

CONCEPTUALISING CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) AND BASKETBALL-FOR-DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE FOR EUROLEAGUE BASKETBALL'S ONE TEAM PROGRAMME

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Abstract purpose

This paper seeks to critically discuss the development and assimilation of a new corporate social responsibility programme known as the One Team programme for the Euroleague Basketball. The aim is to discuss the value attained in the application of strategic stakeholder dialogues initiated to inform the development of culturally sensitive basketball-for-development activities within European professional basketball clubs.

Conceptual background

This study is underpinned by concepts of stakeholder theory, stakeholder approach (Freeman, 1984); stakeholder involvement strategy (Morsing and Schultz, 2006) and organisational issues of legitimacy and responsiveness to local communities' social problems. The stakeholder approach is opposed to the profit-orientated, ticket targeting and public relation approaches that were prominent within the previous CSR models in Euroleague Basketball. Stakeholder enabling (Freeman, 1984) focussed on developing mutually beneficial dialogues which would enable clubs to establish or negotiate organisational license (see also Johansen and Nielsen, 2010 for conceptual explanations) to operate in a partnership with local actors within the target communities tackling similar issues.

Methodology/design/data analysis based on Euroleague Basketball's growth in membership, diversity of member clubs and that of their local communities, the methodological approach adopted was action research which sought to generate knowledge from international and cross-cultural perspectives. The views of management, sport-for-development practitioners, affiliated clubs and their stakeholders and academics were incorporated through workshops, formal meetings, coaching clinics, open ended surveys and documentary analysis. Utilizing both purposive and snowball sampling, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and field notes from active participation were utilised to gather in-depth information regarding previous CRS models and rationales for approaches used by various clubs. Interview transcripts were analysed through an iterative and inductive process.

The information gathered from the focus groups and interviews was then utilised to design a training manual for One Team Managers and trainers in the use of sport as a social good.

Results/discussion/conclusion

Formal and informal discussions revealed that previous CSR models were developed without stakeholder involvement and so lacked clarity in the club's and street level bureaucrats' understanding of CSR. Most of the approaches undertaken by clubs were a one-way communication strategy mainly via the clubs reaching out to vulnerable members of society and lacked application of democratic theory (deLeon and deLeon, 2002) so as to enable those close to the source of the problem to influence the outcomes.

Workshops and coaching clinics enabled the author as a One Team Programme manual author and trainer to interact with clubs across Europe by engaging with the participants in the process of developing a CSR programme which employed a cultural lens and thorough needs assessment for each particular club. Therefore, as a result of the workshops, the structure of CSR was redesigned for clubs, its governance reshape at macro and micro level, clubs reach out to their communities using participatory methods applying concepts of stakeholder approach and involvement. Such processes resulted in the newly launched One Team Programme.

Further findings show that clubs are currently focussing on the following social issues within their communities: provision of access and opportunities for disabled participants; addressing substance misuse among young people; gang culture and knife crime prevention among young people; gender and access to sport and recreation; and economically disadvantaged and marginalised youths. Basketball-for-development activities have been developed to enable dialogue and solution implementation for such problems. The activities are no longer about numbers (ticket sales or player recruitment) but social impact achieved in relation to local community problems. Organisational licence to operate and contribute towards the

targeted issues was achieved via multiple stakeholder consultative processes which engaged the community in a two way dialogue (Cornelissen, 2008) with respective local Euroleague Basketball clubs.

Research limitations/implications

Future fieldwork research to examine the implementation of One Team programme activities developed by respective clubs is essential to establish the alignment not only to the programme ethos but also to local authority or government strategic plans and initiatives focussed on the issues the programme is attempting to address. Language was a barrier in some workshops for participants to fully participate in various critical debates that were conducted.

Originality/value

This paper's originality is strongly rooted in the process of introducing the concept of basketball-for-development to Euroleague Basketball teams. The process has helped reshape their CSR approach by creating a strong sense of business responsibility towards the clubs' local communities through a sound relationship strategy.

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