

A Study of Chinese Retired Elite Athletes' Re-employment Policy

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ABSTRACT. *This chapter will examine the various routes that Chinese retired elite athletes have taken in seeking re-employment. It will focus on the history of policy making and its function in relation to the retirement and re-employment of the Chinese elite athletes. These policies are subdivided into three periods: the mandatory measures period, the transition period and the marketing measures period. Further, statistical backup will be attached to prove and analyse functions of the policy in each period.*

KEYWORDS: *Elite Athletes, Re-employment, Policy*

1. Introduction

The allocation of Chinese retired elite athletes' re-employment has gone through a number of changes over 70 years of development. The different measures depended on the economic background of the time so that the processes can be divided into: 1. the mandatory phase before 1986; 2. the transition phase from 1987 to 2001; 3. the marketing phase from 2002. Mandatory measures refer to the allocation of retired elite athletes in accordance with government planning. They reflect the mandatory allocation of human resources and government-responsible arrangement of retired elite athletes under a planned economy background. Marketing measures are, in comparison, the shift towards multiple distributions of resigned athletes mainly through the labour market. The analysis of both mandatory measures and marketing measures will focus on the relevant policies and their functions during the practice.

2. The Re-employment Policy and Practice Before 1986

Under the mandatory measures policy background, the Chinese central government plays a leading role in planning the labour allocation and assigning the quota to each hiring enterprise, thus establishing a permanent labour relationship between the employers and the employees. The athlete, upon entering the company, established a so-called life-long contract with it and thus got the "iron food bowl". The purpose of the measures was to guarantee the benefits to the athletes and it

shows the absolute control and central management of the government of the human resources. These have contributed to the development of the elite sports and encouraged the elite athletes to train hard and fight with determination.

The Chinese retired elite athletes' re-employment practice has existed from the 1950s when elite sports teams were established. During different periods however, the situation of re-employment of retired elite athletes was not the same. Before the 1970s, the rate of retired elite athletes' re-employment was high, and re-employment with internal placement inside the sports system took up a large percentage. After the 1980s, the sports personnel placement within the system became more saturated, as at this time, the key areas of job placement of retired elite athletes gradually shifted from inside the sports system to other career areas[1]. Before the 1990s, the employment situation of Chinese elite athletes was relatively optimistic.

According to statistics, the total number of retired elite athletes from 1977 to 1989 amounted to between 15,000 and 19,000. The yearly re-employment rate averages 15.0% with a $\pm 3.6\%$ deviation. In the 13 years from 1977 to 1989, 32,225 retired elite athletes had been re-employed, which is in accordance with the aforementioned 15% rate. From 1981 to 1989, there were a total of 29,407 athletes who were to be placed in re-employment. The proportion of actual placement was 22,739, accounting for 77.33% of the number that were placed. According to statistics 18,491 or 81.32% of 22,739 were in full-time re-employment. Four thousand two hundred and forty-eight or 18.68% went back to re-education, whilst 26.06% had employment relating to sports. Of that 26.06%, 11.35% became coaches, 9.46% became sports administrators, 4.51% became PE teachers and last but not least 0.74% worked in sports science departments[1].

In short, the mandatory measures were a way to secure the re-employment of retired athletes. Before the 1990s, there were hundreds of thousands of retired elite athletes receiving their jobs under mandatory measures. Most of them entered their jobs successfully apart from a few who were to lead a life of poverty. Anyway, the re-employment situation of the Chinese elite retired athlete in the mandatory measures period was relatively optimistic.

3. Policy and Practice in the Transition Period (1987–2001)

The seventh 'Five-year Plan' initiated in China in 1986, reformed the labour employment system for enterprises and confirmed the new employment system, which is a labour contract called system. The birth of this system dissolved the mandatory measures from its base of an administrative and organizational system. The appointment and contract system were gradually becoming pervasive in enterprises and institutions. Employment after the assessment and competition system was carried out at all levels of government. Employers gained the authority to decide their employment, and the government was not powerful enough to allocate most elite athletes' re-employment. Hence, the mandatory measures had to be adjusted according to the change in the economic market.

According to the economic background changes, the former allocation measures

of the retired elite athletes' re-employment would not be comparable with the then current employment situation in the labour market. In 1988, the Ministry of Labour announced the abolition of the policy 'Instructions on the Recruitment and Allocation of Elite Athletes', which was issued in 1980 [1]. From then until 2002, the nationwide unified policy of elite retired athletes' re-employment had never been issued. Therefore the situation of retired elite athletes' re-employment was getting more and more serious during the transition period from mandatory measures to marketing measures after 1986. The following data refers to the specific information of practice.

Figure 1 below showed the number of elite athletes who were waiting for re-employment after retiring. It showed clearly that the number was fairly constant before 1986, but increased rapidly from 3,206 to 5,212 during the period 1986 to 1989.

Additionally, according to the report from the Shandong province, there were 648 retired elite athletes' whose re-employment depended on the government's help, and which accounted for 70.3% of the total of 1,052. However, the jobs opportunities provided by the government were reduced gradually. For instance, 88 retired elite athletes acquired jobs from the government in 1994 but this was reduced to 39 in 2000; the number has decreased by more than double since then [2].

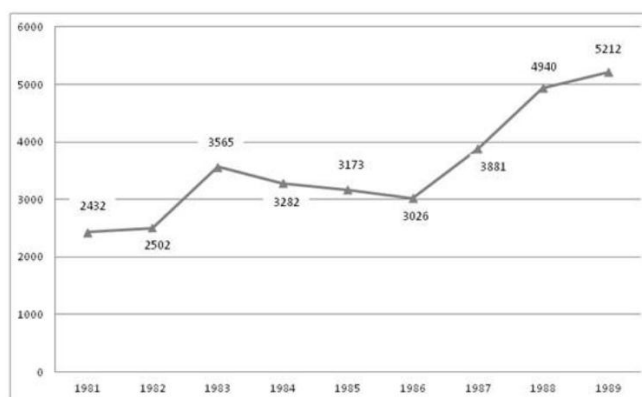


Figure 1: From 1981 to 1989, the number of Chinese elite athletes per year waiting for re-employment after retirement [1]

In summary, from 1986, the Chinese retired elite athletes' allocation measure was transformed from a mandatory to a marketing measure which was a new attempt to change. However, there was not a relevant unified national and powerful policy and most of the Chinese retired elite athletes ran into serious problems of re-employment. This situation reached the lowest level around the year 2002. This required a new generation of policies which would fit in with the then current economic background, and also would be powerful and efficient enough to resolve the elite athletes' re-employment situation after retiring.

4. The Marketing Measures and Practice (2002–2011)

During the transition period from mandatory to marketing, the serious problems of the retired elite athletes' re-employment illustrated that the re-employment measures and policy of retired elite athletes was not unified and powerful enough and needed to be adjusted and improved.

The 'Suggestions for the Facilitation of the Re-employment of Retired Elite Athletes' was jointly issued by the Chinese Sports Ministry, the Central Compilation Office, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Labour and Personnel and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security in September 2002. In this regulation, it was the first time elite athletes could select their occupations by themselves in the 'market' being mentioned. Therefore, the regulation indicated that the market-oriented allocation period for retired elite athletes had been established and confirmed.

The marketing measures arranged the retired athletes' life, re-employment and other basic guarantees according to their personal advantages. These measures also provide the retired athletes with different placement benefits according to the amount of their training years and their competition achievements. This classified arrangement measure is one of the important features of retired elite athletes' re-employment. It reflects the different approaches and benefits athletes will get according to the individual's situation under certain economic and historical conditions. Classified arrangement measures consist of re-employment, re-education and capital measures etc and they are the main methods of placement for the elite retired athletes. Meanwhile, under the marketing measures mode, the expenses of re-employment mainly come from national fiscal investment but other resources are gradually beginning to expand, such as sports lotto's, social fundraising, self-fundraising etc. Such measures solve the insufficient financial problem for the government as the government used to be the sole income provider in carrying out the allocation policy.

Based on the above policies issued by the central and local sports government after 2002, and the related problems during the course of implementing policy, specific situations of the elite retired athletes' re-employment in various provinces of China are shown below.

Sichuan province started adopting capital measures to arrange for retired elite athletes in 2006. At this time there were 326 retired elite athletes who had accepted the compensation and then found re-employment by themselves. This represents 80% of the total of retired athletes. In addition, 85% of the retired elite athletes felt reasonably satisfied with the arrangement; 9% felt very satisfied, and the final 6% felt unsatisfied [3]. In this research, three interviewees who used to train in Sichuan all chose the capital measure and re-education in college.

Another research indicates that the Fujian province sports bureau have arranged retirement for 507 elite athletes from 2005 to 2009. 414 athletes accepted the compensation and then found re-employment by themselves, with about 55 athletes getting a job as a result of government recommendation. Twelve athletes received

jobs under mandatory measures, and 30 athletes were recruited to work in the local sports departments. Before 2005, there were about 200 to 300 elite athletes waiting for assistance from the government every year, but from 2006 to 2009, this number reduced from 90 to 80 every year, which was much better than before.

According to Zhang's [4] sample research on 27 provincial retired elite athletes of the Aquatic sport, there were 14 athletes from among 194 sampled whose re-employment was arranged by the government mandatory measure. This is 7.2% of the sample total, and they were mainly located in Shanghai and Guangdong. The remaining 92.8%, which equalled 180 athletes, accepted the capital measure of retiring and then chose to find their own employment afterwards. These elite athletes were mainly from the under developed areas in the middle and western parts of China. Their employment status is shown in the following Table 2.

Table 2: The re-employment situation of the retired elite aquatic sport athletes in twenty seven provinces from 2004 to 2007[4]

Re-employment type	Re-education	PE teacher	Others	Temporary job	Part-time job in factory	Individual business	Un-employed	Total
Athletes number	8	10	17	22	44	58	21	180
%	4.1	5.7	9.3	12.4	24.2	32.4	11.9	100

From Table 2 we can see that there were less than 10% of elite athletes that continued their higher education or got employed as physical education teachers. Only one third of them started their own business. Additionally, there were almost half of them starting temporary or part-time jobs as their living and another one tenth of them remaining unemployed. The re-employment situation was not yet ideal.

The above data represents independent re-employment with payment compensation and re-education becoming mainstream thereby showing that elite athletes' re-employment after retirement follows marketing measures, but mandatory measures sometimes still play a role for the few who make great contributions and achievements for the national or local sports. However, Shanghai is an exception in so far as there are both marketing and mandatory measures that play an important function for the local elite athletes' re-employment after retiring, and this is the main reason that the re-employment situation of elite athletes is better than in other provinces.

In summary, the whole Chinese elite athlete retirement situation compared with that in the transition period is better, and more and more elite athletes are accepting the marketing measure to find jobs by themselves with capital compensation instead of staying in the team and waiting for the job allocated by the government. However, for some elite athletes who got a different amount of retirement compensation and started their new career, this procedure did not move smoothly. Some elite athletes claim that the capital measure can only satisfy the re-employment problem in the short term, and they will face new problems if they cannot find a job before the money runs out. Additionally, lots of retired elite athletes can only work in careers

with low payment. This situation indicates that the capital measure can only solve the problem that is to push the elite athletes to retire instead of staying in the sports team. The further step of acquiring more skills for a new occupation needs more efforts from both the elite athletes and the government.

5. Conclusion

There were three main periods in relation to the policy making about the retirement and re-employment of the elite athletes during the past seven decades. The first period was pre-1986 and is called the mandatory period. During this time, the government was responsible for ensuring that retiring athletes were able to find employment with the government's mandatory arrangement that it had with potential employers. This policy was based on the planned economy that had been in operation since the 1950s. Consequently, the re-employment situation of the retired elite athletes was optimistic but the employers did not have much opportunity to employ whomever they wanted as they were directed by the government.

The second period was the transition period from 1986 to 2001. During this time, the economic background of the mandatory measures was transformed gradually from a planned to a marketing one. Meanwhile, the right of employment of staff was shifted from the government to the enterprises and institutes in the labour market. Under these circumstances, the mandatory measure of the elite athletes' re-employment needed to be reformed. Hence, the original mandatory measure has been dispensed with gradually, but the new powerful and united policy was not issued before 2002. Although there are a few associate policies issued which relate to the capital measure, re-education etc, none of them could solve the re-employment problem from the root. Since there were no sufficient policies issued the amount of elite athletes re-employed under the mandatory measure was much less and the re-employment situation was in a dilemma.

The third period was the marketing measure period post-2002. The policy in this procedure claimed that elite athletes should select their occupation by themselves according to the 'market' situation. Various types of policies have been gradually issued, which largely relate to the capital measure, re-education measure and some re-employment support measure etc. Although mandatory measures still exist, the amount of the elite athletes who are allocated by this method is sharply reduced. In addition to the above measures, several associated policies were also addressed in order to help the athletes' re-employment, such as the career converting period policy, the vocational training policy, the various local supplementary regulations and so on. However, this research also investigates some problems of implementing the above policies which influence the benefits of the retired elite athletes' during their re-employment. In brief, the policy and measures of the retired elite athletes' re-employment, issued in the marketing period, have improved and matured gradually. More and more athletes accept the capital measures and start seeking an occupation on their own and in accordance with the market structure. However, both the elite athletes and the government still needed to make efforts on vocational training in order to ensure the athletes acquire the practical skills for their new jobs.

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