

Managing strategic performance in sport organisations: the case of high performance sport New Zealand

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Aim of abstract/paper

The aim of the research is to consider how tools for managing strategy implementation are used in non-profit sport organisations. More specifically, the research question posed is 'how does High Performance Sport New Zealand (HPSNZ) manage its strategic performance?'

Theoretical background or literature review

As public investment in sport rises there is increasing pressure on sport organisations to make the best use of available funds and to deliver expected outcomes. This has led to increasing pressure on sport organisations to adopt business practices, including tools for monitoring the implementation of strategy to deliver planned performance. The relevance of a business perspective to sport is acknowledged in the sport management literature; see for example, Leberman, Collins & Trenberth (2012). Of particular relevance are strategic management tools that enable organisations to monitor progress towards strategic objectives. The sport field has developed their own particular tools, such as SPLISS - Sports Policy factors Leading to International Sporting Success to perform this role (De Bosscher, De Knop, Van Bottenburg, Shibli, & Bingham, 2009). The SPLISS framework sets out the factors contributing to high performance sport outcomes and identifies nine factors, referred to as pillars, which determine international sporting success. However, given that SPLISS is still under development, alternate tools such as the balanced scorecard (BSC) could be of immediate use to sport managers. The BSC, a tool to guide strategy implementation, identifies key drivers of performance in four perspectives; namely financial, customer, internal process, and learning and growth, and develops measures to monitor of each perspective. The sport literature occasionally acknowledges the appropriateness of the balanced scorecard for measuring performance outcomes (Hoye, Smith, Nicholson, & Stewart, 2015; Leberman et al., 2012). To date, there are only a few detailed studies of BSC applications in sport settings (Alonso & Fernández, 2009; Kozma & Ónodi, 2014).

Insights derived from the BSC may be useful for guiding efforts to incorporate achievement and measurement indicators of targeted outcomes in the high performance sport sector into the SPLISS model. De Bosscher et al. (2009) acknowledge that SPLISS theory development is still in its youth; therefore, exploring the application of the balanced scorecard may add to theory development in measuring the success of high performance programmes. To accomplish this aim HPSNZ is analysed from a balanced scorecard perspective to reveal its strategic management system.

Methodology, research design and data analysis

This paper presents the initial findings from an on-going, exploratory case study of strategic performance management in

High Performance Sport New Zealand. The research considers how HPSNZ manages its strategy implementation and how it addresses the key dimensions represented in the BSC. Information was gathered from a variety of sources including publicly available documents from HPSNZ and Sport NZ websites, including their strategic plans, annual reports, and media reports. Information was also extracted from internal documents provided by HPSNZ including a performance and investment schedule for a national sport organisation, planning templates and a core investment summary report. Additional information was collected through email exchanges and phone conversations with HPSNZ staff members. Finally, Skype interviews with members of HPSNZ's senior management team provided in-depth commentary about the operation of the organisation's strategic management processes. The data was repeatedly reviewed and coded to reflect the dimensions pertinent to the BSC. Codes were grouped and regrouped to derive key themes until saturation.

Results, discussion and implications/conclusions

The findings revealed that HPSNZ does in fact have a balanced approach to strategic performance management, with a clear vision, mission and strategy, a handful of critical success factors referred to as organisational pillars, and a set of indicators and measures with which to track performance with respect to these factors. Although cause-and-effect relationships are impossible to establish in sport settings, HPSNZ has identified the logical relationships that it believes drive performance. Arguably, HPSNZ has a 'balanced scorecard' approach albeit they do not produce a formal scorecard.

The insights to date can contribute to two areas of knowledge. First, they are useful for assessing the suitability of the BSC as an alternative or supplement to the emerging SPLISS model. Secondly, they are pertinent to the debate in the sport management literature about the usefulness of the BSC for managing strategy implementation in elite sport organisations (Hoye et al., 2015; Leberman et al., 2012). The BSC is a useful supplement to existing high performance sport management frameworks, illustrating how critical success factors and measures might be integrated into frameworks such as SPLISS.

References

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