng Huigen, 1995). Considering the geographical differences in China's level of economic development and population distribution, there are also differences in the degree of demand for sports facilities geographically, in roughly the same way as the distribution of facilities. Therefore, the impact of the uneven geographical distribution of venues in China on the contradiction between supply and demand is not significant.

In contrast, the difference in the distribution of sports facilities in terms of institutions is one of the decisive factors in the conflict between supply and demand. Over the years, the area of sports facilities owned by institutions, including the school system, has accounted for close to, if not more than 50%, of the total area of sports facilities in China. Therefore, opening up school sports facilities is the most effective way to resolve the current contradiction between supply and demand for sports facilities.

Table 1. Distribution of sports venues in the East, Central, West and North East regions

Region	Number of provinces (pcs)	Number of sites (million)	Site area (billion m ²)
Total	31	164.24	19.49
East	10	71.10	9.38
Central	6	40.39	4.18
Western	12	42.63	4.28
North East	3	10.12	1.65

2. Problems and challenges facing the opening of school sports facilities

2.1 Insufficient capacity to manage the opening of school sports facilities

One of the prerequisites for the orderly and high-quality opening of school sports facilities and sports grounds to the public is the availability of adequate management staff to effectively manage the opening of school sports facilities. Professional facility managers not only maintain the public order of the venues when the facilities are open, but also have the obligation to regularly inspect and maintain the facilities to ensure that the school sports facilities are in good condition for use. However, there is still a lack of professional management staff for the opening of school sports facilities. The current managers of school sports facilities open to the public are school security guards, janitors and other staff who are responsible for the management of the venues on a part-time basis. As school security staff, they lack relevant training and experience in the management of open sports venues and lack professionalism, which can easily lead to chaotic and disorganized management (Huang Qunling & Zhang Debao, 2011)

In addition, professional facility managers can provide effective guidance to residents and students exercising in school grounds and help them to achieve scientific participation in sports and exercise. Surveys show that most of the social residents and students who enter schools to participate in sports and fitness are currently unable to participate in sports scientifically, which to a certain extent increases the probability of sports safety accidents. The current opening of school sports facilities does not have enough administrators to provide effective guidance to the community participating in sports. Therefore, the lack of management capacity and professional managers is one of the main problems in the opening of school sports facilities.

2.2 Lack of financial support for the opening of school sports facilities

The opening of school sports facilities to the public is a huge systemic project that requires adequate material and financial resources. The maintenance, renewal and upkeep of school sports facilities, the payment of funds and subsidies to relevant management personnel, and the purchase of safety insurance for relevant personnel all require adequate funding support. However, there is currently a single source of funding for the opening of school sports facilities, mainly through transfers from the local government. This single source of funding does not cover the cost of opening sports facilities in schools. The subsidies received by most schools do not cover the normal operation of the venues when they are open to the public. In addition, due to the lack of relevant rules governing the use of funds, the use of venue funds still suffers from unclear purposes and unreasonable funding arrangements. As a result, there are currently significant problems in the provision and use of funds for the opening of school sports facilities.

2.3 Safety hazards in opening school sports facilities

The opening of school sports facilities is a good thing that benefits the country and the people, as it can both alleviate the shortage of fitness venues for all and improve the utilisation rate of the venues and facilities. However, the safety of sports venues has always been a stumbling block to the opening and operation of sports venues. For one thing, the opening of school sports grounds to the public may lead to violations of students' personal safety. The reason is that the opening of school sports grounds to the public will lead to some social people entering the school, the identity of those who enter the school is complicated, and some idle people do not obey the management, which brings hidden danger to the school order and is difficult to manage. If the school itself cannot take effective management measures, there is a possibility that social workers will violate the personal safety and property of school students, and campus safety cannot be guaranteed. As school administrators, when weighing the pros and cons of student safety and open space, they will prioritise ensuring student safety in their decision-making. Secondly, the opening of the school grounds may lead to liability issues for safety accidents. If an accident occurs to an outsider during a fitness activity in the school, the school may face the risk of a legal dispute over the safety incident. How to deal with safety disputes and how to ensure the safety of exercisers is also an issue that needs to be addressed when schools open their sports facilities to the public.

3. Management Suggestions for Opening School Sports Facilities to the Community

3.1 clarify the responsibilities of the main parties involved in the process of opening sports facilities in schools

The opening of school sports facilities to the public is a challenging and systematic project involving multiple stakeholders, including the government, schools and community resident committees. In the opening up of sports facilities, it is important to clarify the issue of responsibility of the relevant sectors. From the government's perspective, the gov-

ernment, as the investor and builder of school sports facilities resources, has the authority to allocate public sports resources to schools. And as an administrative body, the government can coordinate resources from all parties to promote the effective operation of the opening of school sports venues. From the school's perspective, primary and secondary schools need to actively take up the responsibility of managing sports facilities within the school, refine the details of sports facility opening, clarify the relevant responsible subjects and management organisations, implement the work plan for sports facility opening, improve the relevant management rules in a timely manner, and actively maintain communication with other interested subjects to solve the problem of information asymmetry.

In addition, the local finance department needs to implement the granting of subsidies for the opening of sports facilities, insurance premiums and other subsidies in a timely manner to alleviate the financial constraints of primary and secondary schools; the Sports Bureau and the Education Bureau should play a leading role in the guidance, coordination and assessment of the opening of school sports facilities and actively guide primary and secondary schools to implement the task of opening their facilities. In a comprehensive manner, all relevant responsible parties need to coordinate closely and strengthen cooperation to ensure that the opening of sports facilities in primary and secondary schools is carried out in a safe and orderly manner.

3.2 Building a rational human resources selection management system

The management of sports facilities cannot be achieved without the support of relevant professionals. Therefore, while building the management system and operational mechanism of sports facilities venues in primary and secondary schools, the relevant responsible parties should not neglect the selection and management of human resources in school sports venues and facilities (Zhang Wei, 2019). Primary and secondary schools need to build a standardised management system for school sports venues as soon as possible, adjust the outstanding contradictions in venue management according to local conditions, gradually improve the relevant regulations and systems, and effectively deal with the management of staff in the process of opening school sports facilities to the public. Under the guidance of refined and scientific venue management objectives, primary and secondary schools can employ sports management practitioners with relevant work experience by selecting outstanding talents from the sports industry, thereby improving the quantity and quality of managers of school sports facilities open to the public and solving the problem of lack of talents in sports venues and facilities (Yang Coco, n.d.)

3.3 Develop a diversified source of funding

One of the biggest obstacles to the opening of school sports facilities in China is the lack of funding for primary and secondary schools. Therefore, to ensure that the opening of sports facilities in primary and secondary schools is carried out in a safe and orderly manner, government departments and schools need to develop more diversified ways to raise funds as far as possible (Irobo, n.d.). On the one hand, considering that financial resources are the main source of income for primary and secondary schools, government departments at all levels should play the role of financial transfer to enhance the financial support for the daily management and maintenance of primary and secondary school facilities, so as to solve the urgent needs of primary and secondary school venue management. Places that are in a position to do so can take certain special funds from the local welfare lottery or sports lottery to subsidise schools that open their sports facilities. On the other hand, schools can exercise their own initiative to a certain extent by charging appropriate venue rent and admission fees for the open operation of sports facilities to compensate for the wear and tear brought about by the opening of venues to the public. In addition, schools can actively build long-term cooperation mechanisms with enterprises for mutual benefit and complementary advantages.

4. Concluding remarks

In recent years, with the continued promotion of the national fitness programme, more and more people have started to participate in daily fitness activities. The higher demand for national fitness obviously needs to be matched by a greater supply of sports venues and facilities. The lack of sports venues and facilities in China has led to a growing conflict between the growing demand for sports and the relatively poor public sports services. School sports facilities and sports venues account for more than 50% of the country's sports resources. Opening school sports venues to the community is conducive to giving full play to the functions of school sports venues, thereby building a system for national fitness and promoting harmonious social development. At present, there are still certain difficulties and challenges in fully opening school sports resources, such as insufficient management capacity for opening school sports facilities, lack of relevant financial support for opening school sports facilities, and safety hazards in opening school sports facilities, all of which hinder the process of opening school sports resources. This paper suggests that clarifying the responsibilities of the main bodies involved in the opening of sports facilities in schools, establishing an open human resource

management system and expanding diversified funding channels will be conducive to the further opening of school sports resources.

References

- Huang Qunling, Zhang Debao. Study on the current situation and countermeasures of opening school stadiums to the society under the background of the National Fitness Regulations [J]. *Journal of Foshan Institute of Science and Technology (Natural Science Edition)*, 2011, 029(002):83-88.
- Irobo. A study on the problems in the opening of school sports facilities in primary and secondary schools in Shanghai [D]. Shanghai Normal University.
- Liu Yujie. Optimization of the supply of university sports venues in the context of public services [D]. Shanghai Institute of Physical Education.
- Wang Zimeng. A study on the impact of the opening of school sports facilities on the venues of the national fitness program - taking some universities in Nanjing as an example [J]. *Sports Science and Technology*, 2017, 38(6):2.
- Weng Huigen. A study on the status of sports facilities in Zhejiang Province for the implementation of the national fitness program [J]. *Zhejiang Sports Science*, 1995(3):5.
- Yang Coco. Study on the current situation of the guarantee mechanism and the influencing factors of the opening of sports venues in primary and secondary schools in Ningbo [D]. Ningbo University.
- Yu Shumei. Research on the countermeasures of opening sports facilities in colleges and universities to the public [J]. *Contemporary Educational Practice and Teaching Research: Electronic Edition*, 2016.
- Yu Zhihong, Wu Lili. Study on the current situation of opening school sports facilities to the society in Guangzhou under the background of national fitness [J]. *Sports and Cultural Products and Technology*, 2018.
- Zhang Wei, Jiang Yining, Xu Na. Research on the dilemma and strategy of opening school sports venues to the public - taking Changzhou City as an example [J]. *Urban construction theory research: electronic version*, 2019(1):1.