ON THE PISTE: THE CHALLENGES FACING THE VOLUNTARY SPORT OF PETANQUE IN THE UK
Session aims

• To explore some of the challenges facing not-for-profit, voluntary sports organisations through an empirical account of the governance of petanque in the UK

• To seek insights on the practice of sport governance from the perspective of key stakeholders
Scholarly conversations in sport governance

- Maturing literature on the governance of non-profit sport organisations (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007, Shilbury et al. 2013)
  - Systemic governance structures
  - Governance as networks

- Growing interest from government in ensuring sports organisations are ‘fit for purpose’ to be able to meet governance challenges (Houlihan and Green, 2009, Walters et al. 2010)

- Limited empirical research which examines an insider’s view of what boards actually do (Cornforth, 2003)
The voluntary sport sector

• The sport sector is the largest contributor to voluntary action in the UK (Harris et al. 2009)

• Diversity and complexity of organisations that characterise the voluntary sport sector (Robinson and Palmer, 2011)

• ‘Big Society’ policy rhetoric on how sports volunteering provides attractive potentialities for social gain (Nicholson and Hoye, 2008, Stott, 2011)

• For voluntary sports clubs the landscape appears potentially problematic (Harris et al. 2009, Morgan, 2013)
Themes emerging from the data analysis

• Cultural blockages
• ‘Stalwarts’ in sport (Nichols, 2005)
• Attracting and retaining volunteers and members (Harris et al. 2009)
• Youth development
• Lack of public awareness

• Funding and resources
• Tensions between the NGBs and the grassroots sports clubs
• International representation
• Insurance issues
Cultural blockages

• ‘Political deadlocks’ and resistance to change (Robinson and Palmer, 2011)

• We have history and tradition which was creating all sorts of problems ... the Association would have members who say ‘well, historically we have done this’ or ‘traditionally we did that’.

• The NGB committee is generally the same people year on year. Those clubs who have representation on the committee are well represented, but those who are not are often forgotten

• Historically, the clubs were mostly pub-based, so we have the same set-up as darts or skittles
Disconnect between the NGBs and the grassroots sports clubs

- Multiple layers of committee structures (Management; County Regional; Regional Associations; Affiliated Leagues; Registered Clubs)
- *Distant; non-existent; hinder rather than support*
- *Most members seem to be turning away from national organisations, which is why there is an increase in unlicensed associations*
- *There is a wide gulf between the grassroots club player and the governing body*
- *If the NGB were to cease tomorrow I am pretty sure that the majority of sides would continue playing*
- *Our perception is of a very clique group ... we are subsidising the foreign jaunts enjoyed by a few people*
Youth blind

- Majority of clubs don’t have a strategy for youth development; reliance on adult members encouraging their children
- One critical issue we now face is that our players are ageing and with no meaningful strategy to recruit youngsters we have a ticking time bomb of a problem
- We have got 5 juniors in the whole of Wales, and they are all at one club
Concluding remarks

- Are the NGBs relevant and ‘fit for purpose’?
- There is a clear need to re-engage grassroots level clubs in thinking about the challenges facing the sport
- NGBs need to understand the reasons that volunteers get involved in sport and crucially, why they continue
- Is there an appetite for change?
References


References


