



Enhancing Governance in Chinese Football Characteristic Schools: A Collaborative Approach to Overcome Challenges and Promote Sports Development

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Abstract

The governance of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools (CFCS) faces multiple challenges that hinder their ability to contribute to football development in China. Using a literature review method, this study identifies key issues, including low family participation, insufficient football fields per capita in schools, inadequate core competencies of teachers, ineffective utilization of football-specific funds, a lack of influence from social organizations, and mutual distrust among stakeholders. These issues collectively limit the effectiveness of governance in CFCS. The study emphasizes the importance of adopting a collaborative governance framework to address these challenges. Collaborative governance, which integrates efforts from families, schools, and society, aligns with contemporary demands for more participatory and inclusive management practices. By enhancing family participation, leveraging resource utilization, and fostering trust among stakeholders, this approach aims to construct an effective engine for governance. Moreover, it advocates for targeted improvements, such as increasing teacher training, optimizing resource allocation, and promoting the active involvement of social organizations to ensure that governance is efficient and sustainable. The findings underscore the urgent need for reform in the governance model of CFCS to support the high-quality development of China's sports industry. The study concludes with recommendations to institutionalize collaboration, enhance stakeholder communication, and implement evidence-based strategies to overcome existing barriers. These measures can help CFCS play a pivotal role in cultivating football talent and advancing China's sports enterprises in line with national development goals. By building a robust and collaborative governance model, CFCS can realize its full potential in driving sports excellence.

Keywords: *Chinese Football Characteristic Schools, China's sports enterprise, Collaborative governance.*

A. Introduction

Youth sports serve as a cornerstone for mass and competitive sports, vital to the broader sports enterprise. As a flagship initiative within youth sports, the development of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools (CFCS) has made significant strides since the implementation of policies such as the Overall Program for the Reform and Development of Chinese Soccer and the Implementing Opinions on Accelerating the Development of Youth Campus Soccer in 2015. By June 2022, these efforts had established 32,780 CFCS across China, along with 54 reform pilot zones, 241 pilot districts, and 138 "Full Star" training camps (Ministry of Education of China, 2023). Despite these achievements, the governance of CFCS still faces persistent challenges. These include weak self-management at the grassroots level, biased oversight by

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administrative bodies, insufficient participation from families, and an underdeveloped network of social organizations. These unresolved issues threaten the effectiveness and sustainability of CFCS governance and underscore the need for a comprehensive strategy to address them.

Several studies have explored the governance dilemmas facing CFCS from diverse perspectives. Zhang et al. (2023) noted that many grassroots soccer schools neglect self-management, creating inefficiencies and operational inconsistencies. Wu et al. (2022) highlighted issues of neutrality and impartiality in the evaluation processes, often dominated by local education departments, which can foster "local protectionism." Luo et al. (2021) pointed out that sports departments predominantly manage community sports, leading to unclear responsibilities and misaligned priorities. At the family level, limited parental understanding of the benefits of soccer and misconceptions about its impact on academic performance has further hindered participation (Education Center of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Communication University of China, 2022). Although these studies offer valuable insights, they are mainly fragmented and lack a holistic approach that considers the interconnectedness of these challenges within the broader context of societal and policy developments in the new era.

This study aims to fill the gap in the existing literature by adopting a systemic perspective to analyze the governance problems of CFCS. The primary objective is to explore the dynamics between families, schools, and societal organizations in the governance of CFCS and to propose a collaborative governance model that addresses these challenges effectively. This model will prioritize integrating efforts across all stakeholders, fostering trust and cooperation, and leveraging resources efficiently to enhance governance outcomes. Additionally, the study seeks to align these strategies with the evolving demands of China's sports industry and policy reforms, ensuring they are both practical and future-oriented.

The urgency of this study lies in the critical role that CFCS plays in developing grassroots talent and promoting the overall quality of youth sports in China. A failure to address the governance challenges could undermine national efforts to elevate Chinese soccer globally and hinder the broader goal of fostering a sports culture that aligns with China's aspirations for societal well-being and international competitiveness. By building on existing research and addressing gaps in the literature, this study advocates for a synergistic governance model as a feasible and essential path forward. Such an approach will not only resolve current governance issues but also provide a sustainable framework for the long-term development of CFCS, ensuring they can fully realize their potential as a pillar of China's sports enterprise.

B. Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research design using the literature review method to systematically analyze governance challenges in Chinese Football Characteristic Schools (CFCS). The literature review method enables identifying, organizing, and synthesizing existing knowledge by consulting various sources, such as journals, theses, conference proceedings, and academic databases. By examining this body of literature, the study aims to uncover the evolution of CFCS governance, highlight its challenges, and explore strategies for improvement through the lens of collaborative governance theory and the three-dimensional health view theory (Zhang et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2022).

The research was conducted systematically to ensure comprehensive coverage and relevance. Relevant literature was collected from prominent Chinese academic databases, including the China Knowledge Network (CNKI) and Wan Fang. The search began with general themes on "school football," introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2009, and narrowed down to focus on CFCS governance issues. The timeframe spanned from April 2009 to October 2024, yielding 17,812 documents on "school football" and 1,551 documents specifically

addressing CFCS. These were categorized by type, including journals, master's and doctoral theses, and conference papers, to extract critical information. The selected literature was screened to identify key governance issues and to develop strategies aligned with the theoretical frameworks (Ministry of Education of China, 2023; Luo et al., 2021).

Data collection involved a systematic search strategy using specific keywords, such as "school football," "Chinese Football Characteristic Schools," and "governance." Inclusion criteria emphasized works discussing governance challenges, collaborative governance, and health view theories, particularly those relevant to CFCS. The dataset comprised 5,696 journal articles, 2,997 master's and doctoral theses, 2,997 conference papers on school football, 339 journals, and 318 papers focusing on CFCS. Thematic patterns and gaps were identified to comprehensively understand the issues (Education Center of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Communication University of China, 2022).

The collected data were analyzed using thematic and theoretical frameworks. Thematic analysis was employed to categorize the literature into recurring themes, such as family participation, resource allocation, administrative governance, and collaborative strategies. The three-dimensional health view theory served as the analytical lens to assess governance dilemmas, while collaborative governance theory provided a framework for proposing solutions. Quantitative insights, such as publication trends and research focus, were summarized descriptively to contextualize the scholarly emphasis on CFCS governance. This combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches enabled a nuanced understanding of the governance challenges and guided the formulation of practical recommendations (Zhang et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2022).

C. Findings and Discussion

1. Exploring the Concept of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools

Chinese Football Characteristic Schools governance is an essential hand for the high-quality development of sports enterprise and a realistic path to realizing the construction of an intense sports country, and it is the call of the new era to explore the governance strategy of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools. In order to better study the governance of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools, the concept of campus soccer special schools needs to be clearly defined. Many scholars have given definitions of the concept of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools from different perspectives. Zhao et al. (2018), by way of operational definitions, define Chinese Football Characteristic Schools as schools that use football as a carrier for nurturing, elevate this concept to the height of the overall development of the school, and put it into nurturing practice in an all-round way. Liu et al.(2019) believe that Chinese Football Characteristic Schools are schools combined with their creation in order to promote the popularization of football, play a leading role in the demonstration, form an effective schooling characteristic of football education, and by the voluntary declaration, the educational administrative department of the level by level review and comprehensive identification, and the unity of the named in line with the national school football characteristics of the school of the primary conditions and standards of the regular inspection and assessment of the full-time ordinary primary and secondary schools. Zhao et al. (2018) Pointed out that Chinese Football Characteristic Schools refer to schools that, under the guidance of the national education and sports reform and development policies, form a unique, stable, and all-student-oriented mode of operation and ultimately cultivate all-roundly-developed football talents based on the educational ideology of "making people moral," the school's philosophy of running a school, the core of the school-based football curriculum, and the cultivation of particular football culture as the value orientation of the

school. It can be seen that the definitions of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools are different from different research perspectives. Therefore, this study defines Chinese Football Characteristic Schools as, Chinese Football Characteristic Schools refer to schools with football talents with Chinese characteristics under the leadership of the Party, based on human, material, and financial inputs and the collaborative governance of multiple main participants, which cultivates students' interest in football and promotes students' healthy and all-round development.

2. The Three-Dimensional Dilemma of Governance in Chinese Football Characteristic Schools

In order to grasp the issue of Chinese Football's Characteristic school governance as a whole, this paper introduces the theory of the three-dimensional view of health. 1948, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined health in its charter as "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." this definition focuses the understanding of health on physical, mental, and social aspects. And not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." this definition focuses on the understanding of health in physiological, psychological, and social aspects and, for the first time, clearly puts forward a three-dimensional view of health, in which physiological health is the foundation, psychological health is the core, and social adaptation is the key. The theory of the three-dimensional health view has been applied in sports for a long time. Yang et al. (2005) combined the three-dimensional health view to explain sports science from the biological, psychological, and sociological perspectives. They believed that the three-dimensional perspectives of biology, psychology, and sociology broke through the traditional one-dimensional linear thinking mode and replaced it with the three-dimensional systematic thinking mode, and this brand new mode of thinking in sports science, which improves the sports science research to a new stage. Li et al. (2017) explored the correlation between students' self-management level and the three-dimensional view of health in the American Spark program. It can be seen that the three-dimensional view of health is a theoretical analysis tool that can be used in both the macro level of sports science and the more detailed sports classroom. As a football characteristic school with sports and education attributes, its core is cultivating people and grasping the overall construction and healthy development direction of Chinese Football Characteristic School, which is extremely important. The most crucial management participants in the governance of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools are family, school, and society. Combining the theory of three-dimensional health view, the family can be regarded as the basic factor, school as the core factor, and society as the key factor. The analysis of these three aspects of the reality of the dilemma can help us understand the attribution of the healthy development of the school soccer particular school, which provides a basis for the analysis of the development of the school soccer particular school.

Family Dilemmas in The Governance of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools

As one of the governance participants in the construction of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools, family is the basic factor of the whole governance link. Football activities need the support and participation of parents and students; they are the cornerstone of the smooth development of football activities. With the global economic downturn and increasing social competition, parents regard their children's academic performance as the core element to seek a better future for their children, and the pressure to go to school has become a mountain on the head of the whole family. Parents pay too much attention to children's academic performance and ignore the needs of children in other aspects, which is

not conducive to children's healthy and comprehensive development. A family contains two participants of parents and children, parents as supervisors, often with their own learning and social experience to make choices for children, in learning, often these choices are very purposeful, to improve the performance of the main, and usually do not consider whether the child is willing to accept. As an independent person, children have their own preferences and pursuits, but in communication with parents, they often belong to the compromised party, and in the long run, psychological aspects will produce depressed emotions. In the development of campus football activities, students, as the subject of participation practice, can enjoy the fun of football, enhance physical fitness, improve personality and temper, and are conducive to the overall development of students. Parents' participation in campus football activities is usually not high, and they tend to attach importance to cultural classes, ignore sports, and worry about children's injuries in physical education classes (Li,2017). To deal with the contradiction between students' sports needs and all-around development and parents' cognition and worry, it is a prerequisite for families to participate in constructing and managing campus football schools with characteristics to solve this contradiction. The primary factor of fully mobilizing family participation can lay a solid foundation for the construction of a campus football school.

School Dilemmas in The Governance of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools

The school is the place to carry out football activities. Suppose the construction of a characteristic school wants to get healthy development. In that case, it must return to the school as the core participant and deeply explore its problems in constructing a Chinese characteristic school. After several years of development, the construction of Chinese football characteristic schools has completed the goal of establishing 20,000 football-characteristic schools in 2020, as required by the General Plan for the Reform and Development of Chinese Football in advance, but it can not be ignored that there are still some problems in the construction process.

There are not enough football pitches per capita. According to the data, as of December 2022, there were 143,900 school football fields nationwide (79,684 in primary schools, 40,774 in junior high schools, 16,363 in high schools, and 7,127 in universities) (Ministry of Education of China,2023). The football field is the foundation of football sports. The critical task of the Chinese football charter school is to popularize football. The standard of the school field can not meet the needs of all students. The "National Youth School Football Work Points out in 2022" "strengthen the construction of school football grounds, based on each Chinese characteristic school has one or more football grounds, and strive to achieve an additional 20,000 school football grounds within five years."(Ministry of Education of China,2024). It can be seen that the construction of football fields is still the key task, and increasing the total number of football fields and then increasing the per capita football fields is the key task in the future.

The core literacy of teachers needs to be improved. The "Physical Education and Health Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 edition)" points out that "the core literacy to be cultivated in physical education and health courses mainly refer to the correct values, necessary characters, and key abilities gradually formed by students through physical education and health courses, including sports ability, healthy behavior, and physical morality."(Ji,2022)Teachers play a leading role in the teaching process, and the core literacy of physical education teachers is an essential factor affecting students' learning. Teachers with professional education backgrounds in football do not mean they can teach students well, which is only a prerequisite. Most teachers have conservative teaching concepts, a lack

of innovation in teaching methods and means, and a lack of in-depth teaching evaluation scores. Therefore, more attention should be paid to evaluating non-intellectual and physical factors(Li,2020). Therefore, it is necessary to put forward requirements on the core literacy of teachers. In addition to teaching students to play football, it is also necessary to further guide students to acquire sports morality, develop healthy behaviors, promote the all-round development of students, and finally cultivate talents needed by society.

The special fund for football should be used within the revenue. Data show that during the period from 2015 to 2022, the central finance has arranged 1.408 billion yuan of school football support funds, of which 147 million yuan will be allocated in 2021 for school football teaching and training reform and curriculum system construction, "Full Star" training camp, fourth-level league and other work (Qiu et al.,2024). However, according to the division of powers, the central government does not have direct funds to construct football characteristic schools(Liu,2018). The funds for school football development mainly come from the government, the market, and society. While exploring how to broaden these channels and strive for more funds, using funds also needs to be more cautious. The so-called "open source" is not enough to do a good job of "open source"; in the use of funds, we also need to pay attention to "throttling." It is not easy to fight for capital investment, and it is necessary to be careful when using funds and make the best use of everything.

Social Dilemmas in The Governance of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools

Social organizations are the resources that can be relied on and utilized in constructing the Chinese Football Characteristic School. In the governance of the Chinese Football Characteristic School, the participation of social organizations can absorb more funds and play the role of publicity and supervision. Social organizations are like levers, and good use can strengthen campus football schools. Social organizations have made many attempts to participate in governance. Social sports organizations have tried to break through school boundaries and adopted a series of measures to expand campus football outside the school and link schools, families, communities, and various youth organizations(Wu et al.,2017). Compared with schools and families, social participation is not strong enough, and there are still some defects in participating in the governance of campus football schools, which do not fully play the role of social organizations.

Social organizations lack discursive power. In the governance process of Chinese Football Characteristic School, schools usually play a leading role, whether in the football fields, teachers, capital utilization, or in the direction of governance. Have maintained a strong position and have an absolute right to speak on the investment and utilization of resources. Sports markets and social organizations find it challenging to enter the core circle of campus football decision-making. In addition, social organizations are reluctant to actively intervene in school football work supervised by the education department because of possible interest entanglements(Zhang et al.,2022). To attract social organizations to participate in governance, we must first clarify their status and give them enough discursive power rather than just superficial participation. On this basis, clarify the interests of all parties, carry out in-depth cooperation, reach common goals, and work together to help govern Chinese Football Characteristic Schools.

There is a lack of mutual trust among the multiple participants. Norms and trust are the mechanisms that guarantee the promotion of school football (Li et al.,2018), and trust is the basis of cooperation. The governance of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools is a systematic project; it is necessary to lay a solid foundation, and how to build trust is the key issue. The three participants, family, school, and social organizations, have not formed a

good interaction, nor do they have a unique communication platform, and they are primarily political. In joint management, conflicts and suspicions will arise due to their different needs, which is not conducive to establishing trust. In addition, some sports social organizations, such as football associations and sports organizations, are under the jurisdiction of sports departments in the traditional sense, forming biased responsibility cognition in their positioning, which is likely to lead to problems in implementation and further aggravate the tripartite trust crisis. For long-term and healthy development, mutual trust needs to be established.

3. Collaborative governance strategy of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools

Today's social, political, and economic environment is complex and changeable, and the traditional management mode can no longer meet social development needs. Collaborative governance has six characteristics: publicity, pluralism, interaction, formality, dominance, and dynamics(Tian,2014), which can adapt to the fast-changing modern environment. As a governance theory and strategy, collaborative governance was first born and popular in Western public management research and gradually expanded to other disciplines. Its theoretical connotation mainly focuses on the governance subject, governance object, and subject relationship, and collaborative governance presents a more effective governance model and strategy from the theoretical level (Gu et al.,2022). Collaborative governance theory has also been widely used in sports circles, such as sports public service(Huang et al.,2023), competitive sports and national fitness(Liu et al.,2022), and other fields. The application of collaborative governance theory in the construction and management of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools can mobilize the rich resources of multiple subjects and achieve common goals. Giving full play to the synergistic and co-governing function of multiple subjects can promote the development of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools. From the perspective of collaborative governance, the realistic dilemma of the construction of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools can be alleviated from the following three aspects: activating the kinetic energy of family participation, giving full play to the value of resource utilization, and constructing the engine of collaborative governance. The application of collaborative governance theory in the construction and management of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools can mobilize the rich resources of multiple subjects and achieve common goals. Giving full play to the synergistic and co-governing function of multiple subjects can promote the development of campus football characteristic schools.

Activating the Kinetic Energy of Family Participation

The most noticeable feature of the new era is the application of science and technology. Science and technology have endowed human beings with infinite possibilities. There have been many attempts to use information technology in sports, and the development of technology-enabled sports has become a trend. Information technology also plays a vital role in constructing and managing football characteristic schools. Although the contradiction between children's sports needs and all-round development and parents' cognition and worry exists, the new era also gives us more choices. Information technology has enriched the way of practice, and society and schools can use various platforms to strengthen the publicity of the role of football education so that parents can deeply understand the role of sports in promoting physical fitness and physical and mental health and stimulating the motivation of parents to participate in school football. On the other hand, materialist dialectics hold that contradictions have both opposites and identities and the development process of things spirals. Football can promote intellectual growth and enable students to learn better. An excellent academic level often means a better memory and understanding ability, which is a

promotion factor for football skills and tactical learning, and the two complement each other. Based on the coordination between the two, the school formulated relevant norms to dispel parents' doubts, increase parents' sense of identity, activate parents' participation in school football, release family potential, cooperate with schools and social organizations to participate in the governance of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools, and use resources of all parties to promote the governance of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools jointly.

Giving Full Play to The Value of Resource Utilization

The three-in-one collaborative governance model of family, school, and social organization embodies sustainable development. Only by concentrating our efforts can we do great things. We should try our best to collect the available resources of all participants, coordinate the distribution, make the best use of them, and help the governance of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools. At the same time, the linkage of family, school, and social organization has different emphases. The family must first do a good job of basic security work, and the essential equipment for participating in football should be prepared. Secondly, we should make good use of family and community space and do an excellent job in the primary physical reserve of students. Finally, parents are the best teachers of students and should play a leading role in jointly creating a family football atmosphere. The school should continue to implement the development of football fields, make full use of idle fields in schools, and rebuild more football fields. Make full use of information technology, establish an online learning resource base for schools, and encourage teachers and students to learn online. Establish the concept of lifelong learning; encourage teachers to carry out all kinds of learning exchanges and training and give timely rewards for quantifiable results; Strictly abide by the financial system within the income, and reduce unnecessary waste. Social forces can provide more thoughtful after-school services so that students can get adequate exercise, improve football skills, Establish school football brands, provide professional teachers, explore the road of school football marketization, Guide media attention, and enhance the attention and value of school football.

Constructing the Engine of Collaborative Governance

The collaborative governance theory has a solid guiding significance for the coordinated development of social diversification under an open system. Collaborative governance emphasizes the collaboration of different subsystems or actors to exert the effect that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts(Li,2014). The governance of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools involves many subjects, and it is necessary to build a collaborative governance engine to exert the synergistic effect of each subject to achieve overall development. First of all, it is necessary to activate the enthusiasm of multiple subjects, give all participants enough discursive power, Share information well, reasonably negotiate and balance the interests of all participants in the way of communication, and take the realization of the governance goal of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools as the ultimate task, scientific use of all resources, maximize the utilization of resources and achieve the effect of twice the result with half the effort. Secondly, the role positioning of the family, school, and social organization should be done to rebuild the foundation of trust. Trust is based on shared goals and interests, and the unity of goals and ideas defines the development direction. On this basis, the goals are broken down and refined. So that family, school, and social organization tripartite can be effective and participate extensively. Finally, we should pay attention to the review so that everything has a response; management activities are a long-term process, and everything should be reviewed promptly, with timely correction of

errors, adjustment of deficiencies, improved management efficiency, and clear direction of development.

D. Conclusion

The governance of Chinese Football Characteristic Schools (CFCS) is a cornerstone of youth sports development and a critical platform for advancing China's broader sports enterprise. This study, grounded in the three-dimensional health view theory, identifies significant governance challenges within CFCS across three primary domains: family, school, and social organizations. The findings highlight deficiencies such as limited family participation, inadequate school resources, teacher competencies, and insufficient involvement and support from social organizations. These issues collectively hinder the effectiveness and sustainability of CFCS governance.

To address these challenges, the study proposes a collaborative governance model that integrates efforts from families, schools, and social organizations. This model aims to activate parental participation, optimize the utilization of resources, and foster trust and cooperation among stakeholders. By constructing a "collaborative governance engine," the study outlines a pathway to enhance the governance capacity of CFCS. This approach aligns with the evolving demands of the times and ensures that CFCS can effectively contribute to cultivating sports talent and the long-term development of youth sports in China. The implications of this study are twofold. First, it provides a theoretical framework and practical strategies for improving CFCS governance, emphasizing the importance of stakeholder synergy. Second, it calls on the academic community to explore innovative governance mechanisms for CFCS to strengthen its role as a vehicle for China's sports enterprise. In conclusion, fostering collaborative governance in CFCS is essential for realizing its full potential and achieving sustainable growth in China's sports sector.

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