

Analysis of the Current Development of the Youth Amateur Basketball Training Market and Optimization Strategies

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Abstract: To examine the current conditions of youth amateur basketball training institutions, this study takes the basketball training market in Fuyang City, Anhui Province, as an illustrative case. A mixed-method design was adopted, integrating literature review, questionnaire surveys, and expert interviews. The analysis focused on three stakeholder groups: training institutions, participating students and their parents, and institutional managers and coaches. The findings indicate that, although the market has continued to expand, venue and facility conditions have improved, and demand among students and parents has increased, several constraints persist. These include a limited range of business models and financing channels, insufficiently effective governmental oversight, tensions between academic commitments and training participation, shortages of personnel with management and instructional expertise, and inadequate provision of theoretical knowledge in training programs. In response, the study proposes the following measures: refining operational models and introducing broader social resources; strengthening governmental regulatory mechanisms; advancing the integration of sports and education through enhanced school-enterprise collaboration; establishing professional talent teams and developing the coaching workforce; and increasing the teaching of theoretical content. These recommendations are intended to provide a conceptual basis for regulators and institutional operators seeking to improve the basketball training market.

Keywords: Basketball Training; Sports Industry; Coaches; Adolescents

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1. Introduction

In recent years, national economic development has continued, and household consumption attitudes have shifted accordingly. In addition to subjects commonly regarded as core academic areas (e.g., Chinese, mathematics, and English), parents have shown growing interest in cultivating children's individual skills. Attention is no longer directed solely toward academic performance; greater emphasis is also placed on physical fitness, as well as on supporting healthy growth and development. Within this context, family investment in children's participation in physical activity has increased. Following the introduction of the "double reduction" policy, sports training providers of various types have expanded in number^[1]. Among these programs, basketball is widely favored by adolescents. Participation in basketball can contribute to physical fitness and, at the same time, supports the development of communication skills, teamwork, and volitional qualities. Youth amateur basketball training institutions therefore serve multiple functions, including improving youth physical fitness, fostering sustained exercise habits, cultivating competitive talent, and expanding the basketball-participating population^[2].

They also provide an important extracurricular extension to school-based basketball instruction^[3]. Against this background, the present study adopts optimization strategies for the basketball training market as its analytical entry point, investigates and analyzes the current state of the basketball training market in Fuyang City, and proposes corresponding strategies aimed at supporting orderly market development^[4].

1.1 Research Subjects

The primary focus of this study is the optimization strategies for the basketball training market in Fuyang City, Anhui Province. The survey sample comprised five basketball training institutions, Shandong Sibote Sports, Shandong Huiyang Sports, Aoguan Basketball Club, Yanshan Basketball Club, and Hupu Basketball Club, as well as 100 trainees, 30 coaches, and 6 managerial staff members.

1.2 Research Methods

(1) Literature Review

Using “adolescents,” “basketball training,” and “sports industry” as keywords, 57 articles were retrieved from the CNKI database to provide a theoretical basis for the study.

(2) Questionnaire Survey

Field visits and on-site investigation were conducted at Anhui Sibote Sports, Fuyang Huiyang Sports, Aoguan Basketball Club, Shuanglong Basketball Club, and Hupu Basketball Club. Based on this work, three instruments were developed: the Coach Questionnaire, the Management Staff Questionnaire, and the Trainee Questionnaire. The surveys were distributed to 6 managerial staff members, 30 coaches, and 100 trainees aged 6–12 years, and subsequently collected.

(3) Expert Interviews

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with managers and coaches from the five basketball training institutions to obtain relevant data and supporting materials for the study.

3. Results and Analysis

3.1 Current Development of the Youth Basketball Training Market in Fuyang City

Basketball training institutions in Fuyang City have become an important extracurricular extension of school physical education. To some extent, they have supported the development of regional basketball, while also contributing to youth physical development, the expansion of basketball participation, and the promotion of national fitness and mass sports^[5]. Overall, demand for basketball training is relatively high. Most institutions operate their own venues, and the basic conditions of facilities are generally in place. At the same time, as basketball training is an emerging sector, a range of issues has accompanied its rapid growth, which may affect the orderly development of these institutions^[6].

(1) A Single Business Model and Limited Diversification of Funding Sources

The survey indicates that most basketball training institutions in Fuyang City mainly offer basketball interest-based classes. In contrast, programs such as early-childhood basketball courses, one-to-one basketball coaching, physical education training oriented toward the secondary school entrance examination, and advanced technical–tactical courses are offered less frequently. Market segmentation therefore remains limited, and some trainees’ needs are not met^[7]. In addition, as adolescents develop, participation in multiple sports can support the development of diverse physical functions; however, many institutions provide basketball training as their only service. This limited product portfolio is associated with an incomplete profit model^[8], relatively low profitability, and a pattern in which larger institutions may generate less profit. Revenue is derived primarily from trainees’ tuition and training fees, which results in a narrow funding structure and limited input from social capital. As a consequence, funding is less stable, and it is difficult to allocate sufficient resources to coach development and to facility upgrading^[9].

(2) Insufficient Government Oversight and the Need for Further Market Standardization

In recent years, policies promoting mass participation in sport have coincided with the expansion of amateur basketball training institutions. Corresponding supervisory arrangements from relevant government bodies, however, have not been established in a systematic manner, and the policy and regulatory framework remains incomplete, leaving the market in a less regulated condition^[10]. With rising demand and associated economic returns, many institutions have entered the market.

A portion of these providers lack the required qualifications and have not completed registration with relevant authorities; their venues, facilities, and coaching teams may also be unable to ensure training services that meet expected standards. In this context, a low market-entry threshold and limited oversight can make training quality difficult to assure^[11], which is not conducive to the orderly development of the basketball training market. Pricing mechanisms are also subject to limited regulation. To compete for enrollment, many institutions reduce per-class fees and engage in price-based competition; costs are then offset by reducing coaching expenditures and lowering venue and facility standards. This form of competition can weaken course content and product quality. In addition, unified certification standards for coaches across institutions are not in place. From the perspective of parents, coaches' claimed experience is difficult to verify and is often presented only through institutional promotion, which limits the basis for assessing coaching competence. Government agencies have also provided limited guidance for collaboration between schools and private sports training institutions. Schools often have access to large student populations and comparatively complete and specialized facilities, whereas private institutions may have coaching resources aligned with specialized training needs. When cooperation is limited, implementation of the "integration of sports and education" approach is constrained^[12].

(3) The Academic–Training Conflict Constrains Sustained Participation

Based on the preceding findings, ages 12–16 represent a period in which adolescents' physical functions and sport-specific skills are expected to develop, and this age group would, in principle, be positioned to participate frequently in organized training. The observed pattern does not align with this expectation. A key explanation lies in the tension between China's sport system and education system, often described as the "academic–training conflict" (xuexun maodun). Over the course of sports development in China, this conflict has remained a persistent governance and implementation issue. As competitive standards rise across teams at different levels, athletes are often required to allocate substantial time to sport-specific technical training and physical conditioning, which creates a conflict between training demands and schooling. Within schools, although student participation resources are extensive, examination-oriented pressures tend to shift institutional priorities toward progression rates, and organized sports training receives comparatively less attention. In summary, the education and sport systems have not formed a shared understanding of talent-development objectives, and differences remain in their respective targets. Consequently, adolescents aged 12–16—typically regarded as a key period for athlete development—often face academic pressures associated with transitions such as entry into junior secondary school and the secondary school entrance examination. Parents may therefore be required to choose between training and academic study. The survey indicates that trainee attrition is highest in the 12–16 age group, with excessive academic pressure reported as the main reason. Some trainees who have undergone long-term development or who demonstrate strong potential also discontinue training in response to advancement-related pressures. Under market conditions, this constrains institutions' capacity to sustain higher-level training programs and leaves unmet demand for professionalized pathways; more importantly, it reduces the continuity of reserve talent development.

(4) Shortages of Specialized Personnel Constrain Institutional Sustainability

Regarding institutional management, most managers in basketball training institutions are former athletes or graduates from sport-related university programs. While they may possess teaching experience and disciplinary knowledge, they may lack training in management and economics, which can limit their capacity to assess market conditions and diversify marketing approaches. Basketball training also has sector-specific features; general management knowledge alone may be insufficient without an understanding of basketball as a sport and its training logic. From this perspective, institutions lack senior, interdisciplinary personnel who combine management expertise with basketball-specific theoretical knowledge. With respect to coaching, the survey suggests that coaches in Fuyang City's basketball training institutions face challenges that include comparatively lower formal educational attainment, incomplete theoretical preparation, recruitment channels that are not well aligned with professional requirements, and underdeveloped training and development systems. These conditions can affect course quality and, in turn, influence longer-term institutional development. Competition between organizations is closely linked to competition for human resources. When the market is at an early stage and institutions rely on a relatively uniform operational model, the effects of staffing constraints may be less visible. As the market shifts toward greater diversification

and the sector continues to evolve, limitations in personnel structure become an increasingly important factor shaping institutional development.

(5) Insufficient Theoretical Instruction Affects the Development of Comprehensive Competencies

In the curriculum of basketball training institutions, many coaches focus primarily on sport-specific skills and physical conditioning. Some coaches incorporate game-based activities to support engagement during training. The proportion of content devoted to theoretical instruction, however, is limited. Many parents also have limited understanding of basketball, and they tend to prioritize improvements in children's skills and physical performance. Under these conditions, coaches in community-based training settings may place less emphasis on delivering necessary theoretical knowledge. Over time, trainees may improve in fundamental techniques and fitness indicators, yet their knowledge of competition rules and tactical principles may not develop to the same extent. As a result, although many trainees acquire a certain level of skill and physical capacity, their performance in formal games may not correspond to these capacities, particularly in situations that require rule application and tactical decision-making.

3.2 Optimization Strategies for the Youth Basketball Training Market

(1) Refining Operational Models and Broadening Funding Sources

Basketball training institutions can pursue commercial cooperation with social enterprises, with the aim of diversifying their funding structures. Through resource integration and the introduction of external resources, institutions may obtain additional funding channels, which can be allocated to coach training, course improvement, and organizational expansion. Capital participation may also facilitate the entry of personnel with experience in economic and managerial roles into the basketball training sector; in this sense, cross-sector resource inflows into sports training may constitute a direction for future sectoral development. In terms of product design, institutions can strengthen market segmentation rather than focusing only on interest-based classes. Training programs can be developed for different potential client groups, with course content and formats adjusted to reflect varied needs. A more diversified portfolio of sports training services can respond to consumers' interest in multiple activities, support adolescents' overall physical development, and encourage repeat consumption among members, thereby reducing costs associated with re-acquiring clients. In Fuyang City, many basketball training institutions have limited venue capacity for adding new sports. Under such constraints, institutions can explore cooperative models with providers in other sports to share resources and meet multi-sport demand; for example, collaborations with swimming training providers during summer vacation represent one feasible approach for increasing operational diversity.

(2) Improving Government Regulatory Mechanisms and Standardizing Market Order

As the basketball training market expands, government agencies can establish corresponding market-entry and raise entry thresholds. This can include strict review of institutional qualifications, together with explicit standards for venues and facilities, coach qualifications, course content, and safety management. Training institutions can be registered and placed on record, while institutions that do not meet entry criteria can be removed from the market; at the same time, enterprises with adequate capacity and a sense of social responsibility can be encouraged to participate in the sector. In coach management, unified standards can be developed for qualification review, in-post training, teaching practice, and evaluation of instructional quality. Such standards can reduce the incidence of institutions or coaches operating without required credentials and can align staffing with role requirements. Market governance can be strengthened on a continuing basis through oversight, incentives, and guidance, so that institutions move toward more standardized practices in qualifications, competition behavior, staffing standards, and teaching quality. This can support competition that is oriented toward quality rather than price-based escalation. In addition, cooperation between public schools and non-public sports education institutions can be promoted, which may increase the utilization of school sports facilities and reduce the underuse of educational resources, thereby supporting market development within an ordered framework.

(3) Advancing the Integration of Sports and Education and Strengthening School-Enterprise Collaboration

Misalignment between the education system and the sport system in talent-development arrangements is commonly regarded as one factor shaping the development of youth basketball training. From this perspective, the "integration of sports and education" framework provides a policy pathway for addressing related constraints. As a direction for future development,

training institutions and schools can strengthen communication and cooperation so that coordination between school-based sport and external training becomes more workable in practice. For schools, training time can be arranged in a way that avoids excessive encroachment on academic class time while also ensuring that scheduled training is not compressed. Training efficiency can be improved so that students obtain gains within limited training time. Social resources may also be used to help address the academic-training conflict. In the context of the “double reduction” policy, schools may introduce external sports resources on a paid basis to meet students’ needs for skill development; this may include bringing qualified, reputable organizations or training institutions into schools, provided that they meet compliance requirements and have no record of violations. For enterprises and training institutions, active collaboration with schools can enable fuller use of school sports venues and facilities, which may reduce underutilization of venue resources. Cooperation can also facilitate the provision of training programs that align with students’ development needs, support school sport development, and strengthen pathways for talent identification and progression. In addition, engagement within school contexts can shape brand recognition among parents and students. On this basis, institutions can focus on improving instructional quality, developing coaching capacity, and establishing a brand image aligned with service standards.

(4)Building Professional Talent Teams and Enhancing Coaching Capacity

As the individuals responsible for institutional management and operations, managers influence whether basketball training institutions can achieve sustainable profitability. Their ability to identify market trends in a timely manner, design marketing approaches, and coordinate operational arrangements constitutes a basis for assessing managerial competence^[13]. For this reason, managers in basketball training institutions need sport-specific theoretical knowledge as well as professional training in management and economics, and they are expected to function as interdisciplinary personnel who understand both management and sport. Institutions can improve managerial capacity through two routes: providing re-training for current managers and recruiting dedicated professionals with relevant management expertise.

Coaches, as organizers and facilitators of training activities, play a leading role in program delivery. In Fuyang City, constraints reported for coaches in basketball training institutions include relatively low entry thresholds, loose management arrangements, unstable recruitment channels, and limited internal development systems; these factors have become important conditions shaping institutional development. From this perspective, the development of amateur basketball training institutions requires a stable and professional coaching team.

To strengthen coaches’ professional and practical competence, several measures can be considered. A regulated entry threshold can be established, with systematic review of coaching qualifications and clear requirements for educational attainment among practitioners. Credential-based employment can be implemented, and coaches may be required to hold at least one certificate recognized by education or sport administrative authorities, such as a coaching qualification certificate issued by the Chinese Basketball Association or a physical education teacher qualification certificate. A stable recruitment channel also supports improvements in staffing. Institutions may cooperate with universities and conduct campus recruitment. This approach can increase matching accuracy, as candidate information provided by universities enables targeted selection; in addition, candidates trained in higher education contexts often possess relevant theoretical preparation and practical experience. At the same time, such recruitment arrangements can expand employment opportunities for graduates and provide discipline-aligned students with a setting to apply what they have learned, thereby offering support for graduate employment outcomes. After hiring, a structured coach training system can support continued improvement in instructional practice. At present, coach development in Fuyang City’s basketball training institutions relies mainly on internal training. Although internal training can address institution-specific teaching issues, it may be constrained by the institution’s highest in-house coaching level. In response, institutions can organize periodic external training, learn from high-level institutions in other regions, develop a unified syllabus and teaching outline, and standardize age-appropriate training content across developmental stages. This can reduce the practice of adding training content that does not match trainees’ age and development in order to display short-term outcomes. In parallel, cooperation with university schools of physical education and basketball associations can be pursued to strengthen coaches’ theoretical knowledge and consolidate in-service training arrangements. In teacher management, an instructional quality review mechanism also constitutes an operational component.

Through systematic review, coaches can identify their strengths and limitations, which can inform instructional improvement. Institutions may evaluate coaches using indicators such as attendance, teaching hours completed, course development quality, student training outcomes, and parent feedback. On this basis, reward and sanction mechanisms, as well as recognition activities, can be established to support coaches' engagement in training and professional learning.

(5) Strengthening Theoretical Instruction to Support Broad-Based Development

Theory provides a reference for guiding practice. In routine training, coaches can integrate technical–tactical training, physical conditioning, and theoretical instruction within a coherent curriculum^[14]. Basketball-related theory can be taught in a systematic manner so that trainees can apply it in practice. This content may include basketball culture—such as the origin of the sport, sports ethics, and discussion of future development trends—as well as the application of technical skills, tactical approaches, and conditioning methods, including common errors and correction strategies. Through such instruction, students can learn when to use particular techniques, when to initiate specific tactical patterns, and how to compare the advantages and limitations of alternative options. This can support understanding of technical and tactical concepts and may also contribute to engagement in physical training. On this basis, coaches can explain relevant rules so that students understand what constitutes a violation, what constitutes a foul, and how to participate within the permitted scope of the rules, enabling more comprehensive mastery of competition regulations. Injury prevention and protection methods can also be included. For example, after acute injuries occur, trainees can be introduced to the “PRICE” principle as an approach to immediate response, so that they understand self-protection during exercise and basic steps for urgent handling following injury. By communicating the role of warm-up activities before training or competition and cool-down activities afterward, coaches can guide students to conduct preparation and recovery routines proactively; while supporting interest in sport participation, this approach can also contribute to the formation of exercise habits^[15].

4. Conclusion

With the ongoing expansion of integrated sectors such as sports training and education, the basketball training market in Fuyang City has also developed accordingly. At the same time, basketball training institutions continue to face issues that require attention, including weaknesses in operational management and the absence of effective oversight. Addressing these constraints through continuous improvement and targeted optimization can support the orderly development of the youth basketball training market. Such efforts may also create conditions for identifying and developing basketball talent in Fuyang City, while providing additional opportunities to extend extracurricular physical activity for primary and secondary school students.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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