

AN EFFECTIVE STUDY ON THE DEVELOPMENT PATH OF MINORITY FOOTBALL IN WESTERN YUNNAN

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ABSTRACT

The western Yunnan region is one of the ethnic minority areas in China, where Lijiang, known as the "hometown of football," has developed a unique football development path with ethnic characteristics over its long history. This study focuses on the development path of ethnic minority football in western Yunnan, utilizing methods such as literature review, field investigation, interviews, questionnaire surveys, and case analysis. It systematically examines the main types and operational mechanisms of ethnic minority football development in the region, constructs an evaluation system for the effectiveness of development paths, and conducts in-depth analysis of typical cases such as Lijiang Football Town, ethnic minority football competitions in Yunnan Province, and pilot schools for campus football. The study finds that the development path of ethnic minority football in western Yunnan has initially taken shape but is uneven across regions. Lijiang and other places have formed a distinctive model of "government guidance + social participation + campus foundation + event traction." Campus football plays a fundamental role in the popularization and talent cultivation of young people, and ethnic minority events have become important vehicles for stimulating public participation and promoting ethnic unity. The integration of the football industry has shown initial results, but brand building and profit models are still immature. The shortage of grassroots coaches and low professionalization levels remain key bottlenecks restricting sustainable development. Based on these findings, this study proposes optimization strategies from six dimensions: policy coordination, integration of sports and education, event branding, cultural integration, talent cultivation, and industry innovation. The aim is to provide theoretical references and practical path insights for the development of football in western Yunnan and other ethnic minority areas in China.

Keywords: Western Yunnan region; ethnic minorities; football; development path;

INTRODUCTION

1. Research Background

Football, renowned as the "world's number one sport," is the most influential individual sport in the global sports community. Ancient football originated in China, while modern football originated in the United Kingdom. A standard modern football match consists of two teams, each fielding 10 players

and one goalkeeper, for a total of 11 players, who compete and attack on a rectangular grass field. The objective of a football match is to score as many goals as possible by shooting the ball into the opposing team's goal. Each goal scored earns one point. At the end of the match, the team with the higher score wins. If the scores are tied within the allotted time, the match rules will determine the winner, which may involve drawing lots, extra time, or a shootout (penalty shootout) to determine the superior team. In a football match, except for the goalkeeper who may use their hands to touch the ball within their own penalty area, every player on the field may only control the ball with parts of their body other than their hands (except for throwing-in).

With the support of government policies, regions such as Lijiang, known as the hometown of football, have developed their own unique paths for the development of football among ethnic minorities in western Yunnan, fostering a distinctive atmosphere for football development.

1.1 Subjective conditions

Football is an indispensable part of sports, and the development path of football is an important component of football sports. The 'Overall Plan for the Reform and Development of Chinese Football' issued in 2015 proposed the main goal of incorporating the development of football into the economic and social development plan and implementing a 'three-step' strategy. It aims to improve the environment and atmosphere for football development, rationalize the football management system, formulate medium- and long-term development plans for football, innovate a football management model with Chinese characteristics, and form a pattern of coordinated development between the football cause and the football industry. The medium-term goal is to significantly increase the youth football population, achieve first-class organizational and competitive levels in professional leagues in Asia, and rank the national men's football team among the top in Asia; to achieve comprehensive development of Chinese football, make football a widely participated sport, and form a healthy football culture in the whole society; to bring the organizational and competitive levels of professional leagues into the world's advanced ranks; to actively bid for the FIFA Men's World Cup; and to significantly enhance the international competitiveness of the national men's football team and rank it among the world's top teams. This shows that the country attaches great importance to the development of football sports.

1.2 Objective conditions

On the afternoon of March 15, 2019, the launch ceremony for the inaugural 2018-2019 'China Football Development Foundation Cup' Yunnan Minority Football Tournament was held at Yunnan Minzu University. Guided by the Yunnan Provincial Sports Bureau and hosted by the Yunnan Football Association, this tournament is supported by the China Football Development Foundation as a supporting unit, and also receives support from media outlets such as Titan Sports Media Group Co., Ltd. The participating teams are mainly composed of ethnic minority athletes from western Yunnan, embodying the tournament's concept of 'promoting unity, progress, and common prosperity among all ethnic groups'. It plays a positive role in promoting interaction and exchanges among ethnic groups through sports. This tournament has received strong support from the China Football Development Foundation, with the aim of vigorously developing football in Yunnan, especially by engaging ethnic minority football enthusiasts, allowing them to experience the fun of football, and popularizing and spreading football culture. This large-scale ethnic minority football tournament is the first of its kind to be held in Yunnan Province. It represents a positive attempt by the Yunnan Provincial Sports Bureau and Yunnan Football Association to implement the National Fitness Program, enhance people's physical fitness, and enrich the cultural life of ethnic minorities. The holding of this tournament is of positive significance for creating a football

atmosphere in Yunnan and expanding the participation of people in football. It will subsequently be rolled out across the province, forming a good situation of provincial linkage and widespread participation, which will promote the development of ethnic sports, especially football, cultivate excellent football talents, and explore new paths for football development.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Current research status in China

(Li 2008) mentioned in the study "The Current Situation and Countermeasures of Football Development in Yunnan Border Areas" that Yunnan Province is one of the provinces with the richest natural resources, and it is also an economically underdeveloped and relatively backward province. With the rapid development of football nationwide and the increasing demands of people of all ethnic groups in the province for football, it is of great practical significance to strengthen the macro-control of football work and promote the orderly and healthy development of football in Yunnan Province, based on the overall development goals of China's football and in combination with the actual situation of Yunnan Province, by employing reasonable methods and means.

(Cen 2020) mentioned in the study "Discussing the Development Strategy of Amateur Football for Ethnic Minorities from the Perspective of Competition Mechanisms" that exploring the development mechanism of ethnic minority football, with football as the entry point and a bond for promoting ethnic construction, is not only a necessity for the current development of sports, but also a necessity of the times for building a sports-oriented China and revitalizing ethnic groups. From the perspective of ethnic development, this article takes the development of amateur football as the entry point, fully recognizes the bonding value of sports, conducts research on the development strategy of the football industry in ethnic areas, and proposes competition mechanism development strategies to promote the development of ethnic minority amateur football.

(Feng 2019) mentioned in the study "Research on the Development Strategy of Sports Characteristic Industries in Northwest Yunnan Minority Areas - Taking Lijiang Football Town as an Example" that Lijiang possesses a strong football culture, with locals being passionate about football and earning the reputation of being the 'hometown of football'. Leveraging the strong national support and development of the sports industry, Lijiang can seize this opportunity to integrate into the blueprint for the construction of characteristic sports towns, thereby driving the development of football in ethnic minority areas.

(He & He & Lu, 2017) In the context of the national football reform, as outlined in "The Current Situation and Countermeasures of Campus Football Teacher Development in Ethnic Minority Areas of Xinjiang - Based on the Survey and Research in Yunnan Province", Yunnan Province and local cities and prefectures have established a campus football work leading group under the guidance of documents such as the "Overall Plan for the Reform and Development of Chinese Football" and the "Implementation Opinions on Accelerating the Development of Youth Campus Football". They have carried out effective work, such as establishing campus football instructor positions in Lijiang City and opening a public welfare "Football School in the Old Town of Lijiang", pioneering a beneficial attempt at "combining sports and education", promoting the development of campus football, enhancing the attractiveness of football, and achieving the "three-in-one" effect of football education and teaching, professional talent cultivation, and football promotion.

(Wang & Lin 2019) In the study titled "Research on the Current Situation and Countermeasures of Campus Football Development in Guangxi Minority Areas - Taking Application-oriented Universities in Baise City as an Example", it is mentioned that in order to better and faster promote the development of China's football sports level, the General Administration of Sport of China has begun to promote campus football activities in universities nationwide, increasing the popularization and support of football-related knowledge. At the same time, in order to widely popularize university football, football has been incorporated into the development plan of school physical education. However, current youth campus football activities are mainly targeted at primary and secondary school students. Many primary and secondary schools have relatively well-developed campus football activities, while campus football in universities has not been well implemented, which can easily lead to the formation of two systems in the cultivation of reserve football players in China and cause a talent gap. The development of campus football in universities is equally important, especially for college students who have ample spare time, as they have better enthusiasm and conditions for the implementation of football sports

In summary, the development of football in ethnic minority areas is relatively limited, primarily due to significant constraints imposed by geographical environment, politics, and economy. To make the development path of ethnic minority football in western Yunnan more distinctive, against the backdrop of the country's rapid economic development and significant investment and development in football, as well as the introduction of a series of policies and programs, the government should implement various policies, increase relevant economic support, vigorously carry out football leagues with ethnic minority characteristics, strengthen innovation in traditional development paths, and explore a targeted and distinctive path for the development of ethnic minority football in western Yunnan.

2.2 Current research status abroad

(Liu 2014) pointed out in the study "Research Progress on Identification Methods of Youth Football Talents Abroad" that based on scientific talent selection models, emphasis should be placed on scientific and objective measurement methods and ecological validity models, taking into account the physiological plasticity and sustainable development characteristics of adolescents during their developmental stages.

(Chen, Huang, & Li, 2016) et al. pointed out in their study "Research on Hotspots of Football Endurance Abroad and Analysis of Its Changing Trends" that the hotspots of research related to football endurance mainly revolve around athlete training and competitive performance, encompassing high-level football, youth, the reliability of training methods and testing methods, training loads, and athletes' training responses.

(He, 2008) pointed out in the study "Training Models of Foreign Football Reserve Talents and Their Enlightenment" that the training models for young football players abroad can be broadly divided into two types: the training center model and the school model. Establish and improve a diversified football reserve talent training model with pilot schools for football reserve talents as the mainstay, and with multiple training channels coexisting.

In summary, although football has achieved widespread popularity and significant development worldwide, from the perspective of its sustainable development, there is still a considerable gap between the development of domestic football and that of foreign football. Meanwhile, there is still ample room for the development of football.

3. Research significance

3.1 Theoretical significance

This study aims to systematically sort out the existing paths of minority football development in western Yunnan, and combine regional cultural characteristics and ethnic sports traditions to construct a theoretically framework for football development with regional adaptability. Through case studies of typical regions such as Lijiang, this study explores the formation mechanism and evolutionary logic of the development path of minority football, provides empirical support for the theory of sports development in ethnic areas, and enriches the theoretical system of multiple paths for the development of football in China.

3.2 Practical significance

As a region inhabited by ethnic minorities in China, western Yunnan boasts a unique accumulation of football culture and a solid mass foundation. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of existing development paths, identify constraints and successful experiences, and provide actionable policy recommendations for local governments, education departments, and sports organizations. These recommendations encompass optimizing the allocation of campus football resources, improving the ethnic minority-featured competition system, promoting the integration of the "football + cultural tourism" industry, and fostering the cultivation of football talents among ethnic minority youths. These measures will contribute to the sustainable development of football in western Yunnan, serving the strategies of ethnic unity and progress, as well as rural revitalization.

4. Research objectives

(1) Systematically sort out the current situation of the development path of minority football in western Yunnan, including policy support, event organization, campus football, talent cultivation, social participation, and other aspects.

(2) Summarize the main path types of football development among ethnic minorities in western Yunnan (such as campus-led, event-driven, industry integration, etc.), and extract their core characteristics and operational mechanisms.

(3) Establish an evaluation index system for the effectiveness of development paths, and comprehensively evaluate the implementation effects of different paths by combining quantitative and qualitative methods.

(4) Identify the main problems and bottlenecks existing in the current development path, and propose targeted optimization strategies and safeguard mechanisms.

(5) Summarize the replicable and scalable experience models in western Yunnan, providing references for the development of football in other ethnic minority areas in China.

Research Hypothesis

Based on theoretical analysis and literature review, this paper proposes the following research hypotheses:

H1: The development path of ethnic minority football in western Yunnan presents diversified characteristics, with significant differences in resource investment, organizational forms, and cultural adaptability among different paths.

H2: The level of policy support, the degree of ethnic cultural integration, and the completeness of the competition system are positively correlated with the effectiveness of the football development path.

H3: The integration of traditional ethnic sports culture and modern football can significantly enhance the willingness to participate and sense of identity among young people in ethnic minority areas.

H4: The effectiveness of the football development path in western Yunnan is influenced by a combination of factors such as geographical environment, economic level, teacher resources, and event resources, exhibiting regional differences.

RESULTS

1. Conclusion

Through systematic sorting and empirical analysis of the development path of ethnic minority football in western Yunnan, this study draws the following main conclusions:

(1) The development path has taken shape initially, but there is regional imbalance. The western Yunnan region, represented by Lijiang, has formed a distinctive path featuring "government guidance + social participation + campus foundation + competition traction", while some remote counties and cities still face issues such as resource scarcity and loose organization.

(2) Campus football plays a fundamental role. It has achieved remarkable results in the popularization of youth football, interest cultivation, and talent discovery in ethnic minority areas in western Yunnan. In particular, the "combination of sports and education" model is worth promoting.

(3) Ethnic minority sports events have become important platforms. The sports event system represented by the "Yunnan Ethnic Minority Football Tournament" has effectively stimulated the enthusiasm of the people in ethnic minority areas to participate, promoting ethnic unity and cultural dissemination.

(4) The industrial development has shown initial results, but the depth of integration is insufficient. Projects such as the "Football Town" in Lijiang have made beneficial explorations in the "football + cultural tourism" field, but there is still room for improvement in terms of industrial linkage, brand building, and profit model.

(5) The talent bottleneck remains prominent, with a shortage of grassroots coaches, low professionalization, and an inadequate training system, which restricts the sustainability of the football development path.

2. Countermeasures and suggestions

(1) Strengthen policy coordination and resource allocation, incorporate the development of ethnic minority football into local sports development plans for the 14th Five-Year Plan period, set up special funds, optimize the layout of football venues, and improve the utilization rate of facilities.

(2) Deepen the integration of sports and education, build a talent cultivation echelon, promote the linkage mechanism between primary and secondary schools, universities, and professional clubs, and

establish a diversified growth path of "football talent students + special recruitment for sports + career path".

(3) Build ethnic minority sports event brands, continue to hold the "Yunnan Provincial Ethnic Minority Football Tournament", promote the event to be held at the county and township levels, and encourage differentiated development of "one county, one product" and "one township, one event".

(4) Promote the deep integration of football culture and ethnic culture, combine ethnic festivals, traditional sports events, and football activities, develop ethnic football cultural and creative products, and enhance cultural identity and dissemination.

(4) Strengthen the development of grassroots coaching staff, implement the "Ethnic Minority Football Coaching Training Program", conduct regular training in collaboration with universities and football associations, and establish an incentive mechanism for coaches.

(5) Explore new business forms of "football+" industrial integration, support the construction of a "football + tourism + culture + education" integration demonstration zone in western Yunnan, and cultivate new business forms such as football-themed research and study, ethnic football cultural and creative industries, and football health and wellness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University for invaluable help throughout this research.

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