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Performance assessment of non-profit sport organizations: A status quaestionis from the literature

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Performance Assessment of Non-Profit Sport organizations: A Status Quaestionis from the Literature

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Introduction

In Belgium, the majority of sport organizations are non-profit. Therefore, their long-term existence often depends on government subsidies and external funding (Herman & Renz, 2004; Papadimitriou, 2007). Hereby, the apportioned amount of subsidies is usually related to the performance and effectiveness of these organizations (Schulz, 2005). In this way, rational criteria for investments, subsidies and the organization's priorities need to be established (Lim et al., 1994). Consequently, the application of organizational effectiveness and performance measurements (OEP) to local sport organizations become increasingly important (Papadimitriou, 2002).

Background

Organizational effectiveness has been studied extensively in both profit and non-profit organizations. But, despite of the academic and research interest, little consensus has emerged, neither theoretically or empirically, nor to what constitutes organizational effectiveness and how to measure it (Sowa, Selden & Sandfort, 2004). Three reasons could explain this. First of all, the

difference between all types of organizations calls for various approaches (Thiel & Mayer, 2009). Secondly, organizational effectiveness has been defined in many ways (Cameron & Whetten, 1983; Scott, 1987). As a result, scholars could be investigating and measuring organizational effectiveness in different ways. Thirdly, there is the issue of multiple constituencies (Connolly, 1980). That is, each stakeholder of an organization may have a different view on how the organization's effectiveness should be assessed. These three reasons obviously obstruct the possibility of a unified approach towards organizational effectiveness measurement. As a consequence, we see a diversity in the research on organizational effectiveness.

Objectives

The aim of the present study is to present an OEP-model for non-profit sport organizations. This model will give both scholars and practitioners an opportunity to reflect on performance assessment. Furthermore, we intend to close the current gap in research by using an approach that will take into account the above mentioned problems and challenges.

Methods

In our review of the literature we focused on the effectiveness of non-profit sport organizations. That way, we comply with the first problem. That is, the difference between organizations studied in each article must be kept as small as possible in order for the results to be compared. We also acknowledged that there is no 'one-best-way' of defining OEP. After all, each stakeholder could have a different view on which dimensions (e.g. finance, communication, sport) should be important in assessing organizational effectiveness. Therefore, we merely summarized the dimensions of organizational performance suggested in literature and organized them in a holistic model.

Results

Starting from our review of twelve articles, we extracted twenty-four dimensions of organizational effectiveness that were found relevant in non-profit sport organizations. These dimensions were organized based on Chelladurai's (1985) systems view of organizations. More specifically, we adopted his view of organizations as members of society, each trying to convert its inputs into desired outputs. Consequently, our model was divided into three main categories: (i) input, (ii) throughput and (iii) output. Every dimension of organizational effectiveness was classified into one of these three groups according to its nature. In addition, the correlations between these dimensions that were found in literature were included in the model. This resulted in a complete overview of the current research findings.

The results show that the majority of authors are in favor of a multidimensional approach, adopting both financial and non-financial criteria. Furthermore, most scholars acknowledge the differences between sport organizations in their approach. Yet, our model suggests that certain dimensions can be used in every non-profit sport organization (e.g. size) and measured in the same way (e.g. number of members). Others, however, are specific to each non-profit sport organization and should be assessed differently, like their goals (e.g. assessment of stakeholders

perception and key actors). Consequently, we can support the findings of Baruch and Ramalho (2006) who stated the following: “In choosing criteria for future studies, we recommend adopting a common ground, backed up by specific criteria when a sector is unique, to reflect convergence and divergence in OEP research.”.

Conclusions

Three of the most common problems in organizational effectiveness research has been overcome by our approach. Our model acknowledges the differences between organizations and stakeholders, through the application of a holistic and multidimensional view of organizations. Furthermore, this framework could be applied by practitioners to develop the assessment of effectiveness of specific sport organizations. However, to do this more accurately, this model and all its possibly relevant OEP dimensions need to be explored more extensively.