
**Good Governance and Management Practices: The Perspectives of
Cyprus National Sport Federations Administrators**

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Abstract

Administrators of sport organizations have increasingly become aware of the importance of management not only for the operation of their day to day affairs, but also for the successfully operation of their respective sport organizations. In the case of national sport federations, management techniques that implement good governance can ultimately lead to success not only in the boardroom but also on the playing field as well. The purpose of this paper is to examine the perception of good governance and management by National Sport Federations administrators in Cyprus. Specifically, the objective of this paper is to examine: 1) the perception of good governance and management in National Sports Federations, and 2) the challenges in introducing good governance and better management practices in the sport system of Cyprus. The results revealed a positive perception orientation towards the inclusion of good governance as a management practice by National Sport Federation administrators. The results also revealed a limited understanding as well as a skill set for the application of good governance and management practice.

Keywords: national sport federations, management, sport organizations, good governance

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Introduction

Cyprus is a small island with roughly 800,000 inhabitants. Despite its size, sport and the success of its sport industry is both nationally and internationally highly valued. Moreover, its sport system is viewed as being of utmost importance by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus. This is evident by the high number of national sport federations that exist in this country. Currently, there are 39 National Sports Federations registered with the Cyprus Sports Organization and the Cyprus National Olympic Committee, and they are recognized members of the respective European and International Federations.” (Kartakoullis et al., 2008)

Sport in Cyprus has acquired special importance in Cypriot society over the years, and has become one of the most important social institutions on the island (Kartakoullis, 2006a). Recreational sport is also developing quickly, and a significant number of Cypriots are now engaged in this pastime. Based on figures published by the Cyprus Sports Organization / Ministry of Sport in 2008, more than 80,000 adults are involved in organized sports activities. Sport in Cyprus has become an established social phenomenon which permeates all levels of Cypriot society (Kartakoullis et al., 2009).

In recent years some of the key challenges which have restricted the rapid development of Sport in Cyprus include football hooliganism, commercialization of sport, doping, and poor governance and management of sport organizations. Doping and the use of prohibited substances as well as the poor governance and management of the National Sports Federations are the two major challenges that sport is currently facing in Cyprus.

Good governance is concerned with bettering the current situation while striving for a better future. Specifically, good governance consists of eight major characteristics: (1) participatory, (2) consensus oriented, (3) accountability, (4) transparency, (5) responsiveness, (6) effectiveness and efficiency, (7) equitability and inclusion, and (8) following the rules of law (United Nations ESCAP, 2012).

The good governance and management of National Federations and sports organizations is a major issue of concern for the Olympic Movement worldwide. The President of the International Olympic Committee, Jacques Rogge, (2005) emphasized

the importance of good governance for sport and the Olympic Movement and suggested that this should be based on democracy, transparency and solidarity. For this to take place however, a series of managerial competencies need to be implemented commencing with a perception and understanding of the relevance of good governance (Camy and Robinson, 2007).

Sport Structures in Cyprus

The Cyprus Sport Organization

The Cyprus Sport Organization (C.S.O.) was established in 1969 as a non-profit government organization. Since its inception every sport activity and initiative comes under the jurisdiction of the Organization. In addition, the C.S.O. has also the primary responsibility for the implementation of developmental plans and strategies dealing with sport related matters. For instance, the C.S.O. implemented a series of Five-Year Development Plans focused on developing legitimate sport infrastructure throughout Cyprus. The first Five-Year Development Plan of 1978-1982 was very fruitful; several stadia, sports halls for indoor events, swimming pools and other infrastructure were built throughout the country.

Subsequent Five-Year Development Plans provided for the construction of more sports halls and swimming pools particularly in the free part of Famagusta and in Paphos, and for the improvement of existing facilities throughout Cyprus. In addition, grants and subsidizations to National Sports Federations, clubs and other athletic bodies increased substantially.

Over the years the C.S.O. has emphasized the development of its international relationships. To this effect C.S.O. signed several protocols with the Russian Federation, Bulgaria, Czech and Slovak Republics, Austria and Germany. Relations with Greece, in particular, are strong and cover mutual financial and technical aid in all sports fields.

The third Five-Year Development Plan, which covered the period 1988-1993, stressed two basic guidelines for the development of sport concerns in Cyprus:

- 1) Building new facilities and improving existing ones.
- 2) Developing every individual sport and enhancing its level of performance.

For the aforementioned second point, C.S.O. emphasized two areas:

- a) Mass sport activities through the program SPORTS FOR ALL.
- b) Sport activities on a highly competitive level.

As far as the first field is concerned, the C.S.O. introduced special programs for children, men, and women of every age. (In the children's program about 20,000 children have already participated). In the competitive sports field 35 National Sports Federations and four co-federations are active at the moment and are affiliated with and recognized by the corresponding international associations, and by the International Olympic Committee.

Still a firm believer in international relations, the C.S.O. has renewed all existing protocols with foreign countries and signed new ones with Romania, Poland, Jordan, Syria, Israel, Hungary and Cuba. Furthermore, the Cyprus Sports Organization undertakes to educate the coaches by offering them every possibility to learn new training methods and techniques either by attending seminars, lectures or studying abroad, or by bringing famous coaches to Cyprus for teaching purposes. Moreover, new initiatives have been developed to cover the needs of athletes after retirement from high level sports. Such initiatives include placing athletes in various jobs that are associated with their studies or with their interests.

The Cyprus Olympic Committee

The Cyprus Olympic Committee was founded in 1974 and was officially recognized and became a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1978.

The basic objectives of the Cyprus Olympic Committee are:

- To encourage interest in the Olympic Games and to foster the aims and ideals of the Olympic Movement in the Republic of Cyprus
- To observe and enforce the Rules as laid down in the "Olympic Charter"
- To disseminate, among young people, an interest in sport and a sporting spirit
- To organize, together with the respective National Federations, the preparation and selection of athletes, thereby ensuring that Cyprus is represented at the Olympic Games as well as at Regional, Continental and Intercontinental Games, which have the patronage of the International Committee

- To submit proposals to the IOC with regard to the "Olympic Charter", the Olympic Movement in general, as well as for the organization and conduct of the Olympic Games
- To work in concert with private and governmental bodies concerning the promotion of a sound sports policy
- To ensure the development and protection of the Olympic Movement and sport in general

Since 1980 the Cyprus Olympic Committee has ensured that Cyprus is represented with athletes at the summer and winter Olympic Games, as well as at Regional and Continental Games which have the patronage of the IOC. Moreover, in addition to participating in the Games, the Cyprus Olympic Committee actively participates in the activities organized by the IOC, the Association of the European Olympic Committees (EOC) and other NOC's.

Ethics in Sport

Ethics in sport has become a major focus of media attention and concern to the general public in recent years. Ethics in sport has been very widely defined in recent literature. Investigating the nature of fair play and ethics in sport can also correlate to similar societal implications. Many of our societal idealized values, such as fair play and honesty, are well represented through sport (Simon, 2004). Consequentially, the increased attention allocated to ethical research is well warranted not merely in the sporting arena, but also in the holistic realm of society.

The correlation between sport and society is indisputable. As a result, the ethical standards of a society is often reflected upon their sporting practices. According to O'Sullivan and Murphy (1998), "Sport in society affects the formation and transmission of values and the provision of role models for the young" (p.357). As is the case, significant consideration to the ethical conduct and codes of governing bodies is of essential importance. The ethical decision-making and governing policies of national organizations therefore have clear and direct implications upon national ethics and socialization.

President of the International Olympic Committee (2005), Dr. Jacques Rogge, addressed this augmenting ethical focus in one of his discussions on ethics and Olympism. In a 2005 presentation he stated, "It is in style to say that ethics have disappeared in sports; ethics are an un-definable and evolutionary concept, and the base is respect for others. However, sport might be a universal language that is

approached from very different angles by different cultures and nations. The vision of ethics is not universal therefore let us be very careful in approaching ethics.”

By examining how sport has evolved throughout history, one can deduce that games and sport activities have undergone a number of important changes. Such changes have always been related to the political, social and economic relationships between people in society. For example, in Ancient Greece, games and contests were grounded in mythology and religious beliefs; Roman sport events emphasized mass entertainment; and sport activities during the Middle Ages clearly reflected gender and status differences. However, after the Industrial Revolution things radically changed, and sports became gradually very pervasive and influential in the lives of people. Never before have sports been so closely linked to profit making. Today, sports have become a combination of business, entertainment, education, and moral training. Therefore, modern sports have turned into a very important social phenomenon in the 20th century. Modern sports are the creations of people coping with the conditions of life in their societies.

Economic forces and the emphasis on achievement have become so pervasive in contemporary society that they have heavily influenced the way people define and organize sports and the sport experience. The unrestrained commercialization, the rapid transformation of sport from amateurism to professionalism, the rich sponsorships and the accompanying huge money flows into sports, have led to an erosion of ethical standards (Kartakoullis, 2006). People in this area are concerned that if this situation continues to persist, sports will not be as we know it today but rather will take a turn for the worse. It is within this context that the need persists to examine and discuss the evolving issues, like the one under consideration in this paper dealing with the concept of good governance and management in sports organizations.

Therefore, the question that arises is whether sport is in danger, or whether it is in crisis. What is clear is that sport is a reflection of our society (Coakley, 1990) and as such it has serious problems and issues to face. Sport is an institution, and as such is very dynamic and never static; continuously changing. There are many people that criticize this modern form of sport and its consequences (e.g. the antisocial aspect of competition) and are therefore looking forward to a revival of ethics in sport as it used to be in the past.

Ethics in sports would best benefit from a nostalgic review of previously devoted ethical codes and standards. This of course is a sporting world in existence prior to the commodification consistent with capitalism (Simon, 2004). Through the commercialization of sport, capitalistic characteristics like maximal profit and absolute victory have become dominant athletic themes. Especially in regard to elite professional and nationally competitive athletics (Nixon II and Frey, 1996). Winning at all costs, including cheating, doping, fixed matches etc. can all largely be attributed to the capitalistic influence upon the sporting world. Clearly the commodification of sports will remain an urgent and relevant issue when considering ethical conduct. A committed and persistent focus upon the ethical conduct of athletes, teams, and governing agencies will best ensure the integrity and purity of the games we share such tremendous zeal for.

In 1995, Dr. Rogge addressing the issue of ethics in sport, indicated that “the athlete is threatened on different levels. He may be the victim of social inadaptation, of bodily or psychic injuries, of political exploitation, of violence, corruption or doping.” Ethics in sport extend beyond the athlete to include, economic corruption, bad management, lack of transparency and accountability, and science. Good governance through management may assist in ascertaining that ethics in sport and in the ways that sport organizations conducted their services are enforced and endorsed.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this paper is to examine good governance and management by National Sport Federations administrators in Cyprus. Specifically, the objective of this paper is to examine: 1) the perception of good governance and management in National Sports Federations, and 2) the challenges in introducing good governance and better management practices in the sport system of Cyprus

Methodology

Sample

Primary and secondary data was collected with the use of four in-depth interviews with officials from four National Sports Federations in Cyprus.

Questionnaire – Interview

To reinforce the reliability of the research instrument, a questionnaire has been used which was the same in structure and in the sequence of the questions for each of the interviews conducted. All interviews were held at the premises of the Cyprus Sports Organization in Nicosia and lasted almost three hours.

Procedure

Data was collected during one-on-one interviews, using a semi-structured questionnaire that included open-ended questions. The interviews were conducted in May and June 2009 in Nicosia, Cyprus and covered two main areas: 1) the perception of good governance and management in National Sports Federations, and 2) the challenges in introducing good governance and better management practices in the sport system of Cyprus

Personal interviews were utilized in an attempt to collect as complete and as accurate information as possible. Qualitative data was useful in this respect in gaining additional information in relation to the issue under investigation.

The most important factor considered for selecting suitable subjects from the National Sports Federations was the quality of information they could provide. An effort was made to interview the most appropriate officials from the Cypriot Sport System. Additionally, it was made absolutely clear that interviewees understood the purpose of the study and the measures solicited by the interviewer in view of the very sensitive nature of the issue under examination (Pellemans, 1999). Based on Lofland's and Lofland's (1995) recommendation, the summary for each interview conducted was prepared within the first 24 hours of the interview.

In their attempt to increase the validity of their data the researchers made an extensive search and consulted media articles (print and electronic) from both sources as well as documents from the National Sports Federations. It should be noted that the utilization of the secondary data before conducting the interviews was helpful in managing to seek and collect more related information during the interview process.

Results

The Perception of Good Governance and Management

All four administrators were aware of the concept of good governance and its implications to management. All four agreed that it is relevant and timely to implement good governance practices in sport management, particularly as the sport industry faces new challenges. As one administrator put it:

“We all want to introduce good management practices. We support good governance in the sport system of the country.”

All four administrators indicated that perception and knowledge go hand-in-hand, and that the lack of knowledge of good governance makes it difficult to apply this practice. However, all four administrators agreed on the importance of good governance for management yet showed a collective concern as to how it can be applied with limited know how.

The Challenges in Introducing Good Governance and Better Management Practices

All four administrators expressed that learning and applying good management, both in theory and practice will pose a significant challenge. The learning aspect will be challenging, yet the application, it was also agreed by all four, will also be challenging. For some of these administrators, it was a matter of questioning existing skill sets and existing knowledge levels. Indeed, as one administrator's stated:

“The sports world is becoming complicated and there are instances when I feel that I am not competent enough to meet certain challenges. We need additional skills and competencies to run the Federation properly”

It was further identified that experience is not the only factor needed to succeed today as a sport administrator. That is, as sport and knowledge evolves, so do the challenges of sport administrators. Sport today, it was indicated, possess more challenges to administrators than ever before, with one of these challenges being finding the right administrative technique. As indicated below, knowledge from experience may not be the only aspect of successful management.

“For almost 20 years now I have been involved in the management and administration of the National Federation. I am a practitioner. I got educated through practice but I get the feeling that this is not good enough anymore.”

The concern was raised that a lack of understanding of the principles and application practices of good management may exist. That is to say, that although good management is a useful and meaningful approach, it is one that needs to be learned and a lack of knowledge exists. This is clearly articulated in the statements below:

“Can you tell me and teach me good governance? How do we do that?”

“Our people at the Federation need support and training to do that. It is not that we do not have honest intentions or that we are trying to hide things. No, this is not the case. It is simple, we need to know how to do it.”

“We need lots of support to introduce good management models and practices and good governance. We need to share experiences and cases of good practice with others. This is what is going to improve the management practices of sports federations.”

The world of sport is becoming complicated and many of these administrators admit one or another way that they cannot cope with the new demands imposed on them. In view of this and due to the lack of certain skills and competencies, sport administrators face difficulties in managing their sport federations properly. Lack of skills and competencies in this respect can lead to bad management practices and to the bad governance of the sports federations. Yet, awareness of the need to learn and to implement good governance practice exists. Perhaps this is best explained by one respondent as follows:

“It is a mistake to accuse us of bad governance. This is not bad management. It is our inability to handle things the right way. Lack of expertise!

Discussion and Conclusion

Sport in Cyprus has developed over the last two decades in terms of competitive results as well as in terms of the money available in the sports industry of the country. Despite the small size of the island, the recent outstanding performances of individuals and team sports indicate that Cyprus is becoming a sport oriented nation.

This rapid development of the sport industry in Cyprus has led to management awareness and a need to enhance and improve management practices. A perception of

the importance of good governance and management was found to be prevalent amongst administrators of the National Sport Federation surveyed. Yet, of critical concern, is the lack of knowledge, skills, and expertise that is needed to implement the practice of good governance.

The administration of sport federations and sport related organizations has been subject to question as the sport industry rapidly evolves. The question remains whether or not sport federations and organizations are keeping pace with non-sport federations in implementing good governance and management practices. Nonetheless, as indicated in the current study, good governance and management practices is being valued and deemed to be important for the governing of National Sport Federations in the small island of Cyprus.

Notes

¹ The Republic of Cyprus became an independent state in 1960; a member of the United Nations also in 1960; a member of the Council of Europe in 1961 and of the European Union in 2004. However, since 1974 the island has been de facto divided and efforts to solve the problem and reunify Cyprus have not been successful yet. The island covers an area of 9251 square kilometers and has a population of approximately 800,000 people. Nicosia (Lefkosia in Greek; Lefkosa in Turkish) is the capital city. The Republic of Cyprus-located in the East Mediterranean at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, Africa-has played a crucial part in the course of the island's long history. She has been an attractive target and has been ruled by successive major powers, including the Egyptians, Greeks, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Persians, Ptolemies, Romans, Byzantines, Franks, Venetians, Ottoman, Turks and British and gained her independence from Britain in 1960 (Joseph, 2000).

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