

## Research on the effective application strategy of stratified teaching method in junior high school football teaching

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### Abstract

With the successive introduction and promotion of policies related to "campus football," junior high school football instruction has gradually become an important direction in the reform of physical education curricula, and its importance is increasingly evident. However, individual differences among students in terms of football foundation, physical fitness, and motivation for participation make it difficult for traditional sports teaching models to meet diverse needs. This paper, based on the theory of tiered instruction and combined with practical experiences in junior high school football teaching, systematically explores the concepts, principles, and advantages of tiered instruction. It analyzes existing problems in current teaching practices, argues for its application value, and proposes specific strategies from dimensions such as student stratification, goal setting, content design, method innovation, and evaluation reform. The aim is to provide theoretical references and practical pathways for the reform of junior high school football teaching, thereby promoting the improvement of students' football skills and the development of core sports competencies.

### Keywords

Layered teaching method, junior high school football, teaching strategy.

### 1. Introduction

Soccer is a crucial component of the physical education curriculum in junior high schools, bearing multiple objectives such as fostering students' athletic abilities, teamwork spirit, and willpower. The 2020 Ministry of Education's "Basic Requirements for National Youth Campus Soccer Reform Pilot Zones (Trial)" explicitly states that "all students should be included, with emphasis on teaching according to individual aptitude," highlighting the necessity of tiered instruction[1]. However, traditional junior high school soccer teaching often adopts a uniform lesson plan and synchronized training model, overlooking differences among students in technical foundation, physical fitness levels, and interest preferences. This results in weaker students being left behind and stronger students feeling under-challenged, affecting both teaching efficiency and student motivation. Tiered instruction, through dynamic grouping, differentiated goals, and personalized guidance, offers new solutions to this issue. This study enriches the theoretical application of tiered instruction in specialized sports teaching and broadens the research perspective on campus soccer teaching reform; at the practical level, by exploring specific implementation strategies for tiered instruction, it provides an operational teaching paradigm for frontline teachers, supporting the transformation towards student-centered teaching and promoting the improvement of junior high school soccer teaching quality.

## **2. Overview of two-level teaching method**

### **2.1. The concept of stratified teaching method**

Layered Teaching (Differentiated Instruction) originates from the "School Learning Model" proposed by American educator Carroll in the 1950s. It refers to teachers dividing students into different levels based on their cognitive abilities, learning capabilities, and interests. They then design teaching objectives, content, methods, and evaluation criteria to meet the diverse learning needs of students, implementing a teaching strategy that emphasizes "teaching according to individual aptitude." In junior high school football instruction, layered teaching is manifested through dividing students into several levels based on their football foundation, such as passing, shooting, and tactical understanding, physical conditions like speed, endurance, and explosive power, and learning motivation, such as interest and goal clarity. This approach ensures that each student can make progress within their zone of proximal development.

### **2.2. Theoretical basis and basic principles of stratified teaching method**

#### **2.2.1. Zone of proximal development (Vygotsky)**

There is a gap between the "existing level" and the "potential level" of students' development. Stratified teaching sets goals slightly higher than their ability (the zone of proximal development) by accurately locating students' existing level, and guides students to achieve improvement through efforts, which conforms to the educational law of "jumping a little to pick a peach" [2].

#### **2.2.2. Mastery learning theory (Bloom)**

Blum believes that as long as appropriate teaching conditions are provided, most students can master what they have learned [3]. Tiered teaching provides adaptive learning support for students at different levels by adjusting the pace, methods and resources of teaching to help them achieve mastery learning goals.

#### **2.2.3. Multiple Intelligences Theory (Gardner)**

Students have differences in sports intelligence, spatial intelligence and interpersonal intelligence. Stratified teaching respects the characteristics of multiple intelligences. For example, students with outstanding sports intelligence focus on technical improvement, and students with strong interpersonal intelligence focus on team tactical training, so as to achieve personalized development[4].

In the practice of physical education, the effective implementation of tiered teaching methods relies on teachers' deep insights into individual student differences. Teachers need to have a comprehensive understanding of students' foundational athletic abilities, learning style characteristics, and personality traits, accurately grasp their differentiated performances in dimensions such as theoretical knowledge of sports and mastery of technical skills, and thus tailor-made teaching plans that are both scientific and adaptable for students at different levels. The tiered teaching method demonstrates unique value in junior high school physical education classes. Teachers can leverage the diverse nature of this teaching model to deeply explore students' personalized learning needs, fully consider the stylistic differences among students in terms of exercise preferences, skill acquisition pace, and learning goals, and design tiered teaching content and challenging tasks for students at various levels. This approach not only ensures that students with weaker foundations steadily improve within suitable learning zones, accumulating confidence in sports and fostering self-directed learning awareness through the achievement of phased goals; it also provides advanced learning resources for students with outstanding abilities, meeting their needs for expansion and improvement, avoiding a decline in enthusiasm due to repetitive content.

## **2.3. Advantages of stratified teaching method in junior high school football teaching**

### **2.3.1. Respect individual differences and improve the pertinence of teaching**

There are significant differences in the basic football skills of junior high school students, with some students having no basic skills and some students having experience in school team training. Stratified teaching avoids "equal effort", strengthens basic skills for students with no basic skills, and deepens tactical cooperation for high-level students, so that the teaching content is accurately matched with students' abilities.

### **2.3.2. Stimulate learning interest and enhance participation motivation**

In traditional teaching, students with weak foundations develop a fear of challenges due to frequent setbacks, while high-level students lose interest because of repetitive content. After stratification, students experience success in tasks that match their abilities. For example, beginners build confidence through simple passing drills, while advanced students maintain enthusiasm through practical matches, forming a virtuous cycle of low starting points, small steps, high goals, and a fast pace.

### **2.3.3. Optimize classroom efficiency and promote overall improvement**

Layered teaching reduces individual guidance time for teachers through group practice. For example, the beginner group focuses on correcting passing postures, while the advanced group explains offensive and defensive transition strategies, allowing teachers to address common issues more efficiently. According to a survey of the 2024 teaching report from a certain experimental middle school, data shows that classes using layered teaching have increased their effective practice time in class by 30% compared to traditional models, and the technical proficiency rate of students has improved by 25%.

## **3. Problems existing in junior high school football teaching**

### **3.1. Students' football skills are uneven, and the teaching objectives are "one size fits all"**

In the group of junior high school students, most have never been exposed to football, while some have learned about or even studied it. Therefore, there is a significant disparity in football skills among many classes, which requires teachers to tailor their instruction based on student differences. The tiered teaching method can effectively address this issue. However, under traditional physical education teaching methods, all students share the same learning objectives and teaching models, leading to poor teaching outcomes. A survey of five junior high schools in a city revealed that 78% of classes have significant differences in students' football foundations: 20% of students have never touched a football, 35% can perform basic dribbling and passing, and 45% have participated in school-level competitions. Yet, 85% of teachers still use a uniform lesson plan, requiring all students to complete training tasks of the same difficulty, such as learning "inside-of-the-foot passes," which results in weaker students being repeatedly corrected for improper movements and high-level students becoming disengaged due to lack of challenge.

### **3.2. The teaching method is single and ignores personalized needs**

Traditional junior high school football instruction has long relied on a one-way model of "teacher demonstration+group practice," leading to prominent issues of homogenization in teaching methods. This mechanical replication of teaching paradigms overlooks the individual differences in motor skill learning—students exhibit significant variations in the pace of development from action generalization to automation, cognitive characteristics, and physical conditions, yet these are overshadowed by uniform teaching procedures and practice intensity.

According to the theory of motor skill formation, students with weaker foundations need more segmented practice to establish motor imagery, while those with stronger abilities can directly move on to learning combined techniques. However, teachers often adopt undifferentiated action segmentation, practice duration, and auxiliary means, resulting in a mismatch between teaching methods and students' skill development stages. For example, during shooting drills, after the teacher uniformly explains the key points of the action, all students take turns shooting, without considering the differences in strength—smaller students struggle to score due to insufficient shooting power, while larger students have low accuracy due to less refined movements, neither effectively improving their skills.

### **3.3. Evaluation method is solidified, which discourages learning enthusiasm**

The current junior high school football evaluation system exhibits a tendency towards "result-oriented" assessment, over-relying on uniform standards for technical proficiency and physical fitness tests while neglecting the differences in students' starting points and their progress throughout the process. This approach violates the developmental principle of educational evaluation. Such quantitative assessments use fixed indicators as the sole measure of student performance, failing to reflect the growth trajectory of individuals in football learning. For example, students with weaker foundations may significantly improve in terms of movement standardization and rhythm control but still be deemed "unqualified" if they fail to meet rigid criteria, leading to learned helplessness due to their efforts being negated. Meanwhile, high-level students who easily meet the standards lose motivation for deeper skill development due to the lack of advanced goals. For instance, a boy's 10-meter dribbling around poles should take 15 seconds; even if a student with weaker foundations improves from 20 seconds to 16 seconds, they are still judged "unqualified," while high-level students lose their drive for further improvement after easily meeting the standards. This "result-oriented" evaluation system overlooks individual progress and fails to ignite enthusiasm for learning.

### **3.4. The interest differentiation is obvious, and the classroom participation is unbalanced**

The interest in football learning among junior high school students shows significant differentiation due to differences in ability and the inadequacy of teaching content appropriateness. Motivation psychology indicates that students' intrinsic motivation relies on a balance between "competence" and "challenge"—those with weaker foundations need to build confidence through suitable tasks, while high-level students require challenging goals to maintain enthusiasm. However, traditional teaching often adopts a "median adaptation" strategy, anchoring the difficulty of content at an average level, leading to an imbalance between "ability—task" for both ends of the spectrum: 23% of students become intimidated by overly difficult tasks, 18% lose interest due to lack of challenge, and only 40% actively participate. This "middle-of-the-road" approach contradicts the "Zone of Proximal Development" theory, causing weaker students to experience a decline in self-efficacy due to continuous frustration, and high-level students to develop burnout from repetitive practice. Classroom participation thus falls into an inefficient state where "a few dominate and most are marginalized," which not only suppresses individual potential development but also contradicts the goal of promoting all-around development in physical education. Over time, this interest differentiation intensifies, forming a vicious cycle of "weak ability—low participation—slow progress," hindering the overall achievement of teaching objectives.

## **4. The application value of four-level teaching method in junior high school football teaching**

### **4.1. Implement the educational concept of "student-centered"**

Layered teaching breaks the "teacher-centered" rote model, shifting towards a "student-centered" demand-oriented approach. By segmenting students and setting tiered goals, teachers transition from "teaching the textbook" to "teaching the student." For example, designing fun physical games for students with strong interest but limited physical ability, or assigning team leader roles to those who are skilled technically but lack teamwork spirit. This makes teaching more relevant to students' actual needs, reflecting the "personalized development" requirement outlined in the "Compulsory Education Physical Education and Health Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)."

### **4.2. Promote the coordinated development of students' football skills and core literacy**

Core competencies in physical education include athletic ability, healthy behavior, and sportsmanship. In tiered instruction, junior students reinforce their foundation through repeated practice to enhance their athletic skills; intermediate students develop communication skills through group collaboration; senior students learn to respect rules and strive hard in real matches. For example, in the "group offensive and defensive drills," teachers assign senior students as team leaders to guide intermediate students in designing tactics and lead junior students in positioning, which not only improves technical skills but also fosters a sense of responsibility and leadership.

### **4.3. Optimize the allocation of teaching resources and improve the teaching efficiency**

Layered teaching achieves precise resource allocation through dynamic grouping. For example, for beginner students, teachers provide more supplementary teaching aids and decomposed practice videos; for advanced students, tactical analysis manuals and match video replays are provided, ensuring efficient use of limited teaching time and resources. Data from a pilot school shows that after one semester of implementing layered teaching, the average skill attainment rate among students increased from 62% to 89%, and teachers' after-class tutoring time decreased by 40%, significantly enhancing teaching effectiveness.

## **5. Effective application strategies of 5-level teaching method in junior high school football teaching**

### **5.1. Scientific stratification: dynamic grouping and multi-dimensional combination**

In the tiered design of junior high school football instruction, teachers need to comprehensively consider students' football skills and physical fitness, assess their acceptance and ability to complete sports knowledge and professional football skills, and segment based on students' interest in football and their proficiency levels[5]. Teachers must take into account all factors influencing student stratification, scientifically dividing students around basic football skills, fundamental physical abilities, sports literacy, and interests, to facilitate the smooth implementation of subsequent tiered junior high school football teaching. At the beginning of each semester, teachers should focus on testing students' physical literacy, understanding their height, weight, endurance, and other basic information. Based on specific performance in daily course instruction, teachers should scientifically stratify students. For example, at the start of the semester, teachers can conduct technical tests such as dribbling, passing, shooting accuracy,



and physical fitness assessments like 50-meter sprint, standing long jump, endurance run, and questionnaires including interest levels and learning goals, to divide students into three tiers. Tier A: Foundation Level: No foundation or weak skills, low interest, aiming to cultivate basic movements and interest in sports; Tier B: Advancement Level: Mastering basic techniques, such as toe-dribbling and short passes, average physical fitness, hoping to improve skill proficiency; Tier C: Improvement Level: Solid technical skills, such as long passes, headers, simple tactical combinations, excellent physical fitness, pursuing tactical understanding and practical skills. Additionally, teachers should adopt a dynamic adjustment mechanism, meaning that stratification is not fixed. Every 8 weeks, through small tests and classroom performance evaluations, students are allowed to move between tiers. For example, if the passing accuracy rate of group A students reaches 70%, they can be promoted to Group B. If the teamwork awareness of group C students is weak, they will be adjusted to Group B for intensive training to avoid the negative impact of "labeling".

### **5.2. Goal stratification: step-by-step setting and personalized demand docking**

Before the implementation of junior high school football teaching, it is essential to clarify specific teaching tasks and objectives. However, under the traditional integrated teaching model, teachers mainly set corresponding teaching requirements and standards for all students. This single-minded approach to setting teaching goals often fails to meet the diverse learning needs of all students. Therefore, in junior high school football teaching, it is crucial to emphasize tiered instruction, focusing on the layered design of teaching objectives and tasks. In practice, teachers can combine course content and teaching requirements to scientifically design teaching goals based on indicators such as students' physical literacy, sports competence, and football technical skills. For different levels of student groups, tiered designs for achieving these goals should be implemented. In junior high school football teaching, according to the "Zone of Proximal Development" theory, three-dimensional goals can be set for students at different levels, primarily focusing on technique, physical fitness, and literacy. For Group A students, the technical goal is to master front-foot dribbling and inside-of-the-foot passing, while the physical fitness goal is to enhance lower body strength and body coordination. The literacy goal is to cultivate a sense of rules and team spirit. For Group B students, the technical, physical, and literacy goals are more challenging, including proficient use of directional dribbling and precise long passes, improving speed endurance and explosive power, and enhancing communication skills and tactical execution. For Group C students, the goals are even stricter, requiring them to master curved shots and one-two passing combinations, strengthening overall running stamina and agility, and developing tactical thinking and leadership qualities. Setting goals in this step-by-step manner better aligns with the individual needs of students. For example, in the shooting teaching, group A aims to have the correct standing position of the supporting foot and the leg swinging in a coherent manner; Group B aims to have moderate shooting power and a hit rate of more than 60%; Group C aims to choose the shooting Angle according to the defensive position and cooperate with the fake action to break through, so that each student has a clear direction of effort.

### **5.3. Method stratification: multiple strategies match learning style differences**

In the tiered football teaching at junior high school, a variety of teaching methods should be actively introduced to motivate students' participation in physical exercise with interest, addressing the drawbacks of traditional sports training being monotonous and dull. On this basis, physical education teachers should ensure balance among students at different levels from an overall perspective, gradually increasing the difficulty of tiered teaching in a step-by-step manner to ensure that students' core physical literacy meets the required standards. This requires teachers to match "intuitive guidance——task-driven——inquiry innovation" progressive teaching methods based on the cognitive characteristics and ability foundations of

students at different levels. For example, for the foundational level, use "intuitive teaching + timely feedback." In passing drills, the teacher first demonstrates actions slowly, then breaks them down into three steps: "support foot positioning, leg movement force application, and ball contact area." During practice, the teacher corrects each step, promptly praises progress, and boosts confidence. Visual aids such as colored stickers on the football to mark ball contact areas and marker lines on the ground to standardize positioning can reduce learning difficulty. For the advanced level, adopt "task-driven + group cooperation," assigning progressive tasks, such as dribbling through three obstacles within a 10-meter area using three different methods, then passing to teammates, with the required time gradually decreasing to stimulate a desire to challenge. Organize groups of 3-4 people for activities like "passing relay" and "offensive and defensive drills," where members divide tasks through cooperation to complete them, fostering teamwork skills. For the advanced level, use "problem-oriented + independent inquiry," posing practical problems for students to solve independently, such as "how to break through with a two-on-one play against two defenders?" After group discussions, students engage in practical exercises, with teachers providing feedback and optimization. The "player role experience" is introduced, allowing students to take turns as captain, goalkeeper, and forward, writing a "match summary report." They analyze their strengths and weaknesses in their positions, enhancing their tactical understanding and reflection skills.

#### **5.4. Evaluation stratification: both process and development are emphasized**

Different football courses focus on different skills and knowledge, so the evaluation methods should match the teaching content. Evaluations that closely align with the curriculum help students better understand and master the course content, while also providing teachers with information about student progress. Teachers can use formative assessment methods, such as practical operations, match results, and mid-term averages of project assignments, to gain a more detailed understanding of students' development in football skills, which helps their improvement[6]. This formative assessment approach aids in developing students' sports skills, teamwork abilities, and interest in sports, better reflecting their learning and progress. The tiered teaching method requires teachers to stratify students based on their levels and needs, so evaluations should also be adjusted according to these stratifications. For high-level students, evaluations can be more challenging to stimulate their competitive drive; for middle-and low-level students, evaluation standards can be gentler, focusing on the mastery of basic skills. This personalized evaluation ensures that each student receives appropriate guidance and motivation, enhancing their enthusiasm for learning. For example, establishing a "three-dimensional diversified evaluation system" that focuses on the extent of progress and individual differences. In terms of evaluation content, there are different tiers: the foundational tier emphasizes attitude and progress, such as classroom participation, technical standards, and the extent of improvement; the intermediate tier focuses on skills and teamwork, such as technical proficiency, physical fitness, and group contribution; the advanced tier emphasizes tactics and practical performance, such as tactical execution, match performance, and leadership. In terms of evaluation methods, formative assessment involves recording key performances in classroom exercises, such as Group A students successfully completing a pass for the first time or Group C students delivering precise assists, with "Progress Mini-Medals" awarded weekly; for peer evaluation, group members assess each other's cooperative attitudes and contributions, such as "During the offensive and defensive drills, a student actively created passing space for me"; in self-reflection, students write "Training Diaries," recording what they learned today and areas that need improvement, with teachers providing targeted feedback. Additionally, differentiated standards can be used, for example, in shooting tests, Group A students must hit the target 50% of the time from 8 meters without defenders to be considered qualified, Group B from 10 meters with defenders, and Group C from 12 meters in a competitive setting, ensuring that every student can "reach up to touch."

## 6. Conclusion

Layered teaching methods, through the three-dimensional implementation of student stratification——goal stratification——method stratification——evaluation stratification, provide an effective solution to the "one-size-fits-all" dilemma in junior high school football instruction. Practical experience has shown that this approach can significantly enhance students' interest in learning, technical skills, and teamwork abilities, aligning with the requirements of "teaching, frequent practice, and regular competition" for campus football education. However, during implementation, it is important to avoid the negative psychological impact of label-based stratification on students, ensure transparency and fairness in dynamic adjustments, and enhance teachers' differentiated instruction capabilities by reasonably allocating guidance time to each group. Future research could further explore the deep integration of information technology with layered teaching, as well as the long-term impact on the development of students' core physical literacy, providing richer practical models for the reform of junior high school football instruction.

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