

Evaluation of the creation of a global sports anti-corruption body

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Aim of paper

This paper is a literature review of the recent dialogue concerning the creation of such a body. It represents the basis of a funding bid to support related empirical research to examine and evaluate the case for a 'Global Sports Anti-Corruption Body' being created to engage with the problem of match fixing and wider financial corruption in sport.

Theoretical background

Financial corruption in international sport federations including vote rigging and bribery, fraudulent betting including match fixing and spot fixing (manipulation of an event in a sporting event), money laundering and other criminal phenomena have become a dangerous threat to sport. Additionally, competition related corruption involving prohibited drug use and other forms of cheating within sporting competition are prevalent.

The argument supporting the creation of such a Global Sports Anti-Corruption Body is predicated on the belief that it would be able to adopt a more coherent and wide-ranging approach to this problem than has been evident up to this point with a variety of disparate structures within sports bodies. And as with WADA, the body would be able to be part of a multi-agency approach together with law enforcement bodies such as Interpol. There would also be the opportunity to pool resources and allow the type of forensic investigation that is required to unravel the financial complexities inherent in corrupt financial dealings. Such a body if it came to fruition, would clearly be able to adopt the good exemplars, which have been developed within specific sports such as international cricket and tennis to fight corruption and match fixing. As such it would have a harmonising effect across all sport.

However, the efficacy of this approach has been questioned by some: for example elements within the betting industry believe that essentially a self-regulatory approach based on memoranda of understanding between betting companies and sports bodies on sharing of information is an effective way of detecting nefarious activities. In addition it is questioned whether it is realistic that such a body could adequately respond to inherent criminality of money laundering and other activities of criminal gangs connected

to match fixing. Additionally, unlike WADA that was very much a creation of the IOC and its then existing anti-doping infrastructure, it is not obvious to see where the specific political impetus will come from for the creation of an equivalent anti-corruption organisation such as the Global Sports Anti-Corruption Body.

Match fixing is a current challenge to 'Sporting Integrity'. This is not only about the need to play a role in engaging with criminality. Sporting integrity is the ethical essence of sport. What is crucial is that good governance is the key test of the anti-corruption framework that evolves in the next few years.

Sports corruption is a complex and multifaceted area to examine. As far as the specific occurrence of match fixing in sport, there have been incidents over many years. The true extent of the problem however remains unknown. Using terminology developed in criminology, there is an unknown 'dark figure' of match fixing based on suspicions, allegations and undetected incidents. There is some conjecture within football and across other sports whether it is the primary threat compared to other forms of corruption such as anti-doping. There are reasonably few official determinations of match fixing, those that there are come from official investigations by sporting authorities and/or by law enforcement agencies. It has been argued that "there needs to be a much more systematic approach in recording corruption cases" (Transparency International, 2011). However, the identifiable measures of the phenomenon suggest the problem is chronic and critical.

Implications of review

Much of the support for a Global Sports Anti-Corruption Body seems to be intuitive and unsubstantiated. There is a need for a much more rigorous and reflective debate as to whether this form of sporting self-regulation is the appropriate way to proceed in the engagement with the complexities of sporting corruption.

References

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