

# The Study of Impacts of CFA U23-Players New Deal on the Development of Chinese Football

Congqi Su

**Abstract:** *Based on the developing status of Chinese football presently and the macro-regulation managed by CFA (Chinese Football Association), this article discusses the latest rules about young players entering the court and the transfer system released by CFA. According to the development of Chinese football and the long-term cultivation system for young players, it will study on the new deal released by CFA, the development background of Chinese football, and potential effects of policies to the football league, such as different experiences of clubs and publics. In the meanwhile, the risk, the feasibility, advantages and disadvantages brought by the new deal, and the enlightenment given by policies will be analyzed. Some suggestions related to adjustment of relevant systems will be analyzed in this article.*

**Keywords:** policies, Chinese football, development

## 1. Introduction

With the development of human community, decisions made by the government play the vital roles in Chinese modernization and opening up and reform. As one of the biggest sports events, football is popular among Chinese people. Since 1990s, the reform of Chinese football has been carried out for more than 20 years. In 2011, Yang Qingsong indicated that the flourish of Chinese sports depended on scientific and effective sports policies. Between the 1980s and the 1990s, Chinese football nearly remained in a lag phase, giving rise to the recession of Chinese football gradually. 2018 is the year of the World Cup hosted by Russia, but China was out of the World Cup because China only got 12 points with three wins, three draws and four defeats in the qualifying competition, one point short of having the qualification of entering the World Cup. As a famous sports event, football is always paid attention by Chinese people and its capital input is the largest. According to the report, China formulated the Ten Year Plan from 2015 to 2025, expanding industry scale to more than 0.6 trillion pounds (about 5 trillion yuan). China also plans to build 20,000 football schools in 2020 and 70,000 football fields through investing Grassroots football.

At the beginning of opening up and reform, Mr. Deng Xiaoping, the former leader of China, said that football should be introduced to children. Additionally, President Xi Jinping also emphasizes the development of football industry time by time, which shows leaders of China attach importance to the development of Chinese football. CFA, the governing body of Chinese football, releases a series of new deals to seek progress and innovation of football. However, influenced by the idea of putting government, sports in China has the tendency of highly departmentalization. The social environment and the results of policy implementation lack theoretical and practical analysis. The objective of the thesis is to study the impacts of the new deal on the development of Chinese football market and football professionalism in the future. By studying three respects of contents, the essence of policies, the value of policies and the development of policies, it will analyze the influences of policies on sports industry. And then, the paper will use case study and comparison to discuss and study the new deal of CFA, and put forward

some relative suggestions.

## 2. Literature Review

### 1) The definition of sports policy

There are different views about the definition of sports policy both at home and abroad. Many foreign sports experts consider that sports policies can help the government to implement plans more efficiently. Different development conditions and management system of different countries involve into macro or micro issues of sports development. According to the domestic situation, generally speaking, systems can be divided into different kinds. One is that countries put forward some institutional projects based on people's sports values and requirements, which is the coercive measure to improve people's physical quality. The second one is that countries propose a series of conclusive projects, which strengthens the cohesion of the society and guides the tendency of development. The third one is that countries focus on the diversity and the popularity of sports and pay attention to the interests of publics. The first kind is essential, forcing all of people to take exercises while the second is more advanced. For example, in China, sports teams organized by different ranks of departments are required to take exercises. Compared to the former two kinds, the third kind is at the highest level, which means that countries make some adjustment strategies of holding many competitions to benefit more people. This kind of system makes the greatest effects, sometimes varying from times and places. Founders of science of policy, Harold Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan pointed out that policy was a big plan containing objective, value and strategy.

### 2) The Features of sports policy

In different countries, features of sports policy are different. As for rich countries, they always emphasize the influence of sports policies on happiness index and quality of publics. For instance, in the United States and other rich countries in Europe, the government cooperates with many businessmen to invest a lot of big competitions such as NBA, NBL and the UEFA Champions League. The common places of them are driving the development of market and drawing people's attention to event service, which will result in a good structural chain of industry

(interest-job-events-business-interest). However, as far as developing countries or underdeveloped countries are concerned, they tend to implement long-term policies. Take China as an example. China owns the table tennis talents cultivation system getting a variety of comments from other countries. Because table tennis is the traditional and great sports event in China, many table tennis players practice table tennis since they are young to meet the needs of the country, but a part of them want to use table tennis to attend a good university, receiving a good education instead of being a professional player. Moreover, the careers of those best players are shorter than others. Additionally, there are few investment markets for traditional sports events such as table tennis. The attendance of Table Tennis Super League is far less than some international mainstream sports events, which shows less attention of publics. What's worse, though Chinese players can win many prizes in traditional sports events due to the unique cultivation system, economic benefit is less than other sports events, so this kind of players earn less bonus than others, easily going bankrupt after retirement. However, presently, with the rapid development of economy and the professionalization of sports events, China gradually learns from developed countries, using the experience of market-driven system of them for reference, which means that the increase of bonus can improve performance of players, and those players can still choose to go back to universities studying skills for a better life after retirement. This kind of sports policy is the tendency with the development of economy. In any cases, sports policies include views and requirements of ruling class to the field of sports. By some means of implementing policies, it can practically change the general direction, realizing interest and professionalization.

### 3) The category of sports policy

On one side, sports policy is divided into three categories, fundamental sports policy, specific policy and general policy. Fundamental sports policy is to put forward micro standards to most people, which will make influence on the society slowly and imperceptibly. Specific policy is to make some adjustments to some specific problems occurring in the field of sports, easily handled and effective in a short time. General policy is to make macro adjustment based on the situation of sports, meaning that managerial class gives targeted direction and carries out their plans. The speed of implementing the general policy is faster and more effective than the other two kinds. On the other side, based on the

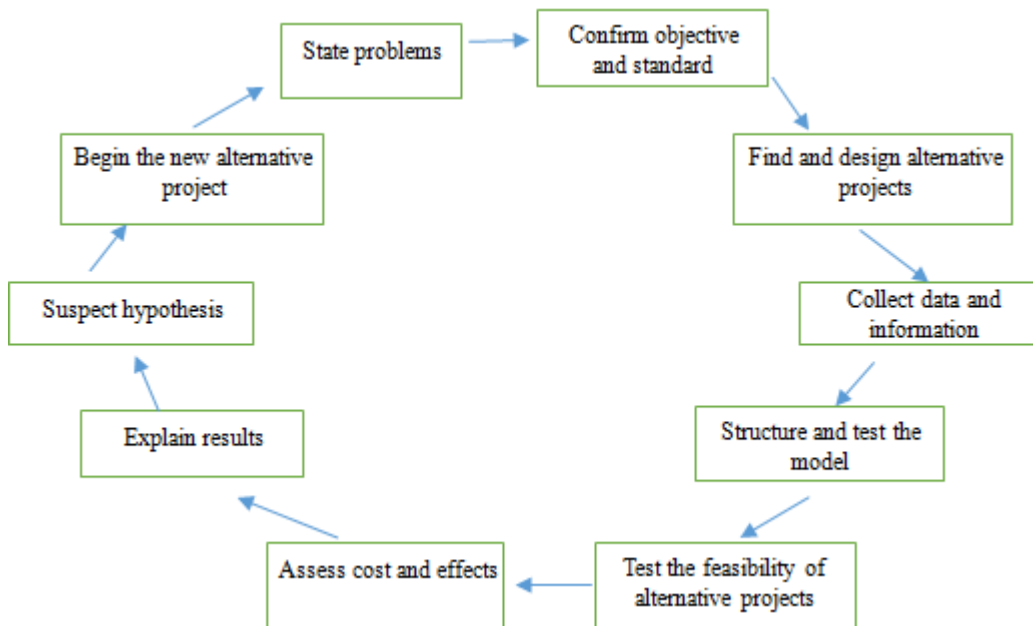
different dividing standard, sports policy can also be divided into three kinds, elitism, popularization, and event-orientation. The development of elitism needs larger investments. Relative departments or organizations can also help and guide the development of elitism to cultivate better sports talents. Popularization can be beneficial to the people of middle and low classes involving in sports events, which can be often seen in some countries. Event-orientation is to hold some competitions or events, attracting people and making great influence on them, more effective than other two kinds in a short term, but because of the excessive cost and problems occurring in the process of implementation, the timing of proposing this kind of policy is particular.

### 4) Analytical methods of sports policy

There are less studies and analysis of sports policy in China than other countries. In *Analysis of Public Policy of Government and Sports*, Li Yiqun and Li Jing, famous scholars in China, indicate that sports policy is the rules of conduct guiding the direction of the development of sports. According to the system and executive requirement, many scholars study sports policy by researches. In *Sports Game Theory*, Li Yiqun and Xie Yalong demonstrate that decision-makers, objects of decision-making system, information, decision-making theories and methods and decisions make up of basic elements of decision making. This kind of decision making refers to decisions and choices of the developing direction, objectives, guidelines, policies, strategies, approaches and means in the future. On the aspect of strategic decision-making, including the choice of national driver instructions, the developing mode of sports, the system construction of competitive sports, principles are much more concerned in the study.

Based on the needs of the study, the analysis of policy is always categorized in five stages, the illustration of objectives, seeking projects, prediction of effects, model construction and assessment of projects. The five stages are interconnected and interpenetrating in practical application.

As mentioned above, the analysis of five stages is to help decision makers realize the objectives of policies, finding the methods to achieve the goals and analyzing possible results of alternative plans. The policy analysis of Edward Quade has seven aspects as shown in figure 4-1.



The analysis and duplication process of policy of Edward Quade

Yang Qingsong further summarizes and generalizes from three aspects, decision making of sports policy, implementation of sports policy and assessment of sports policy. At the same, Yang Qingsong also indicates that there are many factors affecting decision making of sports policy such as social politics, economic environment, educational environment, tasks of decision-making and decision-making organization. Many other scholars also put forward the similar views. For instance, Qian Jing also considers that some social factors like economy and politics, and other factors such as science and technology also make great influence on sports policy. Additionally, Ma Xuanjian analyzes that Olympic cycle can affect sports policy and Li Jianjun points out that WTO makes influence on social policy made by Chinese government, which both reflect that policies are affected by government and social environment.

After confirming policies, it turns to the implementation of policies. The studies of this stage in China are more than other stages. They always study reasons of deviation and distortion during the process of implementation. For example, Feng Huo mentions that reasons of low effect in implementation are unclear policies, lacking practice and short of investment. In the meanwhile, some scholars indicate that lacking enough executors who are qualified and improper inspections can also affect the implementation of policies. The last procedure is assessment of policies, which is to make analysis of feasibility and value of policies, making sure whether the final objectives can be achieved.

### 3. Methodology

This paper chooses typical cases to make specific analysis, integrating the theory of policy analysis with sports practice to reveal some real problems in the field of sports, which makes the theory well guides the real works and help people to find and solve problems of sports in realty.

### 4. Findings and Results

Chinese Football Association issued a Notice *Relating to Soliciting Opinions about U23 Football Players' Attending Chinese Super League 2018 and Chinese Football Association CHINA LEAGUE 2018*. From the 2018 football season on, the maximum registration number for domestic football players should be reached 25 after the first and mid-term registration, among which there should be four U23 Football Players at least. The clubs which cannot meet the requirements will not be accepted to register for the professional league of the year which means the football club will be disqualified for the professional league of that year.

Compared with registration requirements before year 2017, this proposal didn't restrict the ages of domestic football players, which is very reformatinal for the registration of U23 football players. Before season 2017, Chinese Super Leagues had not any inflexible regulations on fielding for U23 players. With this proposal, registration regulations on the four U23 players have made the top clubs to strengthen their youth training in order to enhance their competitiveness.

The best Chinese youth training camps mainly come from two regions. One is the circum-Bohai-Sea area including Beijing, Dalian, Qingdao and so on. The Well-known football clubs (including Beijing Guoan FC, Tianjin Teda Football Club) in this area all have a splendid history. Particularly, Dalian is called the cradle of Chinese football, which has cultivated a large number of national football players.

The clubs of this area is comparatively traditional and is economically affluent; therefore it has invested lots of capital on echelon building and young talent cultivation. Owing to the good geographical conditions, football players are physically competitive. The conditions such as advanced facilities, sound training atmosphere, healthy food habits and experienced coaches all contribute to the prominent



football-playing environment for young football players. Till now, Chinese national football team still maintains the core players in Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, and they're the best players in stringent training system in northern China.

The other one is from southern coastal cities like Shanghai, Hangzhou and Guangzhou. This area owns the Shanghai Shenhua FC (one of the four famous traditional clubs of China), Hangzhou Greentown and Guangzhou Evergrande FC (the No.1 football club in China in recent years). The football teams in this area is known as its strong financial support. Taking Zhejiang Hangzhou Greentown FC as an example, it's famous for youth training. Different from other Chinese football teams who purchase players presumptuously, Greentown persists in cultivating football players and patiently give them the chances to field. It has offered many talents for Chinese Olympic soccer team and U19.

In addition, quality orientation is a significant characteristic for football clubs in southern China. Most of their football players are promising. Shanghai Genbao Football School was founded by the Chinese famous football coach Genbao Xu, whose aim is to cultivate football talents for China. Most of the players from this school now play for national team. SIPG FC, which is also the former Shanghai East Asia FC, used to have many football players from Genbao system. Its strong opponent Shanghai Greenland Shenhua FC is also a gathering place of national football players.

It is also a southern formidable football club can't be easily beaten under the dominance of northern football clubs. It is worth mentioning that Shenzhen FC built in 1994, once sent its players abroad to draw strengths from foreign clubs. This experience offered them with new thinking of cultivating players. Then Wanda, who sent players to foreign countries has learned the experience from Shenzhen FC. In 2012, the upstart Guangzhou Evergrande FC open Evergrande Football School by cooperating with Real Madrid. It was also a new youth training model developed in accordance with the market discipline. 'Football for the rich' means cultivating the most excellent football players for China. As time is constrained, its effect is not obvious yet. While, the reserves are optimistic and it might be the Huangpu Military Academy in the football field.

Taking cultivating of players in both areas, northern football clubs are currently lagging behind. Guangzhou Evergrande FC has been the champion in top leagues since 2011; the following are upstarts such as Guangzhou Fuli FC, SIPG FC, and Jiangsu Suning FC from southern area. While the traditional competitive clubs are weakening to some extent such as Tianjin Teda FC, Beijing Guoan FC and Shandong Luneng FC. The following is the ranking of 2016 Chinese Super League and 2017 Chinese Super League in the round 26.

Table the ranking of 2016 Chinese Super League and 2017 Chinese Super League in the round 26.

Guangzhou Evergrande FC	Guangzhou Evergrande FC
Jiangsu Suning FC	SIPG FC
SIPG FC	Hebei China Fortune FC
Shanghai Greenland Shenhua FC	Tianjin Quanjian FC
Beijing Guoan FC	Shandong Luneng
Guangzhou R&F FC	Guangzhou R&F FC
Hebei China Fortune FC	Guizhou Hengfeng Zhicheng FC
Yanbian Fude FC	Beijing Guoan FC
Chongqing Lifan FC	Chongqing Lifan FC
Liaoning Hongyuan FC	Changchun Yatai FC
Tianjin Teda FC	Shanghai Greenland Shenhua FC
Changchun Yatai FC	Henan Jianye FC
Henan Jianye FC	Jiangsu Suning FC
Shandong Luneng FC	Tianjin Teda FC
Hangzhou Greentown	Yanbian Fude FC
Shijiazhuang Yongchang FC	Liaoning Kaixin FC

It's apparent that, with adequate financial support, foreign aids and national team players, clubs are still competitive in domestic such as Guangzhou Evergrande FC, SIPG FC and Hebei China Fortune FC. One thing that can't be overlooked is that the competitiveness of domestic players are still a guarantee for their achievements. Taking Suning FC as an example, it could be explained that the stagnation of it is owing to the poor of foreign aids; another reason is domestic players are not able to fill the boots. Guangzhou Evergrande FC is still on top of the ranking when the core player Paulinho left and no one could be the substitute immediately. With two defeats by SIPG FC, it still delivered good performance in professional leagues with other clubs and won seven times in a row because of the excellent performance of domestic players.

Under the influence of U23 new policy, Beijing, Shanghai and Shandong might benefit from their own strong echelon building. Evergrande Football School has been established for 5 years and a number of outstanding players have been cultivated. In the coming several years, their potential could be promising. Implementation of new policy, to some degree, can give young players more chances, preventing from the manipulation of players for short-term profits. Meanwhile, more prominent players will stand out so as to play an active role for Chinese national team on the stage of Asia and the world. The reform happened right after the nation football team's undergoing a weak period, and its effect is to be proved.

Moreover, in response to the pursuance of short-term achievements, the policy constrained high-price aids, and an aid adjustment fee equivalent to the transfer fee when, is over 45 million RMB per person for foreign aids and over 20 million per person for domestic aids shall be paid (1 euro is roughly 7.83 RMB). For example, Israeli forward Eran Zahavi moved to Guangzhou R&F FC with a transfer fee of 7.23million Euros, ranking 1<sup>st</sup> in the season; Brazilian forward Hulk transferred to SIPG FC with a transfer fee of 55.8 million Euros in the same year, and his transfer fee had exceeded 100 million Euros.

As the international football market develops, transfer fees for football players have been raising year by year. In this background, constraints on foreign aid transfer by Chinese

Football Association seemed confusing and even reminded people the condition of China's Bamboo Curtain policy. Under such stringent conditions, the obligatory regulations by Chinese Football Association seemed to have stipulated the direction: players who have had his best years or are less famous could cultivate domestic young players; potential players can help stimulate domestic young players to make progress. Under such circumstances, instead of finding the appropriate aid players, football clubs are more willing to strengthen their echelon building. And it might be the purpose of the reform: scale down the power for clubs to get aids, and nurture young players so as to find and reserve talents. With the implementation of the new policy, the decline of foreign aid surely will leave more space for young football players to have a try.

## 5. Implication

U23 is not yet fully implemented. Clubs can upgrade the systems of current reserve echelons. Instead of forcing young players to field in top professional leagues, though reserve echelons at the moment seem less important and there's less cooperation. A better way is to upgrade reserve echelon professional leagues to a platform for the young players and actively cooperate with Chinese Super League to prepare professional leagues for U23, U18, and U15 rather than forcing U23 players to play in top professional leagues; which is quite common in Europe. For instance, Barcelona club has its clear tiered echelons, so players at different ages can practice as appropriate. Chinese Football Association is less experienced in organizing echelon professional leagues and it should draw strengths from European professional leagues.

First of all, absence of echelon building to some extent is because of some young players' not so enthusiastic about their profession. It's a pessimistic trend that some young players are too easy to give up once they could not have outstanding achievements in a short term. Therefore, the Chinese Football Association should spare no efforts to cultivation of young football players. For example, it should offer young players with better professional subsidies, better nutrients, and relevant professional education. Currently, centralized training has led to universal less-cultivation among football players. While under China's social system at the moment, playing football, as a profession, can only last for about ten years. Any incidents such as injury can lead to the retirement of players. Then the loss of their retirements is not only the efforts over the years, but also the social stress and future risks they will face because of absence of education. Taking all these factors into consideration, their parents might oppose their intention to take football-playing as a profession. However, players who have a bachelor's degree like the Italian fullback Chiellini are really rare among Chinese retired football players. Therefore, the Chinese Football Association should endeavor to develop its football infrastructure to enhance professional development. Putting aside the pressure in their mind and the hidden risks can enable more people to have the enthusiasm on football. As a developing country, there're still many social problems to be solved. So there're still a lot of things to do for China to achieve the goal of a completely professionalized football industry.

Secondly, provide better facilities. Many fields in China are short of special surfaces. In the primary school of the author's, the football field shares the hard court with the playground. Players are easy to get hurt. Although on the South American continent, Brazilian football players play on worse field, they have racial advantages. What resembles China is Japan. They have already realized federalization among primary and middle schools. Their supporting facilities are very complete from leagues at provincial, city, county levels to national leagues. The audience will finally amount to 40,000 at the championship match, which demonstrates not only the enthusiasm of Japanese people on football, but also its excellent infrastructure. In China, some football fields can accommodate tens of thousands of audience as well. But many of them have not cooperated with professional match organizations. And it's commonly seen that some even choose fields with poor conditions in order to gain more profits. This is a gap that is hard to narrow between Chinese and Japanese football. Therefore, Chinese Football Association should reach deal on cooperation with more professional football fields to make it accessible for young players to professional training and facilities rather than almost deserted surface dimming in the back of rows of bench.

## 6. Conclusion

This thesis analyzed the merits and demerits of the policies and regulations of U23 policy released by Chinese Football Association. The merits of the newly released policy are to force clubs to train talents even without world-class matches. It may seem useless in the short term, while it can contribute to the development of Chinese football in the long run. While the shortcomings remain in that policy will make domestic leagues less-attractive to watch. During the semi-finals of Asian Football Confederation Champions League, match between SIPG FC and Guangzhou Evergrande FC brought audience to the highlights under the condition of no constraints on the players' qualifications. Match between competitive clubs might be rarely seen in the future as important foreign aids left the clubs. The author believes professional leagues should not be a training field for all young football players. Chinese Football Association should start with youth training, establish a complete system and develop leagues suitable for young players. In this way, outstanding youth football players can compete in top professional leagues with vigorous opponents, while less qualified players have their own platforms as well. By doing so, football players at different levels can strive a balance which is the principle for football development.

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