

The Governance of Professional Baseball in Taiwan: The Case of the Gambling Scandal and Criminal Activity in 1997

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Introduction

Baseball is regarded as Taiwan's national sport and there has traditionally been a strong public following for the game. A professional baseball league, the Chinese Professional Baseball League (CPBL) was established in 1990 with a rival professional league the Taiwan Major League (TML) inaugurated in 1997. The game however was rocked in 1997 with revelations of bribery and gambling and the involvement of criminal elements seeking to manipulate games. Attendances dropped with the decline in public confidence. However, Taiwan won the right to host the 2001 Baseball World Cup and performed very strongly (achieving 3rd place). This boosted public morale and crowds returned to the baseball stadia. In the wake of this experience the two professional leagues also merged since they had both been hit by the economic impact of the loss of spectators.

Method

Within this context, this paper seeks to focus on the relationships between the state and other relevant stakeholders in shaping policy outcomes. More specifically, the paper employs concepts of governance to articulate relations between stakeholders. The approach adopted draws on a three-fold typology of governance approaches (which is adapted from the work of Leftwich 1994, in the field of social policy / political economy) which aids in developing an understanding of this phenomenon (Henry and Lee, 2004). The study draws on empirical material from interviews with stakeholder representatives, analysis of government policy documents, of media coverage, and parliamentary proceedings conducted over two years (2002-3) by the first author.

Discussion

Figure 1 maps out the relationships identified in the paper between various stakeholders. The nature of these relationships differs from those normally discussed in relation to sports governance since criminal interests, reflected in the governance system, are in addition related to political party influence, which in turn is also related to business investment interests in professional sport. These normally 'hidden' elements of the governance system are argued to be critical to an understanding of policy outcomes in the domain of the Taiwanese professional baseball industry. The conceptualised framework of governance theory is complemented by an application of Jessop's (1990) strategic relations theory which highlights access to, and the use of, resources to achieve preferred ends for particular stakeholders.

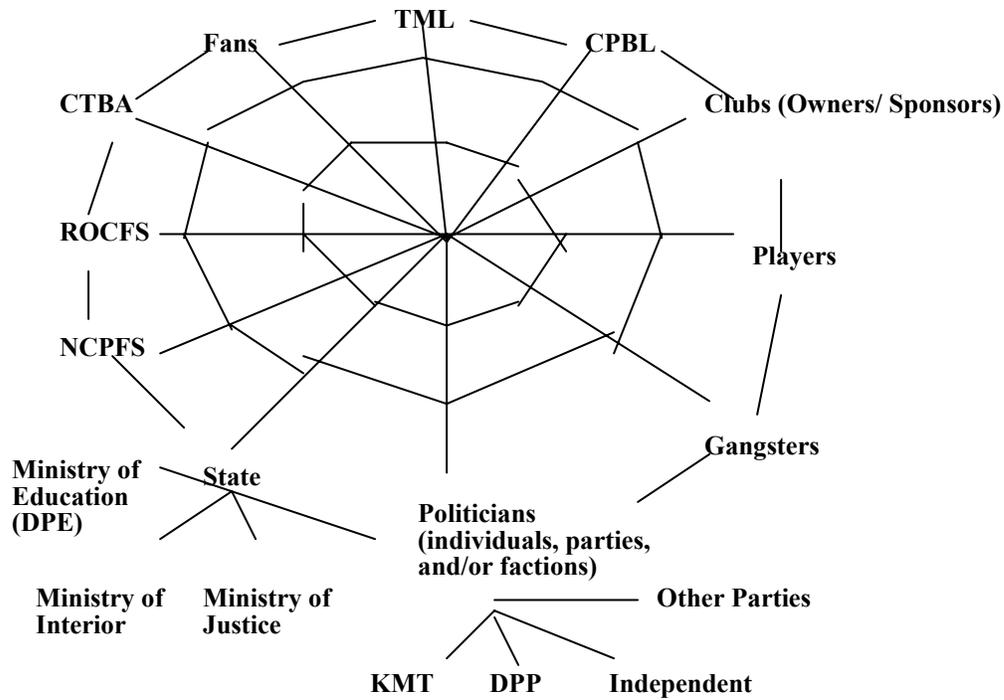


Figure 1 Systemic Governance of Professional Baseball in Taiwan - Interaction between Stakeholders

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