

## **Research on the Promotion Path of Flexible Employment of College Students in Sports in the New Media Era**

**Hua Wang**

*Xi'an Physical Education University, Xi'an, Shaanxi, China*

**Abstract:** With the rapid development of new media technologies, China's sports industry and employment market are undergoing profound transformations. This paper focuses on the flexible employment challenges faced by sports majors in the new media era, systematically exploring practical difficulties and improvement pathways through literature analysis, case studies, and survey interviews. The research reveals that while the new media age has created diverse flexible employment opportunities such as content creation, technical services, and e-commerce operations for sports students, they still face multiple challenges including skill-market mismatch, information asymmetry, constraints from traditional employment concepts, and inadequate policy support systems. To address these issues, the paper proposes four improvement dimensions: 1) Establishing a "school-enterprise collaboration + industry-education integration" talent cultivation mechanism to innovate training models; 2) Enhancing new media skills training to improve students' digital literacy and interdisciplinary capabilities; 3) Optimizing flexible employment policy support systems to improve job environments; 4) Building specialized employment service platforms to facilitate precise job-demand matching. The study further suggests coordinated efforts from four key stakeholders (government, universities, enterprises, and students) to jointly construct a supportive ecosystem for sports majors' flexible employment in the new media era, providing theoretical references and practical pathways for promoting high-quality employment in this field.

**Keywords:** Sports College Students; Flexible Employment; New Media Era; Employment Path; School-Enterprise Collaboration

### **1. Introduction**

As we enter the third decade of the 21st century, the rapid advancement of new media technologies is reshaping every sector of the socio-economy, and the sports industry is no exception. The rise of new media formats like short videos, live streaming, and social media has not only transformed how sports content is disseminated but also created innovative business models and job opportunities in the industry. Against this backdrop, the employment landscape for sports-related college students has undergone fundamental changes. Meanwhile, demand for traditional sports industry positions has grown slowly, while competition for conventional roles like physical education teachers and professional coaches has intensified, exacerbating the supply-demand imbalance.

The advent of the new media era has created new opportunities for sports majors in employment. Emerging professions such as live-streaming sales, sports video production, online fitness coaching, and new media event management have emerged, generating abundant flexible employment opportunities. These new career models feature flexible working hours, remote work options, and diversified income streams, aligning well with the professional values of today's sports graduates. However, they still face challenges in seizing these opportunities, including inadequate new media skills, information asymmetry in the market, constraints from traditional employment concepts, and an underdeveloped policy support system.

To address these challenges, scholars worldwide have conducted relevant studies. International research primarily examines shifts in talent demand within the digital-era sports industry and the impact of new media on sports employment. Domestic studies, however, predominantly focus on employment surveys of sports majors and the application of new media in sports careers. Yet most existing research

remains at the descriptive level, with limited systematic approaches to enhancing flexible employment for sports undergraduates. This paper aims to fill this research gap by analyzing the current status, challenges, and opportunities of flexible employment among sports undergraduates in the new media era. Through systematic research, we propose actionable strategies to promote high-quality flexible employment for sports majors, offering both theoretical insights and practical guidance<sup>[1]</sup>.

## **2. The Current Situation and Characteristics of Flexible Employment of Sports College Students in the New Media Era**

### **2.1 Analysis of the Supply and Demand Structure of the Employment Market for Sports Majors**

The employment market for college students in sports shows obvious structural contradictions. On one hand, the number of graduates in sports-related majors continues to grow. According to the "2024 China College Student Employment Report", the scale of graduates in sports-related majors has increased by about 20% over the past five years, reaching around 120,000 in 2024. On the other hand, the demand for positions in traditional sports industries has limited growth. The annual growth rate of positions for physical education teachers in primary and secondary schools is only 3%-5%, while positions in professional sports teams, sports bureaus, and other institutional roles are approaching saturation.

However, there is a strong demand for talent in the emerging sports industry. According to the "2023 China Sports Industry Talent Development Report" released by the General Administration of Sport of China, the talent gap in fields such as sports new media operations, sports e-commerce, sports event planning, and health management exceeds 300,000. In particular, the annual growth rate of talent demand for new media-related positions, such as sports short video directors, live streaming operations, and community management, exceeds 40%. This mismatch between supply and demand provides market space for flexible employment for sports college students<sup>[2]</sup>.

### **2.2 New Forms of Flexible Employment in Sports Empowered by New Media**

New media technology has created diversified

flexible employment forms for college students majoring in sports, which can be divided into the following three categories:

**Content creation employment:** This mainly includes sports short video production, sports teaching videos, live commentary of sports events, and sports knowledge popularization. Such employment primarily relies on platforms like TikTok, Kuaishou, Bilibili, and WeChat Video Channel, generating income through methods such as platform traffic sharing, ad placements, knowledge payment, and brand collaborations.

**Skill-based service employment:** This category encompasses online fitness guidance, sports rehabilitation consultation, personal training appointment booking, and sports skill training. Such employment is primarily facilitated through professional platforms like Keep, Yuepaoquan, and Gudong, as well as various appointment mini-programs. Revenue models include per-class fees, membership subscriptions, course sales, and tip income<sup>[3]</sup>.

**E-commerce operation employment:** including live-streaming sales of sports goods, sports equipment reviews, sales of sports IP derivatives, and event ticket promotions. It mainly relies on platforms such as Taobao Live, TikTok e-commerce, Xiaohongshu, and Dewu, generating revenue through sales commissions, slot fees, profits from self-operated products, and promotional fees.

The aforementioned three forms of flexible employment are not isolated but often intersect and integrate in practice. For instance, a sports major graduate may simultaneously serve as a sports instructional video creator, online personal trainer, and sports equipment recommender, achieving diversified income channels.

### **2.3 Typical Case Analysis of Flexible Employment of Sports College Students**

**Case 1:** The "Super Individual Incubation Base" of the School of Physical Education at Shenzhen University. The school collaborated with Zhuhai Haiquan Bay to jointly establish the "Super Individual Incubation Base," transforming courses such as "Golf Cultural Tourism Content Planning" and "New Media Operations" into practical corporate projects. Students can participate in real industry projects during their studies and master practical skills like new media content creation, account operation, and

traffic conversion through a "mentorship" model. In the 2023-2024 academic year, the base successfully incubated 12 student startup teams, with 8 of them accumulating over 100,000 followers on platforms like TikTok and Xiaohongshu, achieving stable monetization of traffic<sup>[4]</sup>.

Case 2: The "Sports Delivery" Door-to-Door Coaching Model. This innovative service model connects sports providers with clients through digital platforms, enabling online booking and home delivery of sports training services. Liu Ziheng, a physical education major at Yunnan Normal University, began taking on basketball coaching assignments for elementary and middle school students through the "Sports Delivery" platform during his spare time. Starting with just three students, he expanded to ten within six months, earning both living expenses and valuable teaching experience.

### **3. Main Difficulties in Flexible Employment of College Students in Sports**

#### **3.1 Structural Mismatch Between Professional Skills and Market Demand**

The current curriculum design for sports majors in higher education institutions shows a significant disconnect from the demands of the new media era. Traditional sports education primarily focuses on theoretical knowledge such as athletic skill training, sports pedagogy, and exercise physiology, while neglecting interdisciplinary competencies including new media operations, content creation, marketing strategies, and data analysis.

The outdated curriculum design has resulted in a narrow knowledge base among sports majors, making them ill-equipped to meet the diverse demands of the market. Take the new media operations role in sports events as an example: professionals in this field need to combine sports expertise, content planning skills, data analysis capabilities, and commercialization expertise. However, graduates from traditional sports programs often possess only one or two of these skills, creating a "skill silo" phenomenon<sup>[5]</sup>.

#### **3.2 Asymmetry of Employment Information and Lack of Service Platform**

Sports students face limited access to flexible employment opportunities. Compared to comprehensive universities, sports colleges lag

behind in developing employment service systems, particularly in providing support for flexible employment through information services, policy consultations, and skill training. There is a lack of specialized service platforms specifically designed for flexible employment in the sports sector. Existing employment service platforms such as Zhaopin and 51job primarily cater to traditional employment, with inadequate functions for categorizing, screening, and recommending flexible job positions. As a result, sports college students struggle to efficiently match suitable flexible employment opportunities through these platforms.

#### **3.3 Traditional Employment Concepts and Limitations in Career Perception**

Traditional employment concepts continue to shape career choices for sports majors. Many students and parents prioritize "stability" as their primary criterion, viewing government positions (e.g., physical education teachers, civil servants) as "proper careers," while flexible employment is perceived as an "unstable" and "unreliable" temporary option. This mindset leads many sports graduates to avoid pursuing flexible employment opportunities even when they possess new media skills<sup>[6]</sup>.

The limitations of career awareness pose another critical challenge. Many sports majors lack understanding of employment opportunities in the new media era, struggling to integrate their athletic expertise with digital platforms to unlock new career possibilities. For instance, students in physical education programs often see only the traditional path of becoming school PE teachers, failing to recognize emerging roles like online fitness instructors or children's fitness course designers.

#### **3.4 Imperfect Policy Support System and Lack of Safeguards**

The policy support system for flexible employment remains underdeveloped. While national and local governments have introduced a series of measures to promote flexible employment among college students, most of these policies are general in nature and lack targeted support for sports-related graduates. For instance, policies such as social security subsidies, entrepreneurship loans, and tax incentives for flexible workers are often less accessible to sports graduates due to unfavorable application requirements and

approval procedures.

The labor rights protection for flexible workers is insufficient. College students engaged in sports-related flexible employment often face challenges such as low contract signing rates, inadequate social insurance coverage, and difficulties in resolving labor disputes. Particularly when providing services like online sports instruction and fitness guidance, the lack of standardized service agreements and dispute resolution mechanisms increases employment risks.

#### **4. The Promotion Path of Flexible Employment for College Students in Sports in the New Media Era**

##### **4.1 Establishing an Educational Mechanism of "Integration of Industry and Education, Collaboration between Schools and Enterprises"**

**Curriculum Restructuring:** Universities should dismantle traditional disciplinary barriers and establish an interdisciplinary curriculum system integrating "Sports + New Media + Business". Specifically, core sports courses should be supplemented with modular modules such as new media operations, short video production, live streaming techniques, sports marketing, and fan economy. It is recommended to allocate 20%-30% of total credits to interdisciplinary courses to cultivate students' interdisciplinary competencies.

**School-enterprise collaborative education:** Promoting collaborative models such as "industry colleges", "micro-specializations", and "order-based classes". For example, sports colleges can collaborate with companies like ByteDance, Tencent Sports, and Keep to jointly offer a micro-specialization in "Sports New Media Operations", where corporate mentors and school teachers co-teach the course. Students can participate in real projects during their studies, achieving a seamless connection between "learning-practice-employment".

##### **4.2 Enhancing New Media Skills Training to Improve Digital Literacy**

**Tiered skill development:** A structured new media training system is designed for students at different grade levels and with varying interests. First-year students focus on mastering fundamental new media literacy and content appreciation. Second-year students advance

their skills in short video production, editing, and copywriting. Third-year students develop advanced competencies in account management, monetization strategies, and business partnerships. Fourth-year students concentrate on practical employment and entrepreneurship. The "Dual-Certificate" System: Encouraging sports majors to obtain industry-recognized professional certifications in new media alongside their academic degrees, such as "New Media Operator," "Short Video Producer," and "Live E-commerce Operator." Universities may recognize these vocational certifications as equivalent to academic credits, thereby enhancing students' learning motivation and employment competitiveness.

**Implementing "Learning through Competition":** Organize and host sports new media innovation and entrepreneurship competitions, such as the "Campus Sports Influencer Contest," "Sports Short Video Creation Competition," and "Sports Live Streaming Sales Challenge." These competitions aim to ignite students' creative passion while providing traffic support and commercialization opportunities for outstanding works.

#### **5. Conclusion and Prospects**

The new media era presents both challenges and opportunities for sports majors in employment. While traditional sports jobs show limited growth and struggle to meet rising graduate demand, the integration of new media technology with the sports industry has spawned diverse flexible employment models, such as content creation, technical services, and e-commerce operations. However, these graduates still face multiple hurdles in seizing these opportunities, including mismatches between their skills and market needs, information asymmetry in job searches, constraints from traditional employment mindsets, and an underdeveloped policy support system.

To address these challenges, this paper proposes a systematic improvement framework: First, universities should redesign their curricula and deepen industry-education collaboration to cultivate versatile sports professionals for the new media era. Second, they must enhance digital literacy training to boost students' technical skills and career competitiveness. Third, governments should refine flexible employment policies to optimize job

opportunities for sports majors. Finally, a four-party employment service system integrating government, universities, enterprises, and students should be established to create synergistic support for sports graduates' flexible employment.

Looking ahead, the integration of sports industries with new media will deepen as 5G, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality advance, while diversified flexible employment models for sports majors emerge. Students should proactively embrace these changes by enhancing their digital literacy and innovation capabilities. Universities must accelerate pedagogical reforms to cultivate sports professionals meeting modern demands, while governments and communities should provide robust policy support and career services. Through coordinated efforts, we can build a thriving ecosystem for sports graduates' flexible employment in the new media era. This not only alleviates employment pressures but also supplies talent for the sports industry's high-quality development, ultimately contributing to building a sports powerhouse.

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