

Comparative Study on Football Professionalism Development Histories in China and Japan

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Abstract: *Football Professionalism is an indispensable means to boost the football development in a country. Football professionalism reform implemented by China in the 1990s had a profound impact on the growth of Chinese football. As China's close neighbor separated by a strip of water, Japan also implemented football professionalism reform in the 1990s. However, over the past two decades of implementing football professionalism in both two countries, a tremendous gap has arisen between the two countries' football competitive levels. Up to today, the competitive level of Japanese football has ascended to the top in Asia, while China is still hanging around at the bottom. As for the same football professionalism reform, how could the disparity be so huge. In essence, there must be inherent causes. Therefore, in this paper, a wide range of research methods such as literature review methods, data comparison and analysis methods are employed to analyze, compare and study the football professionalism development histories both in China and Japan. Various problems existing in the development process of Chinese football professionalism are identified, hoping to provide some guidance and theoretical reference for the smooth development of Chinese football professionalism in future.*

Keywords: *Football Professionalism Reform; Development History; Football System*

1. INTRODUCTION

Chinese football has embarked on the path of professionalism since 1992, marked by the “Hongkou Mountain Conference”. Over the 24 years, Chinese football has experienced multiple ups and downs, accompanied by controversies. Since the official inception of Chinese professional football league in 1994, a number of negative influences have taken place in China's football market; the prevalence of “Black Whistle” and “Match-fixing” in Chinese Football Association Super League (also known as Chinese Super League or CSL) have seriously affected the sustainable development of China's football industry; besides, China national football team's performances have been declining all the way. The football professionalism development in China has aroused people's contemplation. Japan also implemented football professionalism reform in the 1990s. In 1993, Japan Professional Football League (commonly known as the J.League) was established, which sparked extensive echoes from Japan's society and made football one of the most popular sports in Japan. Now, Japan national football team has become a leader in Asian football, successively winning the championships in 1992, 2000, 2004 and 2011 AFC Asian Cup. Viewed from the perspectives of time, competition and management systems, China and Japan are sharing some commonalities; however, at the same time, they have their particularities.

2. REVIEW ON THE DEVELOPMENT HISTORIES OF CHINESE AND JAPANESE FOOTBALL PROFESSIONALISM

2.1. Preparatory Phase

The preparatory phase of Chinese football professionalism took place around 1992-1993. In January 1992, during the qualification process for the Barcelona Olympics, South Korea national football team scored three consecutive goals at the last moment, knocking out the Chinese national team and sparking an uproar in the whole society. Hence then, discussions on the development methods of Chinese football were rapidly arranged and expanded, amid which the concepts of implementing football professionalism reforms and developments were formally proposed by some intelligent people. Facts have proved that only professionalism could thoroughly eliminate the contradictions and

hidden dangers accumulated in China's football over the long term. But in professionalism reforms, there had been a majority of people showing questioning attitudes and deeming professional reforms as capitalism acts that tremendously conflict with China's national conditions. However, after Deng Xiaoping made his speech in his South China tour and Jiang Zemin successfully proposed the concept of socialist economy, those people who originally had fears over football professionalism and structural reforms of clubs began to feel relieved and all the thoughts were unprecedentedly unified, firming China's determination for football professionalism reforms. For example, in 1992, under Deng Xiaoping's direction -"We should be more brave to make faster steps", the State Physical Culture and Sports Commission (the former body of General Administration of Sport of China) held the Hongkou Mountain Conference in Beijing. In the Conference, football's future reform directions, process flows, and systems requiring confirmation were certified and agreed. Reform ideas such as implementing the football substantiation and setting up professional football clubs were organically confirmed. The conference served as a key break point in the reform of the sport system^[1]. And in 1993, Chinese Football Administration Center and Chinese Football Association(CFA) carried out field investigations to European and American football powers over the details such as institutions structuring, organization management, club structures, the actual organizing conditions of professional leagues, and national team construction; after a certain period of exchanges and discussions, as well as modest studies and research, they gained a general understanding of overseas professional football operations and business control approaches, thus providing appropriate compatible conditions for China's future football professionalism reforms and developments. In the same year, Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Chengdu, Wuhan and Dalian successively set up professional football clubs, whose operations were dominated by the joint operation of sports committees and enterprises. In October 1993, CFA successfully held a football work conference in Dalian and fully implemented the first football club-themed files, which are reform-related files represented by "The Articles of China Football Association Clubs" and "Ten-year Development Program for Chinese Football", providing abundant instructive clues for the overall development of football professionalism. After two years of preparations, Chinese Football Association Jia-A League (commonly known as Jia-A League) was officially launched in 1994, ushering Chinese football reform into a substantive operation stage.

Japan's preparatory phase for football professionalism took place around 1986-1993; in 1986, Japan Football Association(JFA) revised the registration management regulations for amateur athletes, which was the first time that professional athletes were registered and certified; from 1987, more and more professional football athletes were registered, which played a key role in the development of Japanese football professionalism. Despite a fraction of professional athletes had joined Japan Soccer League (JSL), however, JSL remained semi-professional. In March 1988, Japanese league's chief Sen Zhaojian organized the "Activation Committee" to implement football professionalism reform, where discussions and research on how to improve the overall level of Japanese football were conducted. A total number of 6 meetings were held in a very short period, where the Japan Soccer League's status-quo was analyzed; the professional leagues in other countries were investigated and analyzed, and the possibility of establishing a professional football league in Japan was discussed. Eventually, after discussions, it was agreed that Japan football should follow the road of commercialization to realize the objective of professionalism at the end. In August 1988, Saburo Kawabuchi replaced Sen Zhaojian as the new chief and organized the second "Activation Committee" for studying and discussing the specific affairs related to professional league. In March 1989, the second "Activation Committee" was dismissed and the management of specific matters related to professional league was transferred to the "Professional League Research Committee". Saburo Kawabuchi was elected as the Chairman. From June 1989, discussions, investigations and surveys were conducted on clubs' qualifications and intentions for joining the league. Saburo Kawabuchi's reform goal was to plant the root of new professional football clubs in regional developments. More than 20 years ago, Saburo Kawabuchi attended intensive trainings held in West Germany as a player of Japan's national team in preparation for the Tokyo Olympics, where he was deeply impressed by the completeness of German sports facilities. Everyone there could gain access to the extensive sports facilities in the nature, enjoying the fun of sports. The sports facilities in each region not only served professional sports, but the entire society. Football professionalism, of course, is Japan's reform goal; to change Japan's poor and backward sports facilities through football professionalism- to completely achieve this goal through the development of a new professional football league in 100 years was the original driving force

behind Saburo Kawabuchi's work^[2]. Research Committee held discussions on the purposes of setting up Japan Professional Football League: to revitalize sports culture; to strengthen and develop Japanese football; to improve the professional order of football players and coaches; and to improve the environment and facilities of the football pitch. Based on the purposes, professional football clubs' participation conditions were developed: corporatization of football teams; membership dues; franchise rights; the minimum accommodation capacity of the main stadium; team composition (starting from the top teams, all teams should be categorized); athletes (the minimum number of professional athletes); obedience to Japan Football Association's directives and decisions. The Japanese government spent 6 years on scientific and systematic preparations, professional operation models were established in policies, laws and regulations, structures and club sizes. On May 15, 1993 Japan Professional Football League (commonly known as the J.League) was officially launched at Tokyo National Stadium, marking the establishment of a relatively perfect football professionalism management system. Through the six years of domestic and international research and investigations, as well as multiple-level verifications, Japan Football Association (JFA) took a series of measures from all aspects for football professionalism in the six-year preparatory phase, laying a solid foundation for football professionalism.

1. Stringently controlled the admittance and provided excellent facilities: At the initial phase of launching the professional football league, JFA already had formulated immensely stringent regulations and provided favorable facilities for the development of Japanese soccer. As members of the professional league, Level I and II teams must have their own dedicated training ground and competition ground at home. In addition, most schools have their own football training grounds, so public sports grounds were provided to amateur footballers for free.
2. Drew lessons from European independent operations of FA from the very beginning: To standardize professional League mechanism was also an important aspect in Japan's attempt to keep up with the global football powers; Japan had determined to establish a specialized professional football association to organize and manage all affairs for professional teams; as an administrative superior institution, JFA shall not interfere in specific operations; this provided a good opportunity for the development of European professional football management system and mode.
3. The League had obtained powerful backing from rich financial groups ahead of its operation: One year ahead of J.League's launching, some intelligent in Japan's football society had claimed inviting global football stars to join the League by taking advantage of the nation's strong economic strength; the initiative greatly promoted the improvements of native players and the prosperity of football markets. J.League teams are all financed by powerful consortium, most of which are the world's leading companies. Over multiple years of J.League operation, the ownership of most teams has remained unchanged, maintaining clubs' continuity in operation and development. Currently, J.League's attendance steadily stands at around 80%; clubs have gained immense profits from the revenues such as tickets and broadcasts, attracting more enterprises to invest in football.

Before J.League's official inception in May 1993, that is, at the preparatory phase of JFA's professionalism reform, they gave the best play to their historical tradition of absorbing foreign cultures, like a "Meiji Restoration" in Japan's football. Even after the professionalism reform, they still keep studying Western football culture through the mode of "bringing in" and "going out". In nearly 2 decades, the professional level of Japanese football and football culture has obtained a qualitative leap. JFA had spent six years on domestic and international research and investigations, as well as multiple-level verifications, and the six-year preparatory period also officially started the prelude of Japanese football professionalism reform; from hardware facilities to league mechanism, from fostering football culture atmosphere to valuing the absorption of foreign advanced football concepts, it can be concluded that JFA had taken a wide range of measures from all aspects for football professionalism in the six-year preparatory phase, laying a solid foundation for football professionalism.

2.2. Growth and Improvement Phase

On 17 April 1994, Chinese Football Association Jia-A League (also known as Jia-A League) officially kicked off, marking the full promotion of Chinese football reform. Thanks to the improvement

preparation and exploration at the earlier stage, the framework of Chinese football professionalism reform has formed. Through the market operation and debugging in the three years to 1996, football market began to attract the attention of enterprises and management institutions, despite the interweaving effect produced by various factors over the long time had constantly brought down the average number of audiences in 1997 season; but thanks to the efficient means respectively taken by different divisions for market activation in the second year, the attendance in second half of the season significantly rebounded; i.e. In 1998, the total number of Chinese Jia-A League's audiences reached over 3.88 million, averaging around 23, 000 per game, creating the highest record in the number of audiences^[3]. Take Sichuan Quanxing's home field alone for an example, their matches were mainly held at Chengdu Sports Center where can accommodate more than 40, 000 audiences; from 1994 to 1997, the home field was completely full at almost every game, with ticket revenue reaching ten million Yuan. According to relevant statistics, during the ten years of Chinese Jia-A League's operation, a total number of 127 football clubs had participated in 3, 024 matches watched by 46.95 million live audiences, creating annual revenue of more than 700 million Yuan for the clubs. In fact, after 1999, due to the extensively interwoven problems such as false prosperity, the football professionalism development in China was also faced with profound challenges and difficulties. The manifestations of specific issues were as follows: firstly, the sustained decline in league's quality resulted in huge loss of audiences; in the most severe case, there were less than one thousand field audiences. Secondly, clubs' deficient efforts in industrial development brought about operational difficulties and huge economic losses at the later stage. In contrast, the industrial development in overseas markets was far more ideal, and related living supplies were extremely popular in their markets. While in China, apart from CFA's affiliates China Football Industry Development Corp and Shanghai Shenhua Football Club had responses, the remaining clubs showed their obvious neglect over the wealth resources. Especially on the level of clubs' naming rights development, clubs' actual listed prices were always limited between 10 to 20 million Yuan; but eventually, it turned out that most successful transactions were deputy naming rights, with many discounts on the price; shirt ads prices stood between 4 to 6 million Yuan, the transaction performance was relatively satisfactory. Finally, the football professionalism reform in China retained significant utilitarian and myopic characteristics; the football was promoted into the market, but not completely handed over to the market; the football professionalism reform mechanism was taken as a support media for the international reform and development of China's football; it's aimed to improve football players' initiatives for participating in trainings under the interweaving effect of all parties' money and powers, thus ensuring the perfect and superb athletic skills in the future. It's proved that such shortsighted thinking has produced many disastrous consequences; like the unrestrained World Cup gambling; due to the termination of the arbitrariness on the league promotion and relegation. The league was put on the verge of collapse.

Faced with the above conflicts, CFA higher level leaderships began to work together with experienced individuals to implement targeted improvements and develop perfecting measures. Since 2001, China's football world have successfully organized anti-corruption activities; during this period, CFA faced tremendous pressure and was forced to implement careful regulation on referees and clubs; once any irregularities such as Black Whistle were detected, the suspects shall be arrested and put into prison if convicted^[4]. It's believed that, as long as the judicial involvement is strengthened and the soccer's integration with the entire sports system is improved, the innovative development processes such as standardization and legalization of Chinese football professionalism will be effectively promoted. It is worthwhile to mention that, in 2002, China national football team's first ever appearance in the World Cup benefited from good luck in part, but Jia-A League had also played a significant promoting role. During the 10 years of Chinese Jia-A league's operation, which was opened at Chengdu Stadium in 1994 and closed at Shanghai Shenhua Stadium in 2003, China football league's mechanism had stabilized and the market size had also basically formed; despite various problems were exposed amid the operation, but it had a tremendous social influence because it had not only accelerated China football professionalism process, but also had enriched people's amateur cultural life, thus becoming one of our most favorite sports.

In 1994, the J.League was contested by a total number of 10 clubs, adopting a three-phase home and away competition system. At this stage, the J.League didn't adopt the promotion and relegation system; clubs concentrated their energy and financial resources on infrastructure construction and trainings of reserve forces, laying a solid foundation for the cultivation of Japan's professional

football market. With the arrival of numerous international football stars, the popularity of the J.League was further enhanced; statistics showed that the number of audiences per game averaged 19,598. However, due to the subsequent burst of Japan's economic bubble, plus football players' higher salaries, all J.League clubs encountered budget deficit successively; some club sponsors were so overwhelmed by the heavy burden that they withdrew their capital, resulting in a loss of many high-level footballers. In addition, factors such as the poor performance of the national football team and the media's negative publicity significantly weakened the appeal of the professional league's market^[5]. Years beginning from 1996 saw a sharp slump in attendance. Besides, due to the excessively low competitive levels of the two newly enrolled teams-Kyoto Sanga and Avispa Fukuoka in the season, the overall appeal and competitive level of the J.League was severely affected; in that season, these two new clubs ranked at the bottom among J.League's 16 teams. In 1997, J.League's audiences per game averaged 10,131, which was merely 50% of 19,598 in 1994^[6]. These problems had seriously restricted the development pace of the J.League. But during the 1998 FIFA World Cup qualification, Japan won a ticket. When the news spread out, Japanese nationals felt pleased at the achievements made by Japan football; since then, J.League's popularity gradually picked up. In 2002-03, the average number of audiences per game exceeded 16,000; beginning from 2004, the number of J.League's audiences per game has averaged above 18,000(Figure 1). J.League's rapid break through from the dilemma, to a large extent, had benefited from the clubs' independent operations; since the inception of the League, clubs have been required to have independent hematopoietic function, rather than rely on large consortium. Similar to domestic clubs, J.League clubs also obtain revenues from the following channels: television broadcast rights, tickets, kit advertising, player trading and football-related products development. However, as J.League and all clubs' operations in these aspects are so standardized that an effect of "standardization creates fortune" was produced. Most J.League clubs are supported by large businesses; the establishment of the J.League, relationships among businesses, markets and the league has been highly valued. Up to now, interdependent relations among the three parties have taken shape, so no side could easily have non-conformance moves; each side must regulate its own behavior.

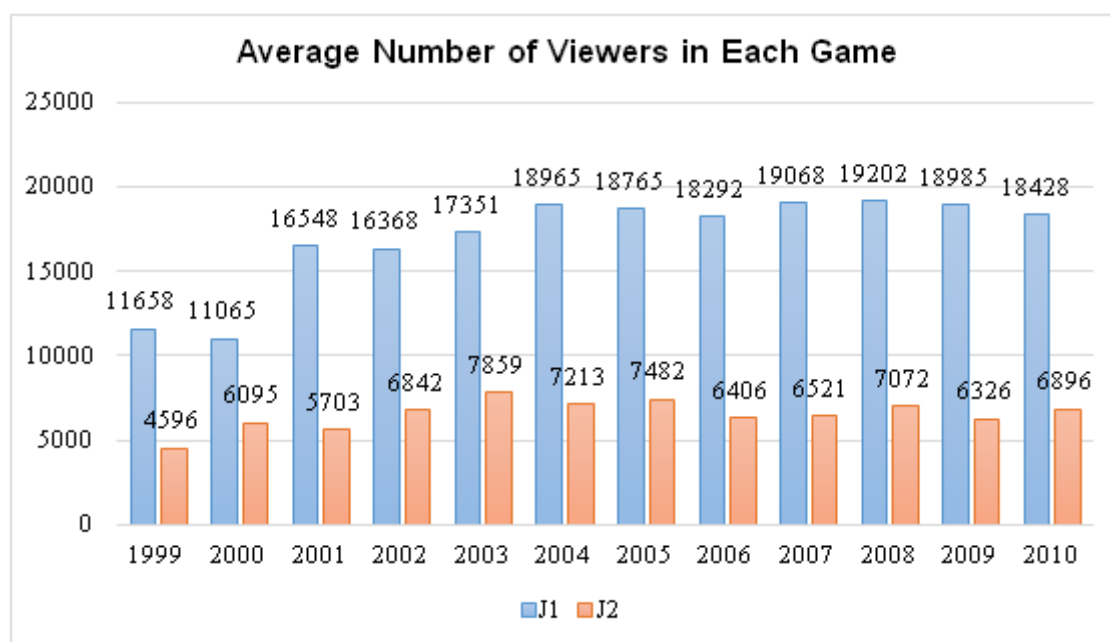


Figure1. Trend Chart - Average Number of Viewers in Each Game

J.League introduced the two-division system in 1999, and since then, more football clubs were expecting to join J-League, so J-League was expanded and divided into J.League Division 1(J1) and J.League Division 2 (J2). The implementation of two-division system, to a large extent, broke the imbalance in regional football development and provided the possibility for more clubs to join the J.League. Initially, J.League expanded its influence through the media coverage. Hakuodo, an advertising agency that had close ties to the league, made great contributions to the growth of the J.League. The recovery of attendance after 2001 mainly benefited from the "regional contact" development concept adopted by a number of clubs in the operation process; all football teams planted their root in regional development and built a good relationship with local residents,

businesses, and local self-government bodies; after gaining strong support from the regional society, regional football development harvested the success^[7]. After 2002, J.League entered into a period of rapid expansion; with the yearly increase in the number of J.League clubs, in 2013, J.League run 40 member clubs. In the process of expansion, stringent criteria are formulated with respect to promotion to the J.League; J.League's assessment principle is based on the club's performance and full professional qualifications.

2.3. Step-by-Step Perfection Stage

In 2004, Chinese Football Association Super League (CSL) was created by the re-branding of the former top division Chinese Football Association Jia-A League (Chinese Jia-A League). The inaugural season consisted of 12 clubs. The promotion and relegation system was not restored until two years later. In order to improve and promote the process of Chinese football professionalism, CFA and all CSL clubs co-founded the Chinese Football Association Super League Co., Ltd. through joint contribution; CSL is administered by the CFA. By 2008, CSL teams grew to 16; and the matches adopted home-away double round robin system. Being loved by the majority of fans, CSL saw constantly rising attendance; football markets gradually picked up. However, as CSL's administration system and other issues were not fundamentally resolved, plus Chinese national football team's poor performances in international matches, ultimately, Chinese national football team descent to a third-tier team in Asia, which attracted the attention of Chinese national leaders. In 2009, when the 11th National Games of the People's Republic of China was held, CPC General Secretary Hu Jintao stated: "Chinese football need to carry forward the spirit of Rong Zhihang" (Note: Rong Zhihang, Chinese former famous football player; selected into the national soccer team in 1972, served as the national team's forward, winger, center and other positions. He won a good reputation "Zhihang-style" for his excellent performance and good morality). The anti-corruption storm set off from 2009 is a great disgrace of Chinese football; but it also provided a historic opportunity for the development of CSL. The anti-corruption move covered a very broad range, including CFA leaders such as Xie Yalong and Nan Yong, referees such as Lu Jun and Huang Junjie, former national footballers such as Qi Hong, Shen Si, Jiang Jin, as well as other various roles. With the disclosure of such extensive corruptions, numerous fans felt greatly distressed. Meanwhile, the performances of China's national teams at all levels have been declining. With Chinese national football team's back-to-back loss to 2006 and 2010 FIFA World Cup qualifications, Chinese national football team took a nose dive in the world rankings. Fans, the media, sponsors, governments and related departments felt extremely angry and disappointed. When we look back at these years, we will find that Chinese professional football has strongly rebounded from the anti-corruption movement. With the continuous optimization of CSL's broad environment, many investors in China have seen Chinese football's development potential and are turned their eyes to Chinese football. Even in the justice sector's investigation and trial process, bosses of CSL clubs began to increase investments, constantly lifting the attendance, television audience ratings and commercial value. We can see that, for Chinese football, it's just an overall and powerful investigation that eliminated the extensive bacteria that had hindered the healthy development of CSL. As a result, China's commitment to re-establishing CSL's credibility was displayed to the outside world, investors or potential investors were also enabled to see the hope of gaining returns from investing in the new environment^[8]. Starting from 2010, all CSL teams have gradually expanded their investments. With the continuous arrivals of many well-known superstars and coaches, the competition level and development environment of CSL are getting increasingly better. What we have to mention is Guangzhou Evergrande group, who took over Guangzhou Football Team and renamed it to Guangzhou Evergrande (renamed to Guangzhou Evergrande Taobao now); in 2010, Guangzhou Evergrande won the championship in Chinese Football Association Jia League and was promoted to Chinese Football Association Super League(CSL); thereafter, beyond everyone's expectation, Guangzhou Evergrande won five championships in CSL consecutively, and finished champions in 2012 AFC Champions League, which was the first ever championship won by a Chinese football team since the restructuring of AFC Champions League. Guangzhou Evergrande has made a series of miracles. On March 8, 2015, the "Overall Program of Chinese Football Reform and Development" was agreed by the Party Central Committee and the State Council; the program was issued by the State Council to governments of provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, as well as to all ministries, commissions and institutions directly led by the State Council. In July 2014, the Central Discipline Inspection Group visited the General Administration of Sport for the 11th time to conduct special inspections. General Administration of Sport is required to implement the

corrective actions to address the relationship between state-run sports system and market mechanism, and the issues such as abusing power in sports events for seeking personal gains, as well as the binding operations of governments, public institutions, associations and enterprises to separate government functions from those of public institutions, associations and enterprises, separate the government regulation from operations, and regulate cadres' excessive part-time positions in associations and businesses and open it to the public in an appropriate form. At this point, deep reforms involving sports administration interests were formally launched. We can see that the Party and State leaders are attaching great significance to the development and reform of Chinese football. Eventually, today's prosperity is achieved. Chinese football professionalism has now entered a relatively stable development stage.

In the year 2005, J1 League had a total number of 18 teams, while J2 had 12. Like leagues in Europe and America, the same single-season system was applied. Besides, reforms on "autumn and spring" game schedule, promotion and relegation system, and admittance system were conducted. By the end of 2011, the number of J.League clubs has risen to 40, including 18 from J1, 22 from J2^[9]. J.League's rigorous approval system and healthy development environment have enabled Japanese football to achieve excellent performances, regardless of domestic Leagues or international matches. From 1998 to 2011, Japan national football team qualified for World Cup finals four consecutive times, two of which are knockout games; besides, they won three championships in AFC Asian Cup; despite having the famous foreign coaches such as Philippe Troussier, and Arthur Antunes Coimbra Zico, but the facts have proved that J.League has played a significant role in helping Japanese football team to dominate Asian football and take the lead globally. In recent years, J.League has passed the so-called golden age of stars' panning and entered a period of steady developments. J.League has become the most successful league among Asian leagues for its stable attendance rate. At the start of the 2003 season, J.League canceled overtime by adopting the ordinary 3-point system: 3 points for a win, 1 point for a draw, and 0 point for a loss. Due to resistance from many clubs, after the 2004 season, J.League canceled the practice that only the champions of two phases have the right to compete for the Championship. J1 League began to adopt double round robin system, where the team of the highest points shall win the championship. J2 League is using triple round robin system now. In order to improve the transparency in the club operation, starting from 2005, J.League began to publicize each club's operational condition. Starting from 2006, all clubs must open all their accounting items to the public. J.League took some innovative measures through the Management Advisory Committee, whose members have adequate power to visit or to communicate with clubs and receive relevant information. All clubs must not conceal their own internal information, but disclose it completely. Management Advisory Committee shall carry out regular inspections to each club, who will be penalized if any misconducts were detected. Some poorly managed clubs could receive guidance, or even financial help from the Management Advisory Committee; therefore, many smaller clubs are able to survive. In addition, J.League implements unified management on the rights such as broadcast rights, derivative products development rights and allocates the income from various rights and sponsorships to each club. Media resources management and sales businesses are entrusted to 3 subsidiaries of J.League (JMP, JLP and JLE). The affiliates are not only responsible for media resources management and sales, but also committed to improving the value of media resources, creating new soccer-themed programs, and developing J.League and football-related industries.

3. COMPARISON ON CHINESE AND JAPANESE FOOTBALL PROFESSIONALISM DEVELOPMENTS

3.1. Comparison on the Professionalism Development Background

Through analyzing the complete development histories of football professionalism in China and Japan, it can be found that both countries have experienced boom and bust periods in the course of football professionalism reform and development. Even so, there is a tremendous gap between Japanese and Chinese football in terms of technique and development levels. Starting from the establishment of "Japan Soccer League Activities Committee" in 1988, Japan had implemented adequate research on the development of football professionalism. Under the legal framework, JFA implemented football professionalism reforms in an orderly manner. In the context of the "Non-profit Organization Laws", the legal entity nature of JFA and J.League is explicitly defined. "Basic Law of Sports" has a very explicit definition on the division of management powers and responsibilities among the MEXT, JFA, and J.League. Thanks to Japan's long-term research on its reform programs,

Japan has developed immensely perfect football policies, regulations and professional league system; particularly, scientific and reasonable operation modes are implemented in the aspect of professionalism, marketization, and trainings of the youth. Plus the full support from governments, strong economic strength, and concerns from all walks of life, J.League was standing at a relatively high starting point when it was launched, and it's honored as the most successful model of professionalism in Asia.

Football professionalism in China commenced merely one year later than Japan (Japan launched J.League in 1993, while China launched Chinese Football Association Jia-A League in 1994), and at the initial phase of operation, China achieved a significant breakthrough, including proposing football reforms and the official launching of professional football league. However, China had a hasty preparation; from the above text, we can see that China's football professionalism reform had a relatively short preparatory phase, as a result, the depth of scientific research, forecasts and decision was far from enough. In addition to the insufficiencies in studying and referring to the world advanced experiences, China do not have perfect football laws and regulations; professional clubs are short in standardization and normalization; rash advance in league operation mechanism, shortage in financial, material and human resources led to a huge number of inevitable issues and contradictions in Chinese professional football league under the guise of surface prosperity.

3.2. Comparison on League Management Mode

Chinese football league adopted centralized management mode under the state-run sports system; the initial phase of Chinese football professionalism reform, this management model played a crucial role for the Chinese government to adjust the conflicts between the clubs and the league operators. Under the state-run sports system, through the integrated planning, deployment and arrangement of manpower, material and financial resources, Chinese football concentrated its strength on some key projects to resolve the most sophisticated issues, greatly promoting the progress of Chinese football professionalism. At the same time, a positive image for Chinese sports in the international arena was shaped; Chinese citizens' national self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as the nation's centripetal force and cohesion greatly enhanced. However, under the state-run sports system, the government controlled everything. The over rigid management seriously constrained subordinate departments' initiative, creativity, wisdom and enterprise. Besides, the progress of society-run competitive sports was also greatly hindered. As a result, it prevented the whole society in hosting the sports events; the competitive function of sports was obliterated. So it's completely contrary to the socialist market economy that required giving full play to the market mechanism's basic function in the allocation of resources. Therefore, as the professionalism process has grown relatively mature today, the centralized management model under the state-run sports system is obviously not in line with the needs of football professionalism development at the current phase in our country.

By contrast, the decentralized management model adopted by the Japanese league introduced the professional league in the market, whose regulation force made Japanese league continuously grow and expand; therefore, decentralized management model is obviously more suitable for the development of today's professional leagues. In terms of the administration over professional league clubs, managerial departments of China's professional leagues lack effective supervision over football clubs, which were succumbed to some enterprises' speculation means in exchange for their interests; meanwhile, it also directly resulted in professional clubs' shortage in investments and their poor performances. J.League uses joint-stock management model that separates the ownership from management, effectively preventing the dominance of any single one club after enterprises invest in the clubs and effectively curbing clubs' poor business operations. In respect of reserve talents cultivation, our country adopts a typical pyramid-shaped cultivation model; and assembled training system is used in athletic training. The disadvantage of this training system lies in that the athletes who are eliminated through multiple-level selections can't receive proper education. This would greatly impact the youth's enthusiasm in getting involved in football. Japan adopts "interactive" reserve talents cultivation mode and free athletic training method; athletes are students, so more young people are willing to participate in football, providing a steady influx of youthful talents for football.

3.3. Comparison on Youth Football Competition System

China and Japan are similar in organizational structure of the competition. But in terms of the competition-organizing, most participants of youth games in our country are students; since the relevant departments are unable to effectively coordinate the relationship between schools and matches, as a result, a lot of games fail to be held at a high quality. On the other hand, the growth of Chinese football relies heavily on clubs' reserve teams and football schools, resulting in a serious lack of youth footballers; so the youth footballer training cost in China is far higher than Japan.

In Japan, a comprehensive school football system that is dominated by college leagues and covers middle and primary school leagues has taken shape. Attendance at All Japan High School Tournament finals is even far higher than a professional league match, reflecting the high level of Japanese school football. With the steady increase in the number of registered youths in football teams, an immense group of sports participants has been developed (Figure 2). In Japan every year, hundreds of thousands of young soccer players from more than 20, 000 middle and primary schools choose to participate in all kinds of football games; on average, each young athlete needs to play over 50 formal games, and countless informal games. It also provides student players with more opportunities for games and exercises. High level competitions such as the "Emperor's Cup" also provide school teams a chance for direct confrontation with professional teams, creating a training and advancement opportunity for young players. The opportunities for playing football are available for the people of all age groups in Japan. So Japan's soccer population saw a multiple growth. This is one of the most crucial factors that have contributed to the rapid development of Japanese football over these years.

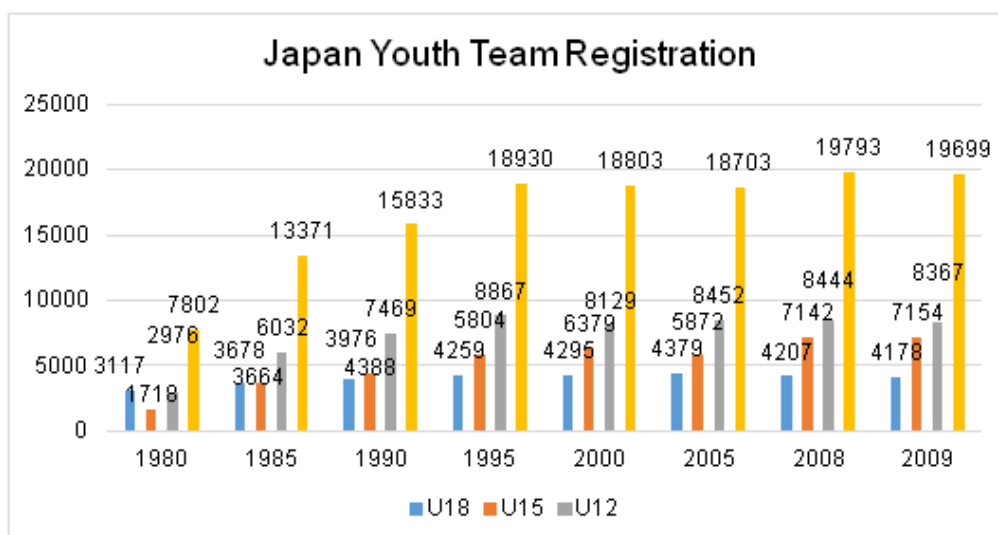


Figure2. Japan Youth Team Registration (1980-2009)

3.4. Comparison on Coach Training System

The total number of coaches at all levels in China is far smaller than that in Japan, and the gap increasingly widens with the rise in the coaching level. Compared to Japan, China's deficiency of coaches is the major contributor to Chinese lower football level. China does not possess a comprehensive system stipulating coach qualification levels and types, nor goalkeeper qualification levels. In addition, the classification of qualification levels is over-general, with no levels designed for youth coaches, which have adversely affected the training of youth football players in our country. On the contrary, JFA attaches extraordinary importance to the training of coaches; in particular, there is a set of perfect training system for youth coaches.

In general, in terms of football professionalism road and relevant practical work, Japanese are upholding the concept of "Think twice before act"; thus, rapid progress has been achieved by capitalizing on properly designed strategies. In contrast, Chinese attempt to seek quick success and instant benefits by upholding the concept of "act before think", but ended up with staggering forward. But what we cannot deny is that after years of strenuous efforts, football professionalism has begun to take shape; football clubs have been gradually moving towards normalization; football level has greatly improved, gradually having the ability to compete with Asian powers. It's correct for Chinese football to embark on the road to professionalism, and the reform has achieved initial accomplishments; as a result, football professionalism of a certain scale has basically taken shape.

4. REVELATION TO FOOTBALL PROFESSIONALISM DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA

4.1. To Improve Professionalism Management System

The dilemma encountered by Chinese football professionalism management system reform arose from the conflict between “institution” and “system”. After 2008, consensus was reached on the predication that such a sport reform is imperative. However, up to today, the reform still fails to address the dilemma caused by the conflict between the “institution” and “system”. On 8 March 2015, the State Council issued the “Notice on Printing and Distributing the Overall Program of Chinese Football Reform and Development”, revealing the causes of 1992 football reform failures. In the “Interpretation on Chinese Football Reform -- Reflection on the Overall Program of Chinese Football Reform and Development”, Sun Ke noted, “As an organization that masters most comprehensive football resources and information, CFA knows all facts and truths best, and its reflections are also very profound and sincere; however, these reflections of immunity have always been established on the obsession with power and on the basis of seeking stability, and derived from China’s deep cultural psychology generated by the complex and entangled collusion between government and businessmen over the long term^[10].” Seen from this point, to optimize lead agency, as well as to improve internal management mechanism and association management system have a tremendous practical significance. It’s possible to achieve football reform within one single day. We should jointly create appropriate cultural atmosphere to promote the growth of football, and we must explore its roots and foundations from public life and daily practices. On the other hand, the reform should combine with China’s national conditions; and the proper entry point for fitting football professionalism to Chinese sport systems and institutions must be found; only on this basis, the targeted measures can be implemented; otherwise, it would be impossible to process any reform, we could not only end up with missing the reform target, but achieving the opposite result. Besides, we should constantly refer to the advanced management ideas and operational mechanisms in Japan, European and American countries to fill the gap. On the basis of upholding our own advantages gained from the state-run sports system, a detailed, step by step reform program should be developed. The adjusting function of market mechanism should be gradually brought into play; dialectical considerations should be given to administrative mechanisms and market mechanisms to make them mutually supportive, so that a proper management system that is led by the government, controlled by the market, and in line with China’s basic national conditions and event laws could be developed.

4.2. To Establish a School Football-Oriented Diversified Reserve Training System

Football has always been a popular sport among teenagers, so the competitive level of the youth football often represents a country’s football level. “Overall Program of Chinese Football Reform and Development” stated that, “we must give full play to football’s educational function to promote the popularization of campus football. The mutual growth of cultural studies and football studies should be enhanced faculties should be expanded as well. Raise the teaching and coaching level through training the existing full-time and part-time football teachers, as well as recruiting new teachers and other means. Schools should be encouraged to introduce overseas high-quality football coaches. “Therefore, cultivation of football reserve talents is a long-term, slow-effect and systematic project; therefore, a scientific planning based on development, as well as comprehensive and strategic visions must be processed to an excellent reserve training system. First of all, great importance must be attached to the cultural education of youth football talents to establish the training ideas of “To Cultivate Perfect Talents with Football”; the construction of youth football coaches must be strengthened; scientific guidance and training should be combined; China’s demographic advantage should be fully utilized; apart from urban areas, youth football should also be greatly promoted in less developed areas such as rural villages and towns. Besides, we should shift from the traditional concept of paying attention only to the academic performances on the new concept of promoting students’ moral, intellectual and physical developments at the same time. Moreover, the operation and development of all football club teams should be regulated; club coaches should be encouraged to provide guidance to schools and football schools, so as to maximize the resource advantage of football clubs. Finally, exchanges between sports and football schools, as well as regular schools should be enhanced, so as to improve the collaboration between the parties.

4.3. To strengthen the Football Culture Publicity and Improve Legal System

To strengthen the cooperation between clubs and the media to ensure the effective dissemination of more information, so as to effectively enhance the Chinese football league's social influence and attention. What's more, professional football in China is just fledging, so the legal system is still under construction; it is necessary to formulate a "Football Law" on the basis of "Sports Law", so that the club's legal person positioning, management systems, business operation and development, the interests of coaches and players, and the cultivation of reserve forces could have legal basis and proceed in accordance with the law; only in this way, the smooth process of football professionalism can be guaranteed.

5. CONCLUSION

Through comparing Chinese and Japanese football professionalism development histories, we can know that China is lagging far behind Japan either in league development mode, professionalism management system, or in youth reserve force trainings. Therefore, in order to raise the level of Chinese football, we have to achieve the following points: First of all, effectively implement the "three-step" strategy proposed by the "Chinese Football Reform Program"; deeply reflect on the issues that have emerged since football professionalism; take the relationship between recognizing state-run sports system and giving full play to the market mechanism as a priority on professional development; combine state-run sports system with the market mechanism through giving play to the superiority of the socialist system, integrating resources to generate a cohesive force, and giving full play to the market mechanism to stimulate dynamism, so that a fair and honest environment that encourages and protects fair competition could be created. Secondly, during this process, the state should play the role of market supervision and regulation to ensure the healthy development of professionalism. Thirdly, we must identify the gap existing between Chinese and overseas professionalism development levels; besides, we should constantly improve the football management system by improving the managerial expertise of management departments, establishing an effective and sustainable development mechanism, and cultivating public interest in football by letting more people participate in football. Fourthly, we should improve the scientific and technological content of sports trainings. Nowadays, tech-sports is a sports development trend in the world, so we should pay due attention to it. Particularly, some most advanced equipment and training methods are largely using the most advanced scientific and technological achievements, thus making football full of vitality. Self-innovation capability and scientific research level should be greatly enhanced. On the basis of China's national conditions, we could selectively refer to the advanced technologies and management expertise from Japan, European and American countries that are higher in the professional level. In conclusion, it's hoped that Chinese football could keep up with international football as soon as possible.

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