

## The impact of political governance on the reform and change of sports: the case study of judo in Greece

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### Purpose:

The main aim of this paper is to examine the impact of political governance to the reform of Judo in Greece and to show the ways and degree of influence of governmental factors on the governance of non-profit sport organisations using as a case study the sport of Judo in Greece. Based on theoretical research and empirical evidence, it further intends to contribute to a better understanding of the factors influencing the change and reform of non-profit sport governing bodies in this country. The paper uses as a theoretical framework the concept of political sport governance. Judo has been chosen as a case study because even though non profit sports organisations, including judo, have received little in depth attention in Greece, the given sport has shown significant successes in world tournaments, European and world championships and even the Olympic Games over the past decade.

### Background:

In the past few years, emphasis has been given to the study of the concept of governance in relation to sports after a strong shock of credibility and legitimacy in the operation of world sports (Beech & Chadwick, 2004). In sports, governance can be perceived as the formation of a system through which each organisation will be able to achieve its goals using direction, control and adjustment of the different parts that form it (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007). In Europe, a wide range of sport governance systems exist from fully free sport movement systems to systems with fair state involvement (Petry et al. 2004).

In general, there are three main approaches to sport governance; systemic, organisational and political (Beech & Chadwick, 2004). This paper concentrates on political governance and focuses on the way governments try to achieve their goals through the "promotion" of ethical and economic motives to sport-related policy issues (Henry, 2007). In this framework, given that the role of the organisation's board is essential to the successful practice of sport governance (Ferkins et al., 2008), the paper examines the influence of governmental sport related policy on the

decisions of the board of non-profit sport organisations and the consequences of this interaction to sport governance.

### Methodology:

The research is based on documentary analysis as well as theoretical research and empirical evidence through observation, interviews and media sources. The sport of Judo has been used as a single case study.

The main focus was on the conduct of semi-structured interviews with selected Judo officials in Greece who were encouraged to refer and comment on the changes that have occurred to the sport of Judo over the past twelve years. Observation was also widely used as a tool to collect many pieces of information on a few specific areas of research, such as the implementation of reform plans and central government policies.

### Findings:

The key finding of this research was that political sport governance may contribute to a particular sport's reform in Greece for as long as sport governing bodies are willing to take the chance to change. In addition, the role of the board is quite critical to the practice of governance, as it may prove to be a brake rather than a tool of efficient implementation of governance plans (Ferkins et al., 2008). However, sport-governing bodies such as Federations should be more involved in national discussions concerning sport policies. Up until now, such sport federations have been excluded from these discussions and therefore, government sport supervising bodies (ie General Secretariat of Sport) create policies without taking into account several differences among different sports, making it harder for the federations to implement their plans to further reform. In the case of Judo in Greece, any reform has mainly been the result of the federation's will to do so. Finally, this paper could also be used as a tool for further exploration of the interaction between governmental and non-governmental Greek, sport organisations.

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