

EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE POLICY FACTORS THAT DETERMINE INTERNATIONAL TENNIS SUCCESS OF COUNTRIES

Author:
Jessie Brouwers

email:
jbrouwer@bond.edu.au

Co-authors:
Sotiriadou, Popi De Bosscher, Veerle

University:
Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Faculty:
Department Sports Policy and Management

Abstract

Aim of the paper

In this study, tennis, an individual sport that places emphasis more on Grand Slam tournaments and rankings rather than on the Olympic Games, was examined in order to identify the policy factors that influence the tennis performance of countries. After the identification of policy factors a conceptual model of these factors was developed. This study built further on the SPLISS-model (De Bosscher et al., 2006) and attempted to validate this model in international tennis.

Theoretical background

Over the past 20 years, various studies looked at the sport policy factors that influence sport performances of countries (e.g., De Bosscher, De Knop, Van Bottenburg, & Shibli, 2006; Digel et al., 2006; Green & Houlihan, 2005; Houlihan & Green, 2008; Oakley & Green, 2001). The most inclusive study in terms of factors that influence international sporting success is the Sport Policy factors Leading to International Sporting Success (SPLISS) study of De Bosscher et al. (2006). De Bosscher et al. (2006) identified over 100 factors and distilled them down under nine key sports policy dimensions or pillars (including financial support, coherent and coordinated tennis policies, sport and tennis participation, talent identification and development, athletic and post career support, facilities, coaching and coaches' education, competition and scientific research). De Bosscher, De Knop, and Van Bottenburg (2007) concluded that key success determinants might be different for every sport or clusters of sports. Therefore, there is a need to gain an insight in - and identify- the sport policy factors that influence international success in each sport. Yet, most of the previous studies on elite sport policies are sport generic and none of them examined tennis.

Methodology

Qualitative data were collected from a review of generic and tennis specific policy literature. Thematic and inductive analysis was used to develop themes and critical success factors (CSFs) of elite tennis policies. Additionally, in a short electronic questionnaire (8 questions) international tennis experts (e.g., managers working at the ITF, researchers specialised in tennis, former high performance directors of national tennis organisations) and high performance directors of private academies and national tennis associations of successful tennis countries gave their opinion on the most important factors that influence the tennis performance of a country. The survey was expanded with interviews to go in more depth on the policy areas and factors that the participants indicated in the survey and to develop the CSFs for each policy area. The survey responses and interview transcripts were thematically and inductively analysed using the qualitative software program Nvivo and complemented the themes and CSFs revealed by the literature review.

Results/discussion

All the factors that were revealed in the literature review could be distilled under the nine pillars of the SPLISS-model. However, the tennis specific literature revealed new CSFs that were not included in the sport generic SPLISS-model (e.g., the presence of private academies, a solid club tennis structure and tradition in clubs, the presence of commercial academies that offer scholarships to young players, de-emphasis of 'winning' as success at developmental levels, adapted competition formulas for young players). The survey and interviews are conducted between March and April. For this reason, there are no results available yet. The conference presentation will also include the results of the survey and interviews. Based on the available results of the literature review, it can be concluded that every sport needs its own model as there are CSFs that are sport-specific. The study contributes to other elite sport policy studies which are mainly sport generic, by the development of a tennis specific model which illustrates the factors that influence the tennis performance of a country. Sport specific research is important as it informs policy makers and high performance coaches in tennis about the factors that influence tennis success and allows them to review and improve the policies in their country. In order to test the conceptual model in an empirical environment, the implementation of the factors will be examined in two countries in a later phase of this study.

References:

- De Bosscher, V., De Knop, P., & van Bottenburg, M. (2007). Sports policy factors leading to international sporting success. Brussels: VUBPRESS.
- De Bosscher, V., De Knop, P., Van Bottenburg, M., & Shibli, S. (2006). A Conceptual Framework for Analysing Sports Policy Factors Leading to International Sporting Success. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 6(2), 185-215.
- Digel, H., Burk, V., & Fahrner, M. (2006). High-performance sport. An international comparison (Vol. 9). Weilheim/Teck: Brauer.
- Green, M., & Houlihan, B. (2005). *Elite sport development. Policy learning and political priorities*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Houlihan, B., & Green, M. (2008). Comparative elite sport development. In B. Houlihan & M. Green (Eds.), *Comparative elite sport development: systems, structures and public policy*. London: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Oakley, B., & Green, M. (2001). The production of Olympic champions: international perspectives on elite sport development system. *European Journal For Sport Management*, 8, 83-105.