Sport Governance and Policy

Dr Shushu Chen

Introduction

Sport governance and policy persist as focal points of scholarly inquiry, owing to their intricate interplay and their capacity to exert a significant societal imprint. The current section provides a nuanced synthesis of seven seminal articles, each contributing significantly to the understanding of these intricate fields. A thorough examination has been conducted of articles published in the selected journals over the past six months. From this review, seven papers have been identified and highlighted due to their strong relevance and direct contributions to the field of policy and governance. Every paper is subjected to a subject evaluation, encompassing its methodological rigour, empirical findings, and broader societal implications, thereby furnishing a multi-dimensional understanding of the complexities inherent in sport governance and policy.

These works delve into an eclectic range of topics, from the imperatives of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) within sport organisations to the exigencies of crisis management amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and from the architecture of governance to the dynamism of policy transitions and enactments. By focusing on papers that are particularly relevant to policy and governance, this review intends to offer a streamlined platform for a quick digest of the latest literature.

Papers Reviewed

In an incisive exploration of policy implementation and the topic of inclusivity, Christiaens and Brittain (2021) employ a qualitative, multi-case study methodology, aiming to unpack the intricate challenges of implementing inclusion policies for

disabled people in the UK amongst non-disabled voluntary community sports clubs. The study reveals that perceptions of ableism significantly influence how inclusion is conceptualised and implemented across various sports clubs and organisations. Such perceptions, in turn, affect the willingness and ability of disabled individuals to engage in these settings. The study distils three categories of inclusion outcomes: parallel inclusion, full inclusion, and choice. It also proposes four methods that stakeholders can employ or need to consider to realise these outcomes: facilitating inclusion, removing obstacles, creating opportunities, and building mutual identity. With respect to the nuances of policy implementation, the study underscores that the actual understanding and application of inclusion policies often rest on ableist foundations, irrespective of their original aims. Therefore, it advocates for sports organisations to strategically incorporate provisions for disability and to engage directly with disabled communities, as opposed to taking a passive stance.

Also relevant to the topic of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), Peers, Joseph, Chen et al. (2023) utilise an intersectional Foucauldian framework to dissect EDI policies within Canadian National Sport Organisations. Their rigorous examination of 143 policy documents both advances theoretical paradigms and furnishes actionable insights. In their work, the authors formulated a model elucidating how EDI policies may paradoxically perpetuate the exclusions they aim to mitigate, calling for 'reproducing the status quo' and 'reproducing the excludable other'. Regarding practical applications, the research team has generated practitioner-oriented resources that not only critique existing issues but also propose viable policy alternatives. These resources have been extensively disseminated and are accessible for scholarly review at the following: https://www.recreation-collective.com/sport-policy.html.

Ferguson, Hassan, and Kitchin (2023) examined the factors that either facilitated or hindered the effective scaling of programme success to a broader context, focusing on the intersections between policy, community, and individual elements relevant to Sport for Development and Peace (SfD&P) in Northern Ireland. The research identifies a three-tiered pathway in the sporting sector that expands from traditional sport development to inclusive sports and then to SfD&P. It finds that unclear structures and a task-oriented approach limit the sector's potential for impactful outcomes. Furthermore, the paper finds that there's a need for a common language and framework, as disparities between policy and practice could lead to duplication and manipulation, undermining the effectiveness of measures. In terms of the implications for policy, the study suggests the need for clearer roles, responsibilities, and language to bridge the gap between policy and actual practice. The study also highlights the opportunity for renewed policy cohesion through outcomes-based strategies, especially as the public sector increasingly recognises the role of sport in achieving governmental outcomes.

Set against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, Girginov, Chen, Alhakami et al. (2023) conduct a discourse analysis to critically compare and elucidate the complexities inherent in governmental responses within the realm of sports policy of five countries – China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the UK and the USA. The article probes into the strategies employed by national governments in leveraging policy tools to influence governance, accessibility, and consumption patterns in the sports sector during the pandemic. Despite ideological differences, all five governments under study emphasised the importance of exercise and sport for individual and societal well-being as a countermeasure to the pandemic's effects. However, this acknowledgement was not paralleled by an equivalent policy capacity

to bolster the sports sector. A discernible preference for elite sports over community-based activities was noted across all governments. The scope and limitations of governmental interventions in the sports arena are determined not solely by the degree of centralisation but also by pre-existing systemic frameworks and the government's chosen method of engagement with the sports sector. Thus, governmental responses to a crisis in the sports sector are intrinsically influenced by the established systems preceding the emergency. Their work is especially pertinent, furnishing policymakers with robust strategies for navigating complex crises.

The following three papers are relevant to the topic of sport governance.

Parent, Hoye, Taks et al. (2021) re-examine the typologies of governance design in sport organisations, focusing specifically on Canadian National Sport Organisations (NSOs). The results yield an empirically grounded taxonomy of governance design archetypes, revealing four distinct clusters—Board-led, Executive-led, Professional, and Corporate. In terms of implications, the findings enrich our understanding of the heterogeneity in NSO governance. They provide a framework for researchers to analyse changes over time in non-profit sport organisations and enable a more holistic comparison of NSOs' governance structures. For practitioners, the archetypes offer benchmarks for performance optimisation. The study also suggests that national sport funding agencies should consider this governance diversity when providing resources and guidelines for improvement.

Examining the power dynamics that influence sport governance, Stenling, Fahlén, Strittmatter et al. (2023) identify the 'gatekeepers' in the governance structures. Specifically, the authors aim to build an understanding of the operational

mechanisms of Nomination Committees in the sports sector and explore their influence on board composition. The study holds significance for its potential to illuminate the procedures that underpin power dynamics within sports organisations. Employing telephone interviews with Nomination Committees from 64 Swedish national sports organisations as its research methodology, the paper identifies six key stages in the Nomination Committees process and three critical factors—degree of formalisation, network reliance, and transparency—that could shape board composition in sports organisations. Although the study serves as a baseline and does not explore the direct impact of these aspects, it sets the stage for future research to delve into their role in shaping governance structures. Overall, the study calls for the necessity of examining governance functions within their specific institutional settings.

Lastly, Turconi and Shaw (2023) delve into the complexities inherent in governance reforms through a longitudinal case study. The focal point of the research was to scrutinise the discourses shaping the interpretation and application of the UK's Equality Standard: A Framework for Sport. The study employed discourse analysis within a critical paradigm framework. The findings indicate that while the Equality Standard offers NGBs a foundational structure for equality initiatives, it falls short in addressing the nuanced debates concerning power relations and equality. The results of the study indicate a departure from the 'zero-sum game' notion, previously critiqued by other scholars, which posited that sport leaders often view equality as attainable only by sacrificing business interests like profit. This shift in discourse suggests a possibility for a more nuanced approach to achieving equity in sport, one that harmonises social justice imperatives with business considerations.

Conclusion

The compilation of seven papers explored in this review collectively unfurls a rich and intricate tapestry of scholarly contributions that significantly enhance our multi-dimensional grasp of sport governance and policy. Each paper distinguishes itself through its unique offerings—whether in the realm of theoretical paradigms, empirical richness, or pragmatic ramifications.

In the scope of this review, the array of methodological approaches featured in the collected papers—ranging from case-study frameworks and discourse analysis to longitudinal designs and qualitative methodologies—underscores the necessity for an interdisciplinary lens in addressing the intricate issues inherent in sport governance.

Moreover, the focus on specific, implementable suggestions throughout these papers—ranging from calls for uniform governance structures to targeted advice for crisis management, as well as customised blueprints for inclusion and nuanced strategies for policy execution—adds a tangible dimension to scholarly debates. These contributions serve as valuable guides for policymakers and practitioners, providing a balanced blend of theoretical insights and empirical evidence to support effective and just governance approaches.

Annotated Bibliography

Christiaens, M., & Brittain, I. (2021). The complexities of implementing inclusion policies for disabled people in UK non-disabled voluntary community sports clubs. *European Sport Management Quarterly*. DOI: 10.1080/16184742.2021.1955942
The authors, affiliated with multiple universities, use a multi-case study approach to examine the complexities organisations face in implementing inclusion policies for disabled people in the UK. The paper provides a nuanced understanding of the practical challenges and offers a compelling case for a tailored approach to policy implementation, thereby having broad

implications for the practice of sport governance.

Ferguson, K., Hassan, D., & Kitchin, P. (2023). Policy transition: public sector sport for development in Northern Ireland. International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 15(2), 211–228. DOI: 10.1080/19406940.2023.2183976
Researchers from various academic institutions employ longitudinal analysis to delve into the intricacies of policy transition within sport organisations in Northern Ireland. The paper identifies various factors influencing such transitions and serves as an operational guide for those involved in policy transition and implementation. It is particularly impactful for its focus on the practical implications, providing a pathway for effective policy shifts in sport governance.

Girginov, V., Chen, S., Alhakami, F., et al. (2023). Government policy responses to Covid-19 in sport: a comparative study of China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, UK and the USA. International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 15(2), 229–248. DOI: 10.1080/19406940.2023.2197001
Researchers from various universities utilise discourse analysis within a critical paradigm to explore how five different governments responded to the Covid-19 pandemic in the sports sector. The paper navigates through the complexities of policy formulation and implementation during a crisis. It serves as a guidepost for policymakers by adding empirical depth to crisis management in sport governance, particularly in how policies are formulated and implemented during unprecedented challenges.

Parent, M. M., Hoye, R., Taks, M., et al. (2021). National sport organisation governance design archetypes for the twenty-first century. European Sport Management Quarterly. DOI: 10.1080/16184742.2021.1963801
The authors, scholars from multiple institutions, adopt a case-study approach to investigate governance structures within National Sport Organisations. They identify inconsistencies in governance designs across different organisations, and advocate for a standardised approach. The paper is particularly impactful for its two-pronged contribution: providing empirical data to inform better governance practices, and calling for a more harmonised, standardised approach to governance in sport organisations.

Peers, D., Joseph, J., Chen, C., et al. (2023). An intersectional Foucauldian analysis of Canadian national sport organisations' 'equity, diversity, and inclusion' (EDI) policies and the reinscribing of injustice. International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 15(2), 193–209. DOI: 10.1080/19406940.2023.2183975
The authors, affiliated with multiple academic institutions, use an intersectional Foucauldian framework to analyse EDI policies within Canadian National Sport Organisations. They scrutinise 143 policy documents, focusing on the underlying governance mechanisms that shape these policies. The study provides a comprehensive database that serves as a robust platform for future research. The paper is invaluable for its dual contribution: advancing theoretical paradigms by fusing intersectionality and Foucauldian theories,

and providing actionable insights for policy formulation and implementation.

Stenling, C., Fahlén, J., Strittmatter, A. M., & Skille, E. (2023). The gatekeepers of sport governance–nomination committees' shaping potential in national sport organisations' board composition processes. European Sport Management Quarterly, 23(2), 586–603. DOI: 10.1080/16184742.2021.1897640
Researchers from various institutions take a qualitative approach to identify the 'gatekeepers' in sport governance. The study fills a critical gap in the existing literature by shedding light on the power dynamics that shape governance structures. The paper is seminal for its focus on the need for transparent checks and balances within sport organisations, providing a pathway for governance reforms.

Turconi, L., & Shaw, S. (2023). 'Turning the tanker around'. Examining the requirements, interpretations and implementation of The Equality Standard: a Framework for Sport. European Sport Management Quarterly, 23(2), 447–466. DOI: 10.1080/16184742.2021.1879190
The authors, affiliated with multiple academic institutions, employ a longitudinal case study to investigate the challenges and complexities of changing governance structures within sport organisations. The paper provides a comprehensive understanding of the lengthy and intricate processes involved in governance reforms. Its call for a strategic, long-term approach makes the paper an essential resource for both academic and practical applications.