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### **Governance in African national cricket organisations: An exploratory study**

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#### **Background**

Despite recognition that governance is a critical component of effective management of sport organisations (Hoye & Cuskelly 2007), little research has been undertaken to investigate sport governance (Foster 2006, Hindley 2003, Yeh & Taylor 2009). Governance research in sport management has further been limited to document the compliance, practices and performance of sport organisations in developed countries (e.g. Ferkins, Shilbury & McDonald 2005, McNulty & Pettigrew 1999, Michie 2000, Michie & Oughton 2005, Shilbury 2001). This concurs with an observation by Brief and Cortina (2000) that, although ‘the less privileged’ would also benefit from research on topics such as corporate governance, they are underrepresented in the field’s research agenda. Indeed, a comprehensive literature search on sport governance conducted within the African continent revealed that with the exception of one South African study (see Burger & Goslin 2005) and guidelines published on ‘best practice principles of good governance’ on the South African Department of Sport and Recreation’s website (SRSA 2010), no other published research on sport governance in Africa is available.

There are a number of sports played in Africa, with some of the world's best sportsmen coming from the continent. Football is by far the most popular sport but athletics, cricket, rugby and hockey are all growing in popularity. In a drive to develop and promote cricket in Africa, the International Cricket Council (ICC) recently introduced an ICC-Africa Regional Development Programme. However, to achieve sustainable growth the ICC identified improved governance and administration as a key priority for participation in the programme (ACA 2010).

#### **Objectives**

The objective of this study was to obtain a greater understating of the ways sports organisation boards in Africa employ principles of governance. As such the following research questions guided this study:

- What is the structural attributes of African National Cricket Organisations boards?
- What are the perceived roles and responsibilities with regards to strategic planning and implementation of boards?

This is a significant contribution as boards are the core decision making authority which approve organisational strategies and manage the risk faced by sport organisations. A greater

understanding of governance is thus crucial for the continued effective delivery of sport opportunities to participants and spectators (Hoye & Cuskelly 2007).

## **Methods**

The members of the Africa Cricket Association (ACA), representing the Africa region of the ICC, provided an accessible sample for the research. The ACA has 23 members affiliated to the establishment of which 19 are participants of the development program (ICC 2010). A facilitated session on governance and leadership with the Presidents of membership countries was used to gain qualitative insight. Quantitative data was also obtained prior to the session by means of a questionnaire, completed by 16 ACA organisations.

## **Preliminary Results**

The number of board members range from four members to 17 with a mean of 8.4 members. These members meet between three and 52 times a year with an average of 13 meetings per year. The number of paid full time staff members varies between no staff and 10 staff members with an average of four staff members and 1.6 managers staffing the administrative offices. The roles of the board were evaluated against the variables proposed by Yeh & Taylor (2009) and results indicate that most boards take on the roles prescribed in the literature. Roles that received less support include: 'to employ, evaluate, provide advice and reward executives', 'it is the role of the board to self-assess', and 'it is the role of our board to initiate board development activities'. Results further suggest that, in several of the organisations investigated, the Board assumes an operational role in addition to its governance role, inter alia because of the lack of qualified staff.

Most boards have a mission, vision, and operational framework in place and they know the organisations' strengths and weaknesses. However, not all boards have identified their critical assets nor did they identify potential threats facing their organisations or how their organisations are perceived by the market. In addition, they do not assess and analyse the external changes in the industry and don't have a formal information gathering process. Strategic priorities and objectives are in line with the priorities and objectives identified by the ICC and not based on the operating environment. Performance is not regularly reviewed and the right mix of knowledge, skills and abilities is problematic.

## **Conclusion**

Through guidelines provided by the ICC, African cricket associations ostensibly adopted many good governance practices, although further research is required to examine its impact on governance and behaviour. As results suggest that boards are mostly internally focussed

and strategies pursued are those proposed by the ICC the motive behind governance practices can be questioned. Good governance practices could very well be a result of compliance to funding prescriptions. If this is the case, boards should be educated on the role and importance of good governance practices as well as benefits associated with strategic management. Finally, there is considerable room for improvement to ensure sufficient distance between the Board (and their governance role) and operations (and their management role).