

# Concept, Interests and Systems: Logical Consciousness of the China Campus Football Policy Trip

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## ABSTRACT

Based on the “Healthy China 2030 Planning Outline”, the literature method and logical analysis method are used to review and analyze the implementation process of China’s school football policy from three dimensions: value, interest appeal and institutional background. The study believes that in order to break through the bottleneck of policy implementation and improve the effect of policy implementation, it is necessary to establish correct values and form broad recognition of policies; meet the reasonable interests of all parties and form a synergy for policy implementation; optimize the institutional environment for policy implementation and form effective incentives.

## 1. BACKGROUND

“Healthy China 2030 Planning Outline” put forwards that health is an inevitable requirement of people’s all-round development, a basic condition of economic and social development, an important indicator of a nation’s prosperity and a common aspiration of the people of all ethnic groups [1]. As the saying goes: “Juvenile strong, the country is strong” [2], indicating that juveniles are the future of our motherland and the hope of the Chinese nation. Accelerating the development of school soccer is a significant move taken by our country to implement the Party’s guiding principle for education and promote their healthy growth [3]. Therefore, our country promulgated a series of policies to promote its development. Up to 2020, the Education Ministry has recognized 3691 schools characterized by youth campus soccer nationwide, reaching a total of 30,000; recognized 41 pilot counties (or districts), reaching a total of 201; and recognized 30 “Full Sky Star” training camps, reaching the number of 110 [4], basically forming a “five-in-one” three-dimensional pattern. For various reasons, it is inevitable that there are some alienating phenomena and problems that need to be solved in the process of promoting campus soccer, such as misunderstanding documents, not satisfying the interests demand, neglecting the origin of education, and

even supporting Only Achievement Theory [5]. In short, to improve the effectiveness of implementing campus soccer policy and provide useful references for promoting its development and contributing to carrying out the Healthy China Strategy, this paper, based on the perspective of the three-dimensional structure of human rationality and correlations of various elements, aims to analyze the inner mechanism of implementing campus soccer in the context of Healthy China and explore how to choose its developing paths accordingly.

## 2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

According to Max Weber's *Religious Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, human rational action is divided into "instrumental rationality" and "value rationality" [6], which should be combined when facing rational choices. Instead of a vacuum between instrumental rationality and value rationality, there is a third rationality that connects the two—institutional rationality [7], which provides concrete plans, conceptual models and step-by-step procedures for people to arrange and change things. Therefore, as shown in [Figure 1](#), the three-dimensional structure of human rationality which is an interactive framework consisting of instrumental rationality, value rationality and institutional rationality helps human to be practically successful [8]. To conclude, taking the three-dimensional structure as its theoretical analysis framework and applying the variable structure of conception, interest and institution, this paper attempts to clarify the inner mechanism of implementing relative policies, operate them efficiently and construct healthy campus through consensus cohesion of values, coordinated symbiosis of multiple interests, and standardized operation of institutions.

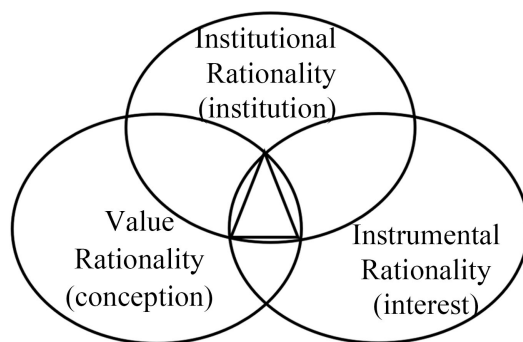
## 3. ANALYSIS OF IMPLEMENTING CHINA'S SCHOOL SOCCER POLICY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THREE-DIMENSIONAL STRUCTURE

### 3.1. Value Rationality: The Conception of School Soccer Policy Implementation

The conception is forerunner of behavior. Generally speaking, if implementers conceptually acknowledge policies they carry out, they can push forward the implementation of these policies effectively. Otherwise, the policy implementation process is bound to be full of obstacles.

As an important initiative to deepen education reform, build a healthy China, a sports power and a strong human resource country, the reform and development of school soccer is in favor of developing a new era Chinese characteristic campus football system and governance system to be dominated by the government, subjected by schools, guided by professionals and involved by the whole community.

In 2015, six ministries and commissions, including the Ministry of Education, clearly pointed out that they should create good conditions for deepening the reform of soccer teaching and learning in terms of scientifically planning soccer teaching and other subjects teaching and allocating the class hours [9]. However, under the influence of cognitive beliefs such as exam-oriented education and emphasizing intelligence over physical fitness, some teachers, parents and many others can't reach an agreement with the policy, which to some extent interferes with the practical process of school soccer policy implementation. In addition, the conceptual divergence between the Sports Department and Education Department is another reason why school soccer policies can't work effectively. The system of fragmentation and the long-term administrative concept that is "sports department focuses on training; education department focuses on learning" not only put a crimp on the two departments to reach a consensus about implementing these policies, but also make it hard to break the administrative barriers. Apparently, this thinking and cognitional deviation and rigidity has become an invisible barrier to the implementation of school soccer policies in China. Further, whether it is local administrative departments, principals, or teachers, their consciousness of responsibility towards the "prohibitions" of national policies tends to be consistent, but in reality, the gap between inherent deviation and administrative requirements is not enough to fully transmute into behavioral practices [10]. Therefore, it is evident that the transformation of concept is only a prerequisite for policy implementation, but it cannot take up the burden of promoting the development of school soccer owing to lacking the guidance of realistic practice.



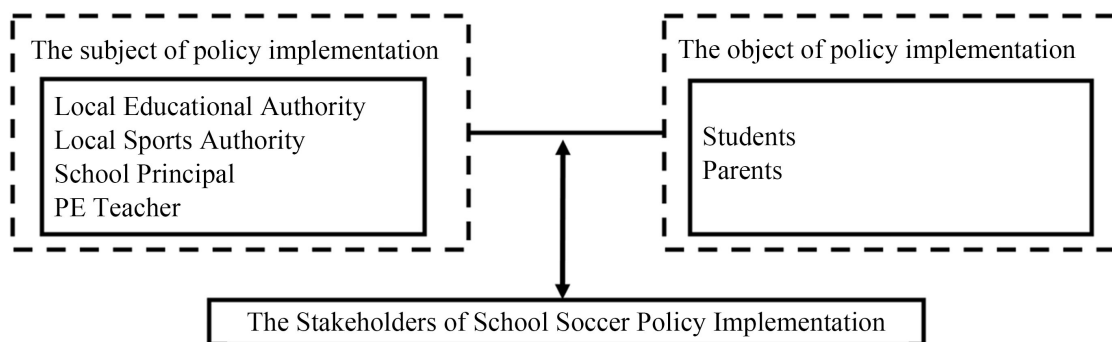
**Figure 1. The three-dimensional structure of human rationality.**

### 3.2. Instrumental Rationality: The Interest Demand of School Soccer Policy Implementation

Essentially, policy implementation is a game of interests by relevant policy implementers based on cost-benefit considerations [11]. In practice, individual often choose cooperation, resistance or inaction based on interest information, *i.e.*, by weighing costs and profits. Therefore, it is necessary to understand and balance the interests demanded by each party in order to reveal the inner mechanism of school soccer policy implementation in China. Due to their own perceptions and positions, different groups and individuals hold dramatically opposed views on these policies, which leads to different action logic. Moreover, when they all seek to maximize their interests, conflicts are unavoidable. Hence it is of great significance to sort out the interests of all parties and clarify the complex contradictions and conflicts to promote school soccer policy implementation. “Public choice theory” separates the relevant interest groups into two categories: subjects and objects [12] (shown in Figure 2), which are analyzed as follows.

On the one hand, an analysis of the interest demand of the policy implementation subject. Policy implementation subjects are the driving force to transform theory into practice. Firstly, as the two major departments for campus soccer development, local education and sports administrative departments are responsible for executing superior policies, leading, monitoring and evaluating policy effectiveness, and coordinating and cooperating across departments. Under the current evaluation mechanism, it’s the enrollment rate and competition performance under the examination-based education that are still the main manifestation of the political achievements and performance of local education and sports departments respectively, as well as their respective interest. Secondly, the principal responsibility system is the leadership system of school management in China. As the first person in charge of school soccer, the principal’s policy executive power is an important engine to call on and unite the whole school to promote and implement the policy, but inevitably, principals have the contributes of “broker”, while the examination-oriented education system is still an essential internal driving force of this game. At last, soccer teachers are the foundation of soccer activities, whose interest demand lies in personal development, like obtaining after-school training funds and incorporating work performance into Professional Title Appraisal System. However, the vast majority of surveys show that their demands are not yet effectively met and guaranteed.

On the other hand, an analysis of the interest demand of the policy implementation object. The policy implementation object is the target functioned and influenced by the implementation of the policies, which can directly reflect its effect. In the background of existing education system, most parents regard “score” as the key elements to evaluate children’s future prospects, but for some parents who want their children to participate in soccer activities, their main demands are that their kids can enjoy some preferential policies, such as earning bonus, entering a higher school or furthering their education. Being chronically guided by exam-oriented education thought from the society, school and their parents, students who are the direct target of school soccer gradually occupy profit center. It’s easy to find that the action selection of subject and object is the result of trade-offs based on their own interests, which inevitably is



**Figure 2. Stakeholder spectrum.**

self-interested. Actually, it gives no ground for blame to pursue profits, but in the process of promotion, how to furthest satisfy their reasonable demands is a necessary prerequisite for policy implementation to be recognized and accepted.

### **3.3. Institutional Rationality: The Institutional Background of School Soccer Policy Implementation**

Institution is fixed procedures and rules generally followed by people, whose executive process is impacted by norms and constraints of its own institutional structure, as well as influenced by institutional background. Therefore, to gain a deeper understanding of issues related to school soccer policy implementation, it's necessary to take account of institutional contexts that are widely presented in custom, culture, tradition and formal rules, and the incentive that they generate for different policy agents.

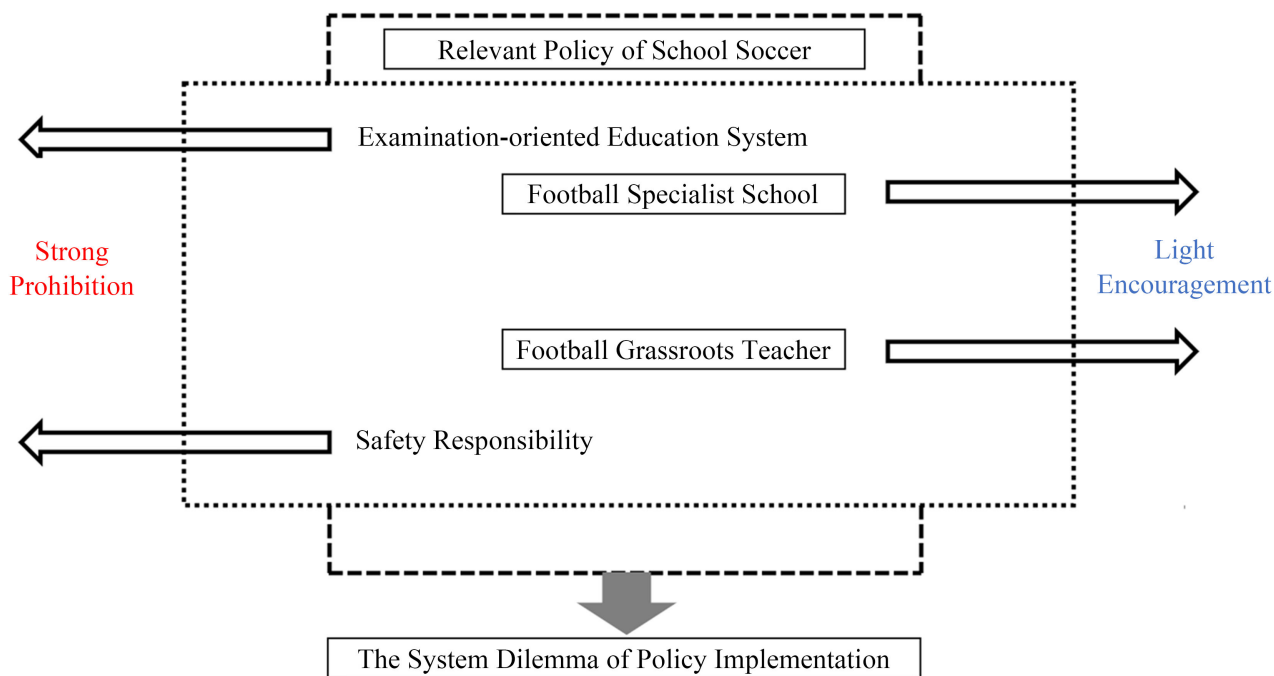
#### **3.3.1. An Analysis of Institutional Background**

For one thing, affected by the entrance examination of high school or college which is a major way to screen the talents in China, both the subject and the object have to pour much time, energy and resources into exam subjects, and students must lay particular stress on learning exam subjects, which are a trigger for school soccer's gradual marginalization. While the Ministry of Education came out the new curriculum standards of Chinese compulsory education in 2022 which shows an increase of the proportion of physical education and health courses and clearly specifies that school soccer should be incorporated into physical education system, its marginalization trend remains unchanged. For another, as a competitive sport in a same field, it inevitably produces some conflicts and safety accidents, for most of which the school is judged to take the responsibility, thus the school bearing the loss of both fame and fortune. As a result, schools or teachers often choose to forgo or faintly cope with the implementation of policies so as to avoid or reduce risk.

#### **3.3.2. An Analysis of Incentive Mode**

Any institution or policy has its own particular incentive mode, which determines the direction and strength of incentives. In other words, encouragement or prohibition determines implementer's behavior, while the reward strength is a decisive factor for their working strength. Generally speaking, the purpose for some schools to be declared to be a soccer school is to gain funds, and improve reputation and influence, so the releasing of specific funds will impact the positivity to carry out school soccer policy. In addition, grassroots soccer teachers playing a leading role in achieving the policy goals of school soccer, a lot of resources have been invested from national to local to improve soccer teaching and strengthen soccer teachers' professional ability. The execution of school soccer requires not only strengthening the construction of qualified teachers, but also stirring up their enthusiasm, making them find pleasure in it. However, with the deeper promotion of school soccer activities, their rewards are out of step with their dramatically increased workload, which will impair their motivation in the long run.

The institutional background of school soccer policy implementation system (shown in [Figure 3](#)).



**Figure 3.** The institutional background of policy implementation in China.

#### **4. PATH SELECTION OF CHINESE SCHOOL FOOTBALL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION FROM THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF HUMAN RATIONALITY**

##### **4.1. Establishing Rational Values and Forming Wide Recognition of Policies**

Public value characterized by consensus and normalization tend to be pluralistic, and even contradictory. According to the modern governance theory, central and local government, the Education Ministry and the Bureau of Education should give full corporation to ensure the efficiency of policy implementation and perfect its mechanism so that relevant administrative departments, the governance subject, can make judgement on value to reconcile the conflicts. After all, the school soccer in China is an activity which takes high moral values establishment and people cultivation as the fundamental task and aims to promote teenagers' mental and physical health and develop comprehensively.

School soccer policy should be made, promoted and carried out around this task. It is of equal importance to change parents' conception of soccer impeding learning and provide thorough and accurate information on the fact that playing soccer can help explore scientific problems, like improving learning efficiency and competence, etc. Besides, departments concerned should take the responsibility of telling "soccer stories" well, doing well in publicizing and helping to for "homothetic effect" among different groups. At last, the government should also vigorously illustrate related policies, correct some misconception and construct a good opinion atmosphere by popularizing its positive outcomes. In addition, schools, the direct football field, should hold some cultural activities themed on photography, drawing, essay solicitation and speech to deepen people's understanding towards school soccer. Conception is a lead of behavior. Only by forming a widely acknowledged acceptance can we bring out behavior direction consistent with policies.

##### **4.2. Satisfy All Parties' Reasonable Demand and Form Joint Forces of Policy Implementation**

The action strategies of policy implementers depend on their trade-offs between the benefits and costs of compliance with public policies [13]. Therefore, in order to align their behavior logic with policy goals, it is necessary to meet the reasonable interests of all parties in terms of increasing compliance benefits, re-

ducing compliance costs, or avoiding zero benefits. First, in terms of increasing the benefits, schools should incorporate the fruits of school soccer into assessment, get rid of the “test-based” evaluation criteria, and establish a comprehensive evaluation mechanism including the number of students participating in school soccer, whether holding intra-school soccer competitions and the construction of school-based soccer courses. For teachers, in addition to meeting the interests of physical education teachers as required, local government should launch corresponding supporting measures to put teachers’ rights into effect in accordance with local conditions. Second, in reducing the cost of compliance, the training, competition and examination subjects should be reasonably weighed to find a balance. Additionally, the education and sports departments should strengthen communication between departments based on their own duties, reduce barriers to collaboration and achieve the long-term development of school soccer. Meanwhile, taking it as the basis for cooperation, each department should try to make progress, improve inter-departmental communication mechanisms, coordinate and even resolve the conflicts about interests, and play the role of “joint meeting system” in actively adopting “external compulsion”, “selective incentive” and other means to show departmental mutualization. In addition, the government should perfect the reward system, break the “silence” of grassroots teachers and parents, and enable them to express their demands through online evaluation, questionnaires, public voting, etc., while the relevant departments should actively respond to their reasonable demands when formulating policies.

#### **4.3. Optimize Institution Environment of Policy Implementation and Frame Effective Incentive**

From the analysis of the background information of carrying out policies, it will be effective to construct an effective incentive mode from resistance reduction and incentives enlargement to optimize the institution environment. To reduce the institutional background resistance, soccer can be seen as a compulsory subject in the examination, so that it can be given the same status as the examination subject. Regulated and motivated by the system, school soccer policy implementation will be more effective. Although this vision will not be performed soon, the institutional background are optimizing, judging from the phenomenon that Chinese physical education examinations in the entrance examination of high school have basically been fully covered across the country, and the scores of physical education in the middle and high school examinations will continue to increase in most provinces from 2021 [14]. For the safety accident attribution, the state should organize specialists to formulate corresponding laws and policies to protect schools and teachers’ motivation, such as clarifying the Education Ministry as one of the responsible subjects, establishing the government’s immunity from liability, willingness to take risks, and the guilt parties’ responsibility in injury accidents. In case of incentive intensity, responsible department should make the number of characterized schools under control and focus on connotation construction for ensuring the value of these schools. Moreover, the allocation of funds should be appropriate, with proving extra rewards to outstanding performer. At the same time, flexible, concrete and operative subsidy distribution standard should be made out according to local economy and financial income and expenditure, which guarantee that soccer teachers can get paid for their work based on the principle of “more pay for more work”. In short, to take advantage of incentive best, different reward modes should be established for different groups, and policy implementation should be linked to their profits as much as possible.

In conclusion, it’s indispensable to establish a sound monitoring and evaluation system, which can draw support from a third-party. In a third party, the policy implementer’s is held the essential with social monitoring system like media, the public as a supplement, which ensure the objectivity and authority of the monitoring and evaluation to a certain extent and improve the performance evaluation mechanism of school soccer. The evaluation indexes should be shifted from scores to engagement, physical fitness and culture construction, which reflect the essence of school soccer. The evaluation orientation should be transformed from government-centered to people-centered, focusing on the grassroots in policy implementation and trying to incorporate the subjective feelings and experiences of principals, teachers and parents. At the same time, the regional differences of implementing policies should be taken into consideration for showing the differentiated and characteristic evaluation indicators. What’s more, a long-term

dynamic evaluation mechanism needs to be established for the implementation of campus soccer policies with the purpose for reflecting its effectiveness dynamically, which can be involved by authorities, schools, teachers, students and parents. The evaluation results can also be seen as an important basis for the continuous improvement of campus soccer.

## FUNDING

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## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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