

# "Harmony" Culture Empowering the Integration of Sports and Education: Research on the Promotion Strategies of He Ball in Primary and Secondary Schools

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**Abstract:** *Research Purpose: He Ball originated from the ancient Chinese Cuju sport during the Tang Dynasty. By incorporating the strengths of modern Western competitive sports, it has evolved into a distinctive modern national sport deeply rooted in the traditional Chinese "Harmony" culture. In recent years, with the high emphasis placed by the Party and the state on China's excellent traditional culture and the steady advancement of the sports powerhouse strategy, He Ball has established a certain scale in society and gained rapid popularity nationwide. However, its theoretical foundation and promotion in primary and secondary schools remain insufficient. This study explores strategies for promoting He Ball in primary and secondary schools that align with China's national conditions through dual pathways of "Harmony" culture and sports, based on research related to the promotion and development history of He Ball in China. The findings aim to provide robust support for the widespread adoption and sustainable development of He Ball in primary and secondary schools. Research Methods: This study investigates issues in promoting He Ball in primary and secondary schools using literature review and logical analysis methods, proposing corresponding strategies and development paths. Conclusion: Primary and secondary schools can enhance the promotion of He Ball by localizing it within school curricula, strengthening course system construction, improving teacher training at the grassroots level, enhancing coach competency, refining competition and event systems, fostering cultural atmospheres, and promoting traditional cultural transmission. While learning He Ball skills, students can better inherit and promote China's excellent traditional culture, injecting new vitality into school sports.*

**Keywords:** He Ball, Promotion strategies, Traditional culture.

## 1. Introduction

Guided by the goal of building a strong sporting nation, fully activate the comprehensive effectiveness of sports in constructing a modern socialist country; currently, China is in a strategic transformation period moving from being a "sports giant" to becoming a "sports powerhouse." The Outline for Building a Strong Sporting Nation, issued by the General Office of the State Council in August 2019 [1], emphasizes the urgent need to construct a system embodying the spirit of Chinese sports to promote the inheritance and development of China's excellent traditional cultural heritage. The Outline explicitly stresses the necessity to systematically advance the cultural ecosystem construction of sports events, innovatively develop and disseminate diversified sports and cultural products, and focus on implementing dynamic protection mechanisms and innovative transformation pathways for ethnic, folk, and traditional sports projects.

In recent years, the Party and the state have highly valued the inheritance of China's excellent traditional culture and the development of ethnic traditional sports events. The "Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving School Physical Education in the New Era" jointly issued by the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council in October 2020 [2] clearly proposed that it is necessary to start from the crucial entry point of constructing the value system of Chinese sports spirit, fully promote the cultural revitalization process of traditional sports events and their school-based practical exploration, with "one school, one brand" and "one school, multiple brands" as the exploration paths, thereby achieving high-quality development of school physical education in the

direction of specialization and differentiation. This policy aims to reconstruct the campus sports ecosystem by strengthening sports cultural identity and educational empowerment, providing practical examples for the construction of a sports powerhouse in the new era.

The sport of UniBall originated from traditional sports events in ancient China, embodying the "harmony" culture which boasts a long historical heritage in China. During the 60th anniversary celebration of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, President Xi Jinping profoundly pointed out [3] that Chinese culture has always revered harmony; China's "harmony" culture is historically profound and enduring, encompassing a cosmological view of the unity of heaven and humanity, an international perspective of harmonizing all nations, a social outlook of harmony in diversity, and a moral viewpoint of benevolent hearts. Modern UniBall was established in 2008 and widely promoted and developed in 2015. Against the backdrop of building a strong sporting nation, this study focuses on the promotion strategies and development paths of UniBall in primary and secondary schools. By systematically analyzing its cultural characteristics, practical status, and policy environment, it aims to reveal key obstacles and potential opportunities for the popularization of UniBall in schools while also enriching students' knowledge of national culture, inheriting China's excellent traditional culture, and enhancing students' sense of national identity.

## 2. Overview of UniBall

### 2.1 Origin of UniBall

The sport of Heball, its historical origins can be traced back to the net-separated Cuju of the Tang Dynasty. Recorded in the classic "Comprehensive Examination of Literature", the competitive form of "making a net into a gate to pass the ball" is clearly documented. People used nets as gates, showcasing unique creativity. The sport of Heball possesses both fun and vitality, leaving an important mark in the history of sports development at that time. During the Song Dynasty, this sport underwent a significant turning point, with the name "Zhuqiu" being established. The innovative goal design known as "Fengliu Eye" is particularly noteworthy [4]. In matches, players could score through the Fengliu Eye, establishing a competitive method for scoring. This significantly increased the richness of gameplay. In 2008, the creation of modern Heball was completed by sports worker Jiang Zhonghe. Subsequently, the International Union of Heball (IUD) took on the task of rule refinement, comprehensively revising the competition rules. The scope of dissemination continues to expand, and the global popularity has been sufficiently proven to be increasing.

## 2.2 Heball Courts and Equipment

The Heball court exhibits a hexagonal geometric feature, with its design concept demonstrating unique creativity. This court is symmetrically joined by two isosceles trapezoidal components. The length of the end line is exactly 7 meters, and the vertical distance from the center line to the end line also remains equally 7 meters. The zoning of the court is clearly visible: the front area of the court serves offensive functions, while the back area fulfills defensive duties, separated spatially by the net apparatus. The net apparatus is about 1.8 meters high, adjustable according to the characteristics of the participants. A traditional element called the "Fengliu Eye" is set at the central position, with a circular hole structure diameter of approximately 40 centimeters. This design element originates from the Tang Dynasty's net-separated Cuju culture, allowing direct scoring when the ball passes through the hole. The surface of the ball, interwoven with yellow and blue colors, creates a harmonious symbiosis visual expression. The concept of "you in me, me in you" from the Hehe cultural philosophy is concretely presented through this color configuration. The ball's circumference falls within the 65-67 cm range, with a diameter measurement of about 20-25 cm, and a weight index maintained at 200-300 grams, making it lighter compared to a volleyball.

## 3. Core Values of Heball

### 3.1 Educational Value

The sport of Heball, which cleverly combines traditional elements with modern characteristics, has a special rule: everyone must perform the fist-and-palm salute before and after the game. Originating from traditional Chinese martial arts culture, this unique etiquette carries profound meaning: the left hand extended as a palm symbolizes "fivefold education"—the comprehensive development of morality, intellect, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor—highlighting Heball's emphasis on enhancing participants' overall qualities. The right hand clenched into a fist represents "strength." When the two hands are joined, the concept of "prioritizing

virtue and balancing strength with gentleness" is conveyed, emphasizing that Heball values not only physical power but also moral cultivation.

### 3.2 Fitness Value

As a sport that combines entertainment and competitive attributes, it skillfully integrates elements of various traditional ball games into its rule design, while significantly simplifying the complex skill systems and rule frameworks. Participants from different cultural backgrounds and age groups can quickly grasp its core principles, lowering the learning threshold. This facilitates the popularization of traditional sports skills and the continuation of cultural heritage. The simplified rules enable broader participation in the sport. Heball enhances cardiovascular and pulmonary functions, improves physical coordination, strengthens muscles, and promotes participants' physical and mental well-being.

### 3.3 Cultural Value

Heball's cultural roots are deeply embedded in the traditional Chinese philosophical system, built on the spiritual core of "As heaven maintains vigor through movement, a gentleman should constantly strive for self-perfection" from the \*I Ching\*, and the value framework of "As earth is receptive and nurturing, a gentleman should cultivate virtue to support all things." Balancing between "competition" and "harmony," this unique sport showcases its charm. It inherits the ethical principles of interaction outlined in the \*Book of Rites\* and continues the idea that "In the practice of propriety, harmony is most precious." Diverse manifestations of Confucian competitive values are embodied, such as the fist-and-palm salute and the rule of male-female cooperation. Traditional concepts like "gentlemanly competition" are brought to life through these practices.

## 4. The Significance of Promoting Heball in Schools

### 4.1 Following Educational Reform Directions, Enriching Curriculum Offerings

According to the relevant policy provisions of the "Physical Education and Health Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)" issued by the State Council in 2022, schools can design novel and moderate physical education activities based on local conditions, which not only meet the characteristics of teenagers' pursuit of new experiences but also promote their athletic ability development. The rules of Heball are simple, with low technical difficulty, cost, and facility requirements, and it is highly entertaining and competitive, making it very suitable for primary and secondary school students. Incorporating Heball into the physical education and health curriculum system can better enrich school sports programs, enhance students' autonomy in choice, broaden their cultural knowledge and sense of national identity, serving not only as a practical exploration of school-based innovation in physical education courses but also providing students with a new track for cultural and sports learning.

### 4.2 Promote Chinese Traditional Culture, Emphasize

## Student Etiquette Education

China has long been renowned globally as a "land of etiquette," with its etiquette philosophy having a long and enduring history. In the contemporary endeavor to build a harmonious society, a harmonious China, and even a harmonious world, "She" culture stands as a gem of China's excellent traditional culture, embodying wisdom and values that transcend time and space. The fist salute in Heball serves as one of its cultural symbols, carrying unique sporting spirit and value connotations. Etiquette education for primary and secondary school students is a crucial cornerstone in shaping well-rounded personalities and fostering positive social trends. Promoting Heball among primary and secondary school students aligns with their physical and psychological growth patterns and enhances their social adaptability through teamwork and cultural exchange among peers, thereby inheriting and promoting China's excellent traditional culture.

### 4.3 Deepen Integration of Sports and Education, Promote Students' Physical and Mental Health

The integration of sports and education, as an institutional innovation in China's educational reform in the new era, essentially represents a paradigm shift and practical reshaping of collaborative education mechanisms between the sports and education systems [5]. As a national sport of China, Heball not only helps improve students' physical fitness during daily practice but also cultivates their spirit of cooperation and competitive awareness, enriches their cultural life, and carries forward excellent culture. Through skill learning in Heball, students can alleviate negative emotions, relieve stress, enhance their physical condition, and achieve all-around development.

## 5. Analysis of the Current Status of Heball Promotion in Primary and Secondary Schools

### 5.1 Lack of Extensive Promotion Experience

Although the sport of Heball has shown a trend of globalization, its promotion in schools in our country is still at an initial stage. As of May 3, 2025, a search on China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) using the keywords "Heball" and "Heball sports" yielded 13 documents, only two of which are about the promotion of Heball in schools. One article discusses research on its implementation in primary schools, while the other discusses its promotion in higher education institutions. This shows that, based on the above data, our country lacks sufficient knowledge, experience, and theoretical foundation for promoting Heball in primary and secondary schools.

### 5.2 Students' Cross-regional Competition is Limited, and the Social Participation Base for Large-scale Events is Weak

Since 2015, our country has gradually established a multi-level competition system for Heball, which currently includes four main types of events: the Chinese University Heball Championship for universities nationwide, the Chinese Middle School Heball Championship for middle schools

nationwide, the Chinese Heball Open for all citizens, and local Heball leagues organized by various regions [6]. Among these, the Chinese Heball Open adopts a "4+1" participation rule, meaning each regional team can only compete within their region plus the final national championship, resulting in seven national events throughout the year. While this model ensures participation opportunities for all regions, it also limits cross-regional competitive exchanges. Currently, about 60% of schools nationwide can actually participate in these events, with significantly more participating teams from eastern regions compared to western ones. The participating schools show a wide disparity in competitive abilities, leading to a trend of polarization.

### 5.3 Insufficient Teaching Staff

Professional Heball coaches play a crucial role in the promotion and teaching of this sport, and the strength of the teaching staff determines the overall level of school physical education. In August 2016, Beijing hosted the first Heball teacher training session, attended by 30 participants, including 21 graduate students from universities and 9 primary and secondary school teachers, thus building up a professional teaching force for Heball promotion [7]. In July 2024, a Heball coach training course was held in Tianjin, granting Level Two Instructor qualifications to 19 trainees and Level Three Instructor qualifications to 49 trainees. In December 2024, another Heball coaching course held at Guangxi University awarded Level Three Heball Instructor titles to 102 participants. From the above data, we can see that Heball coach training is mainly concentrated in Beijing, Tianjin, Changchun, Xining, Nanning, and other places. Although the number of Heball coach training sessions has increased in recent years, there remains a structural shortage of Heball coaches in basic education, indicating a clear tension between the demand for professional instructors and the needs of school-based implementation.

### 5.4 Insufficient Attention from Government Departments and Schools

Currently, He Ball falls under the category of social sports, and its promotion mainly relies on the social sports guidance centers under the provincial and municipal sports bureaus to advance related work. As He Ball is an emerging ethnic sport, some decision-making entities have certain cognitive biases about its intrinsic value during the promotion process, resulting in lagging policy resource allocation and institutional guarantees. This specifically manifests as insufficient special funding allocations and incentive policies. He Ball activities are currently concentrated mostly in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei and Northeast regions. In some ethnic minority areas, due to the influence of local cultural customs, most places carry out local characteristic sports projects, which constrains the promotion of He Ball. Nowadays, He Ball shows significant differences between schools in the north and south, east and west. This phenomenon adversely affects the nationwide promotion of He Ball in primary and secondary schools.

## 6. Strategies for Promoting He Ball in Primary and Secondary Schools

### 6.1 School-Based Adaptation of He Ball and Strengthening Curriculum System Construction

Incorporating He Ball into the school physical education curriculum system reflects a deep-seated need for the sustainable development of traditional sports. Importantly, the "core competency orientation" concept and the "five educations integration" ideology advocated by the "Compulsory Education Physical Education and Health Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)" require such innovative practices for implementation. He Ball features modern transformation characteristics and has completed a paradigm shift for traditional sports through innovative modifications in rule systems and technical-tactical aspects. The integration of traditional Chinese cultural courses can be attempted in combination with He Ball teaching. Through this model, students' cohesion and appeal towards sports culture will significantly increase, and this interdisciplinary teaching approach can effectively promote the inheritance and promotion of excellent traditional culture. Systematic knowledge transmission during the development process of He Ball is indispensable, directly affecting students' recognition and enthusiasm for participation. Learning physical skills and cultural theory courses should be implemented in stages with differentiated teaching. Students' basic technical levels will gradually improve as teaching progresses, achieving the teaching goal of unifying skill learning and application. This is where the value of the "competition-driven learning, learning through competition" model lies.

### 6.2 Strengthening the Teaching Staff in Primary and Secondary Schools and Improving Grassroots Coaching Levels

In the process of promoting the development of field hockey in primary and secondary schools, strengthening the construction of field hockey teaching staff has become a crucial link. The number of field hockey teachers can be increased through various channels, such as adding field hockey-related theoretical and practical courses in the physical education majors of normal universities to cultivate specialized talents and improve the basic skills of primary and secondary school teachers in field hockey. For in-service teachers, schools should strongly support teachers in attending relevant basic skills and knowledge training. When social institutions organize coaching training, they must strictly formulate related coaching certification mechanisms, fully considering the working hours of in-service teachers to ensure their participation rate. Schools should establish a dedicated promotion and selection mechanism to encourage teachers' enthusiasm for participation in learning.

### 6.3 Improve the Construction of Competition and Activity Systems

In primary and secondary education, the systematic construction of field hockey competition and activity systems has significant positive effects on the popularization of the sport and the physical and mental development of young people. A complete competition system including class leagues, grade challenge matches, and inter-school exchange games can be established. For younger students, skill-based

events with simplified rules can be appropriately conducted, during which relevant cultural knowledge is disseminated, fostering cultural identity and basic athletic literacy. For older students, more competitive team 对抗 forms are worth promoting, enhancing practical abilities and reinforcing team cooperation awareness simultaneously. It is necessary to regularly organize inter-school friendly matches, breaking geographical limitations to enable cultural exchange and technical 切磋, effectively broadening students' cognitive horizons and increasing interaction frequency among schools. In terms of constructing an activity system, regular in-school training, holiday training, and teacher training can improve the overall level of field hockey in schools. Regularly holding field hockey cultural festivals can popularize related knowledge while enhancing students' interest and identification with the sport. Organizing drawing competitions related to field hockey allows students to depict their envisioned scenes of the sport, further deepening their understanding and passion for it.

### 6.4 Create a Cultural Atmosphere to Promote Traditional Culture Dissemination

The new media era is an age of collision of new ideas, emergence of new perspectives, and deep integration of new technologies<sup>[8]</sup>. At the level of promoting sports activities in primary and secondary schools, cultural promotion and brand building processes hold non-negligible importance. Cultural elements such as the concept of harmony, collective cooperation awareness, and the spirit of fair competition within the sport need to be systematically explored and organized. These elements should be fully integrated into the framework of campus culture construction. Full use should be made of various campus communication channels, including but not limited to platforms like WeChat Official Accounts, short video apps, school broadcasting systems, bulletin boards, and school publications. Teachers and students can promote the inheritance of China's traditional excellent culture and create a strong sports culture atmosphere by carrying out cultural exchange activities about the history and rule evolution of the sport.

## 7. Conclusion

As an emerging ethnic sport, Heqiu plays a significant role in implementing the "Sports Power" and "Integration of Sports and Education" strategies. It is also an important part of building a new ecosystem for campus sports through cultural empowerment, with its embedded traditional cultural characteristics aligning closely with the current urgent need to strengthen "cultural confidence." Therefore, promoting Heqiu in primary and secondary schools can better inherit and promote teenagers' confidence in Chinese traditional culture and their sense of national identity. Currently, the promotion of Heqiu in society is burgeoning like mushrooms after rain, having initially formed a scale; however, there is still a lack of experience and theoretical foundation for its promotion in primary and secondary schools, which fully reflects both the significant opportunities and challenges for ethnic sports under the current educational background. There are still some issues in the promotion process of Heqiu in primary and secondary schools, which can be addressed through the following ways: (1) Localizing Heqiu programs and

strengthening curriculum system construction; (2) Enhancing the teaching staff in primary and secondary schools and improving grassroots coaching standards; (3) Improving event and activity system construction; (4) Creating a cultural atmosphere and promoting traditional cultural dissemination. While learning Heqiu, students can better inherit and promote China's excellent traditional culture, injecting new vitality into school sports.

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