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Guest Editorial

Governance and CSR Management in Sport

Introduction

In 2009, Bradish and Cronin concluded their introductory note of the first special issue devoted to corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the context of sport by stating that ‘CSR should be regarded as one of the most important components of contemporary sport management theory and practice’ (p. 696). Indeed, there has since been a proliferation of studies highlighting the economic and socio-political CSR dimensions and outcomes both *in* sport (i.e. implementing CSR within the sport organisations’ structural boundaries) and *through* sport (i.e. sport organisations serving as the vehicle for CSR implementation). This is perhaps not surprising if one considers the increased professionalisation, commercialisation, and overall commodification seen in the contemporary sporting context; rendering sport as an activity that ‘should be taken seriously’ (Adcroft and Teckman, 2009, p. 5), not least in relation to CSR.

The editors and readership of this very journal have appreciated the relevance of sport and governance topics that have been examined by many authors to date. (e.g. Byers et al., 2015; Sherry et al., 2007; Forster, 2006; Hamil et al., 2004). Notwithstanding the ever-increasing emphasis the sport-management scholarly community places on CSR, Slack (2014) noted in his keynote at the 2014 European Association for Sport Management (EASM) conference that CSR has become one of the key issues of research in the field. Earlier, Slack (1996) has emphasised not only the importance of connecting contemporary management issues and theories to the management of sport, but also using sport as a testing ground for broader management theory development, including theory concerning governance. With this *Corporate Governance* special issue about CSR in sport we hope to do both.

The idea for this special issue largely emerged during the 2013 and 2014 EASM conference workshops held in Istanbul (Turkey) and Coventry (UK), respectively. These two

scholarly gatherings, which attracted more than 25 research-based presentations, coupled with panel discussions with senior CSR executives from various types of sport organisations to foster theory-practice interaction, signalled the need for a well-rounded understanding of the management and governance of CSR in sport. During these workshops, the idiosyncratic nature of the sport sector was evident. For example, topics included: cultural differences among European, American, and Australasian sport organisations; and the different structural and governance models and processes in relation to CSR implementation that the academic sport management community had failed to empirically address through theory-driven studies and rigorous methodological designs.

At the 2014 EASM conference Slack stated that ‘more work needs to be done [...] by the people who study the management of sport’ (p. 461). This special issue responds to his call by attempting to offer some critical accounts on the *management* and *governance* of CSR in the wider context of sport. In other words, our intent with this special issue is to move away from pure descriptive accounts, which are largely associated with the content of CSR in sport, and shift the discussion toward understanding the contextual and processual dimensions of this important topic. Another intention of this special issue is to open up to and reach out to a readership that may not be familiar with the particular characteristics of the sport industry and the management and governance of CSR, and invite those readers to contribute to this interesting field of research.

Overview of the special issue

We are pleased to have been able to put together a number of insightful and thought-provoking contributions from internationally renowned scholars in the field. In total, three empirical studies, one conceptual essay, one review paper, two critical commentaries and a book review make up the rather diverse content of the this special issue.

The collection of articles begins with Kolyperas, Morrow and Sparks’ study that delineates how CSR unfolds within the context of Scottish professional football. More specifically, Kolyperas and colleagues are interested in identifying the drivers that led these team sport organisations to develop their CSR agendas by placing more emphasis on the six developmental phases (volunteering, regulation, socialisation, corporatisation, separation, and integration) in this process. Employing a qualitatively oriented case-study approach, these scholars illustrate internal and external drivers of change and the institutional forces that, in various phases, become the barriers for organisational integration of CSR. This piece of research adds to the previously incomplete picture of process-based studies by approaching

the matter from a more macro-perspective. Their findings have general implications for the football sector and its governance mechanisms.

The second empirical study, by Banda and Gultresa, takes the discussion about CSR development further and focuses on the actual design and implementation of CSR-related programmes. In particular, this study focuses on the practicalities of designing such programmes that occur in multicultural settings and involve many diverse stakeholder groups. It approaches the topic from a processual angle and a micro-perspective. Through a qualitative approach and participatory action research, Banda and Gultresa offer valuable insights into the mechanics of how the governing body (Euroleague Basketball) for the top-tier basketball clubs in Europe works with local clubs and partner agencies to achieve positive change in targeted local communities. The crux of the authors' conclusion is that a close(r) dialogue and constant collaboration with (local) stakeholder groups is the way forward for associations/federations to ensure that the latter's CSR agendas have the best possible effect on both business and social terms alike.

In the third and last empirical study in this special issue, Bouchet, Troilo and Spaniel shift the discussion toward socially responsible buying and sourcing with respect to human talent in the context of Major League Baseball (MLB). Drawing on and utilising game theory, the authors model how MLB-teams create rules to curb unethical behaviour within the supply chain. This unique, well-needed study focuses on the most valuable assets of team sport organisations (athletes), thereby opening up an unexplored aspect of responsible management and sound governance in the sporting context.

The essay by Castro-Martinez and Jackson is another process-oriented work, although conceptual in nature. Given the proliferation of community trusts as the main CSR delivery agents of professional team sport organisations, the authors argue that both business and social value for each organisation will reach its highest potential only if a more strategic and integrated approach between the two entities is employed. With this in mind, and guided by service-dominant logic (SDL), the authors propose a framework that introduces a six-step decision-making process for CSR formulation and implementation. This is substantiated by four research propositions geared toward future empirical studies.

The next two contributions concern critical analyses of CSR in sport. In an invited commentary, Giulianotti locates CSR within the wider field of sport-related social activities before convincingly arguing that the application of CSR in sport should pursue a dialogical critical approach within and through its work. In the second commentary piece of this special issue, Levermore and Moore take a similar stance. More specifically, they state that

examining CSR in sport by drawing on political and critical perspectives largely utilised outside sport management literature will help us better grasp the complexities associated with the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of CSR-related programmes in and through sport.

Following these two critical commentaries, the guest editors of this special issue (Breitbarth, Walzel, Anagnostopoulos and Van Eekeren) offer an overview of the current development and research themes of CSR and governance in sport. The intent is to position the present literature in relation to theoretical advancements from the general business and management scholarship. In doing so, gaps are identified and concrete actions (at conceptual, theoretical, and empirical levels) is postulated for advancing our understanding of CSR management and governance in and through sport.

Finally, Robertson's review of the *Routledge Handbook of Sport and Corporate Social Responsibility* edited by Paramio-Salcines, Babiak and Walters marks the end of this special issue. The book's comprehensive content, coupled with Robertson's observations, not only provides the necessary starting point for students interested in the topic of CSR, but also offers valuable research avenues for the sport (and non-sport) management scholarly community.

Acknowledgements

In this editorial note, we provided an introduction to the special issue. However, we could not put these final notes together without the support we received from a good number of people. First and foremost, we would like to thank the past and current (co-)editors of *Corporate Governance: The International Journal of Business in Society*, Professors Nada and Andrew Kakabadse, and Associate Professor Gabriel Eweje respectively, for offering us the platform of this internationally renowned academic outlet to accommodate a selection of quality papers on such a current topic. Of course, neither guest editorial decisions nor the current state of the papers included herein would have been so smooth a process without the assistance of our guest reviewers. By generously volunteering their time, they helped us a great deal to shape the special issue at hand. More specifically, special thanks go to (in alphabetical order by last name): Robert Aitken (University of Otago, New Zealand); Kathy Babiak (University of Michigan, USA); Paul Boselie (Utrecht University, The Netherlands); Leah Donlan (University of Manchester, UK); Lance Kinney (University of Alabama, USA); Linda Lee-Davies (University of Bedfordshire, UK); Juan Luis Paramio-Salcines (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain); Carolin Plewa (University of Adelaida,

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In closing, we hope that this special issue will serve as a catalyst for either becoming, or continuing to be, inspired toward actively contributing to the international community of CSR and governance in sport research. After all, although CSR (and its management and governance) has now attracted a great deal of interest, there is still much to do.

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