

# Design and Experimental Research on Football Big Recess and Campus Football Festival Activities in Ordinary Primary Schools

Liu Fuli<sup>1</sup>, Chen Jixing<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Physical Education, Guangdong Baiyun University, Guangzhou, China, 510000*

<sup>2</sup>*School of Physical Education, Guangzhou Huashang College, Guangzhou, China, 511300*

**Abstract:** *Many primary schools in China tend toward formalism when organizing football big recess activities and campus football festivals. One principal reason is a skewed understanding of campus football. Drawing on the literature review and expert consultation, this research designs a football big recess and campus football festival activity scheme suited to Chinese primary schools, based on advanced football concepts. An experimental study conducted in two primary schools in Guangzhou tested the scientific nature and feasibility of the scheme, aiming to enhance awareness of common issues in campus football and to offer methodological references for organizing large-scale campus football events in primary schools in China.*

**Keywords:** *Ordinary primary school; Football big recess; Campus football festival; Activity scheme*

## 1. Introduction

Football big recess and campus football festivals are two major components of campus football activities in Chinese primary schools. However, there are often conceptual and methodological deviations in how these activities are designed. For instance, some schools organize football big recess by having students perform “football gymnastics” or “football dance” in uniform; others hold campus football festivals where students do ball tapping or passing drills only with their hands. Although such practices seem aimed at promoting football, they actually depart from the essence of football and lack core football elements. This overemphasis on form arises from our misunderstanding of campus

FIFA has long indicated that campus football should center on matches and games. Activities ought to be lively, fun, and integrated with skill training and education in the context of actual matches and games.<sup>[1]</sup> We need to fully grasp the spirit and key ideas in such guidance and design our campus programs accordingly. In China, the “football big recess” grew out of the general “big recess” concept, whereas the “campus football festival” is an activity advocated by FIFA. The two share great similarity content, form, and methodology.

Based on an extensive literature review and practical experience in campus football, this paper synthesizes football big recess and campus football festivals into an integrated activity scheme appropriate for ordinary primary schools. We then conduct experimental research in two schools to test its scientific basis and feasibility, hoping to provide a proper methodological guide for large-scale football events in Chinese primary schools.

## 2. Research Subjects and Methods

### 2.1 Research Subjects

Table 1 presents the basic information on the research subjects. The proposed activity scheme for football big recess and campus football festivals was implemented concurrently at Shabu Primary (Experimental Group 1) and Xiancun Primary School (Experimental Group 2) in Guangzhou. Two control schools—Wenchong Primary School (Control Group 1) and Huagong Affiliated Primary (Control Group 2)—organized their own activities in the traditional manner during the same period. the experimental groups and control groups are the focus of this study. The experiment ran from September 2022 to July 2023 (two semesters). To assess performance through a match-based test, we selected 30 boys and 30 girls (Grade 1) from Experimental Group 1 vs. Control Group 1, and from

Experimental Group 2 vs. Control Group 2, respectively—120 students in total. None of these students had previous football training.

*Table 1. Basic Information of the Experimental and Control Groups*

Group	Staff	PE Teachers	Boys	Girls	No. of Football Fields	Facilities & Equipment
Exp. Group 1	34	3	425	398	1 eight-a-side, 3 five-a-side	Sufficient
Ctrl. Group 1	42	3	373	391	1 eight-a-side, 2 five-a-side	Sufficient
Exp. Group 2	44	3	355	349	1 eight-a-side, 3 five-a-side	Sufficient
Ctrl. Group 2	36	3	378	371	1 eight-a-side, 4 five-a-side	Sufficient

Note: “Staff” and “PE Teachers” refer to those on official payroll; each football field meets standard specifications. Five-a-side fields include segments derived from one eight-a-side pitch.

## **2.2 Research Methods**

### **2.2.1 Literature Review**

By reviewing relevant literature, we gained insights into advanced football concepts and the latest developments in campus football, learning from successful international experiences. These insights formed the conceptual foundation and goals for organizing football big recess and campus football festival activities. The literature was a crucial source of information for this research.

### **2.2.2 Expert Consultation**

Twelve experts were invited: four primary-school principals or vice-principals, four senior PE teachers, and four professors of physical education from universities. Through three rounds of Delphi questionnaires and feedback, the experts reached consensus on a range of concepts, viewpoints, and corrections, while also evaluating the proposed activity scheme. The consultation focused on the scheme’s philosophy and objectives, implementation principles and key points, content design, theoretical underpinnings, and organization. Ultimately, the experts judged the scheme’s scientific integrity, applicability, and feasibility.

### **2.2.3 Questionnaire Survey**

We administered two sets of questionnaires to 120 students and 120 parents from the four schools—240 questionnaires in total—achieving 100% valid return. The student survey assessed their degree of interest in football, whereas the parents’ survey measured their awareness of national policies, their recognition of school initiatives, and their views on school-organized activities. These findings provided important feedback on the effectiveness of scheme implementation.

### **2.2.4 Experimental Application**

Experimental application was the pivotal step in validating the proposed scheme. Based on international practices and advanced concepts, we designed an activity scheme for football big recess and campus football festivals in primary schools. We then examined its scientific merit and advantages by comparing the experimental groups and control groups through expert opinions, questionnaire data, and technical statistics from actual matches. These findings also helped to confirm the feasibility and effectiveness of the scheme.

## **3. Design of the Football Big Recess and Campus Football Festival Activity Scheme**

### **3.1 Scheme Philosophy and Objectives**

#### **3.1.1 Scheme Philosophy**

Both activities must reflect the essence of football, follow football’s inherent rules, and incorporate fundamental elements of the game. The guiding principle must be correct from the outset. Organization should be premised on fun, prioritize game-based methods, foster interest in football, and ultimately aim for competitive play. At the same time, organizers must adhere to educational principles to synchronize with holistic schooling goals.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

#### **3.1.2 Scheme Objectives**

Align activity design with advanced football principles. Ensure the scheme is innovative, scientific, and practical, providing methodological guidance for large-scale campus football events in primary

schools across China. Offer every student an authentic football experience that brings joy, a sense of team spirit, and well-rounded physical and mental health benefits.

### **3.2 Organizational Principles and Key Points**

#### **3.2.1 Organizational Principles**

##### **(1) Reflecting the Essence of Football**

Prior research defines football essence as follows: football is a match or a game centered on using the feet to control the ball, featuring two opposing teams engaged in attacking and defending to score in the opponent's goal. A match aims to win a trophy, while a game is for recreation. Both the football big recess and campus football festival must integrate these core notions.<sup>[4]</sup>

##### **(2) Incorporating Football Elements**

The six essential elements of football are:

Core element: The ball

Target element: The goal

Team element: Teammates

Confrontation element: Opponents

Spatial element: The playing area

Restrictive element: The rules

In designing the football big recess and campus football festival, all six elements should be balanced, ensuring students gain a true football experience.<sup>[5]</sup>

#### **3.2.2 Key Points of Organization and Implementation**

##### **(1) Three Basic Rules for Games or Matches: Handball (handling the ball) is a foul. A goal counts**

When the ball crosses the goal line, if the ball goes out of bounds, the other side restarts play.

These three rules ensure that activities genuinely reflect football's essence while incorporating all its key elements.

##### **(2) Simplify yet Diversify Games and Matches**

Simplification is based on the "three rules," while variation comes from changes in field size/shape, number of players, goal size/number/location, etc.<sup>[6]</sup>

##### **(3) Adequate Preparation for Event Organization**

Regardless of the scale or number of participants, organizers must plan the playing area, participant groupings, and assigned roles in advance.

##### **(4) Strive for Dynamic Order**

Before each event, use cones or markers to set predetermined movement paths. Students are guided to move in a dynamically orderly flow, which need not be "uniform and rigid." <sup>[7]</sup>

### **3.3 Scheme Modules and Content**

#### **3.3.1 Overall Structure**

##### **(1) Football Big Recess Module**

Three sub-modules by grade level: Grades 1 – 2, Grades 3 – 4, and Grades 5 – 6.

Each sub-module runs for two semesters (one full academic year), with 18 activity sessions per semester, once per week.

Each session lasts 35 minutes (5 – 10 minutes of warm-up, followed by 25 – 30 minutes of matches or games), with 9 matches and 9 games per semester. Match formats include intra-class matches,

inter-class matches, and grade-level leagues. Game content varies from session to session.

## (2) Campus Football Festival Module

It is organized once per semester, typically taking place during one afternoon. The event is divided into two main areas: a central activity zone and a peripheral (outer) activity zone. All students are split into two shifts, each lasting about 90 minutes: Shift 1 (14:00 – 15:30), Shift 2 (15:30 – 17:00). Each shift is further divided into three groups (e.g., Shift 1 has Grades 3, 2, and 1; Shift 2 has Grades 4, 5, and 6). Within each shift, every group spends 30 minutes in the central activity zone. Meanwhile, the other two groups use the peripheral zone for about 60 minutes of free play.

### 3.3.2 Activity Content

Table 2. Content Design for the Football Big Recess

Module	Matches	Confrontation Games	Technical Content	Technical Game Activities
Grades 1–2	2v2 (8–9 times): 2×intra-class, 2×inter-class, 4×grade league	Alternating with matches: “Eagle Catches Chicks,” “Break Through,” “Control & Tag”	Inside/outside foot dribbling, front-foot drag, inside-foot cut, feint dribble step-over, inside-foot pass/receive/shoot, instep shooting	Heading self-toss, linear dribbling around cones, inside-foot passing through gates, forward-drag dribbling with turns
Grades 3–4	3v3 (8–9 times): 2×intra-class, 2×inter-class, 4×grade league	Alternating with matches: “Mother Hen vs. Eagle,” “Catch the Mouse,” “Sharpshooter”	Front-foot dribbling drag (forward/backward), outside-foot cut, dribble feint, outside-foot pass/receive/shoot	Head ball pass for distance, zigzag dribbling around cones, outside-foot pass through gates, inside-foot dribble cutback
Grades 5–6	4v4 (8–9 times): 2×intra-class, 2×inter-class, 4×grade league	Alternating with matches: “Mouse vs. Cat,” “Control-Pass Through the Block,” “Surround Hunt”	Front-foot outside/inside drag and feint, half-volley inside-foot passes, heading passes, inside/outside-foot direct shooting	Heading to the side, cross-shaped dribbling, inside-foot passing, outside-foot dribble cutback
Module	Matches	Confrontation Games	Technical Content	Technical Game Activities

\*Notes:

“Technical Content” is addressed primarily in warm-up. Higher-grade students also practice lower-grade techniques.

Grades 1–2 focus on single techniques; Grades 3–4 introduce simple combinations; Grades 5–6 practice multiple combined techniques.

Technical drills are repeated cyclically, with difficulty and combination complexity gradually increasing.\*

Table 3. Content Design for the Campus Football Festival

Module	Breakdown	Activity Content	Activity Stations (Zones)
Central Activity Zone	8 stations; 8 total activities (4 match formats + 4 technical games)	Match formats: single-goal, double-goal, triple-goal, double-corner-goal; Technical exercises: heading for distance, dribbling around cones, passing through gates, dribble-turn for time	Four match formats and four technical exercises are arranged alternately in a rectangular loop of eight stations
Peripheral Activity Zone	12 game stations; 4 micro-match “challenge zones” + 8 technical drills	4 “challenge” matches corresponding to the 4 formats above; 8 technical drills (4 overlap with central zone, plus 4 new ones: juggling, inside-foot pass/control, dribble around cone & shoot, dribble-turn & shoot)	12 stations are spread out away from the central zone. Students freely choose games, either individually or in small groups.

Note: Activities at the campus football festival are representative selections from the big recess content.

### ***3.4 Principles and Organization of Football Big Recess Activities***

#### ***3.4.1 Underlying Principles***

Using the principle of “pitch subdivision and player distribution,” it is possible to expand the number of participants in matches. For example, dividing an eight-a-side pitch into three five-a-side fields raises the number of participants in matches from 16 to 30 simultaneously. Further subdividing a five-a-side field into multiple 2v2 spaces can yield 24 micro-pitches, letting 96 students compete at the same time. If each micro-pitch hosts 6 sets of matchups, each playing 2 minutes, then in 4 minutes, a single eight-a-side pitch can accommodate up to 576 participants. The same principle applies to organizing game-based activities. Schools also usually have two basketball courts plus other open spaces, making large-scale football big recess feasible.

#### ***3.4.2 Organizational Method***

FIFA has stressed that an essential qualification for conducting grassroots football is the organizer’s ability to manage. In the Netherlands, three people can organize a community-wide four-a-side event with over a thousand participants from all backgrounds—including youth students—but it requires detailed planning and high-level organizational skills.<sup>[8]</sup> By comparison, running a football big recess in China will not happen overnight. We must draw on foreign experiences and engage in thorough planning: Prepare field layouts, marking them with cones or flags in advance; organize students into class-based groups and assign trained student leaders; design and rehearse match/game formats; then conduct small-scale pilot sessions before full implementation.

### ***3.5 Principles and Organization of the Campus Football Festival***

#### ***3.5.1 Underlying Principles***

Central Activity Zone: This is the core focal point, where activities are dense and complex. A cyclical rotation method is used here (the “circuit approach”). Peripheral Activity Zone: Serves as a supplement to the central zone, featuring looser scheduling and content, organized like a “funfair” or “amusement park” approach.

#### ***3.5.2 Organizational Method***

(1)Registration, Grouping, and Activity Stations in the Central Zone Experimental Group 1 had 823 students, Experimental Group 2 had 704. Both were split into two shifts (14:00–15:30, 15:30–17:00) and into three grade-based groups per shift. Each group of 120–180 students registers 10 minutes early, then is divided into 16 smaller teams (temporary squads). The central zone has eight “circuit” stations, each with a distinct activity (four match formats + four technical drills). Teams rotate through stations at fixed intervals.

(2)Implementing the Central Zone. Station numbering: 1–8 in a counterclockwise loop, with matches and drills alternating. Four match stations feature single, double, triple, and double-corner goals, usually in 4v4–6v6 format.

Four technical stations feature dribbling around cones and relay, inside-foot pass and control through gates, heading for distance, and dribble-turn relay. Each match lasts 3 minutes per segment, with each team playing four segments interspersed with four segments of technical drills. Sixteen teams simultaneously start at the eight stations, rotating synchronously at the end of each segment.<sup>[9]</sup>

(3)Organizing the Peripheral Zone. During 14:00–15:30, Grades 1–3 are free to move around the outer stations; Grades 4–6 do so from 15:30–17:00. Four “challenge” stations replicate the match formats from the central zone, while the eight drill stations overlap partially with the central drills plus four new items (juggling, inside-foot pass/control, dribble-turn & shoot, etc.). Students freely choose which stations to visit, either individually or in small groups. Successful campus football festivals require careful overall planning, including the principal’s address, class teachers’ roles, distribution of prizes, and safety protocols.

### ***3.6 Experimental Validation***

To verify the effectiveness of the proposed scheme, we compared expert evaluations, questionnaire data, and match performance statistics from the experimental and control groups.

## 4. Results and Analysis

### 4.1 Comparative Analysis of Survey Results

Table 4. Expert Evaluation of the Activity Scheme and Its Implementation

Group	Overall Scheme	Big Recess Design	Football Festival Design	Implementation Effect
Exp. Grp 1	89.3	87.1	93.3	87.4
Ctrl. Grp 1	78.5	69.5	81.7	65.8
P	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
Exp. Grp 2	90.5	90.8	95.0	89.9
Ctrl. Grp 2	73.9	74.5	84.2	69.5
P	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01

As Table 4 shows, experts thoroughly endorsed the experimental groups' activity scheme. They deemed it significantly superior to previous approaches in terms of innovation, scientific validity, and feasibility.

Table 5. Students' and Parents' Evaluations of Implementation

Group	Students' Enjoyment (Score %) Football	Parents' Recognition (Score %) Big Recess
Exp. Grp 1	87.13	92.36
Ctrl. Grp 1	76.84	80.13
P	<0.01	<0.01
Exp. Grp 2	85.17	91.68
Ctrl. Grp 2	77.05	76.34
P	<0.01	<0.01

In Table 5, students in the experimental groups showed markedly greater enthusiasm for football and the two activity types compared with the control groups. Parents in the experimental groups also demonstrated higher levels of awareness and approval of both national policies and the schools' initiatives. These findings suggest that the newly designed scheme is more appealing to students and more readily supported by parents—an important shift in how we conceive and execute campus football.

### 4.2 Match Statistics Analysis

Table 6. Comparative Analysis of Match Outcomes and Goals Scored

Group	Matches Played	Matches Won	Goals Scored	Weekly Match Participation
Exp. Grp 1 (Boys)	10	8	27	16
Ctrl. Grp 1 (Boys)	10	1	6	3
P	—	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
Exp. Grp 1 (Girls)	10	7	18	13
Ctrl. Grp 1 (Girls)	10	2	5	3
P	—	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
Exp. Grp 2 (Boys)	10	6	27	15
Ctrl. Grp 2 (Boys)	10	2	9	5
P	—	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
Exp. Grp 2 (Girls)	10	5	17	12
Ctrl. Grp 2 (Girls)	10	2	5	4

All matches used a simplified 2v2 format on a 15 m × 15 m square pitch with five-a-side goals (no goalkeeper). Each match was 8 minutes in total (two 4-minute halves). This format favored more scoring opportunities and a clear display of players' technical ability. As seen in Table 6, the experimental groups significantly outperformed the control groups in terms of wins, goals scored, and frequency of extracurricular matches. This indicates that students in the experimental groups achieved higher proficiency and motivation in football.

Table 7 illustrates five skill metrics (dribbling, breakthrough moves, passing, shooting, tackling/interception). The experimental groups showed significantly higher figures in both frequency and success rate. This demonstrates that the newly designed scheme not only improved students' overall match performance but also influenced their grasp of football concepts and skills. Overall, data from experts, students/parents, and match statistics validate the new football big recess and campus football festival activity scheme as advanced, scientific, feasible, and superior to former methods.

*Table 7. Comparative Analysis of Match-Play Technical Statistics*

Group	Dribbling Times	Breakthrough Success %	Passing Times	Shooting Success %	Tackling/Interception Times
Exp. Grp 1 (Boys)	10.6	65	4.6	57	13.8
Ctrl. Grp 1 (Boys)	2.7	46	1.3	48	7.4
P	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
Exp. Grp 1 (Girls)	7.3	69	3.5	52	12.4
Ctrl. Grp 1 (Girls)	3.0	44	1.6	36	7.2
P	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
Exp. Grp 2 (Boys)	11.4	65	5.1	67	18.8
Ctrl. Grp 2 (Boys)	6.2	44	2.3	41	10.1
P	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
Exp. Grp 2 (Girls)	13.1	57	4.3	71	16.1
Ctrl. Grp 2 (Girls)	4.3	50	2.2	44	9.3
P	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01

## 5. Conclusions

In ordinary primary schools, the football big recess and campus football festival scheme should be grounded in the essence of football while incorporating key football elements. It should ensure fun, use game-based methods, foster long-term interest, and aim for competitive goals.

The four key points for organizing activities include: (1) adhering to the three simplified rules (handball foul, scoring in goal, out-of-bounds restart), (2) simplifying yet diversifying games and match formats, (3) thorough pre-event planning, and (4) conducting technical exercises in a dynamically orderly manner.

Through expert appraisal and practical experiments, our scheme for football big recess and campus football festival activities demonstrates innovativeness, scientific rigor, and feasibility, outperforming traditional approaches.

A comparative analysis of experimental and control groups reveals that the new scheme significantly enhances students' match performance and overall technical abilities, indicating its effectiveness in cultivating football competence and interest among primary school students.

## Acknowledgement

This study is supported by the General Administration of Sport of Chinese Sports Philosophy and Social Sciences Research Project (No. 2158SS15045).

## References

- [1] FIFA. *Grassroots Football Training Manual* [M]. Beijing: People's Sports Publishing House, 2010: 11–13.
- [2] Ministry of Education, et al. *Implementation Opinions on Accelerating the Development of Youth Campus Football* [R]. 2015: 2.
- [3] Zhang QC. *Youth Football Training: Philosophy and Practice* [M]. Beijing: Beijing Sport University Press, 2008: 6–9.
- [4] Ert Van Lingen. *Dutch FA Youth Football Training Materials* [M]. Beijing: People's Sports Publishing House, 2012: 1–2.
- [5] Gu MC. *Modern Football Concepts* [M]. Beijing: Beijing Sport University Press, 2005: 36.
- [6] FIFA. *Grassroots Football Training Manual* [M]. Beijing: People's Sports Publishing House, 2010: 6–11.

- [7] FIFA. *Grassroots Football Training Manual* [M]. Beijing: People's Sports Publishing House, 2010: 68–83.
- [8] Frank Thomes. *Complete Football Training* [M]. Beijing: Beijing Science and Technology Press, 2016: 297–298.
- [9] FIFA. *Grassroots Football Training Manual* [M]. Beijing: People's Sports Publishing House, 2010: 92.