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Integrity Management in Sport

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Abstract

This paper proposes integrity management as a strategic reaction to what is perceived as a moral deficit in sports. First, a number of frequently heard counterarguments against integrity management such as "we have no ethical problems in our organization" or "by introducing ethics management our coaches, directors, athletes, etc. will feel attacked" are addressed and subsequently refuted.

The central argument of the paper states that good ethics management should achieve a right balance between two complementary approaches. A rules-based approach includes both specific regulations about what is acceptable behavior and appropriate punishment procedures. A values-based approach includes support for managers, coaches and athletes facing ethical dilemmas. The latter are ambiguous situations where it is not really clear which behavior would be considered ethical.

The paper concludes with recommendations on how to implement the listed instruments so as to ensure that they make a real difference and are not restricted to lofty ambitions on glossy brochures.

Keywords:
Ethics management, Panathlon Declaration, Ethical dilemmas, Code of conduct, Ethical leadership

Integrity Management in Sport[1]

Introduction

Interest in integrity management in sports is growing. This has been fuelled by a number of high-profile scandals about all kinds of (alleged) violations, including fixed games and aggression in European soccer, doping among famous cyclists, child abuse (Brackenridge, 2006; Vanden Auweele, 2008), child trafficking, child labor (Donnelly and Petherick, 2006) and corruption of sport managers (Jennings, 1996; Forster and Pope, 2004). Moreover, issues like these have not only been reported in the mass media, but also in more academic research-oriented literature (e.g. Bertieri, 2000; Bockrath & Franke, 1995; Brackenridge, 2006; Bredemeier & Shields, 1986; Coakley, 1998; David, 1999; Donnelly & Petherick, 2006; Eitzen, 1988; Forster & Pope, 2004; Giulianotti, 2006; Hong, 2006; Jennings, Lenskyi, 2006; Morgan, 2006; Vanden Auweele, 2004).

Whether these scandals reflect a deeper deterioration of integrity within sports or rather a

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An earlier version of the paper was presented at the World conference on the Panathlon Declaration *"Implementation of ethics in youth sport"* Gent, 6 November 2008. This paper also draws from an earlier French publication: Maesschalck, J., Vanden Auweele, Y. & Maes, M. (2008). *Vers une politique de promotion explicite de l'intégrité dans le sport,* Cinésiologie, nrs 239-240, 60-64.

decreasing tolerance for integrity violations (and thus higher chances for exposure) is not a question for this publication. For our purposes we limit ourselves to the observation that there is at a least a perceived problem that deserves attention and that there are a number of risks for integrity violations in sports that should be managed.

Some sport scientists such as Donnelly & Petherick (2006), Forster & Pope (2004), Morgan (2006) and Parrish & Mc Ardle (2006) are rather pessimistic as to the self-cleansing capacity of the sports sector because, they argue, the sports sector has not been renowned for its self-criticism, nor for accepting criticism rightly directed at it. They also observe that many important changes in sports have been enforced by external pressures (e.g. the Bosman ruling (Parrish & McArdle, 2006).

We take a more optimistic stand towards the possibilities for improvement, taking into consideration the increasing number of analyses & research projects on ethical issues and the growing impact of organizations such as Panathlon International (www.panathlon.net) that have an ethics revival in sport as their core business. An indication of a greater sensitivity for ethical issues in sports is the fact that the 'Declaration on Ethics in Youth Sports', that has been developed by Panathlon, has now been endorsed by 150 international & national sports organizations, universities and public authorities (Vanden Auweele, 2004; Vanden Auweele & Maes, 2006). To our knowledge not any declaration or ethics code in the sports sector has been endorsed on such a large scale.

Although the risk for a gap between the aspirations in the code and reality on the ground remains, the broad endorsement of this code at least suggests that senior officials in the sector are taking the ethics issue seriously. It is on that observation that this contribution builds. The aim of the paper is to move beyond complaints about (perceived) moral deficit of sports, and focus on practical policy interventions that can make a difference on the ground.

We first address the definitional question, i.e. what is integrity; what is integrity management? Second, we deal with a number of common arguments against integrity management that often act as psychological barriers among managers against the introduction of integrity management in their organization. Third, the two goals of integrity management will be elaborated. Finally we list a number of important instruments for integrity management that might be useful in the context of (youth) sports.

Defining integrity and integrity management

The term "integrity" is derived from Latin and literally means not (in) touching (tangere) (Nieuwenburgh 2002). It refers to something or somebody that/who is not contaminated, not damaged. In the context of this chapter "integrity" will refer to the application of generally accepted values and norms in daily practice (van den Heuvel & Huberts 2003: 19). Integrity management then refers to the activities undertaken to stimulate and enforce integrity and prevent integrity violations within a particular organization.

Why integrity management?

There are some typical psychological barriers that seem to block managers from being convinced of the use of integrity management.

Barrier No. 1. "We do not have any significant integrity problems in our organization."

It might of course be possible that there are virtually no integrity violations in an organization, but the question is how the manager can be so sure about the truth of this claim. It is only through an appropriate detection system, as part of a wider integrity management framework, that one can have a reasonable certainty about the prevalence of integrity violations.

Yet, even if there would be no integrity violations, every organization still faces challenging dilemmas: difficult situations where it is not obvious what appropriate behavior would be. From this point of view the question is not whether there are integrity problems and dilemmas, but rather how one develops an appropriate integrity management framework that supports managers and trainers in identifying and resolving such problems and dilemmas. The advantage of this perspective is that it does not represent integrity dilemmas as nuisances that have to be oppressed or ignored, but as challenges that are faced by any

organization and to which any organization will have to develop an appropriate response.

Barrier No 2. "Introducing integrity management will only reinforce the lack of trust in our organization and in sports in general."
The assumption here is that there are integrity violations, and the fear is that they will be made public because of the installation of an integrity management framework, which might in turn lead to reduced trust.

The above statement is, in our opinion, highly questionable. It suggests both a very short-sighted vision and a strong underestimation of the public.
First, it is short-sighted because ignoring integrity violations might indeed reduce their actual exposure to become reported scandals in the short run, but it drastically increases the risk that the problems will emerge in a much stronger and damaging form in the future. Integrity violations have a tendency to expand. Tolerating integrity violations in the short run thus strongly increases the chance that there will be more violations in the future.

Second, this statement also indicates low trust in the public's capacity to judge sports. It is fair to believe that the general public and also supporters and fans are capable of distinguishing between an integrity violation that has come to light thanks to a well-functioning integrity management framework on the one hand and a scandal that has exploded because the situation had been neglected for a long time and necessary prevention measures were not taken on the other.

Barrier No 3. "However nice the intentions of integrity management might be, they will never have an impact because experience shows that an implementation deficit is unavoidable."
Although this statement contains a lot of truth, we think the conclusion is wrong.

We should first acknowledge that experience in many contexts shows that integrity management is indeed very sensitive to implementation deficits, the often lofty ambitions are not implemented on the ground. This implementation deficit is indeed problematic for at least two reasons. First, if an instrument is not implemented, it will not have any effect and all the efforts invested in designing the instrument will have been in vain. Second, if organizational members observe that integrity policies are not implemented, they might perceive the integrity management framework as mere window-dressing. Such a perception, might in fact increase cynicism and, through that, even increase integrity violations (Trevino & Weaver 2003).

However, contrary to the above statement, we think that these observations are not reasons to do away with integrity management. Instead, they should motivate to set up an integrity system that really makes a difference on the ground and thus helps to overcome the implementation deficit. The instruments and recommendations in this paper are particularly intended to overcome this implementation deficit.

Barrier No 4 "Volunteers and staff will consider it an insult when I would introduce an integrity management framework in my federation or organization. They will think that I do not trust them."
This barrier seems to be the most grounded one. However, it is in our opinion not convincing enough to conclude that a federation or club should therefore not develop proper integrity management. Integrity management not only has a rules-based, "compliance" dimension, but also a values-based, stimulating "integrity" dimension (see below). If the latter and its concomitant instruments (integrity dilemma training sessions, coaching, ambitious integrity codes, open organizational climate to raise integrity issues, etc.) are sufficiently emphasized, then the message towards the organizational members is one of trust, not of distrust.

In conclusion we want to argue that these objections/barriers are not convincing as reasons for not introducing an integrity management framework. A modern integrity management framework that thoughtfully balances rules-based and values-based approaches can provide an appropriate and positive response to the challenges and concerns mentioned above.

Two approaches to integrity management
This is a fundamental distinction in the literature on integrity management (Lewis 1991; Paine 1994; Maesschalck 2005). The "rules-based" approach to

integrity management emphasizes the importance of external controls on the behavior of the members of an organization. It prefers formal and detailed rules and procedures as means to reduce integrity violations and prevent corruption.

The "values-based" approach, on the other hand, focuses on guidance and "internal" control, i.e. control exercised by individual organizational members on themselves. Thus, rather than about controlling, this approach is about supporting and stimulating. This approach therefore aims to stimulate understanding and daily application of values and to improve ethical decision making skills through interactive training sessions, workshops, ambitious codes of values, individual coaching, etc.

A modern integrity management framework aims at both goals: preventing serious integrity violations on the one hand, and promoting integrity through stimulating understanding, commitment and capacity for ethical decision making on the other hand. Consequently, a modern integrity management framework judiciously combines both the rules-based and values-based approaches and ensures the coherent balance of their components within one integrity framework. The rules-based component will then constitute the elementary legal framework and will provide the "teeth" of the system that are inevitable to ensure minimal ethical behavior. The values-based approach will ensure that one is ethically more ambitious than this minimum of simply avoiding integrity violations.

Instruments of integrity management

Risk analysis

In a process of risk analysis one would map sensitive processes in an organization (e.g. hiring and promotion of coaches, decisions to select sponsors, etc.) and sensitive functions (typically staff-members with a responsible role in the sensitive processes or in decision making in general) and identify the points where there is a significant vulnerability for integrity violations. This analysis would then be the basis for recommendations to the organization on how to increase the organization's resilience towards these vulnerabilities, e.g. via function rotation, conflict of interest regulations, regulations about the acceptance of gifts and gratuities, etc.

Although such risk analyses are very useful, it is important to be aware that they have advantages and disadvantages. They provide a clear framework for organizational members and reduce the immediate risks for integrity violations, but their control-bias might also shape the organizational culture in undesirable directions. If the risk-approach is taken too far it might be seen as a sign of distrust by management, thus undermining the organizational members' intrinsic motivation, which might in turn reduce their tendency to behave ethically.

Analysis of ethical dilemmas

There are similarities between a dilemma analysis and a risk analysis but there is an important difference in overall philosophy. Dilemma-analyses tend to have a bias towards the values-based approach to integrity management and that will be reflected in the analysis itself as well as in the recommendations that are drawn from it. Two differences are particularly notable. First, while risk analysis focuses on problematic situations ("risks") that should be reduced, dilemma analysis starts from the assumption that dilemmas are inevitable and that it is not always desirable to avoid dilemmas. Sometimes it is better to accept that there are areas where dilemmas might occur and to trust and support the actors in dealing with them. Secondly, while risk analysis shows some distrust in the organizational members, dilemma analysis tends to be more trustful. The organization should know what the dilemmas are, so as to better support its members in dealing with them.

Consultation of staff and stakeholders

The aim here is to make an inventory of the concerns of and expectations of all stakeholders and use this as an input for the definition of integrity (e.g. in the form of an integrity code). Stakeholders include all actors within the sport organization or with an interest in the sport organization: i.e. the athletes and their parents, the coaches and other technical and administrative staff in the sport organization, the sponsors, supporters, staff of higher-level federations (national and international sport organizations), etc. Their values deserve attention in the organization's code or in other integrity-defining instruments.

Code of conduct or code of ethics

At this point it is useful to refer to the Panathlon Declaration. That document contains a number of important principles and guidelines, but it does not present itself as a real code of conduct for sports federations and clubs. This is more an advantage than a disadvantage, because it provides an excellent opportunity for sports organizations to translate the Panathlon Declaration into a code of conduct that is specific for its own members and that can be used in daily practice. Such a code will probably not only focus on ethics in youth sports, but on all ethical aspects of the organization.

A distinction is often made between a "code of conduct" and a "code of ethics". This distinction usually refers to both the contents of the code and the way in which it is enforced. The "code of conduct" is a typical instrument of a rules-based approach to integrity management. Like that more general approach, it starts from the assumption that people are essentially self-interested and that they will only behave with integrity when this coincides with their self-interest. Hence, a preferably detailed code of conduct will describe as specific and unambiguous as possible which behaviour is expected. Such a code of conduct will also establish strict procedures to enforce the code: systematic monitoring and strict punishment of those who break the rules. A "code of ethics", on the other hand, is rooted in the values-based approach. It focuses on general values, rather than on specific guidelines for behaviour, thus putting more trust in the organisational members' capacities for independent moral reasoning.

As for the choice between the two types of codes, the recommendation is to situate this in the broader question about the balance between the rules-based and the values-based approaches.

Structural measures

This subsection refers to specific measures that add rules or make other changes to the structure of the organization. Conflict of interest policy -- It is important for federations and clubs to be aware of possible situations of conflict of interest and to think of ways to avoid these. One case in point is the situation where a parent of a young athlete would also be involved in the selection of athletes within the same club. It is important to be aware of this risk and take preventive measures to avoid problems (e.g. by ensuring that this parent will never be involved in decision making concerning his/her own child).

Gifts and gratuities policy -- The general principle is that managers, trainers, referees and other actors are expected not to ask for or accept gifts or gratuities from individuals (e.g. parents) or organizations (e.g. sponsors) that may influence their impartiality. Yet, in practice is not always realistic and sometimes even not desirable to strictly prohibit all types of gifts and gratuities. One could imagine situations where a parent would be deeply insulted when he/she offers something of limited value as a token/signal of his/her appreciation for the trainers' efforts. Moreover, by strictly prohibiting such small gifts, one runs the risk of trivializing and even ridiculing integrity management.

Separating functions -- Particularly vulnerable tasks (e.g. advising, prescribing and giving nutrition supplements and substances to athletes; selection of athletes for an important international competition; contracting a new sponsor; selection of a city or country to organize an international competition, assessing the side effects and social impact of a mega sport event organization) could be split up in several sub-tasks that will be performed by different staff-members, thus increasing the number of people that would need to be involved if one wants to commit an integrity violation. It is expected that this will increase oversight and control, thus reducing the risk of integrity violations.

Rotating functions -- If staff performs the same vulnerable task for a long time, the risk will increase that they will develop undesirable routines and relations with athletes, parents, sponsors, media, providers or other stakeholders, which might in turn increase the risk for integrity violations. One could therefore consider to rotate those trainers, directors, administrators, referees etc. between different regions, specialties or functions. At the same time, one should also attempt to ensure knowledge management and maintain appropriate capacity in key functions.

Assessing instruments of personnel management

Personnel management contains a number of important tools for integrity management. Any actor

responsible for designing an integrity management framework should therefore analyze the different available instruments of the "HR cycle" (hiring, training, promoting, and firing) so as to assess to what extent they support the wider objectives of the integrity management framework. There are many ways to do this and we mention just a few.

In the recruitment process, one could double check the statements made by the candidate in his/her CV (checking references, asking for original degree certificates, etc.). One could also check the candidate's background, particularly looking for previous incidents of relevant misconduct (particularly, child abuse) and for living conditions. One could also probe for moral judgment capacities in the job-interview, e.g. by asking whether the candidate has been confronted with an ethical dilemma and how he/she has dealt with it or by asking how he/she would deal with a hypothetical dilemma that is typical for the job.

Integrity can also be assessed after the hiring process. For example, it could be explicitly formulated as a criterion in the evaluation and the promotion of staff. By doing this, management gives a clear signal that it considers integrity important, thus increasing the chance that staff will consider integrity important and behave accordingly.

Exemplary behavior by management (of local, national and international sport organizations)
Managers are of course absolutely crucial for an integrity management framework to be successful. Through their own behavior, managers give an important message about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable that is at least as important as the official communication.

Integrity Training
Integrity training is probably one of the most often used and advertised instruments of integrity management. As with all integrity management instruments the choice for a particular training type will depend on local circumstances and on the overall balance of rules-based and values-based instruments. Two general recommendations can provide additional help for this choice. First, it is important not to limit integrity training to the introduction of new staff or volunteers. The starting point of a career or a voluntary commitment is of course a very appropriate moment for introducing the new recruits to the organization's expectations in terms of integrity, but this is not sufficient. Laws, rules, codes and expectations from stakeholders change over time and a regular update in training sessions would be useful. This could consist of a regular update-training where the new elements of the normative framework are presented and where the techniques are practiced again. Yet, the follow-up could also be of a more structural nature. One option could be to institutionalize integrity-discussions in daily communication, e.g. by regularly discussing an ethical dilemma in staff meetings and meetings with parents, while using the techniques learned in the training session for this.

Integrating integrity in the regular discourse of the organization
One of the key success-factors for an integrity management framework is the impact it has, the extent to which it stimulates the members of the organization to act with integrity in their day-to-day activities. This subsection focuses on a number of instruments that are particularly effective in achieving this goal.

Announcing the integrity policy and the contents of the code through channels of external communication -- Examples of this include the organization's magazine, website, newsletter, targeted mailing, etc. This is of course a useful tool for ensuring trust among the general public, fans and the organization's stakeholders, but it could also have an important indirect effect upon the integrity of the organizational members themselves. The fact that the public, fans and other external stakeholders (media, sponsors) are now better informed could help to prevent certain types of integrity violations or problems. Stakeholders might now be less likely to bring managers and trainers in difficult situations (e.g. sponsors and media who directly contact athletes, providing gifts and/or putting inappropriate pressure on them) or on the contrary be more critical of organizational members' behavior, because they know what is expected from them.

Regular discussions of ethical dilemmas or other ethical questions and issues in the official internal

communication channels of the organization -- Examples of this include the organization's internal magazine, intranet, newsletter, etc.

Institutionalizing regular discussions of ethical issues in staff meetings -- One could agree that, at a regular interval, part of the staff meeting would be devoted to discussions of integrity dilemmas or other integrity-related questions. This would be an excellent way to follow-up on an integrity training and thus to strengthen its impact.

Institutionalizing regular discussions of ethical issues in individual meetings between the manager and his staff -- Many personnel management (particularly in the evaluation cycle) or strategic management (e.g. "management by objectives") systems prescribe some kind of regular planning meeting between the managers or technical directors and their trainers and supporting staff members, where goals and plans for the latter are agreed that might eventually be the basis for the evaluation. Forcing manager and supporting staff to discuss the topic of integrity in these conversations would serve as an excellent vehicle for institutionalizing the integrity discourse.

Coaching and counseling for integrity

This instrument implies the appointment of an actor or a number of actors within or outside the organization whose task it is to provide content-wise support to staff members with ethical concerns. This could take several degrees of institutionalization, ranging from the informal appointment of certain organizational members on the one hand to establishing a formal body, with some independence from the organizational hierarchy that provides written advice to organizational members facing integrity issues on the other.

Whistle-blowing policies

"Whistle-blowing" can be defined as "organization members' disclosure of illegal, immoral, or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers, to parties who may be able to effect action" (Miceli & Near 1985: 525). It is a complex affair. On the one hand is it obvious that managers, trainers, parents, supporting staff or other actors in the sports field, who take the risk of disclosing abuses with as their goal the public interest (e.g. preventing game fixing or bribery) or the prevention from harm (e.g. physical or mental abuse of children in sports clubs), deserve respect. On the other hand is it clear that the act of whistle-blowing usually damages the image of the organization concerned, which might in turn lead to decreasing trust among the public in the organization itself, but often also in sports as a whole (Lenskyi, 2006; Jennings, 1999). Whistle-blowing policies have the aim to maintain the desirable effects of whistle-blowing (the fact that the wrongdoing is reported) while trying to reduce the undesirable effects upon the image of the organization. Such a whistle-blowing policy therefore essentially consists of two components: a system for reporting wrongdoing and a system for the protection of those who make use, in good faith, of these channels.

The very idea of a "whistle-blowing policy" often provokes resistance. It is often associated with big scandals (that were indeed often made public by whistle-blowers) or with "witch-hunts" and paranoia. These concerns are unnecessary, at least on the condition that the whistle-blowing policy is well-developed. Whistle-blowing policies would actually help preventing public scandals. By providing additional reporting channels, they offer employees a way to report the wrongdoing without having to turn to the press or other public reporting channels.

Fair investigation and sanctioning of integrity violations

However important prevention and guidance are, every integrity management framework will need a significant component of enforcement. If the rules are clear for the organizational members and one observes significant transgressions of those rules, then sanctions will be necessary if the integrity management framework wants to maintain its overall legitimacy. The specific investigating and sanctioning mechanisms will differ largely from organization to organization and it is not useful to elaborate them in this context.

We limit ourselves to one important recommendation: ensure that both the procedures and the sanctions are perceived as fair (Trevino & Sims, 1994). The sanction should be consistent with and in proportion to the seriousness of the violation and with the sanctions for other colleagues who committed similar violations.

Conclusion

Our conclusion is that the sports sector should, without being forced, initiate a fundamental self-examination and subsequently elaborate its ambitions into workable (integrity) policies. In doing so, the sector would not only show transparency, accountability and responsibility, but would also be able to put things in perspective, prevent exaggerations and dramatization and suggest procedures that are in proportion to the size and the nature of the problems.

We argued that initiatives like the Panathlon Declaration act as a good starting point, but that they require implementation if they want to have a real impact. The latter is possible by designing an appropriate integrity management framework that not only prevents serious integrity violations in sports but also supports people in the sports world in dealing with complicated ethical dilemmas where it is not immediately clear what appropriate behavior would be. The key challenge will be to avoid the implementation deficit, i.e. the threat that integrity management will not go beyond lofty ambitions.

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