

Current Status and Analysis of the Physical Education Major in the Chengdu–Chongqing Region

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Abstract: This study examines undergraduate Physical Education (PE) programs in universities within the Chengdu–Chongqing Economic Circle. Through an investigation of development trajectories, talent cultivation, resource allocation, and program construction, the study identifies salient features and challenges. Findings indicate notable imbalances in program distribution, significant disparities in resource allocation, and a high degree of homogeneity in training objectives. In the context of regional coordinated development, the PE major faces intensified inter-institutional competition, insufficient internationalization, and limited depth of interdisciplinary integration.

Keywords: Chengdu–Chongqing region; twin-city economic circle; physical education major; status analysis

1. Introduction

In January 2020, at the Sixth Meeting of the Central Financial and Economic Affairs Commission, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized that advancing the construction of the Chengdu–Chongqing Economic Circle is vital to fostering a new growth pole for high-quality development in Western China [1]. In October of the following year, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council officially issued the Outline for the Construction Plan of the Chengdu–Chongqing Economic Circle [2], and subsequently elevated it to a major national regional strategy in the report to the 20th National Congress. Situated at the intersection of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Yangtze River Economic Belt, the Chengdu–Chongqing Economic Circle, by virtue of its core geographic position and advanced economic base, has been tasked with developing into a nationally influential economic center, a science and technology innovation hub, and a livable area offering high-quality life [3].

Against this backdrop, sports development—central to enhancing quality of life and advancing the Healthy China initiative—assumes particular significance for the Chengdu–Chongqing Economic Circle. With the deepening of the Healthy China strategy and the rise of nationwide fitness, the sports industry has continued to expand, driving growing demand for sports professionals. As a primary channel for cultivating such professionals, university PE programs constitute a foundational element in the sports talent pipeline and bear directly on the quality and sustainability of regional sports development. This study analyzes the current status of undergraduate PE programs in the Chengdu–Chongqing region and explores the opportunities and challenges these programs face under the twin-city strategy.

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2. Current Development of Physical Education Programs in the Chengdu–Chongqing Region

2.1. Distribution of Institutions and the Status of Talent Cultivation

Program distribution: According to survey data, there are 23 public universities in the region offering undergraduate PE majors, of which 15 are located in Chengdu and its surrounding areas (65%) and 8 in Chongqing (35%). Geographically, eight universities within the core urban area of Chengdu offer PE programs, while seven universities are located in surrounding cities such as Miyang, Nanchong, Dazhou, Leshan, Yibin, and Neijiang. In Chongqing, five universities are situated in the main urban area, with three in suburban areas including Yongchuan, Fuling, and Wanzhou. This distribution pattern reveals a clear imbalance in program placement, with Chengdu holding a numerical advantage. From a population perspective, Chongqing has approximately 32 million residents, whereas Chengdu and its surrounding areas have around 64 million; the number of universities with PE programs roughly aligns with this demographic ratio. Nonetheless, the uneven distribution has resulted in disparities in resource allocation and talent cultivation that warrant further investigation.

Enrollment scale: With respect to PE undergraduate enrollment, Chengdu accounts for approximately 8600 students, compared to about 2800 in Chongqing—roughly three times as many in Chengdu. Although Chengdu has seven more institutions than Chongqing, the magnitude of the enrollment gap suggests that Chengdu has adopted a more expansive admissions strategy. However, in terms of alignment with population base and talent cultivation needs, Chengdu does not demonstrate a pronounced advantage.

2.2. Faculty Strength and Research Capacity

Faculty composition: Survey results indicate that Chongqing universities employ approximately 416 faculty members in PE programs, while Chengdu institutions employ about 806, giving Chengdu a clear advantage in aggregate size. Regarding high-level talent, Chengdu has 131 doctoral degree holders and 88 full professors, compared to Chongqing's 88 and 55, respectively, suggesting a stronger position for Chengdu in attracting and nurturing senior talent. However, when adjusted by the number of institutions in each area, the differences narrow considerably. The average number of PE faculty per institution is 52.3 in Chongqing and 53.7 in Chengdu. Average counts of doctoral degree holders are 11.0 in Chongqing and 8.7 in Chengdu; master's degree holders are 32.2 in Chongqing and 34.1 in Chengdu; full professors are 6.9 in Chongqing and 5.9 in Chengdu; associate professors are 19.2 in Chongqing and 18.7 in Chengdu. On a per-institution basis, Chongqing surpasses Chengdu in three indicators—senior academic rank and doctoral degree holders—suggesting relatively higher faculty quality in Chongqing's PE programs.

Research output and program construction: Chongqing institutions host approximately 38 national-level or philosophy and social sciences projects, whereas Chengdu hosts about 46. At the provincial/ministerial level, Chongqing accounts for around 235 projects versus about 220 in Chengdu. Chongqing has published at least 130 monographs or textbooks, while Chengdu has at least 150. Although Chengdu shows a slight advantage in national-level projects and monograph/textbook output, when institutional counts are considered, Chongqing demonstrates higher average research productivity. In terms of program construction, among Chongqing's eight universities, three host national first-class PE majors (including construction sites) and two host provincial first-class majors, comprising 63% of Chongqing's institutions. In Chengdu's 15 universities, three host national first-class and three host provincial first-class majors (40% of Chengdu's institutions). This indicates a relative advantage for Chongqing in program quality.

Training objectives across institutions: Both regions' institutions exhibit commonalities alongside distinct emphases. Common features include: (1) holistic cultivation across moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor dimensions, aligned with the needs of basic education; (2) a primary focus on preparing PE teachers for primary and secondary schools, with emphasis on teaching and practical competencies; and (3) attention to practical abilities and innovation, and to the integration of theory and practice. Overall, however, the training objectives remain highly homogeneous, concentrating on preparing school PE teachers and application-oriented sports professionals. The lack of distinctive positioning and differentiation risks weakening institutional competitiveness, impeding the formation of unique program brands and core strengths, and failing to meet

increasingly diverse societal needs.

Note: The above materials are derived from publicly available online sources and expert interviews prior to September 2024.

3. Analysis of the Current Status of PE Programs in the Chengdu–Chongqing Region

3.1. *Regional Imbalances*

High spatial concentration: The majority of PE programs are concentrated in the core urban areas of Chengdu and Chongqing. While this concentration facilitates efficient resource utilization and inter-program synergies, it also leads to pronounced shortages of PE resources in other cities and counties across the region.

Significant disparities in resource allocation: Chengdu shows clear advantages in the number of program sites, student scale, and total faculty headcount, whereas Chongqing performs relatively better in faculty quality, average research output, and program construction quality—though the gaps are modest. These differences reflect divergent strategies: Chengdu tends toward expansion, emphasizing quantitative growth, whereas Chongqing focuses more on connotative development and quality enhancement.

Imbalance between competitive sports and educational development: Chengdu has a marked advantage in facilities for elite sports and the training of high-level teams, closely linked to specialized institutions such as Chengdu Sport University. By contrast, Chongqing places relatively greater emphasis on pedagogy and research capacity. This imbalance reflects historical trajectories and distinct strategic orientations in program development across the two areas.

3.2. *Challenges in Talent Cultivation*

Homogeneity in training objectives: A high degree of homogeneity persists in training objectives, with most institutions prioritizing the cultivation of primary and secondary school PE teachers. While this aligns with prevailing labor market demands, the diversification of the sports industry and the advancement of the Healthy China strategy are expanding needs for a broader array of sports professionals. Excessive homogeneity hinders responsiveness to market diversity and constrains institutions from establishing distinctive profiles and brand advantages.

Overlap in institutional strengths: There is substantial overlap in institutional strengths across the region, particularly in aerobics, wushu, soccer, and basketball. This duplication leads to resource redundancies and intensifies intra-regional competition. Meanwhile, insufficient emphasis on local traditional sports constrains the development of distinctive program characteristics.

Curricular misalignment with societal needs: In some institutions, curricula remain relatively traditional, with insufficient coverage of emerging domains such as smart sports, sports rehabilitation, and sports management. Limited interdisciplinary integration hampers the cultivation of versatile professionals aligned with contemporary industry needs. In particular, curricular offerings in sports technology, exercise and health management, and international sports event organization remain underdeveloped, constraining the supply of high-level talent under the twin-city strategy.

3.3. *Constraints on Regional Collaboration*

Intensified regional competition: Under the twin-city initiative, inter-institutional collaboration presents both opportunities and challenges. Insufficient cooperation impedes resource sharing and complementary advantages, while competition for high-quality educational resources, student enrollment, and employment outcomes is intensifying. In the absence of robust coordination mechanisms, the risk of vicious competition rises, which undermines coordinated regional development of PE education.

Insufficient internationalization and educational diversification: Building an internationally influential metropolitan area is a core goal of the Chengdu–Chongqing Economic Circle, raising the bar for internationalization in PE education. Yet current shortcomings are evident in internationalized curricula, cross-cultural exchange, and joint programs. Few institutions offer PE-specific international courses or opportunities for international exchange and internships, which constrains students' global outlook and cross-cultural competencies.

Incomplete cross-regional cooperation mechanisms: Although the Chengdu–Chongqing University Alliance was established in 2020, cross-regional collaboration in PE remains nascent. Mechanisms for cross-institutional course selection, credit recognition, and faculty sharing are not fully in place, and collaborative efforts in practice base co-construction and joint research remain shallow. These limitations restrict the optimal allocation and sharing of PE educational resources in the two regions [4].

4. Conclusions

The development of PE programs in the Chengdu – Chongqing region exhibits pronounced regional characteristics and imbalances. Chengdu holds advantages in program distribution, student enrollment, and total faculty size, with strategies oriented toward scale expansion and elite sports performance. Chongqing demonstrates relative strengths in faculty quality, average research productivity, and program construction quality, focusing more on connotative development and the enhancement of teaching and research capacities. Under the twin-city strategy, PE programs face several challenges, including homogeneous training objectives, repetitive construction of institutional strengths, curricular misalignment with societal needs, and insufficient internationalization, alongside imperfect mechanisms for regional collaboration.

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Data Availability Statement

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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