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SPORT | REVIEW ARTICLE

The impact of governance principles on sport organisations' governance practices and performance: A systematic review

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Abstract: *Objectives:* The objective of this systematic review was to determine what impact governance principles and guidelines have had on sport organisations' governance practices and performance.

Methods: Following the PRISMA, PIECES and Warwick protocols, we conducted a search of academic, grey literature and theses in sport and broader social sciences and humanities databases. We excluded studies that only proposed governance principles and did not actually measure their use by sport organisations, as well as those studies which did not consider the governance principles in relation to organisational performance.

Results: From the initial 2,155 studies reviewed, 19 met the inclusion criteria. A wide range of governance principles or guidelines have been considered by the relatively small number of studies included in the analysis. We did find a variety of researchers from mainly developed countries examining the issue, often using case studies as a means to explore the topic. Although the link between board structure and organisational performance has been empirically found, the link between other governance principles and organisational performance remains lacking.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The authors are collaborating as part of a larger team on a major study funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Sport Canada titled: The New Sport System Landscape: Understanding the Interrelationships between Governance, Brand and Social Media in Non-Profit Sport Organizations. They have previously co-edited the SAGE Handbook of Sport Management published in 2017. This publication relates to their SSHRC grant that builds on their expertise in sport governance and sport management and their interest in improving the governance of sport, including the policies and actions able to be taken by federal and state or provincial governments to improve sport governance practices.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Given current corruption scandals and calls for better governance of sport organisations, it is important to see whether the increased number of suggested governance principles have impacted on sport organisations' practices and performance. A bibliographic search revealed a lack of a systematic review on sport governance, let alone the impact of either recommended or mandated governance principles on the performance of sport organisations. This systematic review's findings show a range of potential governance principles can be used, that no agreed-upon set of principles exists amongst national sport agencies or researchers and the organisational performance impact of governance principles remains poorly understood. We cannot yet answer the question: does implementing a range of good governance principles positively affect organisational performance? Moreover, we found researchers presenting cautions about the potential negative repercussions of requiring the implementation of governance principles by volunteer members, thereby pushing non-profit organisations to act like for-profit organisations.

Conclusions: Despite an increased interest in good governance principles and guidelines in sport, there is a clear need for both the international sport community and researchers to develop an agreed set of governance principles and language relevant for international, national, provincial/state and local level sport governance organisations. The multidimensionality of the concepts of governance and organisational performance, as well as their interrelationship and the potential positive and negative impacts of implementing governance principles render this need all the more critical.

Subjects: Sport; Management; Social Sciences; Public Administration

Keywords: systematic review; governance; guidelines; principles; performance; sport organisation

In recent years, a number of international and national sport governing bodies have been beset with corruption scandals and challenges to their legitimacy (Hoye, 2017). Numerous instances of individual directors failing to behave appropriately, the continued use of antiquated or inequitable governance structures, failures to instil adequate checks and balances over decisions by boards, and cases of outright failure to govern have led to calls for better governance of sport organisations from both governments and independent agencies (cf. Australian Sports Commission, 2015; Play the Game, 2015). One response of government, sport organisations, and independent agencies has been the development of an increasing number of suggested governance principles and guidelines designed to counter failures in governance, such as democratic structures/democracy, accountability, transparency, professionalization, control/supervisory mechanisms, fairness, solidarity/social responsibility, equality, elected presidents, board skills (instead of representation) and term limits, separation of board chair and CEO roles, codes of ethics and conflicts of interest, athlete involvement/representation, stakeholder participation/representation, anti-bribery/corruption codes, equity, respect, autonomy/independence, evaluation, effectiveness, efficiency, planning standards, structure standards, and access and timely disclosure of information (Chappelet & Mrkonjic, 2013).

The increase in the number of governance principles and guidelines developed in recent years was highlighted by Chappelet (2018, p. 724) who stated “since the beginning of the twenty-first century, governmental and intergovernmental bodies, national and international sport governing bodies and academics have put forward numerous lists—more than 30 in total—of governance principles for sport organisations”. These include efforts by independent agencies, such as Play the Game/Sport Observer for national and international sport federations (IFs); elements of the Olympic Movement, such as the European Union office of the European Olympic Committee and the International Olympic Committee itself; national peak bodies for sport, such as Sport & Recreation Alliance UK; government agencies, such as the Australian Sports Commission, UK Sport, and Sport New Zealand; as well as independent academic groups, such as Birkbeck University in the UK .

Despite the development of these guidelines over the last 15 years and, in some cases, the mandated adoption of them for sport governing bodies by national sport funding agencies or international (sport) organisations, there remains scant evidence of their impact¹ on sport organisations’ governance practices and performance. It seems that there are a range of (implicit and untested) assumptions made by policymakers and funding agencies whereby adherence to governance principles is related to, or results, in improved governance performance of sport organisations, with performance referring to a potentially broad range of governance-related performance indicators (based on one or more of the governance principles noted earlier) and/or performance management measures centrally imposed by these actors (cf. Green & Houlihan, 2006; Grix, 2009).

The subject of sport organisation performance in relation to governance practices has been explored by authors, such as Hoye (2004), Hoye and Cuskelly (2003, 2004) and Hoye and Doherty (2011), who focused on a range of drivers of the performance of non-profit sport boards including structure, power, board composition, and leadership interactions, but not specifically the adoption of a set of governance principles on the overall sport organisation's performance.

The authors are unaware of any other published systematic review on sport governance, let alone the impact of either recommended or mandated governance principles and guidelines on the governance performance of sport organisations. Having sport organisations adopt various governance principles without understanding the potential impacts can be ineffective and inefficient. The purpose of this systematic review was therefore to determine what impact governance principles and guidelines have had on sport organisations' governance practices and performance. Understanding the relationship between governance principles and performance can then assist policymakers and funding agencies in their evidence-based decision making.

1. Methods

As no review protocol specific to sport management and/or governance existed at the time of the study, this systematic review was conducted following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis; Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & The PRISMA Group, 2009), PIECES (Foster & Jewell, 2017) and University of Warwick (n.d.) protocols. Figure 1 provides the PRISMA flow chart details. After the Warwick protocol and search strategy were independently peer-reviewed using the PRESS (Peer Review of Electronic Search Strategies) guidelines by a university librarian expert in systematic reviews, the initial research question was broadened from national and international sport organisations only to all sport organisations (e.g., including sport event organisations). Next, the first author conducted the initial search to download all references from the search results, importing them into Endnote, which allowed for duplicates to be identified and removed. The resulting reference list of 2,155 records was uploaded into the Covidence online systematic review platform. Subsequent steps were conducted independently by both authors; after completing each step, they reconvened to discuss and resolve any conflicts before moving onto the next step. Methodological details are found below.

1.1. Search strategy

After an initial test of search term criteria in SPORTDiscus to ensure the right types of publications were found, the search strategy and protocol were independently peer-reviewed and discussed between the peer reviewer and the review's two authors. To ensure the broadest capture of publications possible, the following search terms were decided upon, where TI = title, AB = abstract, KW = keyword, and SU = subject:

(TI Governance OR AB Governance OR KW Governance OR SU Governance)

AND

(TI ("sport* organi*" OR "governing bod*" OR federation* OR association* OR "sport* event*") OR AB ("sport* organi*" OR "governing bod*" OR federation* OR association* OR "sport* event*") OR KW ("sport* organi*" OR "governing bod*" OR federation* OR association* OR "sport* event*") OR SU ("sport* organi*" OR "governing bod*" OR federation* OR association* OR "sport* event*"))

On 22 January 2018, the first author conducted a search of academic literature, grey literature, and theses in sport and broader social sciences and humanities databases, specifically: SPORTDiscus, Proquest (all included, such as ABI Inform Complete and Dissertations & Theses), SCOPUS, Google, Open Grey, SIRC (Sport Information Resource Centre), Theses Canada, and Open Access Theses and Dissertations. She also targeted projects and organisations with documents of potential interest the authors already knew about: Play the Game/Sport Observer for national and IFs, SIGGS, the International Olympic Committee, the European Union's Expert Group on Good

Governance in Sport, BIBGIS, The Principles of Good Governance for Sport and Recreation (Sport & Recreation Alliance UK), Mandatory Governance Principles from the Australian Sports Commission, Good Governance in Sport (from Birkbeck), and the *Implementing Good Governance Principles* white paper from TSE consulting. Finally, the second author searched publisher sites for sport governance-related books from Sage, Routledge, Elsevier, Human Kinetics, Sagamore Publishing, Palgrave Macmillan, Holcomb Hathaway, Oxford University Press, and Meyer and Meyer. All records (the references) were imported into Endnote, and duplicates removed.

This list of 2,155 records was uploaded into Covidence and each author independently screened the records, first with the title/abstract only and then with the full-text (see Figure 1 for outcomes of the screening). Table 1 provides the pre-selected inclusion and exclusion criteria used throughout the screening process that were designed to capture as many possible outlets as possible while excluding works that provided no empirical evidence, were not related to sport organisations, or did not explore the possible link between governance principles and organisational performance.

1.2 Quality assessment

In order to assess the quality of the records for final inclusion, analysis and synthesis, the authors used an adapted version of the American Psychology Association's (n.d.) guidelines for reviewing the 23 remaining manuscripts. This resulted in four records being excluded due to poor research/methods quality.

1.3. Data extraction and analysis

The following information from the final 19 records was extracted and put into an Excel table: publication type, publication source, country(ies) of study, research question, governance principles

Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram.

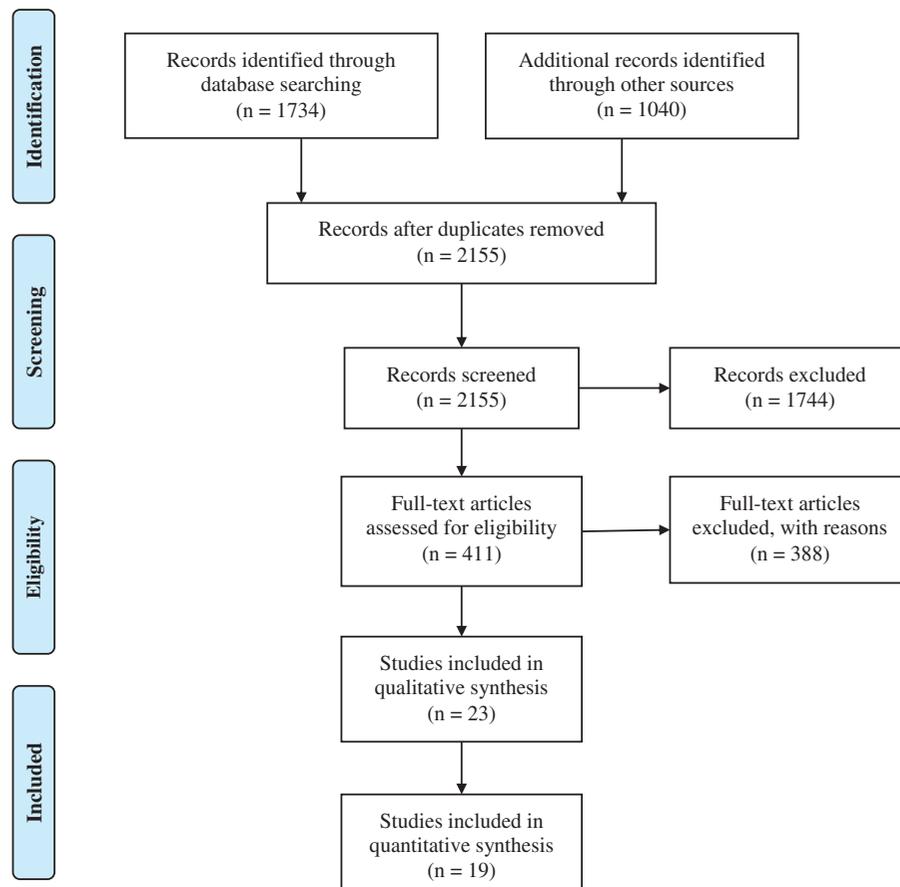


Table 1. Pre-selected inclusion and exclusion criteria for the systematic review

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Journal articles and review articles Academic books Academic book chapters Conference abstracts Theses Grey literature (reports, white papers, etc.) Empirical studies (qualitative or quantitative or mixed methods) No start date until date of search Includes search term in research question, keywords, title or body of text In English Up to and including day of search (no lower date limit)	Theoretical works Works that only discuss governance principles or guidelines without discussing the impact on organisational practice and/or performance Non-sport articles

or guidelines considered, methods (research design and data collection sources), sample/unit of analysis, findings, and limitations. Together, the authors extracted the information from the first record to ensure agreement on process and information to extract. Next, each author extracted the information for half the records, and verified the information extracted by the other author for the other half of the records.

The analysis focussed on identifying similarities and differences between the 19 records in relation to the governance principles or guidelines considered, the theoretical framework adopted by the study, their research questions, and the findings (governance principles and their impact on performance). A secondary focus of the analysis identified patterns amongst the 19 records in terms of publication type and sources, countries where the studies had been conducted, the methods, unit of analysis, and study limitations.

2. Results

As shown in Table 2, the 19 records included 14 journal articles, 3 theses, and 2 reports published between 2004 and 2018, with 10 of those published in the last 5 years. The peer reviewed journal articles appeared in nine different journals, including four in the *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* and two each in the *Journal of Sport Management* and the *European Sport Management Quarterly*. Fifteen records focussed on single countries, one included two countries, and three were focussed on Europe or international regions, with the United Kingdom being the subject of six records, Australia two, New Zealand two, and Norway two, with single studies being conducted in Canada, France, Scotland, and South Africa.

The predominant research design was a case study approach (one used an action research approach) using traditional organisational studies data collection strategies (interviews, document analyses, surveys, and observations). The focus of 13 studies was on national sport organisations (NSOs), two studies focussed on professional sport and the associated governance structures (clubs, leagues, NSO, player unions), two studies focussed on organizing committees of major sports events (and their stakeholders), one study focussed on IFs, and one focussed specifically on professional football (soccer) clubs.

The very wide range of governance principles or guidelines considered by this relatively small number of studies is also highlighted in Table 2. These include principles related to (1) membership, such as board diversity and composition, the degree of independence of the board, the range of stakeholder presence in the governance system of a sport organisation, board size, and ownership structures; (2) the nature and extent of inter-organisational linkages; (3) regulatory structures impacting the governance of sport organisations; (4) decision making issues, such as accountability, transparency, procedural fairness, democratic processes and decision making protocols; (5) shared leadership; and (6) the strategic focus of the board.

Table 2. Summary of extracted data from studies included in quantitative synthesis

Source or University (if thesis)	Authors (Date) Country of study	Research question	Governance principles or guidelines considered	Theoretical framework	Method	Level of analysis	Findings	Limitations/reviewer comments
Journal of Sport Management	Aalraanse and Schofield (2014) Australia	(a) What is the impact of gender quotas on the gender relations that characterize the composition and operation of sport boards in terms of a gender-regimes approach? and (b) What is the impact of gender quotas on gender equality in sport governance?	Board diversity in non-profit governance.	Organisational management and gender dynamics.	Comparative case study of five NSOs using interviews.	NSOs	There is still resistance to gender quotas; Lack of clear progress to advance gender equality; evidence that gender-balanced boards are “better”; None of the quotas examined specify absolute parity; Quota is important for numerical presence of women on boards, but this does not result in increasing power or impact of women on governance and strategic direction; “the implications for policy and practice are that the adoption of a gender quota is effective for gender equality in governance only if it is used in conjunction with other measures. They include directors’ adoption of gender equality as an organisational value (symbolic relations), the allocation of women directors to influential board roles (production and power relations), and the promotion of a cohesive team environment on the board (emotional relations).” (p. 495)	Small number of NSOs in one country; Study conducted in the absence of a mandated gender equality principle in the country at the time of the study, but the results of the study indicate that this may help overcome the resistance and improve governance performance.

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued)

Source or University (if thesis)	Authors (Date) Country of study	Research question	Governance principles or guidelines considered	Theoretical framework	Method	Level of analysis	Findings	Limitations/reviewer comments
University of Sydney Thesis	Adriaanse (2013) Australia	(a) What are the gender relations that characterise the composition and operation of sport boards in NSOs in Australia in terms of a "gender regimes" approach, that is, one that draws on categories associated with the gendered organisation of production, power/authority, emotional attachment and symbolic relations? (b) What are the implications or prospects for gender equality on these boards in terms of the barriers and opportunities created by the specific configurations of gender relations and dynamics?	Board diversity in non-profit governance	Organisational management and gender dynamics; Kanter (2002), Connell (1987, 2009)	Stage 1: Quantitative audit of 56 NSO boards Stage 2: Qualitative interviews with 5 Olympic NSOs.	NSOs	Women remain underrepresented on boards, holding 10–33% of board positions, which is also lower compared to the percent of women participating in those respective sports; Horizontal and vertical gender segregation still holds in Australian NSO governance; Gender dynamics are not uniform (three different gender regimes found —masculine hegemony (the most common and least gender equal), masculine hegemony in transition, and gender mainstreaming in progress), often creating tensions, and demonstrating gender parity has not yet been reached; The gender regimes set the opportunity and constraint structures within the organisation Adopting gender quotas can be an effective strategy to achieve gender parity in organisations, especially when a minimum (not maximum) is prescribed; Women need to occupy leadership positions, not just be board members; Board members need to understand gender inequality and related dynamics and demonstrate proactive commitment to achieving equality; It is the responsibility of men and women.	One country; Study conducted in the absence of a mandated gender equality principle in the country at the time of the study, but the results of the study indicate that this may help overcome the resistance and improve governance performance; Women need to be in leadership positions, not just be board members.

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Table 2. (Continued)

Source or University (if thesis)	Authors (Date) Country of study	Research question	Governance principles or guidelines considered	Theoretical framework	Method	Level of analysis	Findings	Limitations/reviewer comments
International Journal of Public Policy	Boyle (2005) France	Explore how changes in the environment influence relationships in a given organisational field—the French sporting sector—in order to understand modes of governance, decision-making and implementation as regards public sporting policies.	Stakeholder presence in the system; interorganisational linkages; regulatory structures.	Organisation theory (neo-institutional theory, Bourdieu, drivers of change).	Secondary data (documents, previous studies), participant observation, and 14 interviews.	NSOs and professional sport teams, French government, national Olympic committee, regional and local level managers.	Structures, processes and modes of action in the French sport system have been homogenizing due to: NSO dependence on the French government, ambiguous objectives, uncertainty, and extent of professionalization; Strategic repositioning by NSOs done within zones of uncertainty; The environment (number of stakeholders) has increased in complexity over the years, leading to greater inter-organisational relationships and the need to consult multiple decision-making bodies; The public-private model of governance in French sport remains, despite these changes in the environment; Network governance approach seen in the French government now.	Multi-level data collection, but focus on NSOs; Despite numerous changes in the environment and in the French government's governance of the system, the basic French NSO governance model remains.
European Sport Management Quarterly	Boyle and Robinson (2007) France	Propose a framework that uses strategic and operational factors to explain the performance of French NSOs.	Organisational performance	Organisation theory and performance	Longitudinal data of documents, surveys, and interviews focused on 11 NSOs; 100 interviews with the 11 NSOs and their stakeholders were conducted.	French NSOs	The strategic performance mix includes the system of governance, the quality of the operating network and the position of the NSO system within the industry; The operational performance mix includes factors facilitating operational performance (forms and levels of performance, presence of a participatory organisational culture, and adoption of a partnership approach), factors inhibiting performance (deficient information systems, inappropriate incentive mechanisms, absence of control mechanisms, and political sclerosis).	Extensive mixed methods dataset that demonstrates the multidimensional nature of organisational performance.

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Table 2. (Continued)

Source or University (if thesis)	Authors (Date) Country of study	Research question	Governance principles or guidelines considered	Theoretical framework	Method	Level of analysis	Findings	Limitations/reviewer comments
Corporate Ownership & Control	Bradbury and O'Boyle (2015); New Zealand	Examine the independent board structure adopted by New Zealand Cricket and to provide insights into the major challenges of this approach.	(Independent) board structure, role, calibre	Corporate governance and sport governance	Case study using interviews (six) and documents (unknown number) of New Zealand Cricket.	NSO	Governance can be improved through independently appointed board members with appropriate skills, instead of elected members from within the sport whose skills are not guaranteed. Benefits of this includes: increased revenue generation, skills matrix creation to help in board member appointment, introduction of board member remuneration, high calibre board, increased consultation and engagement with regional associations; Commercial expertise is needed on the board.	One case study in one country, but it demonstrates link between board composition and organisational performance.

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Table 2. (Continued)

Source or University (if thesis)	Authors (Date) Country of study	Research question	Governance principles or guidelines considered	Theoretical framework	Method	Level of analysis	Findings	Limitations/reviewer comments
University of Pretoria Thesis	Burger (2004); South Africa	Three research questions, two of which apply for this review: (a) Describe the governance principles best practices; (b) Measure the level of non-adherence to the governance principles by South African sport bodies.	Accountability, responsibility, social transparency, social responsibility, independence, fairness, and discipline.	Corporate and best practice governance systems.	Survey of 21 NSOs (out of a possible 90)	NSO	73% or more of NSOs surveyed adhered to all examined governance principles (some principles adhered to by over 80%), and the degree of adherence ranged from 3.54 out of 5 (discipline) to 3.96 out of 5 (accountability). Concerns are raised about the relatively low compliance with the overall good governance of independence, which highlights a problem with autonomy, ability to take fair actions, and transparent fund administration; Formalized guidelines at the national level are recommended to improve good governance within the NSOs; Notes that sub-standard performance in one good governance pillar will affect other pillars; Recommends separation of powers between the board's governing role and the CEO/staff's managerial roles for NSOs; Recommends between five and nine board members selected based on their skills and abilities, but external appointments should be limited; Recommends free and fair election of board members, with nomination guidelines and biographical information about officers; Recommends a code of ethics defined by the board and implemented by the CEO, and to include how to hand conflicts of interest; Recommends auditor independence.	Demonstrates intertwined nature of governance principles, but does not actually measure the organisation's performance as a result of compliance or non-compliance with the governance principles.

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Table 2. (Continued)

Source or University (if thesis)	Authors (Date) Country of study	Research question	Governance principles or guidelines considered	Theoretical framework	Method	Level of analysis	Findings	Limitations/reviewer comments
Management Research Review	Dimitropoulos (2014); Europe	Examine the impact of corporate governance quality on the capital structure of European soccer clubs and specifically on the level of debt that soccer clubs decide to issue.	Board size and independence, ownership and capital structures.	Corporate governance and agency theory	Documents (annual reports, financial statements) from 67 soccer/football clubs in 10 European countries over the 2005-2009 years.	Professional soccer clubs	Increased board size and independence, as well as separation of the roles of board chair and CEO roles, reduces leverage level and risk of financial instability. Managerial and institutional ownership (i.e., reduced ownership concentration between managers and institutional investors, and increasing ownership dispersion) contribute positively to leverage level and improve capital structure.	Board independence and ownership dispersion positively affect financial performance, but study findings are limited to soccer's particular corporate identity and to limited liability and publicly listed companies.

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Table 2. (Continued)

Source or University (if thesis)	Authors (Date) Country of study	Research question	Governance principles or guidelines considered	Theoretical framework	Method	Level of analysis	Findings	Limitations/reviewer comments
Journal of Sport Management	Ferkins et al. (2009), New Zealand	Investigate the strategic capability of NSO boards.	Board strategic function and involvement in strategy, and shared leadership between the board and CEO.	Agency theory, stewardship theory and managerial hegemony theory, corporate and sport governance literature.	Longitudinal (18-month) case study of New Zealand Football (soccer) using an action research approach with interviews, focus groups, documents, participant observation, reflective journaling, and memoranda.	NSOs	<p>Board-CEO shared leadership enhance a board's strategic capability;</p> <p>There is a dynamic and complex relationship between the board and CEO (linked to leadership paradox), which can impair board strategic capability if not examined by organisational members;</p> <p>The volunteer nature of the board can impact the board's ability to influence and control—though boards should be more involved in the organisation's strategic development, this results in more time, expertise, and intellectual commitments from the board members;</p> <p>Volunteer boards struggle with increased organisational sophistication introduced by CEOs, even if board members have the proper experience and education for their positions;</p> <p>The CEO remains the pivotal position in the organisation, controlling information flow and potentially the board's strategic functioning, but increased collaboration between the board and CEO can lead to increased board strategic function. This may require board compensation for their increased time and commitment.</p>	<p>Shared leadership and collaboration between the board and CEO are important for proper board and organisational performance. But, the study highlights the paradox of increasing volunteer board sophistication or professionalization to increase strategic functioning and good governance, but this comes at the cost of volunteers' time and commitment, thereby pointing to a potential need to compensate board members for their work for the organisation. The action research is a lengthy process, but one that derives rich data needed to get at organisational governance and performance.</p>

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Table 2. (Continued)

Source or University (if thesis)	Authors (Date) Country of study	Research question	Governance principles or guidelines considered	Theoretical framework	Method	Level of analysis	Findings	Limitations/reviewer comments
Loughborough University Thesis	Garcia (2008) Europe	Four research questions, one of which applies for this review being: What has been the impact of EU policies and decisions in the governance structures of football?	Structure	Agenda setting, multi-level governance	Inductive, qualitative research based on interviews (44) and documents extending over 18 years.	Continental government, soccer/football clubs, national and continental associations, footballer's trade union and football supporters, academics and lawyers, minor focus on IF.	The sport's increasing commercialisation put it on the EU institutions' systemic agenda; EU intervention in football has contributed to a transformation of football's pyramid structure towards a more crowded environment and horizontal stakeholder network governance structure; EU policies have undermined the sport's traditional vertical authority channels, helped contest the legitimacy of governing bodies, and favoured the emergence of new stakeholders in the governance network.	Broad analysis of a sport's governance system, highlighting the potential impact of new policies on facilitating new entrants into the system and changing governance structures.

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Table 2. (Continued)

Source or University (if thesis)	Authors (Date) Country of study	Research question	Governance principles or guidelines considered	Theoretical framework	Method	Level of analysis	Findings	Limitations/reviewer comments
International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics	Geeraert et al. (2014) International but mainly from Europe	Empirically determine whether the lack of good governance is widespread in international sport organisations.	Accountability, democracy, checks and balances, independence, decision-making power, representation (by country and gender), member tenure, power concentration.	Good governance, corporate governance, democratic governance, and good sport governance.	Analysis of publicly available data.	International sport governing bodies (IFs) of the 35 Olympic sports	<p>Demonstrates that recent corruption scandals were institutionally induced; Sports' autonomy has had a negative impact on the quality of sport governing bodies' self-governance; Accountability problems hinder the impetus for change to improve governance;</p> <p>Watchdog organisations' efforts are undermined by the absence of objective criteria and transparent funding distribution to members; Lack of independent ethics committees found;</p> <p>Though athlete representation is often present, the study finds athletes lack decision-making power within their sport governing body;</p> <p>Dominance of European and male representation in executive body membership;</p> <p>General lack of term limits was found, which results in a concentration of power.</p>	<p>Highlights the lack of a broadly agreed upon and objectively measurable list of good governance principles;</p> <p>Suggests that pressures from outside sport is the most likely way to improve sport governing bodies' governance;</p> <p>Study limited by publicly available data, but study also finds transparency is problematic in these organisations.</p>

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Table 2. (Continued)

Source or University (if thesis)	Authors (Date) Country of study	Research question	Governance principles or guidelines considered	Theoretical framework	Method	Level of analysis	Findings	Limitations/reviewer comments
International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics	Grix (2009) United Kingdom	(a) To analyse the impact that the government's modernisation drive has had on government sport policy in general and on the national governing body for athletics; and (b) to determine the impact of governance of UK Athletics on its own demise in performance.	Accountability	New Managerialism	Single organisational case study using documentary analysis and interviews.	NSO	The hierarchical chain of power from government to NSOs has effectively strait-jacketed UK Athletics into delivering a narrow, Olympic driven sports policy to meet government set targets, while mass participation rates have declined. This is due to UK Athletics taking on the New Managerialist culture. Due to this, the authors argue the professionalization of UK Athletics has been taken too far into the realm of for-profit organisations; trust between the sport governing body and the grassroots of sport could be affected.	One of the few studies to investigate the link between government policy, expectations of performance and influence over NSO governance and the subsequent impact on performance of an NSO.
Sport Management Review	Parent (2016) Canada and Scotland	(a) How different event stakeholders view the principles associated with democratic governance in relation to planning for major sport events; and (b) how informative democratic governance principles are for studying major sports events.	Performance; Transparency; Accountability; Stakeholder participation in decision making.	Democratic governance	Exploratory study using interviews from stakeholders of three major sport events.	Organising committee of a major sport event and its stakeholders (including IFs, government, sponsors, media, etc.).	Stakeholders involved in planning and delivering major sport events held similar views of the meaning of democratic governance principles; Democratic governance has merit as a framework for the study of major sport events.	Highlights the utility of a small number of governance principles for influencing stakeholder engagement and behaviour in the context of major sport events; highlights interrelationship between good governance concepts, including with performance; also one of the few studies to examine these phenomena in more than one country.

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Table 2. (Continued)

Source or University (if thesis)	Authors (Date) Country of study	Research question	Governance principles or guidelines considered	Theoretical framework	Method	Level of analysis	Findings	Limitations/reviewer comments
International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing	Parent, Kristiansen, and Houlihan (2017) Norway	(a) What is the relationship between good governance principles and the knowledge management/transfer process in major sport events, and (b) to what extent does knowledge management/transfer in the Youth Olympic Games compare with that of the Olympic Games process.	Transparency; Accountability; Stakeholder participation in decision making.	Democratic governance	Single organisational case study using documentary analysis and interviews.	Organising committee of a major sport event	The IOC used governance principles to ensure the organising committee for the major sport event was held accountable for strategy and operational matters. The study also found that while good governance might facilitate the management and transfer of knowledge, it does not ensure organisational effectiveness (performance).	Highlights the difference between desired governance practices and what is possible in reality.
Play the Game	Geeraert (2017)	The study set out to identify a number of good governance indicators for sport.	Transparency, Democratic processes, Internal Accountability and control, Societal Responsibility.	None.	Survey of NSOs	NSOs	NSOs scored either 1 or 0 for the adoption of the 274 indicators of good governance organised across 4 themes—Transparency, Democratic processes, Internal Accountability and control, and Societal Responsibility.	Provides a snapshot in time of the state of the adoption of a range of good governance principles by NSOs across a wide range of countries.

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Table 2. (Continued)

Source or University (if thesis)	Authors (Date) Country of study	Research question	Governance principles or guidelines considered	Theoretical framework	Method	Level of analysis	Findings	Limitations/reviewer comments
International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics	Sisjord et al. (2017) Norway	(a) Are leaders in Norwegian sport aware of the [gender] quota regulation, (b) Does the quota regulation guide the composition of the executive boards, and (c) does there exist specific projects/initiatives in order to increase the proportion of the under-represented gender on executive boards.	Board diversity	None used to drive the research design and analysis.	Interviews with representatives from three organisational levels of Norwegian organised sport.	NSOs, Regional confederations of sport and local sport clubs.	Sport organisations at the national and regional level had greater awareness of the regulation than local clubs. National and regional level organisations had largely adhered to the regulation while at the local level, clubs had not paid much attention. There was little evidence of specific projects or initiatives to support increasing the representation of women on boards at any level. Overall, the study concluded that gender quotas do not work in isolation, they need to be supported by comprehensive efforts to consciously address gender balance amongst governing sport boards.	The data for the study was collected in 2007–2008 and published in 2017 so there may have been improvements in the Norwegian sport system in the last decade that are not captured in this study. However, the study supports findings in Australia.
International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics	Tacon and Walters (2016) United Kingdom	How has modernisation influenced the way NSO board members perceive and enact their roles.	Board roles	Modernisation, Political Science and Nonprofit Governance.	National survey of NSOs in four home countries—England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and a single longitudinal organisational case study of one NSO based on interviews and documentary analysis.	NSOs	The financial and strategic roles of the board have become comparatively more important to boards, while representative roles have become comparatively less important. Board members from larger NSOs consider their professionalised role of financial and strategic oversight to be more important than board members from smaller NSOs, while smaller NSOs consider their traditional roles of fundraisers and ambassadors as more important than larger NSOs. Some evidence that board members made decisions in line with policy from funding agencies and that the issue of representative boards still presents practical challenges for boards to govern effectively.	The study did not address specific elements of the governance guidelines or principles, rather it focused on the overall influence of the modernisation agenda on NSO governance. Suggests modernization emphasizes commercial values.

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued)

Source or University (if thesis)	Authors (Date) Country of study	Research question	Governance principles or guidelines considered	Theoretical framework	Method	Level of analysis	Findings	Limitations/reviewer comments
Corporate Governance: An International Review	Taylor and O'Sullivan (2009) United Kingdom	(a) What is the most appropriate orientation for boards of NSOs in order to balance the interests of the broader membership with the increasing commercial orientation of the sport, (b) What is the optimal size for boards of NSOs, and (c) What is the most appropriate leadership structure, CEO duality or a separate Chairman and CEO.	Board composition, Board leadership	Nonprofit governance	Interviews with a convenience sample of 22 board members and other sport industry stakeholders.	NSOs	Widespread acceptance that NSO boards should move away from traditional representative structures to a more corporate structure. Boards should comprise between 5 and 12 members, that the role of CEO and Chair should not be held by the same person, and that boards should utilise a number of non-executive members.	Sample comprised a majority of respondents holding senior management roles so potentially reflects the views of paid staff more so than board members.
European Sport Management Quarterly	Walters and Tacon (2018) United Kingdom	(a) Why do boards of non-profit sport organisations adopt codes of governance, and (b) how do board members perceive codes of governance.	National good governance guidelines from UK Sport, Sport and Recreation Alliance and Sport England.	Modernisation, Political Science and Nonprofit Governance.	Single longitudinal organisational case study of one NSO based on interviews and documentary analysis.	NSOs	The adoption of a code of governance has two impacts; to create external legitimacy by demonstrating to a funding body that the board was taking governance seriously and to create internal legitimacy amongst board members that their board was well governed. Adoption of the code can also be perceived as constraining board autonomy, strengthening lines of accountability upwards by strict adherence to code principles, and shift institutional logics whereby the principles in the code become the assumed way of governing by a board.	The study did not address specific elements of the governance guidelines or principles, rather it focused on the overall influence of the modernisation agenda on NSO governance. But, the authors warn increasing mandatory codes could undermine actual good governance improvements within the organisation and become simply a box-ticking exercise.

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued)

Source or University (if thesis)	Authors (Date) Country of study	Research question	Governance principles or guidelines considered	Theoretical framework	Method	Level of analysis	Findings	Limitations/reviewer comments
Birkbeck Sport Business Centre	Walters, Trenberth, and Tacon (2010) United Kingdom	Not specifically stated; the report provides an analysis of standards of governance within UK NSOs and considers the extent of the impact of the UK Modernisation program on UK NSO governance and management.	Role of the Board, Board Composition	Inferred to be modernisation	National survey of NSOs in four home countries—England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.	NSOs	<p>Most NSOs had strategic plans but many NSOs need to address core issues of board induction, board training and board performance evaluation. NSOs engage with stakeholders and have some form of representation at board or committee level.</p> <p>Suggests board size should not exceed 10 members and include at least one independent, non-executive member from outside the sport;</p> <p>Suggests board member onboarding and training is needed, as well as evaluation/appraisal;</p> <p>Organisational operational aspects should be delegated to staff members;</p> <p>Suggests a stakeholder map analysis should be conducted by NSOs, as well as increasing stakeholder engagement and representation.</p>	This is a scoping and exploratory study that provides some useful context for the impact of the UK Modernisation program on UK NSOs.

The research questions investigated by these studies focussed on five areas: (1) the impact of gender quotas for board composition on governance outcomes, (2) the impact of external forces, including government policy on governance practices, (3) seeking to explain governance performance, (4) the role and structure of boards, and (5) the extent of the adoption of specific governance principles by sport organisations. Somewhat surprisingly, none of the studies explicitly sought to explore the extent to which the adoption of specific governance principles had impacted actual governance outcomes or performance of sport organisations.

While two of the studies did not appear to utilise a theoretical framework, a wide range of theoretical frameworks were utilised by the other 17 studies with the predominant ones being corporate governance (used by five studies), new managerialism or modernisation (three studies), democratic governance (two studies), organisational management and gender dynamics (two studies), organisational theory (two studies), political science (two studies), and three other theories being used once: Agency theory, stewardship theory, and managerial hegemony.

The range of the findings of the studies summarised in Table 2 reflects the diversity of research questions, theoretical frameworks and, importantly, the conceptualisation of governance principles and guidelines adopted by this collection of studies. The findings illustrate the relative lack of adherence (or resistance) to good governance principles in some cases and the potential these principles have to support good governance performance. They also illustrate that most studies have focussed on single or small numbers of principles and that *no studies* have examined the impact of the adoption of a comprehensive suite of governance principles or mandated guidelines on the governance outcomes or performance of a sport organisation. Overall, studies highlight that pressures outside sport may be the best way to improve sport organisations' governance practices and performance (cf. Geeraert, Alm, & Groll, 2014) and that appropriate board structure positively impacts organisational performance. But, cautions are raised in terms of pushing volunteer members to be too professional, too much like for-profit organisations, in the quest for good governance, which impacts volunteers' capacity to devote time and effort to non-profit sport organisations and puts greater emphasis on commercial values (cf. Ferkins, Shilbury, & McDonald, 2009; Tacon & Walters, 2016; Taylor & O'Sullivan, 2009; Walters & Tacon, 2018).

3. Discussion

This review highlights that governance principles and guidelines in sport are of increasing interest amongst governments, practitioners and researchers from many different (mainly developed) countries and in a range of sport contexts. The studies are also largely independent studies, not funded by federal sport agencies, and have explored a wide range of research questions.

The review highlights the multidimensionality of the concepts of performance (Bayle & Robinson, 2007) and governance (e.g., Burger, 2004; Geeraert et al., 2014; Parent, 2016), as well as their interrelationship (Parent, 2016). Moreover, board composition (Bradbury & O'Boyle, 2015), independence (Bradbury & O'Boyle, 2015; Dimitropoulos, 2014), ownership dispersion (Dimitropoulos, 2014), and shared board-CEO leadership and collaboration (Ferkins et al., 2009) positively affect an organisation's (financial) performance. The review results also suggest that the board structure-organisational performance link seems established, while the empirical link between other good governance principles and improved organisational performance more broadly remains elusive.

As well, caution is also raised by researchers (e.g., Ferkins et al., 2009; Grix, 2009; Walters & Tacon, 2018) of the increasing demands placed on sport managers, especially volunteer board members, moving them from volunteers to unpaid professionals needing to act like for-profit managers, and having good governance become a superficial, box-ticking exercise to obtain funding or to illustrate an organisation's compliance to accepted norms.

Thus, what is striking is that while the findings of each of these studies independently have merit, collectively they illustrate the lack of robust, empirical, independent evidence that has been

collected to date that helps to elucidate the core question of which governance principles should sport organisations adopt and implement to optimize their overall governance and performance or how governance principles may need to differ between legal jurisdictions or cultural contexts. This is not surprising given the lack of agreement amongst national sport agencies and independent sport governance watchdogs of what constitutes a set of core governance principles for sport and the range of somewhat disparate sport governance guidelines that have been developed by leading national sport agencies, such as the Australian Sports Commission and UK Sport.

Compounding the problem is the lack of a consistent theoretical approach or conceptualisation of governance principles being adopted by researchers over the last 15 years. This has manifested in a succession of somewhat unrelated studies being published over this time by a wide range of authors with no sense that there is any sort of research program or thematic approach to understanding the issue of good sport governance principles or guidelines amongst the international sport management research community. Subsequently, each independent researcher or research team has conceptualised good governance principles using different criteria and applied different theoretical approaches to understanding the phenomena. There has been some consistency amongst researchers who have largely used traditional organisational research methods and data collection approaches in their studies. Given the focus of these studies has been on identifying current governance practices and behaviours of organisations and individual directors, the use of interviews, document analyses, surveys, and observations in these studies is understandable.

The more recent studies published by Walters and Tacon (2018) and Tacon and Walters (2016) highlight that there is a growing focus on the influence of governance principles and guidelines in sport, especially the role of national sport agencies in influencing their adoption by NSOs, as well as the influence these have in the behaviours of individual directors. The other set of studies on the impact of gender quotas on boards (Adriaanse & Schofield, 2014; Sisjord, Fasting, & Sand, 2017), a very topical issue coinciding with the current groundswell of interest in the #metoo movement, the growth of women's sport and the importance of ensuring women are serving in leadership roles in sport, also highlights the early signs that some forms of thematic approach to understanding governance principles and guidelines in sport are starting to emerge from the research community.

4. Conclusions

This systematic review has demonstrated that, despite an increase in interest in research associated with good governance principles and guidelines in sport, there is a clear need for both the international sport community and researchers to develop an agreed set of governance principles and language relevant for international, national, provincial/state and local level sport governance organisations. This may be unrealistic given the multitude of stakeholders involved, such as the International Olympic Committee, IFs and numerous national (sport) agencies, as well as the different legal and cultural contexts between national sport systems; but, this lack of coherence will limit the ability of both sport organisations to improve their governance and researchers to understand which principles and guidelines are central to improved governance performance in sport organisations.

The primary limitation of the published research to date has been the lack of robust, empirical, independent evidence that addressed the core question of which governance principles should sport organisations adopt and implement to optimize their governance performance. To that end, a number of research areas are suggested below that should be prioritised by the international sport management research community.

First, researchers need to understand the differences and similarities that exist between the various governance principles and guidelines developed by respective national (sport) agencies over the last 15 years. By understanding why these agencies emphasise different principles and which ones are common, researchers may gain a clearer understanding of the potential foci for future studies of the adoption of governance principles over time and between jurisdictions and countries. As this review focused on English-language studies, researchers should expand the analysis to other language to

capture potential differences related to culture and context. Researchers also need to look outside the sport sector and explore the applicability of more generic corporate governance principles and how they may be adopted by sport organisations. A common set of principles would facilitate comparative studies between countries that would assist researchers and managers in understanding the contextual or environmental factors which might help or hinder the impact the adoption of these principles or guidelines have on actual governance performance.

Second, this review's authors support the continued focus on the development of a number of themes related to governance principles building on the emergence of gender quotas and the influence of national sport agencies discussed earlier. A further theme that could be developed might focus on the capacity and readiness of sport organisations to adopt governance principles and what conditions need to be met for sport organisations to be capable of adopting and implementing these in order to reap some reward in the form of improved governance performance. Future research efforts might also focus on the impact of mandatory versus suggested principles or guidelines might have on the adherence or impact on future governance performance at the organisational and individual board member level. To wit, if volunteer board members are increasingly required to implement good governance principles, whatever they may be, the workload may be such that the call for them to be paid, especially if they are to be independent board members, becomes a necessary outcome. The impact of such a situation merits further critical reflection. In essence, is implementing governance principles all positive or are there potentially negative impacts as well? A critical analysis of this issue is therefore warranted.

Third and finally, there is a need to more clearly define the concept of governance performance and how improved governance may be objectively measured. The underlying premise or assumption of adopting a set of good governance principles or guidelines is that doing so will lead to improved performance. At the moment, beyond the board structure aspect, the studies in this review have largely focussed on identifying the adoption of governance practices, rather than the impact their adoption or implementation (or failure to implement them effectively) has had on governance outcomes or performance. Understanding this aspect is critical for policymakers and funding agencies to make evidence-based decisions.

To conclude, future research efforts in this area need to contribute to a clearer understanding of what are the principles that matter for good governance, and they need to do so in such a way that is supported by sound theoretical frameworks and appropriate research designs and methods. This review's authors hope this systematic review has provided greater clarity for understanding the research to date in this field and assisted set the course for future research efforts in this area.

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Note

1. In this review, the term impact refers to the influence on, relationship between, or effect of a given governance principle on sport organisation performance.

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