

European Olympic sport governance factors: a relational perspective

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Aim of abstract

Due to the number of stakeholders and their increasing expectations, the governance of European National Olympic Committees (ENOC's) is challenging as they have to fulfill requirements from international and national bodies, which interest differ. The goal of this paper is to help better understanding of what their governance refer to in their context and what factors to take into account in a relational perspective. It also aims to highlight similarities between the ENOC's and the European Union's vision. The different expectations from International Olympic Committee (IOC), European Union (EU) and ENOC's are included and valuated into a specific governance framework for ENOC's. This paper intends to provide a consistent model of Olympic sport governance while highlighting factors and items to measure, analyze, and aiming to enhance governance of ENOC's.

Theoretical background

The growing willingness for change and regulation emerged in the Olympic sport Movement. Despite numerous studies on governance in sport, there is still a gap for what concerns the relational aspect of Olympic sport governance. This research uses the theory of the three interrelated approaches of governance by Henry and Lee (2004) (i.e., systemic, organizational and political) underlining that organizations are challenged by their environment. This aspect is crucial because organizations exist in interaction and relations with their environment which includes for the most part their stakeholders, partners, competitors. Relations of the ENOC's with both IOC and EU are essential. The recommendations of the Olympic Charter (2011) are balanced with the expectations of EU which started to intervene in sport once it was considered to be an economic activity (Chappelet, 2010). To match with expectations and recommendations, ten factors of governance are highlighted according to the literature on governance of FPO, NPO and Olympic sport organizations (IOC, 2008). It is assumed that these factors are crucial for assessing and enhancing relational governance of ENOC's.

Method

After selecting a set of governance factors in the literature, we submitted them to experts through a focus group discussion. Key factors of relational sport governance were assessed through an online survey. The survey, sent to the general secretaries of all the 49 ENOC's, aimed to measure and to enhance the relations between ENOC's, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the European Commission.

A Principal Component Analysis was used to construct scales of governance factors, validated by Cronbach's alpha. Pearson correlation coefficients were finally used to analyze the relationship between factors and components in a three dimensional perspective (Henry& Lee, 2004).

Results

All components of each factor are consistent ($\alpha > .70$). The first dimension of Henry and Lee – the organizational governance - includes ethic (e.g. following an ethical chart), equity (e.g. being based on quotas or competencies), democracy (e.g. presence of clear rules and process), relational transparency (e.g. internal transparency), power (e.g. using and having an organizational chart) and involvement of athletes (e.g. current consideration for athletes). The second dimension – the systemic governance – includes collaboration (e.g. collaboration with external and national Olympic organizations) and communication (e.g. good exchange of information with the IOC). Finally, the third dimension – the political governance - covers only one factor: the subsidiarity (e.g. respect of European Union intervention)

For the factors, only ethics ($\alpha = .723$), involvement of athletes ($\alpha = .814$), subsidiarity ($\alpha = .701$) and collaboration ($\alpha = .643$) are consistent (Amis et al., 2004).

Notwithstanding the fact that the IOC vision of sport differs from the one of the European Union, the results showed by ENOC's under the application of Lisbon Treaty – members of EU - and the ENOC's from non EU countries have many governance practices in common. Only two components differ between the two groups: external delegation of responsibility ($r = .32$; $p \leq .05$) and respect for the intervention of the European Union in sport ($r = .008$; $p \leq .01$).

Discussion

Results show components and factors of Olympic sport governance which give ENOC's the opportunity to meet the expectations of their main stakeholders (IOC, EU and other ENOC's). This research provides information to integrate Olympic decisions in the 49 European countries. Further researches in the field of sport governance could use the framework we developed in this paper to assess the quality of the relational governance between the ENOC's and their main stakeholders, accordingly to national and cultural differences and to the importance each ENOC gives to each factor.

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