

DOCTORAL THESIS

Gender Equality Policy of the Olympic Movement in Chinese Sport Governing Bodies: The Cases of Volleyball, Artistic Gymnastics and Diving

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Abstract

Gender equality has been regarded as a global value over the years. There is a general consensus amongst the majority of countries in the world that men and women should have the same right, opportunities and support, especially in workplace. However, notable gender gaps in the society could not be ignored, and there is still a long way to go to fully realise the goal. In the context of elite sport, gender equality policy has been officially advocated by International Olympic Committee (IOC) which is the leader of the Olympic Movement. The policy mainly focuses on improving the status of women in sport in order to eliminate the current inequality between men and women since 1990s.

Based on the theoretical framework consisting of globalisation theory, policy transfer and policy implementation, through qualitative approach, this research aims to investigate if and how the IOC's gender equality policy has influenced the development of Chinese Olympic progress, meanwhile, if and how China has responded to its penetration, in relation to three Chinese sport governing bodies involving elite volleyball, artistic gymnastics and diving, covering the period from 1990s to the present. In addition to documents, 40 semi-structured interviews with key insiders within Chinese elite sport system including athletes, coaches and leaders in relation to volleyball, artistic gymnastics and diving have been conducted in data collection process.

The findings indicated that gender equality development in Chinese elite sport system is inconsistent with the basis of gender equality policy that women rather than men are likely to suffer from gender inequality promoted by the IOC. Women's sports and gender equality are fully supported by Chinese sport governing bodies. Therefore, the IOC's gender equality policy has not affected Chinese elite sport to a great extent. China has its own special development model in terms of gender equality in elite sport. However, it is worth noting that compared to athletes, Chinese women coaches and leaders might experience more barriers in recruitment and promotion process. Moreover, according to research findings and further discussion, the present research suggested that first, a specific sector of gender equality should be established in Chinese elite sport system; second, a monitoring system between the IOC and China should be developed in order to improve the effectiveness of information sharing and implementation; third, the group of referees should be included in one of the perspectives of the IOC's gender equality policy except for athletes, coaches and leaders.