

Management and program effectiveness in Belgian sports clubs

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Aim of paper and research questions

The aim of this study was to present a model to investigate management and program effectiveness in Belgian sports clubs. The theoretical framework used was the competing values approach (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1981; 1983).

Literature review

Organisational effectiveness is one of the basic constructs in management and organisational theory (Goodmann & Pennings, 1980). In spite of the extensive academic interest in the topic, there still remains confusion and controversy about what constitutes organisational effectiveness and how it should be measured. Organisational effectiveness has also been studied in the area of sport management. Most researchers (e.g., Chelladurai & Haggerty, 1991; Koski, 1995; Papadimitriou & Taylor, 2000) subscribed to a multidimensional approach of organisational effectiveness. Sowa et al. (2004) addressed that nonprofit organisational effectiveness should discern between levels and units of analysis. They argued that organisational effectiveness comprises two primary and distinct levels: management and program. To date, no study has been found that examined effectiveness of sports clubs by studying effectiveness at two units of analysis. Moreover, sport management research that used the CVA as theoretical framework is limited. The increased pressure on sport organisations to be businesslike, professional, and accountable, highlights the need for research on effectiveness (Shilbury & Moore, 2006).

Research design and data analysis

We identified appropriate dimensions using an inductive approach: identifying appropriate dimensions through an extensive review of the sports effectiveness literature and carrying out semi-structured interviews. Different items per dimension were generated for each of the proposed management and program effectiveness dimensions. Pilot tests were carried out to screen the instrument for its face validity. Board members received the full 107 items of the management and program effectiveness inventory scale. Sports members were asked to complete only the program effectiveness scale (51 items) since it was plausible that they were not familiar with the management issues of their sports club. Exploratory factor analysis was used to delineate the dimensionality of the management and program effectiveness scale.

Results

The sample consisted of 431 board members and 392 sports members of Belgian sports clubs. The mean age of board members was 45.51 years (SD = 11.52) and the majority were male (83%). Most board members served as secretary or chairperson. The mean age of sports members was 27.25 years (SD = 7.33) and 75% were male. Sports members participated in their sports for on average 14.87 years (SD = 6.62).

Factor analysis yielded twelve management factors representing 40 items that explained 79.05% of the variance (Table 1). Chronbach alpha's ranged from $\alpha = .68$ to $\alpha = .92$, and were considered to be satisfactory. Factor analysis yielded nine program factors representing 39 items

that explained 68.95% of the variance. Chronbach alpha's ranged from $\alpha = .77$ to $\alpha = .92$, and were considered to be satisfactory.

Results showed that both board and sports members rated the dimension atmosphere at management and program level as the most effective factor in sports clubs. Board members perceived that their sports club was less effective in acquiring board members, coaches and other volunteers. Both board and sports members had similar perceptions about the program dimensions that were rated as less effective. The independent sample t-test revealed significant differences in perceptions between board members and sports members for the program effectiveness dimensions societal goal, safety, satisfaction, and information and communication. Board members perceived that their sports club was more effective on these four dimensions than sports members.

Discussion and conclusion

Effectiveness studies are necessary since the pressure to increase professionalization in sports clubs denotes that sports clubs are forced to provide a service that is more comparable to private and public sectors (Nichols et al., 2005). Sports clubs are urged to be accountable for their performances (Shilbury & Moore, 2006). This study contributed to the effectiveness quest by focusing on the management and program effectiveness level (Sowa et al., 2004).

Our conceptual perspective and its measurement scale offered a different perspective to consider effectiveness. It can be used by practitioners as a practical tool to measure the level of effectiveness on the different management and program dimensions, and subsequently, it can be used as a means to tune the sports clubs' policy. The results of this study indicated that perceived social benefits of sports clubs is an important trigger for sports membership or volunteering as a board member. This research contributed to confirm the conventional wisdom that sport as a social institution is worthwhile, responsible, and enriching for people.

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	Board members (N = 431)		Sports members (N = 392)		t	df	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
Factors Management Effectiveness							
Financial goal	5.52	1.25					
Social goal	4.93	1.49					
Societal goal	5.86	1.19					
Human capital: other volunteers	4.46	1.50					
Human capital: board members and coaches	3.56	1.52					
Sport accommodation	4.58	1.63					
Sport material	5.69	1.22					
Atmosphere	5.91	0.82					
Education	4.18	1.49					
Stability	5.37	1.21					
Communication	5.17	1.16					
Information	5.14	1.73					
Factors Program Effectiveness							
Competition goal	5.13	1.16	5.18	1.32	-0.58	775	.56
Recreation goal	4.02	1.45	4.06	1.46	-0.37	811	.71
Societal goal	5.60	1.18	5.23	1.27	4.19**	768	< .01
Safety	5.81	0.91	5.64	0.99	2.58**	806	< .01
Human capital: sports members	4.56	1.37	4.50	1.37	0.60	802	.55
Satisfaction	5.24	0.90	5.05	1.08	2.63**	760	< .01
Atmosphere among members	5.82	0.66	5.90	0.80	-1.57	755	.12
Education	4.16	1.57	4.05	1.66	0.90	735	.37
Information and communication	5.52	0.81	5.38	0.99	2.20*	758	.03

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the Management and Program Effectiveness Factors.

Table notes:

*p < .05

**p < .01