



An exploration of stakeholder values: In search of common ground within an international sport and development initiative

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to uncover the values of the Commonwealth Games Association's of Canada's international sport and development (IDS) initiative. Interviews were conducted with 39 key program stakeholders (e.g., IDS organizational leaders, host organizational leaders, intern alumni) involved in the management and operations of the initiative. Certain values were espoused by the organization through written documentation while others were perceived by stakeholders and were described as instrumental toward achieving desired end-states. In general, evidence of both congruent and incongruent values emerged through interview data. Nuance between stakeholder groups was also found, which in turn exposed areas of operations requiring further managerial attention. The complex interplay of values uncovered in this study contributes to the research on values in sport management and the emergent area of using sport as a means toward various developmental goals.

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For any individual leading an organization, managing a department, or working within a group setting, coming to know the values which guide members' behavior and preferences for outcomes can inform him or her about the desirable or expected way of doing things (McShane & Steen, 2009; Schein, 1990). Schein (1990) advanced that leaders have a fundamental role in shaping and reinforcing core values for the organization. Moreover, management researchers have called for the need to identify and understand how values shape behavior and inform managerial decision making (Anderson, 1997; Dolan & Garcia, 2002; Hamm, Maclean, Kikulis, & Thibault, 2008). Berger (1979) argued that one of the challenges of working in an international environment is coming to know the values which influence daily work life. When considering an intercultural setting, values may become a source of unification or one of possible conflict; thus, it is even more important for managers to have a sound grasp of the values which guide organizational behavior.

Uncovering such values has been confirmed as critically important to the successful management and operations of organizations (Buchko, 2007; Dolan & Garcia, 2002; Offermann & Hellmann, 1997; Schein, 1985). Values have been conceptualized as stable and evaluative beliefs, which describe desirable modes of behavior (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). Indeed, knowing individuals' values, particularly in cross-cultural settings where uncertainty regarding others' attitudes may be amplified, may assist management in understanding the importance people place on certain outcomes and why they behave as they do (Berger, 1979; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998; Schein, 1991). The shift in the business literature from Management by Objectives to Management by Values (cf., Dolan & Garcia, 2002) illustrates that values are essential to performance and success. Knowing that individuals' values influence behavior, and that incongruence between values

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(i.e., between members, between a member and what the organization states) may have negative influences on individual and group level outcomes (Carmeli & Tishler, 2004; Drucker, 1999; Hamm et al., 2008; MacIntosh & Doherty, 2005), further research on values may help explain the success or failure of various organizational initiatives.

Consequently, the primary purpose of this study was to uncover the perceived (felt and enacted) values of key stakeholders of the IDS program. Key stakeholders were defined as those critical for the leadership and operations of this program (i.e., IDS program founders and leaders, host leaders, internship alumni). A secondary purpose was to describe the espoused (written statements) values of the organization in greater detail. Fulfilling these two purposes were meant to achieve a third purpose; that was to determine the value congruence between the values key stakeholders experienced and perceived as meaningful and the values that the organization espoused or stated.

Research on delivery of sport programs designed to enhance development has been a recent focus in the sport management field (Coalter, 2007; Darnell, 2010; Hayhurst & Frisby, 2010; Kidd, 2008). In this case study, we explored values within one sport-for-development program—namely the Commonwealth Games Association of Canada (CGC) international development through sport initiative—to fulfill on these three purposes. Although the CGC is principally involved in elite amateur sport, there is a division of this organization responsible for “international development through sport” (IDS). As such, a difference in focus within the organization itself, from its principle involvement, may produce incongruent values (or gaps). Such gaps are thought to create subcultures, which Martin (1992) explained can be a source of conflict (e.g., divergent philosophies between groups, poor communication) if not properly managed by leadership. To date, there remains a general lack of empirical work regarding the management of these types of IDS programs (Hayhurst & Frisby, 2010; Kidd, 2008). Specifically, there is a dearth of research on the values which guide management behavior in sport and development settings. Evidence of organizational values generally, and the notion of congruent or incongruent values specifically, can assist management in guiding decision making for sport and development programs.

Motivated by a desire to uncover the values due to the prominent role they have within organizational life and the relevance they have within an intercultural setting in particular, we make the argument that through case study research (cf., Posner & Schmidt, 1992), exploring key stakeholders’ values is an important starting point to understanding the foundation by which IDS programs operate. In this paper, we uncover the values which key stakeholders perceive as important to the CGC’s IDS initiative. We articulate the perceptions of key stakeholders who are instrumental in partnering and delivering this IDS initiative and who thereby contribute largely to the values.

It is important to note that values and the concept of organizational culture are both distinguishable and complementary (Hofstede, 1998) and that the focus of this study is on values within the IDS initiative rather than a description of organizational culture (i.e., artifacts, values, basic assumptions). In this study, we do not examine personal values in this setting; rather, we examine the core organizational values that stakeholders perceived and the organization espoused to view the existing congruency and incongruency within this IDS program. This study adds to the conversation relative to the theoretical importance of values within sport organizations and further extends the recent literature on IDS programs (e.g., Beutler, 2008; Bloyce, Smith, Mead, & Morris, 2008; Hamm et al., 2008; Hayhurst & Frisby, 2010; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). In this paper, the concepts of values and value congruence within an organizational programmatic setting are reviewed and the prominent role that values have played in organizational culture research is noted. The concept of sport and development then follows, including a description of the IDS program under investigation, to enrich an understanding of the study’s context. Details of the methodology used in this study are outlined and the results are presented and discussed. Practitioner implications of this research are also outlined and future research projects are suggested.

1. Literature review

1.1. Values and the organization

Hofstede (1980) remarked that values are the “broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over others” (p. 19). Meglino and Ravlin (1998) argued that “values affect perceptions and behavior, [and] have implications for interpersonal interactions” (p. 356). This contention was advanced in prior research on values (cf., Rokeach, 1979) and current evidence demonstrates that values do significantly influence work-related behavior (Carmeli & Tishler, 2004; Goffee & Jones, 1996; Kolodinsky, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2008). Stinchcombe (1997) placed values at the core of organization, while both Denison (1990) and Anderson (1997) remarked that values act as the foundation for the development of the organization’s management system. Indeed, researchers have recently called for further examination on the role of values, given the prominent influence they have within organizations (Suddaby, Elsbach, Greenwood, Meyer, & Zilber, 2010).

Hofstede’s (1998) research illustrated that the concept of values is critical to understanding where differences may lie within an individual’s attitudes and behavior toward his or her work; thus, informing overall intercultural management strategy. One’s values are relatively stable in nature and represent one’s evaluative beliefs, which guides one’s preferences for desirable outcomes and in turn, inform one’s actions (McShane & Steen, 2009; Ravlin, 1995). Concomitantly, the study of values can act as a powerful analytical tool to assist leaders in analyzing and interpreting how values influence organizational behavior (Buchko, 2007; Meek, 1988).

In his research on values, Rokeach (1973) distinguished among two types: (1) instrumental values or the modes of behavior, which describe the facilitation of an end-state (e.g., polite, honest); and, (2) terminal values or the self-sufficient end-states of existence that a person strives for (e.g., comfort, security). Rokeach (1973) postulated that one’s instrumental

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