

The development of basketball in Taiwan: from the perspectives of theories of governance and strategic relations

Authors: Ren-Shiang Jiang

Institution: Loughborough University

E-mail: R.Jiang@lboro.ac.uk

Introduction / aims

This study seeks to identify the nature of governance of the sport of basketball in the Taiwanese context focusing on three critical issues. One of these issues related to a critical incident, namely, the collapse of the Chinese Basketball Alliance (CBA), a second to a critical process, the operation of the Super Basketball League (SBL), and a third to a critical element of the policy context, namely relations with People Republic of China.

Theory / literature review

Two complementary theoretical approaches are adopted in this study, those of governance theory (Henry & Lee, 2004) and a strategic-relational approach (Jessop, 1990; Hay, 2002), which allows us to identify how such outcomes were mediated and shaped, and in particular how different sets of interests were implicated, how power was exercised, and whose interests were met in governance decisions.

Henry and Lee (2004) suggest there are three approaches to governance evident in the literature - systemic, organisational and political governance. The notions of systemic and political governance are useful to this study as the study seeks to analyse the interaction between various stakeholders in order to understand the nature of their action and how they exercise their power. Governance structure works with influence from other structures. In the Taiwanese sporting context, social class, political structures, media, sponsors, coaches, players and club owners are groups of stakeholders whose interests and actions are relevant to governance issues. This study aims not only to 'describe' the governance system as an interaction of stakeholders but also to 'explain' which stakeholders win in different battles on the basis of for example social class or political support. The study moves beyond meso-level governance concerns to macro-level consideration of strategic relations evaluating broader structural forces like social class and economics, as well as looking at the individual views on the micro-level to generate an explanation of why certain outcomes developed within this structure.

The strategic-relational approach (SRA) transcends the dualism of structure and agency to examine structure in relation to action, action in relation to structure, rather than bracketing one of them. The SRA therefore focuses on the nature of "strategic action", and of the "strategically

selective context" within which such action is formulated, with each impacting on the other. Jessop (2005) treats structures analytically as strategically-selective in their form, content, and operation; and treats actions as structurally-constrained, more or less context-sensitive, and structuring. Jessop points out that this approach "aims to produce theoretically informed analyses of strategic calculation and practice and of how they over-determine social relations more generally" (1990: 264). The SRA thus offers a wider framework of analysis at the macro-level for this study without prescribing restrictive boundaries for empirical work, and comprehending governance analysis at the meso-level.

Methods

The study adopts a qualitative case-study approach, which was based on documentary material and semi-structured interviews. Three major cases, namely, the collapse of the CBA, the development of the SBL and the sporting links with China, was selected on the basis of their significance in the operational governance of basketball.

The perception of the stakeholders in the specific groups was reviewed in order to compose insight into principal interests and forces in the governance system. 25 interviewees were drawn from the Sport Affairs Council, Chinese Taipei Basketball Association, legislators, clubs, coaches, players, media, and sponsors. Interview transcripts and government reports/proceedings of parliamentary debates were subject to coding employing a Nvivo 8 qualitative data analysis software, and coding and analysis were undertaken employing an ethnographic content analysis approach while this approach employs a protocol which allows the application of both pre-determined deductive, research imposed categories, and inductively determined, categories or codes arising from respondents' comments.

Conclusions / findings

Provisional findings are as follows: first that this study illustrates the heuristic weaknesses of traditional, hierarchical models of governance; second the study illustrates how the outcome of one set of struggles (the collapse of CBA) shapes the strategic context for subsequent governance decisions; third, it demonstrates how clientelistic relationships (and specifically also Guanxi), as a strategic context, constrains and/or facilitates the choices available to stakeholders.

References

- Hay, C. (2002). *Political analysis: a critical introduction*: Palgrave.
- Henry, I. P., & Lee, P. C. (2004). Governance and ethics in sport. In J. Beech & S. Chadwick (Eds.), *The business of sport management* (pp. 25-41). Essex.: Pearson Education.
- Hoye, R., & Cuskelly, G. (2007). *Sport governance*. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Jessop, B. (1990). *State theory: putting the capitalist state in its place*: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Jessop, B. (2005). Critical realism and the strategic-relational approach. *New Formations*, 56, 40.