

MANAGING FOOTBALL ORGANIZATIONS: A MAN'S WORLD?

Berit Skirstad, Anna-Maria Strittmatter

Introduction

The recent appointment of Lydia Nsekera from Burundi to the executive committee of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) was an historic appointment for she is the first woman to be appointed to FIFA's executive committee in over a hundred years. She is also the only female president of all the 209 member associations of FIFA and has been an IOC member since 2009. This appointment triggered our curiosity to investigate more about the representation of women in organized football. Previous research in women and football has mainly been about the players, discrimination, the coaches, sexual harassment and abuse (special issue of Soccer & Society in 2003), but this research is about the representation of females in the executive committee in international and national football associations. We know that in Norway and Germany the process of getting women into decision-making positions started much earlier. Germany and Norway had the two first females in the European Football Association's (UEFA) and FIFA's women's committees more than thirty years ago. Our research question is to document the representation of females in decision-making positions in UEFA, FIFA and two national football federations, why it happened and how, by whom, where and when by using Pettigrew's contextualist approach (1987).

Theoretical background

The study facilitates an understanding of how change has been achieved as a result of the changes in society in where the football federations exist (outer context) and the changes in the football federations (inner context), and the action of key-persons, their values and legitimacy, and the structures and the strategies of the organization, and critical incidents. Pettigrew's (1987) contextual approach provides us with a better understanding of the change process. Female under-representations in sport executive boards have been reported both for Germany (Hartmann-Tews & Combrink, 2005; Pfister & Radtke, 2006) and Norway (Fasting & Sand, 2009; Skirstad, 2009).

Methods

Data originate from interviews with three of the main female actors, informal interviews with two former football presidents from Germany and Norway, both involved in UEFA and FIFA, and documentary and archive data. The focus of the analysis is the entrance of women into football organizations, how we can explain this process and likely future developments. Data coding was concept driven according to Pettigrew's contextual approach.

Results, discussion and implications/ conclusions

The contextualist approach is a viable method because it takes into account the economic, societal and political levels of change both in the outer context, in sport generally and in football organizations at the actual time. The task is to explain the often inconsistent ways change appears.

The UEFA Women's Committee was founded in 1980. In the same year, the decision to establish a European Championship for women was taken, and the first female entered the Women's Committee. At FIFA's 45th Congress in 1986 the first female in the executive board of the Norwegian Football Federation (NFF) demanded that FIFA should put more effort into the development of Women's Football. It took 26 years before they invited the first female to the board. Germany appointed the first female to the board ten years after Norway, but Germany was the first to have a female in UEFA's Women Committee from its start (the rest were men). These differences can partly be explained by some strategic moves by a man in power, the Norwegian football president at that time, who was an executive board member in UEFA as well in FIFA and in the Women's Committee, and in the context of local time cycles (Pettigrew, Woodman, & Cameron, 2001). NFF has three females in the board to-day. The changes in football in Scandinavia were a response to the focus on gender equality in society in general (Andersson & Carlsson, 2009), and in sport generally the development was more rapid than in football.

Furthermore the representation system in Germany makes it harder than in Norway for a female to get in. Because in Germany the female needs to be a president of the regional federation in order to be elected. In Norway it is an open system so anyone who declares their candidacy can win as soon as they are elected by the General Assembly. The chair of UEFA's Women's Committee looks upon a brighter future for female football, because the big clubs in Europe have started to have female teams, partly because it gives the club greater legitimacy. The added value to the clubs is likely to include more spectators at the men's matches, greater sale of merchandize and hopefully more female representatives.

References

- Andersson, T. & Carlsson, B. (2009): Football in Scandinavia: a fusion of welfare policy and the market, Soccer & Society, 10:3-4, 299-304
- Fasting, K. & Sand, T.S. (2009). *Kjønn i endring – en tilstandsrapport om Norsk idrett*. Oslo: Achilles.

- Hartmann-Tews, L. & Combrink, C. (2005). Under-representation of women in governing bodies of sport. In G. Doll-Tepper, G., Pfister, D. Scoretz, & C.Bilan (EDS.).
- Sport, women and leadership. Congress proceedings Berlin 2004 (pp71-78). Berlin: Sport and Buch Strauss
- Pettigrew, A.M. (1987). Context and action in the transformation of the firm. *Journal of Management Studies*, 24(6), 649-668.
- Pettigrew, A.M., Woodman, R.W., & Cameron, K.S. (2001). Studying organizational change and development: Challenges for future research, *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(4),697-713.
- Pfister, G. & Radtke, S., 2006, Dropping out: Why male and female leaders in German sports federations break off their careers. *Sport Management Review*, 9, 111-139.
- Skirstad, B. 2009. Gender policy and organizational change: A contextual approach. *Sport Management Review*, 12, 202-216.