

Sport governance in Chinese competitive and professional volleyball: review and prosepct

Hou Tingyu

Graduate School of Sport Science, Waseda University, Tokyo, 10084, Japan

Abstract: *Research questions:* With the support of the whole nation system, Chinese competitive volleyball has made many brilliant achievements in international arenas. By contrast, the development of professional volleyball league have been in a state of tepid. We can observe the interesting phenomenon of the fire and ice between competitive volleyball and professional volleyball in China. This paper aims to explore sport governance structure in Chinese volleyball. **Research method:** This paper focuses on the application of national sport governance model in Chinese volleyball. The history of Chinese volleyball are reviewed and data from official website and articles are analyzed. At last, opportunities and challenges are summarized to prosepct the future development of Chinese volleyball. **Findings:** With a unitary governance model, sport governance in Chinese volleyball governance should be flexible to react to changes, combining the whole nation system with marketization, thus promoting the benign development of Chinese competitive volleyball and professional volleyball league.

Keywords: *sport governance model, Chinese volleyball, professionalization, benign development*

1. Introduction

Sport governance in Chinese elite sport and professional sport has been widely discussed. National Sport Governance has been broadly categorised into two types' models: The Unitary model and the Federal model (Oboyle and Shilbury, 2016). The Fedaral model is usually applied in coutries that has various regions under a national government. The Unitary model is usually seen in centralised government. National body holds the power of governance and decision making. China belongs to the former one.

According to Hu and Henry (2017), Chinese elite sport is predominantly governed by the governmental body, the General Administration of Sport (GAS). The All China Sport Federation (ACSF), a non-government sport organization in China, is responsible for managing Individual sport associations. Although ACSF ostensibly has management responsibilities, it is still under the actual control of the government authority. As Geeraert (2016) states, good governance consists of transparency, democatcy, cheks and balance, social responsibility, eqyity and diversity. Under the whole nation system, it is difficult for China to meet all the governance requirements. In previous sport organizations' study, King (2015) summaried elements of the governance structure of Non-profit Sport Ogranizations (NPSOs). NPSOs usually includes a board or management committee (for key decision-making) and few sub-committees (for execution and operation Treasurer). The board usually consists of individuals with titles such as Chair, President, Secretary and. China has long adhered to its own system of volleyball governance for a long time. Its system of governance is similar to basketball and soccer. Therefore, we could learn from good practices of sport governance in other sports.

Soccer, basketball and volleyball are traditionally known as Chinese "Big Three Balls", of which only women's volleyball has the strength and record to dominate the world. However, compared with soccer and basketball, volleyball is not the most core sport in China because of the breadth of mass participation, the impact of the sport itself and commerciality. The whole nation system and Olympics Strategy was implemented in China for a long time(Hong and Huang, 2013). With the support of the whole nation system, Chinese competitive volleyball has made many brilliant achievements in international arenas. By contrast, the development of professional volleyball league have been in a state of tepid. We can observe the interesting phenomenon of the fire and ice between competitive volleyball and professional volleyball in China.

2. The development of Chinese volleyball

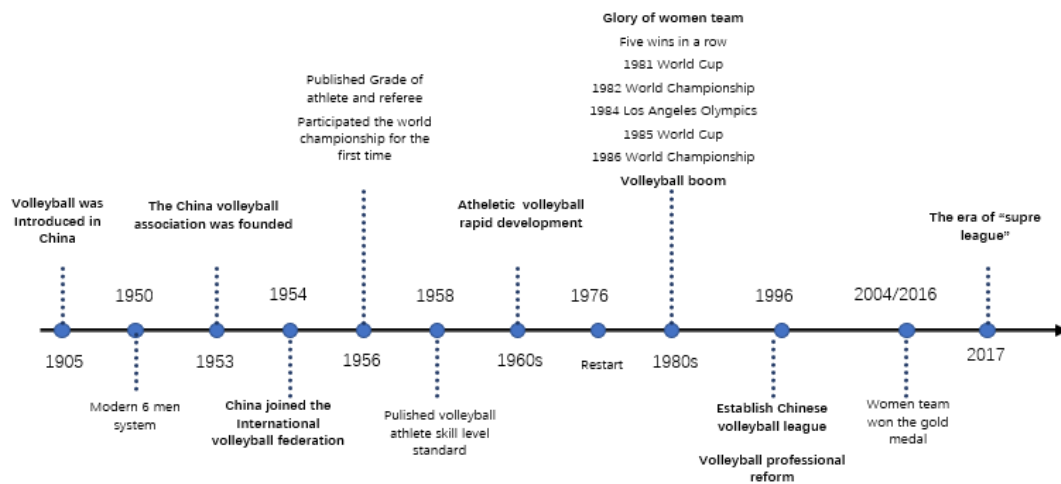


Fig.1. The timeline of Chinese Volleyball development

According to the China Volleyball Association, volleyball originated in the United States in 1895 and was soon introduced to south China in 1905. It was played in schools in Guangzhou and Hong Kong and quickly spread in local areas. In 1950, China began to introduce the modern 6 men system to comply with the trend of international volleyball.

In 1953, the China Volleyball Association was founded. In the second year, China joined the International Volleyball Federation (FIVA) which strengthened technical and emotional exchanges with the world's volleyball community. In 1956, China appeared in the World Championships for the first time. Then, China published the grade of athlete and referee in the same year and formulated the volleyball athlete skill level standard, which greatly promotes the standardized development of Chinese volleyball. In the 1960s, competitive volleyball developed rapidly in the process of learning volleyball from Eastern Europe. After that, China suffered from 10 chaotic years. It was not until 1976 that volleyball began to grow again.

In the 1980s, China ushered in the most glorious moment of volleyball development. The women's volleyball team won five straight in three major volleyball events. Inspired by women's volleyball spirit, volleyball began to sweep the whole nation. In 1996, to meet the needs of marketization, China started the road of volleyball professionalism reform and established the Chinese Volleyball League in 1996. The Chinese women's volleyball team won a gold medal again at the 2004 Olympics and 2016 Olympics. After that, it's been a period of ups and downs for the Chinese volleyball team. In 2016, the women's volleyball reached the top again, which increased the commercial value of women's volleyball greatly. In 2017, conforming to the Volleyball Craze in China, the Chinese Volleyball League was updated to the Chinese Super League.

3. Chinese volleyball governance system

The governmental framework in China is an umbrella that comprises the central sport governing authority at the top, down towards the provincial and municipal sport governing bodies (Hong and Huang, 2013). The national body, the General Administration of Sport (GAS), holds the power of sport policy and governance in decision making. Chinese elite players are selected and trained in three systems: the sports school system, the educational system and the public system. (Wang & Xue, 2010). The selection of volleyball talents follows this system.

Chinese Volleyball Management Center (CVMC) belongs to the General Administration of Sport of China and acts as a government agency with 7 sub-departments, which takes charge of the business management, competitions, fitness and training of volleyball and beach volleyball events.

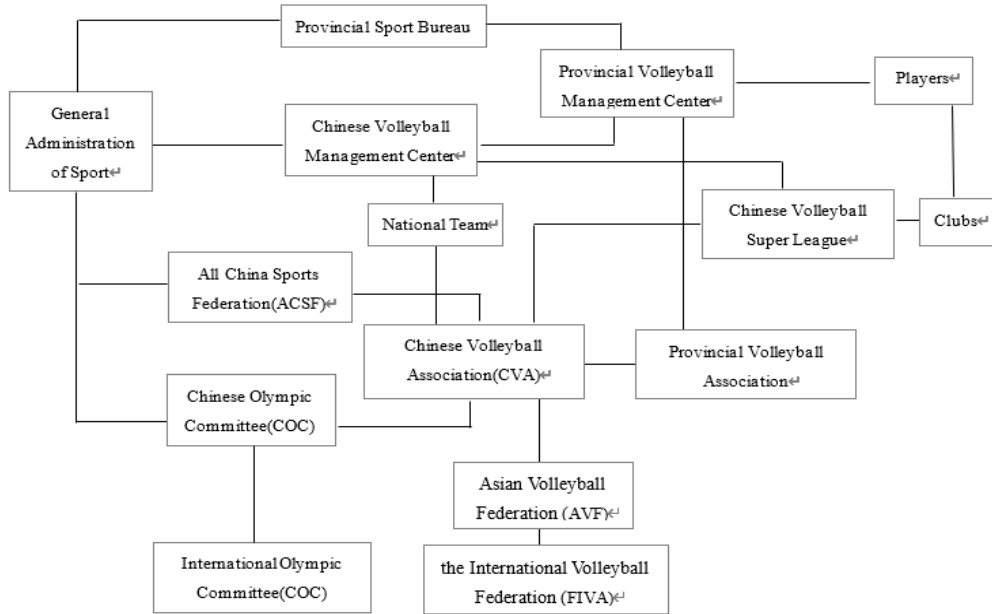


Fig.2. Macro Administration Structure of Chinese Volleyball

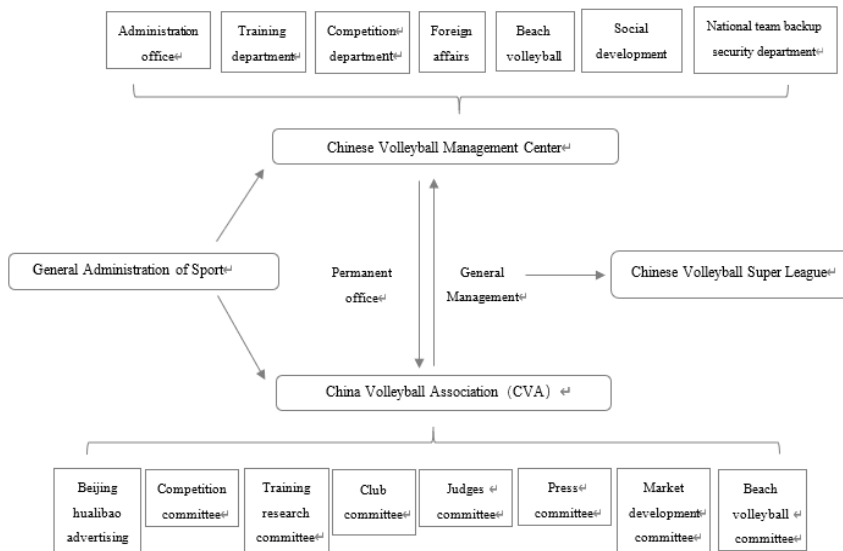


Fig.3. Specific Administration structure of Chinese Volleyball system

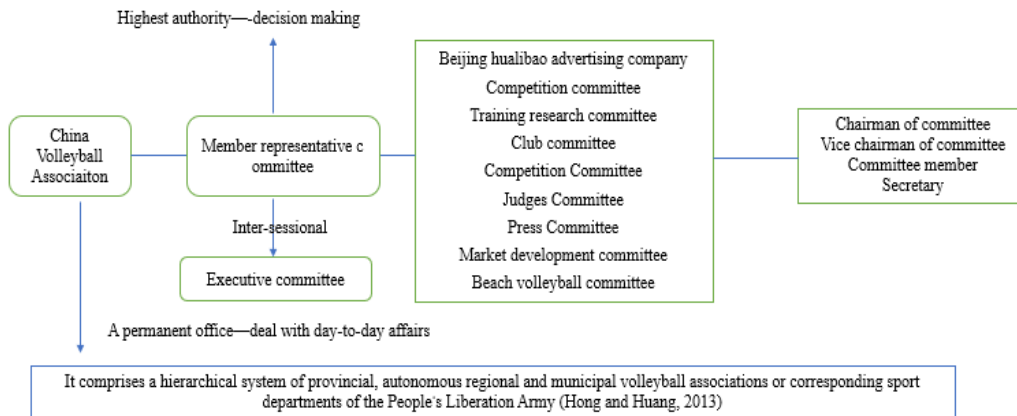


Fig.4. The structure of China Volleyball Association

China Volleyball Association (CVA) is a national non-governmental nonprofit sports organization. The Member Representative Committee is the highest authority in decision-making. In the inter-sessional period, the Executive Committee, as a permanent office, will deal with day-to-day affairs. CVA represents China in FIBA and Asian Volleyball Conference (AVC). It's also a member of the All-China Sports Federation (ACSF), managing national teams and organizing the Chinese volleyball super league. It consists of eight sub-committees (for execution and operation). Every committee has a chairman, vice chairman, committee member and secretary.

However, many staffs in CVA also work in CVMC. Hong and Huang (2013) said there was a slow transformation of power and the true power in governing Chinese sport effectively was still the government. Despite the reform of the association entity, the sports associations are still lacking in autonomy. Hence, the development of Chinese volleyball needs more transparency, democracy and social responsibility.

4. Professionalization of Chinese Volleyball

Chinese Volleyball League (CVL) was founded in 1996. It was updated to Chinese Volleyball Super League (CVSL) in 2017 for a higher degree of professionalism. Now, there are 14 men's teams and 14 women's teams.

In aspect of the professionalization, taking women's league for example, there are 6 stages in the tortuous road to professionalism in Chinese volleyball: (a) Beginning period: The women's volleyball league was founded in 1996 with 8 teams. (b) Growth period: After the 1998-1999 season, the women's volleyball league expanded to 12 teams. (c) "Naked" period: In 2015, Chinese women's volleyball team returned to the top of the world, but the women's volleyball league had the embarrassing situation of "naked" without sponsors. (d) Blooming period: 2016 Women volleyball league brought a hot topic because women's team won the 2016 Rio Olympics. (e) "Super Volleyball" era: In 2017, the Chinese volleyball league was renamed as Chinese Volleyball Super League. (f) Frustration period: Volleyball Window ended its contract with the Volleyball Association. The league lacks professional organizers and marketers now.

To sum up, the road of volleyball professionalism in China is not smooth

The Media market development is not enough with low retransmission rate of super league on TV. Moreover, there is a slow flow of players in the club. Many clubs are still governed by Local government. Funds are provided by the state and a small amount of enterprise sponsorship. In addition, due to the impact of the Olympic Games and the National Games, the clubs and players do not pay much attention to the league, and the economic and ornamental quality of league is not very high.

5. Opportunities and Challenges for Chinese volleyball

Based on the analysis of the structure of Chinese volleyball governance and professionalization. There are some opportunities and challenges for Chinese Volleyball.

1) Opportunities:

a) National policy support: Citizens' sports consumption concept has changed and sports demand is increasing.

b) Wide media coverage and social attention: Volleyball is a worldwide sport. Chinese women's volleyball team has great international competition results in recent years. Chinese Women's team has a high commercial value and forms Women's volleyball spirit.

c) Advanced technology: The development of training, exercise, and sports analytics technology allows athletes to be trained more scientifically and systematically. Advanced video technology not only improves the results of a game but also reduces conflict. Digital technology makes live streaming popular, which is helpful to open up the young fan market.

d) Other popular sports are underperforming: China has three big ball sports: football, basketball and volleyball. However, basketball and football are underperforming in international competition in recent years.

2) Challenges

a) For the government: It is urgent to plan sports volleyball resources and facilities reasonably so that develop mass volleyball on a large scale. Additionally, athletes conveying rewards needs to be completed to enhance the enthusiasm of local government training.

b) For the Super league: It is necessary to consider how to retain and expand attendance and make the Super League develop into a true professional league with a high commercial value.

c) For CVA: It is important to maintain independence and reduce government intervention. At the same time, how to leave a positive impact on society using Social Corporate Responsibility is also a big challenge.

d) For Covid-19: There is a strong uncertainty of the volleyball event and there may be some spectator restrictions, which could seriously affect event attendance.

6. Conclusion

Gu (2012) pointed out that sports development strategies should be constantly adapted to the changing demands of the times for more effective and sustainable sport development. Hence,

a) With a unitary governance model, sport governance in Chinese volleyball should be flexible to react to changes and keep pace with the times.

b) Chinese volleyball should combine the whole nation system with commercialization and marketization, thus promoting the benign development of Chinese competitive volleyball and professional volleyball league.

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