The effect of organisational governance on the reform of Judo governance in Greece

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Dr. Efthalia Chatzigianni¹, Baltopoulou Angeliki²

¹ Tenured Asst. Professor, Dept. of Sport Management and Organization
University of Peloponnese, Greece

² MSc, PhD Candidate, Dept. of Sport Management and Organization
University of Peloponnese, Greece

Abstract

Research question:

This article focuses on the way governance may impact the reform and change of a specific sport, so as to improve its organisational performance. Using organizational governance as a guideline the paper aims at finding all its aspects that could have or have already had an impact on the reform and change of the sport of Judo in Greece, as well as the degree and sort of this impact.

Research methods & Results and findings:

Using semi-structured interviews with two Hellenic Judo Federation (HJF) ex-officials and extended research on HJF paperwork (such as score sheets, HJF internal regulations and annual budgets), this paper concluded that after the year 2000 the HJF’s Board of Directors used several aspects of organisational governance in their effort to change and improve the sport of Judo. Not all aspects were addressed equally, however, the sport of Judo changed radically in many different areas such as involvement of all parties interested in Judo, motivation for young athletes to participate in tournaments, popularity increase etc.

Keywords: Sport governance, Organisational sport governance, Non-profit sport organisations, Hellenic Judo Federation, Judo
Implications:

This research may be used as a guideline by several sport organisations which aim at improving their organisation’s performance and achieving better results especially in countries where the government impact is critical to their operation.

Furthermore, in the case of Greece, where sport organisation is currently deeply influenced by the economic crisis, the paper may contribute to a better understanding of sport organisations’ internal politics and stimulate related discussions and problem-solving.

Introduction

The sport world is governed by Non-Governmental Sports Organisation’s (NGOs). According to the UN (as cited in Willets, 2006, p. 3), ‘virtually all types of private bodies can be recognized as NGO’s, they only have to be independent from government control, not seeking to challenge governments either as political party or by a narrow focus on human rights, non-profit making and non-criminal’. These bodies include international or continental federations of various sports. In the majority of the cases, these federations aim at spreading sporting ideals. In addition, most of them, if not all, aim at spreading the Olympic ideal as defined in the Olympic Charter (Chappelet & Kubler-Mabbott, 2008).

In most countries, sport NGOs, are responsible for one or more sports (Jamieson & Orr, 2009). Usually these organisations are responsible for the organisation of the sport, ensuring the involvement of the administration, providing material and services, organising competitions and the development of the sport at amateur and championship level. These NGOs usually follow the State’s instructions as well as the regulations that govern the sport. They also maintain permanent staff and they have strong ties with local players in an attempt to better achieve the objectives of the development of the sport (Jamieson & Orr, 2009).

The impact of government control on sport organisations varies. In some countries, such as Greece, there is a strong interlinkage between the state and sport federations with the former achieving its sport related goals through the exert of control and influence via funding on the later. In other countries, such as Germany, the state and the sport non-governmental organisations are equally responsible for the development and organisation of sport. Usually, in these countries the sport non-governmental organisations are financially independent from the state.

The main aim of this paper is to address organisational governance in the framework of sport organisations. To do so, it examines the impact of organisational
governance on the development of Judo in Greece. Additionally, it intends to show the kind and degree of influence that governmental factors may exert on the governance of non-profit sport organisations in Greece using as a case study the sport of Judo. Based on theoretical research and empirical evidence, it further intends to contribute to a better understanding of the factors influencing the development of non-profit sports governing bodies in Greece. The paper uses as a theoretical framework the concept of sports governance. Judo has been chosen as a case study because even though nonprofit sports organisations, including judo, have received little in-depth attention in Greece, the given sport has shown significant success in world tournaments, European and world championships and even the Olympic Games over the past decade.

The Way to Sport Governance

Governance is strongly linked to globalisation and its features; commercialisation, technology and information, concepts tied with the new, reformed shape of sports (Crawford, 2004). One may refer to globalisation as a process where ‘network of independencies such as political, economic, cultural and social’, bring people together across boarders (Maquire as cited in Raney & Bryant, 2009, p. 470). What is really happening is that globalisation and its interaction and co-dependence of different countries across the globe, creates a need for an authority to guide and determine these relations (Bennett & Oliver, 2002). The organisations that have developed over the last decades need the guidance of a common code of governance.

After WWII, the term governance was not usually used, but during the eighties the concept of governance gained new status and started expanding (Kjaer, 2004). Its new status referred to a broader meaning than that of government, which took into account external factors for the determination of decision-making and the achievement of goals, while being used (as today) in different fields than that of government (Kjaer, 2004).

Its broad and different use of the concept governance can be clearly seen through the different interpretation that three well-known scientists give to their research regarding governance. Rhodes (1996, as cited in Kjaer, 2004) refers to this concept as a means for reforming public sector; Rosenau (as cited in Kjaer, 2004) refers to global political problems that need global solutions, while Hyden (as cited in Kjaer, 2004) refers to development and democratisation in third world countries.

The concept seems to be of great concern to political scientists over recent years as shown by the dramatic increase in the number of articles and books
written on the subject and its proper management. At the same time, it seems that there is growing concern among even more scientific fields on this matter, for example, economists, diplomats and public administrative bodies, who exercise governance (Kjaer, 2004). Thus, it is easily understood that governance does not form a single entity, since so many different scientific fields use the term, making it difficult to obtain a complete overview on what the theory of governance really advocates.

Even though governance is so widely used and in so many different fields, according to Rhodes (1996, as cited in Stoker, 1997), they all share a common factor; governance refers to the different kinds of government where the boundaries between public and private sector are receding.

Up until the late nineties, the IOC was somewhat governing itself (Chappelet & Kubler-Mabbott, 2008). About that time, the term governance started being used, mainly because of the influence of American reporters and sponsors (Parent & Slack, 2007). ‘The governance of organisations mainly refers to the system by which various elements of an organisation are directed, controlled and regulated’ (Hoye & Cuskelley, 2007). There is no universally accepted definition for the sport governance, even though the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) attempted to give one in 2004. According to that definition, sport governance refers to “the structures and processes used by each organisation to develop its strategic objectives and to ensure that members of the board of directors act bearing in mind the interests of their members” (Hoye & Cuskelley, 2007).

As mentioned above, sport governance is a relatively new concept that was brought to the sport world after a strong reliability and legality shock that happened in the nineties (Beech & Chadwick, 2004).

The governance of organisations profit-wise can be divided into two broad areas, corporate governance and non-profit governance (Hoye et al., 2006). The first one, as it is easily understood, refers to the governance of organisations that aim for profit. The second one is concerned with organisations that mainly operate on a voluntary non-profit basis. These organisations aim at offering a form of service to the community and assuring equal opportunities to all people in various activities (Hoye Smith, Westerbeek, Stewart & Nicholson, 2006). Sport organisations, such as sport federations usually operate according to the second form of governance.

Furthermore, in the framework of non-profit contemporary sport governance there are three main approaches: systemic, organisational, political (Henry, 2007).

Systemic governance is primarily concerned with ‘how the sport is governed not directly by national or international organisations, but through their interaction and the interaction of other important players’ (Henry, 2007, p. 7-8). In other words, systemic governance reflects the impact of globalisation in the change of direction from government to governance (Beech & Chadwick, 2004), as a consequence of the new sport conditions (mentioned in the previous chapter) and sport interest
representation (Chatzigianni, 2014) that have appeared and resulted to the emergence of the ‘new Olympic system’ (Chappelet & Kubler-Mabbott, 2008).

The second approach of governance is organisational. This approach is concerned with the ethics of an organisation, the tactics it uses and the description of the morals that represent the organisation (Henry, 2007, p. 7-8). Furthermore the notion of good organisational governance is based on seven principles (Beech & Chadwick, 2004):

- Transparency (in terms of decisions, in particular those related to investment funds)
- Responsibility (to all those who invest in sports, athletes, coaches, etc. and not just those who offer physical goods)
- Democracy (representation of all stakeholders)
- Reliability (continuous development of the organisation and the sport)
- Fairness (to ensure equal opportunities for all in accessing the sport)
- Effectiveness (monitoring and ensuring the effectiveness of measures to achieve the objectives)
- Efficiency (to achieve goals with the judicious use of available resources).

The last approach of sport governance is political governance. Political governance is focused on the way governments try to achieve their goals through ethical and economic motives (Henry, 2007, p. 7-8). Governments used to rely on giving opportunities and supplies, while now they ensure that they use a combination of all these elements.

The more popular and profitable a sport is, the more independent governance its federation can have (Westerbeek & Smith, 2003). Since they can develop independent governance, they are looking to broaden their influence in the international community (Westerbeek & Smith, 2003).

**Methodology**

The research is based on documentary analysis and media sources 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 interviews were conducted in 2009 and the period being examined and interviewed for, extended in two periods – from 1990 to 2000 and from 2000 to 2009.

The main focus was on the conducting of semi-structured interviews with selected Judo officials in Greece who were encouraged to refer to and comment on the changes that have occurred to the sport of Judo over the past 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.

The main approach in methodology, as seen above, was qualitative methods in an attempt to better understand the ‘how and why’ of a certain situation (Veal, 1997). Using this type of method it becomes feasible to collect much information on few selected areas of research (Veal, 1997) contributing to the aim of this paper to study the peculiarities of governance in a particular sports sector.

Firstly, observation was used for determining the way the Board of Directors (BofD) in Judo governed the sport in the past and in recent days. The role of an observer-researcher may vary from a mute spectator to a working together with the monitored population researcher (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner & Steinmetz, 1991). For this particular study, the role of the observer was something in between those two extremes. In particular, while the presence of the observer was obvious – as the observer used to work for the HJF-, she did not interfere with the decision– making processes and/or the design of the governance patterns of the specific sports body.

In the same way the level of pre-planning observation may differ (Robson, 2002). Once again, there are two extremes, but for this research an intermediate level was used. Even though, the researcher had specific areas to study, she did that while maintaining the freedom to study other cases indirectly related to the research.

Subsequently, various documents such as the Constitution and Rules of the HJF and organisations which govern the Federation were used, so as to diagnose the boundaries within which those organisations function as well as to scope any room for improvement or change in the way they are governed.

According to Bryman (2004) there are several types of documents that can be used for a qualitative research. For this study official documents deriving from the state were used, as well as the law for understanding not only the spectrum of ‘movements’ sport organisations can make, but also the environment in which they operate. Along with these documents, this study also used official and unofficial documents deriving from the Hellenic Judo Federation, the European Judo Union (EJU) and the International Judo Federation (IJF).

Finally, bibliography and electronic sources or other media sources concerned with the issue of governance and relative to its’ notions were used, in an attempt to better understand the phenomenon of governance, and also to compare theory and real practice in relation to the tactics and strategies real sports organisations use. Moreover, media sources provided the researcher with enough material to form a complete view of the path the HJF has followed up until today.
Organisational Governance and the Hellenic Judo

The sport of Judo originated in Japan by Jigoro Kano. He was also the first Asian member to be included in the IOC and from there on he managed to spread the sport and integrate it into the Olympic program of the Olympic Games in 1964 in Tokyo.

Judo in Greece became a single legal entity –judo federation- in 1984. Up until that date, the sport of judo was part of a larger federation responsible for many different sports. A Board of Directors (BoFĐ) which consists of a President, a General Secretary, two Vice Presidents, a Treasurer and a Deputy Treasurer and members manages the HJF. The total number of the BofD’s members is fifteen, and they operate on a voluntary basis. The BofD is responsible for governing the sport of judo in Greece, following the Greek sports legislation as well as all the regulations derived from the international and European judo federation and the IOC.

HJF is a non-profit sport organisation, representing Greek judo in the European and International governing bodies of judo and in the Hellenic and International Olympic Committees. It operates under the superintendence of the General Secretariat of Sports (GSS).

Operating under Greek sports legislation, the HJF is being funded on a yearly basis by the Greek state through the GSS, as all the acknowledged sports federations (even though over the past few years there has been an on-going attempt for sports federations to become more state-independent). The state’s fund is based on the number of athletes and sports clubs that belong to the specific federation as well as the international medals won in official tournaments and championships. This restricted funding is distributed among the different functions of the Federation (e.g. salaries and wages, rents, participation in tournaments and championships for the national teams). Other means of funding for the HJF consist of Hellenic Olympic Committee’s funds for the preparation of the athletes for the Olympic Games, or emergency funding in special cases by the state, or even sponsors.

To better understand the Federation, it is essential to briefly describe the structure of the organisation. HJF consists of a BoFĐ which is responsible for all the decisions made. The board is elected every four years by the officially recognised judo clubs. After the board has been elected, a president is appointed from among the members of the board. The president has the main responsibility for hiring and firing the employees of the federation after having obtained the consent of the board. However, as the Federation operates under the auspices of the GSS each alteration in the number of the employees has to be reported to the GSS as well, and once again receive its consent. During the last few years the ongoing
economic crisis in Greece has somewhat changed this pattern regarding the number of employees the federation can employ, following new legislation.

Apart from the BofD there are several committees, each one responsible for a different area of expertise, such as referee committee, development committee, development for children’s judo committee, etc. These committees are usually smaller in member numbers, varying from 3-member committees to 10-member committees.

The federation employs four permanent employees at the moment, each one specialising in a different area. For example, one of them deals only with the national teams’ needs, another one deals with financial matters, while a third one deals with all the paperwork and the issue of athletes’ IDs, according to the responsibilities that the BofD has appointed to the employees. These responsibilities have not been appointed formally through a BofD decision, but through common acceptance.

The HJF up to 2000: Stagnation and Government Intervention

Since its formation, the HJF used to operate in accordance to the way the state operated. The HJF’s BofD did not have a specific business plan, strategic plan, marketing plan, nor did they state specific goals for the Federation to achieve in the future.

The BofD affiliated with a specific political party of Greece (governing Greece for several years) and seemed to rest assure that the Federation’s every need could be met as soon as it was communicated to the GSS. The fact that the BofD members felt secure that their needs were being covered as soon as they appeared, did not help them create a long-term plan concerning the Federation. Even though they lacked specific goals in management, governance and marketing kept them somewhat stable, but also revealed a governance gap since the BofD did not use to operate keeping the interests of their members in mind (personal interview judo ex-official, 2009A).

For example, whenever a tournament was organised by a judo club the last concern for the organisers was that of the material needed. It was common practice for a club to ask the federation for material and the federation to ask the GSS. The GSS would provide this material for no cost. As it is easily understood, this practice resulted in a deeply rooted notion of no planning, in regards to the federation itself and the tournament organisers as well (personal interview judo ex-official, 2009A).

However, not all organisers were treated in the same way. According to official tournament documents (tournament results sheets), there had been a small number of judo clubs that seemed to be more active in organising tournaments than others. According to a judo ex-official (personal interview, 2009A) of the ‘non-
active' judo clubs, the reason for that was that the HJF would not grant their clubs what they granted others, and again according to them this was because they were not affiliated with the same political party. The above-mentioned example indicates a lack of organisational governance, since not all clubs were treated equally.

Another common practice, according to a judo ex-official (personal interview, 2009A), was that of favoring a specific athlete or club. In the case of the athletes this could happen by changing the official weight categories so that specific judokas could have easier opponents, resulting in winning championships and entering the national team. One must keep in mind that weight and age categories are issued by the EJU, the IJF and the IOC. Therefore, every such change was in reality breaking the rules of the judo governing bodies. Again this example indicates that the BofD did not operate under the principles of organisational governance, resulting in unequal opportunities among athletes and clubs.

This fact of inequality is important since in Greece athletes who win national championships receive bonuses for entering the university. Having stated that, it is easily concluded that athletes who were part of the favored clubs had better changes of winning such bonuses.

However, this change in category, resulted in specific judo clubs being favored. The more judokas a club had in the national team, the more well-known it became. In addition, the more athletes it attracted, the higher the revenues for the club.

In reality, national teams were neither representative of the best athletes from each category, nor could the athletes achieve the best they could in international level competitions (personal interview judo ex-official, 2009B). This was also due to the way national coaches were selected. Once again, coaches from judo clubs close to the BofD were being favored over others. In several cases, as the same judo official stated (personal interview, 2009B), the differences between the coaches selected for the national teams and others that attempted to submit their participation but were not selected, were huge. On the one hand, there have been coaches with no actual training experience, especially in regards to national level, at times not even a sports background. On the other hand there have been coaches with physical education degrees and many years of actual training experience. This example shows that several organisational governance principles were being neglected. It is not just fairness or responsibility that have been overseen, but also – in a more indirect way- efficiency, reliability and responsibility.

The above-mentioned practices resulted in low international activity by Greek athletes. The only significant distinction by a Greek athlete, was that of seventh place in the Atlanta Olympic Games. Apart from that, few medals were won on international and European level.

In regards to the economic aspect of the HJF, up until 2000, there was no real fiscal plan (personal interview judo ex-official, 2009A). The BofD relied on GSS for
their funding with no real plan as to what that funding should—or could—cover or how it could help the federation expand and develop. Thus, it was common for the yearly budget to disappear before the end of the year, resulting in the HJF applying for additional funding by the State. As it is easily understood, once more, organisational governance and in particular transparency and responsibility were not being realised.

In addition, there were no monitoring practices for the expenditures. Therefore, many people related to the Federation in several ways (national coaches, external associates, etc.) could benefit from this. For example, when the national team had no actual dormitories for their accommodation and training, according to a judo ex-official (personal interview, 2009A), an associate offered to help by providing them with a training space. The particular venue, however, had no provision for rooms or other necessary amenities for every day life. Still, the HJF had to pay huge amounts of money as rent for leasing this building (personal interview judo ex-official, 2009A). Again, several aspects of organisational governance were being neglected.

Finally, through research on HJFs’ BofD documents, it was discovered that several committees operating under the HJF up until 2000 had little or even no activity at all. For example, the committee responsible for the development of the sport did very little to expand and make the sport of judo popular in Greece. In addition, many of these committees did not represent the contemporary idea of a sports federation, while other committees should be added to keep up to date with the needs of the federation.

It can be easily understood that the Federation did little to take advantage of what was being offered by the government, to form a strategic plan to reform and develop the sport of judo. In spite of the easy access that Board of Directors had to the State’s official sporting governing bodies, they were reluctant to use them even for claiming supplies for a long-term planning. This could be attributed to the notion that had been formed over the years, and which steadily became a common practice not only for sports federations but in the public sector in general, of no planning, no organising, no adequate monitoring etc.

### The HJF after 2000: Change and Strategic Planning

After 2000 the BofD changed completely in its composition. HJF’s political influence started to grow. They formed a strategic plan and implemented it, they set goals and tried to achieve them.

Even though the BofD at that period of time was not that close to the governing Greek party, they managed to influence the state’s sports governing bodies by
presenting fully justified business and marketing plans for the growth of Judo (and consequently HJF) in Greece (budget documents approved by the GSS, 2005, 2006).

Furthermore, sports laws were used to grant funds for clubs according to their participation in tournaments and grants for the federation itself according to its participation in international judo events and medals. Their objective was to strengthen the Federation through its athletes, make the sport of judo more popular and organise it in a more participant-friendly way (whether these participants were athletes, referees, parents of athletes etc).

In particular, the Greek Sports Law offered a type of grant for sports clubs that have at least ten participations in tournaments and championships. Since sports clubs (especially those that offer amateur sports) in Greece have little or no way to fund themselves with other ways than the members’ subscriptions, this was an effective way to raise more income. Taking advantage of this law, the HJF offered all its clubs which wished to host a tournament or championship all the required material so as to provide them with incentive. This way, tournaments of all levels started taking place all over Greece; as a result, almost every judo club gained the right to claim the additional fund offered by the Greek State. In addition, another goal was being met, that of spreading the sport of judo and making it popular in different areas of Greece.

The increased number of participation offered the athletes the chance to start taking part in international events, helping them to upgrade their level. Thus, new talents were discovered who composed the national teams. These teams of all categories started winning tournaments and championships, which led to increasing HJF funding from the Greek state.

The HJFs’ BoD also made an effort to establish the school judo tournament. According to the Greek sports and educational laws, federations have the right to organise school championships, through which students have the chance to add points to their total examination score for entering university. Up until 2000, there had been no attempt to use this law to the advantage of young athletes by the HJF. Most other sports took advantage of this legislation and used it for the benefit of their participants. After 2000 an attempt was made to complete all the prerequisites to gain the right to hold yearly school championships. Although the effort was not completed, due to lack of time (the federations that had already guaranteed this right continued to do so, but it expired for any other sport federation that wanted to be included in this ‘special treaty’, GSS response to the HJF’s request to be included in the annual school championship in 2008) the effort was made and showed the intentions of the Board of Directors.

The gained publicity, led the federation to increase its popularity among Greek people, giving it the chance to form a marketing plan and implement it. Through this plan, specific steps were made so that sponsors could be attracted and profit could be made for further investing in the sport of judo.
In the beginning, sponsors consisted of organisations such as OPAP (Organisation of Football Matches Prognostics) (the organisation responsible for betting games in Greece) or municipalities. Slowly, but steadily, the sponsor programme expanded, attracting private companies such as travel agencies that offered to cover part of the national teams’ expenses in specific international championships. Moreover, some of the most famous athletes of the sport, such as Ilias Iliadis (who won the Olympic medal in Athens 2004), were helped by the HJF in finding sponsors. In particular, Iliadis found a major sponsor, the National Bank of Greece, which granted him funds for participation in several international tournaments as part of his preparation programme for the next Olympic Games.

Finally, the White Paper on Sport which was issued by the European Union became an example to be followed by the HJF for achieving its own goals (i.e. organisational governance).

As the semi-structured interviews conducted with members of the BofD after 2000 show, it became clear that personal relations could help in reform plans. ‘It is not only the political party governing a country, but also the relationships one builds with the state’s officials, once you show them that you are trustworthy and interested in the development of the sport’, as one of the ex-official said (2009A).

However, due to elections and the subsequent change in government, the country is led to a lack of stability in relation to the broader sporting direction. Different governments may change their entire sports policies according to their agenda and leave the reforms of certain sports semi-finished. This usually happens in sports that are not that popular. In other words, sports in Greece are mainly divided into two categories, one of which includes popular sports that participate in national discussion concerning sports and the other that does not. In order to gain a place in the first category, a sports federation needs more than personal affiliations and acquaintances. For example, they need to further develop and become more popular.

The HJF & Organisational Governance in the Service of Reform

As mentioned above, there is a seven point list according to which one can reflect on organisational governance. In this study, we will use this list to point out the impact of organisational governance had on the reform of the sport of Judo.

Starting with transparency, which refers mainly to the allocation of available resources, we will investigate the economic aspects related to the HJF performance. According to the Law 2725/99 (Sports Law), the federation is obliged to prepare and submit financial reports to the State (GSS) in addition to the annual budget. This ensures a partially transparent process in regards to the allocation of financial
resources, as these financial reports are controlled by the state. Apart from the GSS control, financial subsidies are also subject to audit by the federation’s General Assembly (GA). At the end of each financial year, the GA convenes, where the financial report is handed out for consideration among the members, followed by their vote of approval or disapproval.

It can be easily understood that the budgets submitted to the GSS may be subject to possible fixation (2725/99, Sports Law). This is due to the fact that the planning done at the beginning of each financial year does not include any possible emergencies that may occur during the year (e.g. athlete injury that causes him not to participate in all events planned for him). The GSS can approve redistribution of the funding, provided that it is fully justified. There are of course cases where such reallocations are not approved. It must be highlighted that the economic control exercised by the GSS is not confined to the approval or disapproval of the budget at the beginning of the year and/or the financial report at the end of the year. In order for the state to control the allocation of the federation’s economic resources, the GSS asks them to submit quarterly statistics where the total expenditure under the respective codes representing the main functions of a federation (e.g. operating costs, costs of national groups etc.) are analysed.

Even though the HJF as explained above follows the law on transparency of sources, one can wonder if the GSS sources are the only ones the HJF uses. The answer is no (e.g. HJF’s Financial reports 2007, 2009). In many cases, the HJF receives subsidies or grants from other organisations or sponsors. Although these sources are listed in the spreadsheets submitted to the GSS and the GA, the HJF is not required by law to provide a detailed description of the allocation of these sources. For example, the HJF received a few years ago, an annual sponsorship in the form of uniforms for the national team from a sports clothing company (Glou company). Although one can easily detect whether the sponsorship has reached the correct destination, the federation is not obliged to disclose when and how the grant was used.

Nonetheless, the HJF in an effort to be as transparent as possible, during the yearly GA for the approval of the next year’s budget, it usually lists all the sponsorships received in the previous year. This, as stated by a judo ex-official (2009A) did not happen during the nineties.

According to the second point of organisational governance, responsibility, the HJF has a moral obligation to all those who invest emotionally in the sport of Judo such as coaches, athletes, parents, etc. The federation must justify its decisions to everyone involved in Judo, as is practiced in the economic and financial factors through the spreadsheet. Within the framework of responsibility, the HJF is trying to give Judo a bust by organising most of its championships in provincial cities that show interest in the sport (Larisa, Chalkidiki, etc.) and have willing young athletes (Veroia, Thessaloniki etc.).
The 2007 decision of the HJF’s Board for the development of the sport through Judo tournaments and training camps throughout Greece, is in the same context (ex-official, 2009B). This decision was followed by the interest of many clubs to organise such tournaments, as the HJF ensured the logistics and personnel for their organisation. The benefits of such a tournament are manifold such as giving impetus to the sport in provincial towns; the opportunity to young athletes to participate in more official games and thus gain more experience, the coaches of the various clubs have the opportunity to socialise with colleagues from other regions and to exchange views and work together, parents of the athletes receive moral satisfaction watching their children participate actively in sports, etc. In contradiction to what used to happen before 2000, as mentioned above, where the opportunity to host tournaments was restricted to only a few favoured judo clubs.

Apart from the tournaments the HJF initiated, it also showed particular interest in the education of referees and coaches, through the organisation of seminars for existing referees to inform them about new regulations, the hosting of schools for new referees to provide new national level referees and the organisation of coaching schools under the supervision of GSS. This did not happen before 2000, and as one judo ex-official stated (2009B), the reason was that the favoured coaches could not meet all the requirements in order to participate in the seminars under the GSS’s supervision.

The next organisational governance concept addressed, is democracy. This concept refers mainly to the enablement of participation of all federation stakeholders (referees, coaches, athletes, etc.) in judo related decisions. One could say that in this area, the area of democracy, the HJF has remained somewhat stagnant. No significant steps have been made to further democratise the HJF decision-making processes. Even though there is a referee committee, a hierarchy and DAN committee, a sports events committee, a planning and national teams committee, a childrens’ development committee, a judo development committee etc. these committees do not play active role as they should or could. So no real change has been made in this direction and the HJF seems to be satisfied with everything the Greek law and its internal rules of procedure (HJF Rules 2009, 2011) require.

In relation to democratisation the committees do not have an active role. Even though they do make proposals and suggestions for their development and the subsequent Judos’ development, the decisions are made by the BofD and not always in the direction introduced by the committees.

The next point is reliability. If one takes into account what has already been stated above, one can easily conclude that the HJF strives to maintain an environment which helps the development of Judo, shows the proper accountability for the resources management and strives to serve the purposes of Judo in society. However, what becomes apparent is that sport governance in the Greek and
international environment is constantly changing. The privatisation of federations is gaining ground and will soon become the norm for all sports organisations. Given this new situation, many sporting organisations have already begun to look for new investors and sponsors so as to ensure their income, which will continue to provide them with the opportunity for development. The HJF up until 2000 did little to pursue sponsors. The first years after 2000 the same situation continued, but as of 2002-2003 things started to change. The quest to find sponsors intensified over the last years, but not with the results that the HJF would have liked (ex-official, 2009A). The sponsorship with a sports clothing company is one of the examples of successful sponsor placement, as is the cooperation of the federation with municipalities and prefectures for the championships and tournaments. Through this last collaboration with municipalities and prefectures, the federation manages to gain venues for the hosting of the championships, purchase medals and usually provide the accommodation for all officials.

However, the economic crisis over the last years in Greece has obviously restrained the ability of companies and other types of sponsors, to sponsor sports federations, sporting events etc. Therefore, the overall economic environment of Greece is an obstacle for fully realising this goal of organisational governance.

The next issue addressed by organisational governance is fairness. Fairness is the equal treatment of all those involved in the sport. Under EU legislation, the HJF Board is obliged to have a certain number of female members. Not only did the HJF include the appropriate number of women on the board, but it also appointed one of them as general secretary. Likewise, the referee committee secretary is also a woman. However, one can criticise the fact that the other HJFs committees do not consist of an adequate number of female members.

The same category of fairness includes the organisation of Women’s Judo tournaments that started in 2010 on Women’s Day and the federation hopes for it to become an institution. According to research (Kollias et al., 2005) the number of female athletes is significantly lower than that of men. The new enrolment of athletes shows exactly the same (Kollias et al., 2005). This phenomenon is not only Greek but international as well. Despite this, the HJF in an effort to provide women athletes and referees with equal opportunities created this annual tournament where only women participated either as athletes or staff.

Regarding equal treatment of people with special needs, the federation could do little, since under the Greek legislation sports federations for the disabled operate separately under other sports federations. Despite all this, the annual championship for disabled people in recent years is takes place simultaneously with that of the HJF, in which the latter offers logistics and personnel for the successful hosting of the judo championship for the disabled.

In regards to efficiency and effectiveness, and taking into account the course of the HJF from 2000 onwards, it is easily understood by all the above that the targets
set by the Board are slowly being implemented. The minimum available sources were used in such a way that Greek judo could further develop. The aim of the Board was, and still is, as said in many cases by an ex-president of the HJF, to have success in international competitions, to increase brand awareness of the sport (through articles in magazines and newspapers and overall media exposure), as well as to increase the clubs practicing Judo throughout Greece and the number of enrolled judo athletes. All the above-mentioned goals have been achieved to a great extent. Greek Judo athletes won many medals in international competitions, with the exception of the year 2008, the number of judo clubs increased, especially in rural areas and islands, such as Crete and Sifnos, and the stature of the sport according to the president of the HJF has increased dramatically with coverage not only in sports newspapers, but in newspapers of general content as well. This suggests that the efficiency having measurable targets, set every four years (after each Olympic cycle) by the Board of the HJF, has been largely achieved through the effective use of available resources. However, the Board does not always set measurable goals, so it is not certain whether the objective was achieved through efficient resource use or if it was a matter of chance. Therefore, the HJF needs to take one more step in monitoring, measuring and evaluating every step it takes towards a specific goal.

**Key Findings and Proposals to be addressed**

The key finding of this research was that organisational governance may contribute to the reform of a particular sport in Greece for as long as sport governing bodies are willing to take the chance to change and allow the BoD to take steps towards this goal. However, all seven principles of organisational governance are of great importance when trying to bring changes to a sport, and therefore, directing committees should pay equal attention to all of them. In the case of Judo this did not happen, and as a result there have been a few areas that still need to be addressed in an attempt to achieve higher levels of reform.

To be fair in the comparison to the pre-2000 period versus the after-2000 period, one should mention that the term governance only made its appearance in the sport world (as mentioned earlier) in the late nineties. Therefore, what today is conceived as common practice is not what was perceived as such in the years before 2000. Having said that, some of the practices adopted by the BoD after 2000 is not a result of extensive research on the governance sector, but common sense practices.

The paper shows the level of importance organisational governance has on the whole structure of a specific sports federation. In addition, the role of the board
is crucial to the practice of organisational governance, as it may prove to be an impediment rather than a tool of efficient implementation of governance plans (Ferkins et al., 2008). However, sports-governing bodies such as Federations should be more involved in national discussions concerning sports policies. Up until now, such sports federations have been excluded from these discussions and therefore, government sports supervising bodies (e.g. the 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 willingness to do so. For example, in the inclusion of women in the BofD and the organisation of several tournaments in several places around Greece.

In conclusion, aspects of organisational governance still need to be addressed such as democracy. The HJF could follow the EJU’s example and create more active committees consisting of athletes, sponsors and parents. Finally, this paper could also be used as a tool for further exploration of the interaction between governmental and non-governmental Greek sports organisations.

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HJF Documents

Articles of association of HJF
Internal Rules of HJF
Budget Documents of HJF (2005, 2006)
Correspondence mail between the HJF and the GSS (2008)
Score sheets of HJFs’ tournaments and championships

Interviews

Interview with anonymous HJF ex-official 2009A
Interview with anonymous HJF ex-official 2009B

Address for correspondence:

Baltopoulou Angeliki
Dept. of Sport Management and Organization
University of Peloponnese, Greece
E-mail: angie_balt@yahoo.com