

Managing priorities and performance of Olympic sport governing bodies

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Aim of paper and research questions

It is widely recognised that the performance measurement of organisations should help them in their strategic decisions and in their capacity to evaluate their successes. This measurement is, however, lacking in sport governing bodies from the French speaking Community of Belgium (CSGBs=56). So, they are not able to assess whether their priorities are achieved and which actions are to be taken. The aim of the paper is to propose a model of the organisational performance of these CSGBs in order to provide the Chairs of CSGBs with a strategic tool.

Literature review

Organisational performance is a social construction which would not exist independently from beliefs and actions of individuals (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983; Cameron, 1986; Chelladurai, 1987) and, as such is related to the nature of organisations and their actors. Organisational performance of non-profit organisations (NPOs), such as national sport governing bodies (NSGBs), is difficult to measure mainly due to their vague missions and their stakeholders' heterogeneous expectations and needs.

As a consequence, organisational performance should be understood as a coherent whole of dimensions. According to Madella, Bayle and Tome (2005), it refers to "the ability to acquire and process properly human, financial and physical resources to achieve the goals of the organisation." In reference to the work of Madella (1998) and Bayle (2000), we propose a model to measure organisational performance by considering strategic objectives distributed among five main dimensions (sport, customers, communication and image, finance and organisational) which are split into two sub dimensions.

Research design and data analysis

The first part of the study focuses on the measurement of the objectives of CSGBs according to the multidimensional model we suggest. The model includes quantitative performance indicators considered capable of measuring the achievement of proposed strategic objectives of the 56 CSGBs in 2005. Afterwards, we normalise the values of each indicator to establish a performance score for each objective. Finally, we highlight consistent performance score for each (sub) dimension.

The second part of the study focuses on Olympic sport governing bodies (OSGBs). In 2007, the relative weight that the Chairs of OSGBs attached to the dimensions and the objectives of the model was assessed. This was achieved via a survey of the 27 OSGBs. The Chairs classified each (of their) objective within the same dimension and each dimension in increasing order

from the most to the least significant. In this way the priorities of the OSGBs which participated in the survey were assessed.

Results

The measurement reveals that the sport and finance dimensions are not consistent because their sub dimensions are competing, respectively elite sport and sport for all, reflecting what is to be found in literature for NSGBs (Shilbury & Moore, 2006), and financial resources management and financial survival. Consequently, seven (sub) dimensions of the organisational performance of OSGBs are highlighted. Three of these refer to their missions: customers, elite sport and sport for all and four refer to their systemic goals: communication and image, financial resources management, financial survival and organisational.

The survey had a 48% response rate (13 Chairs of OSGBs' among 27). The assessment of the priorities reveals that the crucial dimension is sport, followed by the finance dimension. The latter is neither a top priority, nor one to be neglected.

The assessment of the weight of the objectives of the sport dimension reveals that about the half of the 13 OSGBs in the sample focused on elite sport and the other half on sport for all, although it might have been expected that all OSGBs would be elite sport oriented.

Discussion and conclusion

In conclusion, we propose a strategic model of the organisational performance of OSGBs combining 7 dimensions including their missions and operational goals. The contrast between their achievement and their relative priority leads to strategic decisions. The study highlights OSGBs which achieve their missions. The financial resources management is assumed to be crucial to perform high. Furthermore, it points out OSGBs which perform low in the achievement of their priority missions. Some of them do not achieve their priority operational goals, but others. This suggests wasting resources.

The model should encourage the Chairs of CSGBs to focus on specific objectives that they choose to invest in. So they should not consider some specific objectives such as priorities because they perform at a sufficiently high level so that more investment would be useless, or because they do not have the necessary financial and human resources to improve. Therefore Chairs should redefine their priorities depending on their capacity and performance.

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