Sport Governance and Policy

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Introduction

Sport policy and governance-related articles published in the ten major journals relevant to the discipline in the first six months of 2022 were reviewed for this issue of the Sport Management Digest.

For the section on Sport Governance and Policy, this review features six articles produced by a group of scholars from Europe, Asia, and Australia (the full annotated bibliography can be found at the end of this review). The reviewed articles covered timely and novel topics, including *anti-doping policy*, *e-sport* and *board governance*, and the policy and political dynamics between *national and local policy actors*.

These articles are selected for the issue because of their relatively strong theoretical contribution to, or the conceptual advances made for, the development of policy and/or governance disciplines. Research, addressing policy/governance concerns in passing, is not included.

All the six articles conducted theoretically grounded investigations and five of the six articles were supported by empirical data (apart from Kelly, Derrington and Star's (2022) work where their primary aim was to propose an integrated policy process model). Supplemented by document analysis, qualitative approaches (interviews) were commonly used in studies relevant to sport governance and policy, with one exception [Wicker, Feiler and Breuer (2022) used survey data]. A broad range of theories was incorporated to guide the research investigation and interpret the results, including *policy process* and *implementation* analysis, the *advocacy coalition framework*, the *corporate governance framework*, and *critical mass* theory.

The following section highlights the key messages of each reviewed paper in turn.

Papers in this section's review

Relevant to the topic of sport policy, Yang et al's (2022) study examined anti-doping policy implementation processes in China. Whilst the topic of anti-doping and its related policies is a relatively new research area, much of the studies are based in western contexts. Little is known about how non-USA/Europe countries – such as China – have implemented anti-doping policies and are compliant with the world anti-doping code. Yang et al (2022) mapped out China's anti-doping administration system and relevant organizations. They revealed that the central government played a dominant role in making and implementing relevant anti-doping policies, but not necessarily providing full financial support. Challenges and barriers were reported by various local agencies when trying to be compliant with the world anti-doping code, such as, the standards and objectives of some aspects of the anti-doping policy were perceived as vague; limited policy resources; low awareness of anti-doping; and the restrictions on the media's freedom to investigate issues and publicise sanctions.

Also examining the implementation process of anti-doping policy, Krugers and van Botenburg (2022) focused specifically on urine sample collection procedures and highlighted the power imbalance relationships between the doping control officers and athletes. They conclude that the discretion used by doping control officers does not affect the reliability and credibility of anti-doping policy. The authors further suggest that doping control officers might employ different interaction strategies with athletes and try to take specific situations and circumstances into account when dealing with this intrusive urine sample collection process.

Using the advocacy coalition framework, Chatzopoulos (2022) analysed the role of sport policy as an instrument for fostering social integration amongst female migrants in Copenhagen. The author specifically focused on a local swimming club which offered gender-

segregated swimming lessons for migrant children and young people, and highlighted the efforts made by various stakeholders – including the local government, sport federations and clubs, local housing organisations and schools – to collaboratively work towards migrants and asylum seekers inclusion for distressed neighbourhoods. The study, nevertheless, reveals the differences (in terms of policy priority) between the liberal-conservative government at the national level and the social-democratic government at the local level, in a sense that local governments were more creative with their integration actions aiming to help the immigrants to develop social and citizenship skills, whereas the national government seemed to place more emphases on tightening the immigration laws.

Also focusing on the micro levels, Hoekman, Elling and van der Poel's (2022) work expands our understanding of the development and functioning of local sport policy in the Netherlands. They studied local sport managers' perspectives on recent changes in national sport policy and how the changes were interpreted and implemented in their daily practice. Whilst the local sport managers recognised that policies and policy discourses have changed over time and that local sport policies today were more closely intertwined with other policy domains because of sport's social benefits, related data-to-day practice at the local level, however, remained relatively unchanged. An interesting finding was that very little variation was found in response patterns across the nine locations despite their varied socio-demonphrahpic characteristics.

Relevant to board governance, Wicker, Feiler and Breuer (2022) examined the effect of board gender diversity in German non-profit sport clubs. Using large quantitative data collected from 1626 clubs (6504 responses) between 2009 and 2015, the results of regression analyses indicated that board gender diversity significantly reduced human resource and financial

problems. They further suggest that a diverse board of directors benefits the organisation by increasing resource access, adding human capital, and improving decision-making quality.

Building on Burger and Gosline's (2005) corporate governance framework, Kelly, Derrington and Star (2022) turned their attention to esport governance and adapted the seven principles – accountability, responsibility, transparency, social responsibility, independence, fairness, and discipline, to the context of esports. An integrated policy process framework was proposed to incorporate various esports actors with an intention to minimise stakeholder tension.

Conclusion

The above-reviewed articles relevant to sports policy and governance are novel and rigorously researched. The variety of topics and themes covered here highlight the fact that sport policy and governance is of interest to many sport scholars and the quality of relevant research on this topic is maintained at a high level.

To finish this review, I would like to share my personal reflection relevant to policy implementation, as quite a few of the papers included in this review have paid particular attention to policy adaptation and implementation at local levels. Building on the past thirty years' research work on examining the role of states in developing and implementing policy cycles at the macro levels, research attention seems to move to micro-level analysis e.g., to understand how localised policy actors and their individual ideologies influence policy implementation and outcomes. To this end, Ball's (1990) well-known work on policy decontextualization seems relevant and useful for further guiding the examination of power decentralisation in policymaking and implementation. A key message from Ball's work is to be aware of the existence of 'power-knowledge relations' in different social, political and cultural contexts, which change over time and place.

Annotated bibliography

Yang, K., Dimeo, P., & Winand, M. (2022). Anti-doping in China: an analysis of the policy implementation processes through stakeholders' perspectives, *Sport Management Review*, **25:2, 360-381, DOI: 10.1080/14413523.2021.1917247**
The authors, researchers at Sichuan University, University of Stirling, and LUNEX International University of Health, Exercise and Sports, explained anti-doping policy implementation processes in China. They undertook field trips to seven provinces and two municipalities in China, and conducted interviews with relevant stakeholders including staff of local anti-doping agencies and local sports bureaus, Chinese elite athletes and coaches, journalists, and staff from the World Anti-Doping Agency and other national anti-doping organisations. Guided by Van Meter and Van Horn's top-down policy implementation approach, data were subject to thematic analysis. The findings revealed that the Chinese government had the organizational and financial resources to support anti-doping, but issues, such as poorer provinces lacking funding and insufficient doping control officers, still persisted.

Krugers, J. & van Bottenburg, M. (2022). Sample collection as a social process: the influence of interaction between doping control officers and athletes on the implementation of anti-doping policy, *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, **14:2, 353-368, DOI: 10.1080/19406940.2021.2013924**
The authors, researchers at University Medical Center Utrecht and Utrecht University, analysed how sample collection worked in practice, proposed strategies that doping control officers can employ to deal with the intrusive sample collection process, and examined how their interaction with athletes influenced the implementation of anti-doping policy. Informed by Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy and Goffman's dramaturgical perspective, the research team conducted 18 interviews with elite athletes, active doping control officers, National Anti-doping Organisation officers, chaperones, sports team doctors and anti-doping policy officers from sport organisations. Their study shows that the discretion used by officers does not affect the reliability and credibility of anti-doping policy. As a response to uncomfortable situations and unexpected events, doping control officers did not define their discretion as bending or ignoring rules. The research team further highlights the importance of the social interaction between the officer and athletes in the sample collection process.

Chatzopoulos, I. (2022). Sport, migration and integration in Denmark: local political responses and policies in Copenhagen, *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, **14:1, 53-69, DOI: 10.1080/19406940.2021.1996436**
The author, a researcher at Loughborough University, used document analysis and semi-structured interviews to analyse the development of sport policy as part of the migrant integration policy in Copenhagen, focusing on female immigrants and women-only swimming programmes. The gender-segregated swimming within local sports facilities was highlighted in this study as one of the most effective venues for facilitating integration for minority girls and women.

Hoekman, R., Elling, A. & van der Poel, H. (2022). Local Policymaking in Sport: Sport Managers' Perspectives on Work Processes and Impact, *Journal of Global Sport Management*, 7:1, 89-111, DOI: 10.1080/24704067.2018.1537682

The authors, researchers at Radboud University and the Mulier Institute, studied how local sport managers (i.e., the heads of municipal sport policy departments) interpreted national policies and legitimated new discourses when implementing national sport policies. Using interview approaches, they concluded that whilst austerity measures, organizational restructuring and changes in national policies and discourses had influenced the day-to-day work of local sport managers, they continued to focus on the building of good sport facility infrastructure.

Wicker, P., Feiler, S., & Breuer, C. (2022). Board gender diversity, critical masses, and organizational problems of non-profit sport clubs, European Sport Management Quarterly, 22:2, 251-271, DOI: 10.1080/16184742.2020.1777453

The authors, researchers at Bielefeld University and German Sport University Cologne, examined how board gender diversity affected organisational problems of German sport clubs in the areas of human resources, finances, facilities and club development. Gender diversity was measured with the share of women on the board, the Blau index, and the number of women on the board using panel survey data (2009–2015; n = 6504). They suggest that human resource and financial problems can be significantly reduced by gender diversity on boards.

Kelly, S., Derringtonm S., & Star, S., (2022). Governance challenges in esports: a best practice framework for addressing integrity and wellbeing issues, *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 14:1, 151-168, DOI: 10.1080/19406940.2021.1976812

The authors, researchers at the University of Queensland and Jindal Global University, focused on esports governance and its related policy development. The study offers a governance model that serves to mitigate critical challenges such as integrity and participant wellbeing, building on the seven pillars of the corporate governance framework recommended by Burger and Goslin (2005).

Reference

Ball, S.J., 1990. *Politics and policymaking in education: explorations in sociology*. London: Routledge.

Burger, S. and Goslin, A.E., 2005. Best Practice Governance Principles in the Sports Industry: an Overview. *South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation, 27* (2), 1–13.

Chatzopoulos, I. (2022). Sport, migration and integration in Denmark: local political responses and policies in Copenhagen, *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 14:1, 53-69, DOI: 10.1080/19406940.2021.1996436

Hoekman, R., Elling, A. & van der Poel, H. (2022). Local Policymaking in Sport: Sport Managers' Perspectives on Work Processes and Impact, *Journal of Global Sport Management*, 7:1, 89-111, DOI: 10.1080/24704067.2018.1537682

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Yang, K., Dimeo, P., & Winand, M. (2022). Anti-doping in China: an analysis of the policy implementation processes through stakeholders' perspectives, *Sport Management Review*, 25:2, 360-381, DOI: 10.1080/14413523.2021.1917247