Organisational culture within Women's football: A comparative study within European football organisations

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Background

Over the last ten years there have been major developments in women's football across Europe .To understand why these developments have occurred, an insight into the European Football Associations from a Macro approach was needed to ascertain whether the development structures now in place are a result of a change in organisational culture and how these have been caused

Organisational culture was founded by anthropologists to study complex organisations including educational and corporate administrations (Meek 1988). More recently organisational culture literature has moved into the sport domain and helped gain a better understanding of sport organisations. According to Colyer (2000) there has been little exploration of organisational culture in sports organisations and tends to focus on volunteers and their relationship within the organisation. Emerging research and literature from Smith, Stewart, Wallace and Weece, 1995, Coyler, 2000, Kaiser 2009 has tried to fill the gaps with various relationships to organisational culture notably Doherty's 2007 research on organisational culture and leadership. Therefore this paper aims to ascertain the organisational culture(s) that exist within women's football and how these impact the development of the game.

Organisational culture can be defined as a collection of traditions, values, policies, beliefs and attitudes that constitute a persuasive context for everything we do and think in an organisation (Marshall and McClean 1988).

Method

The study explores the developmental philosophy, environment, and situational circumstances (e.g. political and ideological positioning, nature and status of the women's game) which play a critical role in the player development process. The study involved semi-structured interviews, (n=6), (Biddle, Markland, Gilbourne, Chatzisarantis and Sparkes, 2001) with the key strategic stakeholders responsible for women and girls football development within their respective European football organisations alongside the collation of strategic and operational policy and practices within each of the women's football development programmes. Interview data will be

predominantly deductively analysed using content analysis procedures (Scanlan, Ravizza and Stein, 1989; Côté, Salmela, Baria and Russel, 1993).

Results and Discussion

The paper draws upon key implications for the development of women's football in those countries and from the analysis of the material this will inform the football organisations on their working practices. The results show that the status of the game has improved in all the countries involved. Directives from FIFA & UEFA were found to be an impetus for FA's to move the women's game forward and put new structures in place. The appointment of new Chief Executives has led to organisational culture change with new philosophies, visions, support mechanisms implemented in the five out of the six football associations.

This paper is part of a wider study which aims to examine the development structures of women and girls' football from a Pan European perspective, in order to identify and illuminate the critical transition phases experienced by top- level female football players prior to, during and after their football career. This paper aims to capture the essence of both the structural and protocol complexity of women's football in Europe and further research is needed to explore the relationship of the organisation structure of women's football and the individual player.

Application to Practice

The research will highlight the issues surrounding organisational structures, working mechanisms and philosophy regarding the development of women footballers within football development programmes across Europe. The results will allow football association development programmes and the football organisations to take into account key moments which can affect female players during the critical period of transitions throughout their playing careers.

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