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**Developing a Structural Framework for Effective and Better Governance
in the Dominica (DMA) National Olympic Committee**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to determine the best practises for effective and better governance within the Dominica Olympic Committee (DOC). The issue of creating a framework for effective and better governance is significant, and this study utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods. Interviews with four (4) external National Olympic Committees were conducted, and a survey was emailed out to the fourteen (14) affiliate members of the Dominica Olympic Committee. Results showed that participants are overall in favour to form a policy/strategic board, and transition away from the more traditional/representation (i.e., administrative/ operational). Recommendations include that the Dominica Olympic Committee transition to a policy/strategic board, and hire either a CEO or General Manager.

RÉSUMÉ

Le but de cette recherche était de déterminer les meilleures pratiques pour une gouvernance efficace au sein du Comité Olympique de la Dominique (DOC). La question de la création d'un cadre pour une gouvernance efficace et meilleure est importante, et cette étude a utilisé à la fois des méthodes qualitatives et quantitatives. Des entretiens avec quatre (4) Comités Nationaux Olympiques externes ont été menés et un sondage a été envoyé par courrier électronique aux quatorze (14) membres affiliés du Comité Olympique de la Dominique. Les résultats ont montré qu'il existe une tendance générale à former des conseils politiques/stratégiques et à s'éloigner de la représentation/représentation plus traditionnelle (c'est-à-dire administrative/opérationnelle). Les recommandations comprennent que le Comité olympique de la Dominique passe à un conseil politique/stratégique et embauche un PDG ou un directeur général.

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INTRODUCTION

The Commonwealth of Dominica is situated in the Easter Caribbean among the Lesser Antilles between the two French Islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique. Not to be confused with the Dominican Republic, which forms part of the island of Hispaniola bordering Haiti and speaks Spanish, the Commonwealth of Dominica is an English-speaking former British colony which gained its independence on November 3rd, 1978. It was formally welcomed into the Olympic Family on the 1st of January, 1993.

The Dominica Olympic Committee (DOC), comprises nine (9) Executive Board Members; President, Vice President, Secretary-General, Treasurer, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer, three (3) Ordinary Members, and an Athletes Representative. It currently oversees fourteen (14) member affiliates; Athletes, Basketball, Boxing, Canoeing & Kayaking, Cycling, Fencing, Football (Soccer), Handball, Netball, Rowing, Swimming, Table Tennis, Tennis and Volleyball.

Presentation of the problem

“No governance measure can once and for all stop people with a firm decision to steal and manipulate. But good governance structures are necessary for honest leaders to curb corruption and deliver effectively on the objectives of their organisation” (Sports Governance Observer, 2013).

The Dominica Olympic Committee faces a number of challenges. The ever present shortage of efficient human capacity and financial resources, the familiarity and small island culture of behaviour and lack of concern for good governance, often pose several problems when it comes to preserving the integrity of the organization.

Most members when they join the board, are generally not so concerned about governance of the organisation, its rules, structures and procedures. Either it is too much work, or not important and is played off as not necessary, or they don't have the time.

There are members who may be too busy with their external work and careers to care very much about governance, and focus more on representing and serving the interest of their respective organisations and supporters who got them to a particular elected position, while there may be others seeking to take advantage of the organization's institutionalized weaknesses in order to reap benefits for personal gain.

Some members have little or no experience in board management, procedures, and operations, and not contribute very much. Some lack the required training, knowledge and skill sets needed to be in their position, and bring nothing of value to the organization, but all they want, is to be on the board of the Dominica Olympic Committee.

As the organization has grown and developed over periods of time, and has gone through some not so pleasant experiences, there is a need now for the board to become more professional and ethical. At some point, it will have to begin to consider employing a general manager or chief executive officer, as well as additional specialized management and operations staff.

The casual and relaxed cultural approach to management and operations in the past, has had its way of creeping in and taking over good governance practises which were not being followed. A few relationships went sour, giving rise to animosity and friction among members, and the trust, public image and reputation of the National Olympic Committee has been affected.

Every four (4) years the election process becomes a public spectacle, and a battle ground for those who seek only position and power in one of the most influential organizations in the country. There are various splinter groups within the general membership between those who, for whatever reason, don't like each other because of past grudges, and/or because of personal, social and/or political reasons, affiliation and connections with others.

When and where there is a lack of focus on developing procedures and structures, and the absence of sufficient guidelines and institutionalized policy, it becomes easy for scrupulous leaders to take advantage, and in some instances, control matters to prevent transparency or exposure.

With the election of a new board in 2017, and under new leadership of the current President, there has been a changing of the guard so to speak. Until March 2022, there were no serious attempts to have any major strategic review of the Dominica Olympic Committee. There are now ongoing consultations with a local attorney and a Project Officer to assist the DOC in a constitutional review and the creation of a strategic plan.

It is the hope of this author at the time of writing that these strategic and legal consultations and workings will continue until policies are developed and implemented in a timely and efficient manner, as well as continued engagement with its affiliate members.

To ensure its future growth and development, the current board of the Dominica Olympic Committee continues to make considerable strides in trying to improve on its management and operations, but so too should be its governance policies, procedures, and practises.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to seek ways to develop suitable best practises for effective and better governance in the Dominica Olympic Committee. It can hopefully be used as a guide and recommendation to implement in the very near future as part of its new Standard Operating and Administrative Procedures (SOAP). This must also be part of a *living and working* document for the Dominica Olympic Committee.

To address this purpose, the first research question is: What are the best practices for effective and better governance?

Once we know and understand what these best practices are, and the second research question is: What best practises can be implemented in the Dominica Olympic Committee for more effective and better governance?

Benefits of the Research

As there have been no studies done on this topic in Dominica, the benefits of this research should not only inspire future research and development, but also create room to conduct more in depth and open discussions on the topic of governance, and its implementation of best practises.

Governance is a very critical component of the spinning wheels of management and operations in the Dominica Olympic Committee; it simply cannot be left neglected. Implementing best practises would also help create a culture of change in the attitudes toward governance within its organization, but as well, trickle down to the management and operations of its own National Affiliates for them to do the same.

There has to be the willingness of the leadership of the Dominica Olympic Committee, both current and future, to take the necessary actions and enact changes for the betterment and the preservation of the organization.

This presentation of research is on the Dominica Olympic Committee; the author hopes that it can contribute to the literature, and also be of benefit to its current and future board and membership. It will surely take longer than this MEMOS year, and require some more years in the making before this study may be able to achieve any major significant impact.

REVIEW OF EXISTING KNOWLEDGE

Since there has been no other research or studies done on this topic in Dominica, this work will be able to fill a gap in the current literature. What currently exists, focuses mainly on developed countries and their National Olympic Committees, and International Sport Governing bodies.

Current literature does not address smaller, lesser developed countries and their National Olympic Committees, as well as examine their respective procedures and best practises for effective and better governance.

Governance Defined by the Current Literature

The British Standards Organization (BSI) defines governance “as the system by which the whole organization is directed, controlled and held accountable to achieve its core purpose over the long term” (Mercier, 2020). Since the role of the board is to govern, its job would then be to create and implement the system which delivers effective governance (Mercier, 2020).

Other sources define governance as the “exercise of power in the management of an organisation” (Lam, 2014, p 19). It is also about “oversight, steering, and directing, which can occur in 3 different spheres: organizational, systemic and political” (SIRC, Trend Report 2021-2022, Better Governance Principles, Parent, 2022, p 1). The organizational sphere deals with the way sport organizations direct and manage the allocation of resources as well as their financial information through ethically informed standards, norms and values (SIRC, Better Governance Principles, Parent, 2022, p 1). The systemic sphere entails “how organizations interact within a given system” (SIRC, Better Governance Principles, Parent, 2022, p 1). A local example would be any competition and cooperation the National Olympic Committee may have with the Government Sports Division, which, in itself, is not fully developed and there is also no national sports policy. The political sphere is quite critical and perhaps most relevant to this study, and defines “how governing bodies and governments steer sport organizations” (SIRC, Better Governance Principles, Parent, 2022, p 1).

Throughout the past years, the corporate world has been responsible for sowing the seeds of good governance which defines the power sharing, decision making process, communication, dissemination of information and accountability and transparency on financial matters.

The current trend, according to the SIRC, Sport Governance and Trend Report 2021-2022, has indicated the term good governance is being replaced “with better or improved governance” which means it must follow ethically informed standards (Better Governance Principles, Parent, 2022, p 1).

Requirements for Effective and Better Governance

It is imperative that Board members know and realise the importance of their roles and functions. They must consider five things, “act as servant leader, set direction, protect the organizational assets, separate the governing role from the management role, assure organizational performance, and ensure leadership succession” (Mercier, 2020). To be a servant leader implies good communication and networking between the various stakeholders to which they are accountable to, and actions and decisions are transparent. The board must also conduct self-evaluation, and act with integrity at all times (Mercier, 2020).

Part of the governance process is transparency where information flows freely from the top down. This is vital as those who are most affected by certain decisions has to be able to access information. Governing bodies must also be able to communicate effectively and efficiently to their affiliate members in an unbiased and professional manner. “The role of the governing body, structure, responsibilities and accountability, membership and size of the governing body, democracy, elections and appointments, transparency and communication, decisions and appeals, conflicts of interest, solidarity and recognition of other interests” (Lam, 2014, p 24).

Sport governing bodies have a major responsibility, not only to establish the rules of their game, and to develop and promote it, but knowing that “these goals can only be achieved through good governance and to ensure that the principles of democracy, independence, fairness, solidarity and transparency are respected” (Lam, 2014, p 24).

The board must set the direction for the organization which defines its Mission, Vision and Values and then employs a senior type of manager to work alongside the organization’s staff, to apply the full scope of their creativity and expertise in formulating and executing plans that lead to achievement of the board-specified purpose (Mercier, 2020).

It is vital the assets of the organization are also being protected by the Board so the importance of the identification of risk and its management and mitigation, comes into critical play. The organization must ensure its “financial, physical, intellectual property, information and data, image, credibility and future capacity” (Mercier, 2020), are not being left and managed in the wrong hands.

The lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities can hamper management and operations of the organization. There must policies put into place where there is a clear separation of powers between the Board and management, and understanding as to how authority is to be delegated. “The board governs, the CEO/ senior manager manages” (Mercier, 2020). In any organization where the board has to delegate the management there has to be a process where management is also held accountable for achieving the direction that the board set and protecting the organization’s assets to the degree that the board defined as necessary (Mercier, 2020).

The election processes of the organization should also be free and fair; democratic principles must be in place and if it is not organised, can lead to corruption. Encouragement of new persons must be facilitated and encouraged to become part of the governing body, and “shall be subject to a limited term of office” (Lam, 2014, p 26).

“Personal agendas, groupthink, tenure length and board size are key challenges” (SIRC, Board Composition, Parent, 2021-2022, p 1). Board members who have been appointed or elected and who already serve on an affiliate board, can have their own personal agendas that result in conflict of interest. These agendas can also lead to decisions that benefit themselves or their affiliate organization rather than the board’s organization. This might even cause damage to the organization’s image and reputation, or put it at a disadvantage (SIRC, Board Composition, Parent, 2021-2022, p 1).

Board members having similar backgrounds and skills, and who have also had an extended period of time serving, can also create some inefficiencies as well as dysfunction. The composition of such a board can create similar ways of thinking, and decisions not being challenged, or not wanting to make progress. Ultimately, the organization suffers because it performs poorly and may lead to stagnation (SIRC, Board Composition, Parent, 2021-2022, p 1).

In some other instances, the size of the board can also impact efficiency and governance of an organization. The larger the board, the more opportunities there may be for conflicts arising, bad communication, lack of involvement and decision making.

To counteract some of those problems it is advisable to adopt some best practises such as to “provide role clarity, choose required backgrounds and qualifications, diversity the board, build independence, vary tenure length, and minimize board size” (SIRC, Board Composition, Parent, 2021-2022, p 2).

The Constitution and By-Laws of every organization should include firm policies which are in keeping with its mission, vision and values. This is especially critical when contentious issues may lead to severe arguments and clash of personalities, (e.g., proper procedures should be established for resolving disagreements (Lam, 2014, p 27).

In situations where there is a chance of a conflict of interest arising, it is recommended that a specific body, committee or commission, undertake that role and “should have clearly defined responsibilities and reporting lines” (Lam, 2014. P 27). Conflict of interests occur when there is a compromise of objectivity, judgement and ability to act in the best interest of the sport organization. This is a very common scenario, especially when there are personal, financial or occupational considerations and benefits at stake (SIRC, Board Conflicts of Interest, Parent, 2022, p 1).

Engagement, Representation and Whistleblowing are three (3) of the several challenges related to conflict of interests, and which may be more applicable to this National Olympic Committee (SIRC, Board Conflicts of Interest, Parent, 2022, p 2). The issue of Engagement “arises from board members’ ability to strategically control discussions or limit other members’ involvement, and in doing so, influence a decision to ensure their own self-interests are protected” (SIRC, Board Conflicts of Interest, Parent, 2022, p 2). Having a policy/strategic type board to address the issue of Representation enforces the need to reconfigure the structure of the organization, and importantly, the makeup of its members.

It is quite common that there is a lack of independence when individuals are elected to boards with a representation-based structure and composition (SIRC, Board Conflicts of Interest, Parent, 2022, p 2). In other words, representation, (administrative/ operational type) boards are susceptible to conflicts of interest because of the motives, position and relationships of board members within the jurisdiction they represent. Actions and behaviours of board members can easily be influenced by these motives, position and relationships (SIRC, Board Conflicts of Interest, Parent, 2022, p 2). This would be a rationale to support that board members not sit on any other board of affiliate members in order to avoid or limit this conflict of interest arising. The issue of Whistleblowing has become a contentious one and depending on the situation, and especially within organization where effective and better governance is not very strong, there might be a reluctance for board members to implement a policy. Implementing a whistleblowing policy would mean exposing any personal, illegal or even criminal actions which a board member may be engaging in. Such grave conflict of interests “can inhibit a board member’s willingness or ability to present claims of misconduct or corruption” (SIRC, Board Conflicts of Interest, Parent, 2022, p 2).

Two (2) major intangible assets for any organization are its reputation and trust. The same can be said about individual board members. Reputation and trust are gained over time, but can be lost in a moment if there is any indication there may be some unethical behaviour. According to the European Commission (2013), “good governance is generally understood to imply the necessity to define clear roles, principles and responsibilities of sports bodies, as well as an enforceable code of ethics”. An organization which does not have good governance practises is also an indication of an unethical culture within the workplace. Sport organizations are often in the public spotlight and any negative impact can cause untold reputational damage which can have severe implications on its brand, and even on a human level (Sports Governance Observer, 2013).

For good governance to be achieved, there needs to be accountability, integrity and transparency. All 3 cannot work independently and must function together and form an interaction between the key elements. “The principle of transparency includes the possibility of accessing relevant information concerning the organisation, clear external communication, as well as external auditing and monitoring” (Maennig, 2017, p 3; Geeraert, 2016).

The base of each concept of democratic government is transparency, as well as the prevention of corruption and the mismanagement of people. Transparency can be a challenge to those organisations who are not used to openness or disclosure, and most often difficult to implement even after there has been a scandal, because the same members who are involved in the decision-making process, is also involved in the management process (Maennig, 2017, p 4; Chappelet, 2016). Accountability has to be part of transparency as “both principles require external auditing and monitoring, giving members as well as outsiders of the organisation the possibility of legitimately controlling checks and balances, posing critical questions and enforcing democratic structures within the company” (Maennig, 2017, p 4).

Another part of better governance is the role which integrity plays. It is an indicator of good social responsibility as well as “a symbol for successful control over corruption” (Maennig, 2017, p 4; Geeraert, 2016). The importance of the role sports organisations can play to stamp out corruption and unethical behaviour, is one which is absolutely paramount as a positive contribution and responsibility to society. “Corruption is the main threat to the integrity of sports organizations. It generally results from a desire for advantages for the occupant of the position” (Maennig, 2017, p 5). It is critical that effective and better governance measures be implemented in order to prevent it from occurring. Any major scandal can have dire consequences for a National Olympic Committee. The loss of public image, trust and confidence can be severe, and especially in this age of social media, bad news can travel very far very fast (Maennig, 2017, p 7)

One of the most important policies any board can put into place, is to ensure leadership succession (Mercier, 2020). It is a condition which is most often neglected, and any new board coming into power will have no guidelines or framework in place to ensure continuity. The Board also has to implement policies for review of management and staff, and to “ensure its own succession and establish or inform the recruitment and nomination process. This includes determining the desirable profile of its members and competences, but also attributes and character” (Mercier, 2020). The lack of experience, and knowledge, and various skill sets or systems which is required to govern effectively, can limit the potential impact of the organization, the lives of those who are about to receive it, such as athletes, coaches, officials, and volunteers. At its worse, it can imperil the organization’s future capacity to deliver those results (Mercier, 2020).

There should be a policy to implement term limits which can be set at either new, medium, and longer-term. For whatever personal reasons, members may feel a sense of entitlement and want to serve on the board for a long time without making any impact or major contributions. This is a very common problem when boards have no term limits and which “can lead to bias, complacency, favouritism, and lack of independence” (SIRC, Parent, 2022).

Another important consideration and one which should be encouraged and enforced is, in order to be effective and to avoid fatigue, board members should generally limit service to one committee so they get the opportunity to focus and develop expertise which can be better utilized (Morgan Johnson, 2020).

One rather interesting finding was, “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” (Parent & Hoyer, 2018, p 9). This form would be more applicable to an International Sport Governing Organization, or large National Olympic Committee; however, depending on the type of leadership will and culture and work ethic, this may also be possible within a smaller organization.

International Olympic Committee (IOC) Principles

According to the International Olympic Committee’s (IOC) Basic Universal Principles of Good Governance of the Olympic and Sports Movement, 7 operating requirements have been adopted to assist National Olympic Committees (NOC’s) in establishing a compliance framework of governance. These basic requirements include:

- 1-Vision, values, mission, and strategy
- 2-Structures, regulations, and democratic processes
- 3-Highest level of competence, integrity, and ethical standards
- 4-Accountability, transparency, and control
- 5-Solidarity and development
- 6-Athletes’ involvement, participation, and care
- 7-Harmonious relations with governments while preserving autonomy

1. “The vision, values, mission and strategy of the NOC are elements that allow it to establish its purposes and goals as an organisation and guide its governing bodies and office-bearers in the decision-making processes and the daily activities” (IOC Principles of Good Governance-PGG, 2016, p 1)
2. Structures, regulations and democratic processes, include such details as the NOC being a legal entity which is locally registered and incorporated as a non-governmental and non-profit sports organisation.
3. The highest level of competence, integrity and ethical standards simply implies that its executive board members be of a high level of leadership quality, integrity and experience.

4. Accountability, transparency and control refers to the accountability of members to the organisation, “in particular, the Executive body shall be accountable to the General Assembly of the Organisation” (IOC PGG, 2016, p 36). The importance of disclosure of financial information is crucial and must be transparent to the members, the public and stakeholders. “Internal control of the financial processes and operations should be established within the sports organisation” (IOC PGG, 2016, p 43).
5. Solidarity and development suggest that “the NOC should ensure that the major part of its resources is invested in sports activities and development (athlete support, coaches, education, sports promotion activities, training and competitions, infrastructure and equipment, etc)” (IOC PGG, 2016, p 48). There should also be “a fair and rational distribution of funds between sports activities and administration coats should be reflected in the NOC’s budget” (IOC PGG, 2016, p 48).
6. Athletes’ involvement, participation and care refers to “the right of athletes to participate in sports competitions at an appropriate level should be protected. Sports organisations must refrain from any discrimination and the voice of the athletes should be heard in sporting organisations” (IOC PGG, 2016, p 52).
7. Harmonious relations with governments while preserving autonomy includes cooperation, coordination and consultation while preserving the autonomy of sport. “Sporting organisations should coordinate their actions with governments. Cooperation with governments is an essential element in the framework of sporting activities, and the right balance between governments, the Olympic movement and sporting organisations should be ensured” (IOC PGG, 2016, p 61).

Two Models

Board structure can significantly impact the way decisions are made, and how certain organisations are managed. Two types of models stand out: Administrative/ Operational and Policy/ Strategic.

Administrative/Operational Boards are of the more traditional type and “hands-on in managing the organisation” (Sports Governance Academy, “n.d.”). In some instance there may be no functioning committees, however a small staff is employed to manage the operations of the office.

Policy/Strategic Boards on the other hand “develop policy and strategy for an organisation and hire an executive director and staff to implement policy and conduct the day-to-day operations of the organisation” (Sports Governance Academy, n.d.).

Because Administrative/ Operational type boards get caught up in the daily management and operations of the organization, it is often very difficult to also to make governance a primary focus. In doing so, a Policy/ Strategic board can bring in a new dynamic and be responsible for cultivating a new set of organizational culture, and “add value to the organization and to account meaningfully to key stakeholders (Gill, 2007).

The Power of Structure

It is important that organizations base their governance needs by regularly evaluating the structure of their board, and be ready to adjust it (Morgan Johnson, 2020). Every board is different, and the same can also be said about every board committee structure. Without regular evaluation, there is very little or no thought given to relevance and soon becomes bored or frustrated (Morgan Johnson, 2020).

Structures help influence good/better governance, and “refers to the formalisation, complexity and centralisation of your organisation and is the key to understanding how your organisation operates and how to influence its effectiveness” (Sports Governance Academy, n.d.).

Formalisation refers to how the organization uses rules and procedures (Sports Governance Academy, “n.d”). Complexity is the various layers in how the organisation is set up in terms of its hierarchy of management, number of departments and members, and centralisation refers to the “extent to which decisions are made at the top of the organization” (Sports Governance Academy, n.d.). The more complex an organization, the more communication and integration which is needed and this leads to more managers wanting to increase formalization (Sport Governance Academy). It is important to note, however, that the more formalised an organisation becomes, the greater chances there may be bureaucratic challenges arising such as “lack of adherence to the rules, slow decision making, and miscommunication” (Sports Governance Academy, n.d.).

Structures which are well defined can determine the success of a sport organization if it has a solid foundation in good governance. “Other than listing the relative positions, roles and responsibilities of all assemblies, committees, commissions and all other groups which make up the governing body, a clear chain of accountability and responsibility should be established among them” (Lam, 2014, p 25). The establishment of additional committees within the organization in the form of Subcommittees or Commissions also play a critical role in improved management and operations of the Board. “Subcommittees can engage experts in the area of strategic importance to the organization, and also offer a scrutiny function” (Sports Governance Academy). They can also offer much additional support to the organization in areas where goals can be monitored and achieved more closely than at the board level” (Sports Governance Academy, n.d.).

Board committees can be of two (2) types; Standing and Ad hoc (Morgan Johnson, 2020). The executive board is a standing committee which would also be referred to as an operating committee. Other operating or semi-operating committees may include an Athletes Commission, National Olympic Academy, Marketing and Publicity, Technical, and a Women in Sports Commission.

When specific governance, management and operational needs of the organization are not being met, it is wise to consider establishing additional Standing and Ad hoc committees or subcommittees or commissions of three to five members (Morgan Johnson, 2020). However most often, and especially within a small organization as the one this study is based, these are not seen as relevant, or considered too costly, or not important.

The addition of governance, management and operational Standing and Ad hoc committees can add good value to an organization and a good way to involve non-board members, and those outside the sphere of the organization (Morgan Johnson, 2020).

The Executive Committee is tasked with developing the strategy of the organization, and will “often hire the CEO and work with the CEO in establishing goals” (Morgan Johnson, 2020). It can also act as advisor to the CEO and liaison between its other members.

Other important relevant examples of Standing and/or Ad hoc committees include Audit, Finance, Governance, Membership, and Programs. A committee from time to time can also set up focused task force groups to concentrate on a particular problem and to find the solution (Morgan Johnson, 2020).

The role of an Audit committee is becoming more and more important as a standing committee, but it can also be an ad hoc committee. This committee is usually tasked with selection of the external auditor and “auditing the expenses of the board and the chief executive officer” (Morgan Johnson, 2020). It can also be responsible for developing risk management policy for the organization.

Any key component to organizational success is that of finance, and the role of a Finance committee or commission is paramount. A wide range of responsibilities of this committee will not only include overseeing the organization’s financial matters when it comes to the annual budget, its revenues and expenses, but also management and supervision of organizational assets and investments, and even fund raising (Morgan Johnson 2020).

A Governance committee is also a very important and critical operating asset for any board who values integrity and transparency. “A governance committee is responsible for regular review of bylaws, governance policies and practises, as well as board member recruitment, development and evaluation” (Gill, 2007). The roles and functions of a Governance committee during an election cycle, might also serve as the Nominations Committee or Commission, as they may be charged with supervising the process in a free, fair and ethical manner.

It would also be critical for this important committee to display strong integrity, and know how the board operates, and which skill sets are required to be effective in order to fill the positions on the board (Morgan Johnson, 2020).

Developing criteria for organizational membership as well as credentialing of its members may be a task undertaken by a Membership committee. Mind you, it is quite common in a small organization that office staff may engage in some of that responsibility, but “questions as to criteria for membership, granting of membership, and revocation of membership are usually reserve for the board” (Morgan Johnson, 2020). A Membership committee may actually be called upon to oversee elections, instead of the governance committee, as it is more closely engaged with the organizational membership so would set the required criteria. It may also organize the organization’s annual general meeting (AGM) and be tasked at identifying and delivering programs to its affiliates.

A Program(s) committee may also be a very useful one, and can be responsible for the formulating and delivery of a wide range of programs including matters relating to education, technology and government relations. Some of these programs may include long range planning and general oversight of programs within the organization (Morgan Johnson, 2020).

There are several other committees, and subcommittees, or commissions a board can set up to suit its management and operations agenda. Even where there are budget constraints, smaller organizations which may not be able to pay staff to take care and manage certain programs and functions, “committees may be vital to the operation of the organization” (Morgan Johnson, 2020).

As more sport organizations are developing codes of conduct “they are also forming Ethics Councils” to manage any violations (Morgan Johnson, 2020). Members of these councils, or committees or commissions, would be outstanding persons in the community, who may be active or retired and who do not serve on the organization’s board.

In order for an organization to be effective, and to enable its survival and success, it must change its practises and turn them into best practices. There is no particular board composition and structure that is “a one-size fits-all” (Parent, SIRC, 2022). In the end, a board must be flexible and be able to adapt to the changing needs of its organization, and decide what type of composition and structure is more applicable to suit the needs of its working environment.

DATA COLLECTION

The research was from qualitative as well as quantitative data collection to build a case study. There was also some measure of benchmarking to determine best practices.

The qualitative research relied on semi-structured interviews with other small National Olympic Committees, and included three (3) from the Caribbean, and one (1) from Europe as a benchmark for best practises. The quantitative portion of the study comprised an online survey requesting a simple response of whether they, Fully Disapprove, Disapprove, Slightly Disapprove, Slightly Approve, Approve or Fully Approve, was sent out to all of the 14 Affiliate Members of the Dominica Olympic Committee. The survey presented some the best practises necessary to improve governance, management and operations of the NOC. Each data collection source is described below.

Interviews

Participants were informed about the study and requested to respond to what they think of the following suggestions put forward by the author. They were also guaranteed confidentiality.

The four (4) scheduled interviews with the National Olympic Committees of Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Liechtenstein, were conducted in April 2022 over a period of 16 days, and used as the benchmark countries.

The National Olympic Committees of Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago were chosen because of their regional standing in the Caribbean, and although not at the same level of development, they are either full policy/ strategic boards, or on the way to become fully.

The National Olympic Committee of Liechtenstein was chosen because it is a very highly developed organization, full policy/ strategic in a very highly developed, but very small country, in the middle of Europe. It is small enough in size and number to be able to conduct this benchmark, and although its financial resources are way more than the other three (3) in the Caribbean put together, the interview was on which governance best practises they have in place within their organization.

The online interviews with the General Manager of the National Olympic Committee of Barbados, Secretary General/ Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the National Olympic Committee of Liechtenstein, and the President of the Jamaica National Olympic Committee, were conducted from the office of the Dominica National Olympic Committee. Each lasted no longer than an hour.

The final interview was conducted with the President of the Trinidad and Tobago National Olympic Committee while in Switzerland and lasted just over an hour. All four participants were briefed on the confidential study before being interviewed and signed a consent form.

Based on the literature noted above, these were the specific questions asked during the interviews:

1. What type of Board does your organization currently have; a general Administrative/operational or Policy/governance type?
 - a. Why do you have this type of board?
2. What is the make-up of professional capacity in your office?

Do you have a CEO, Finance type Officer or Accountant, Office Manager, a Marketing type Officer, someone in-charge of Projects, or any other paid individual (e.g., consultant/contractor)?
3. Do Presidents of National Affiliates/federations sit on your Board? Why or why not?
 - a. If so, are there limits to the amount of other affiliate boards they can serve on? Why or why not?
 - b. Our Constitution states that only the President and Secretary General may not come from National affiliates. What are your thoughts on whether the same should be extended to other Board Members to avoid conflicts of interest?
4. Do your Board members have any age and/or length of tenure limits?
 - a. If so, what are they?
 - b. Do you think it necessary to impose such limits? Why or why not?
5. What are the key documents that guide Board behaviour and activities in your organization (e.g., constitution or by-laws, codes of conduct/ethics, conflict of interest policies, travel policies, self-assessments)?
6. Does your Board possess any type of Governance & Integrity or Disciplinary type Commission?
 - a. If so, are they Standing committees or Ad-hoc?
7. Is there anything else you would like to say about best practices or advice regarding proper NOC governance?

Surveys

In addition to the interviews, a 10-question survey was emailed out to the 14 National Affiliates (national sport federations), and returned within 1 week. The members were asked to indicate whether they fully disapprove, disapprove, slightly disapprove, slightly approve, approve, or fully approve of the following:

1. The Dominica Olympic Committee should transition from a basic Administrative/ Operational, to a full Policy/ Strategic Board.
2. The Dominica Olympic Committee should have a CEO or General Manager to manage the day-to-day affairs of the Organization. The roles of the current Administrative Secretary and Capacity Officer can be more defined and the office can be supplemented by more specialized staff such as Administrative/ Human Resource Officer, Finance Officer, Marketing Officer and Technical Officer. The role of the Technical Officer would be to develop an Elite Program.
3. The Dominica Olympic Committee should implement Age limits for Board Members.
4. The Dominica Olympic Committee should implement Term limits for Board Members.
5. The Dominica Olympic Committee Board Members should not serve on any Boards of National Affiliates as to limit conflict of interest.
6. The Dominica Olympic Committee Board Members should not serve on more than one (1) Board of a National Affiliate.
7. The Dominica Olympic Committee Board Members should be required to complete a NOC Administrative Course before being considered to serve on the Board. This course will cover topics such as NOC Administrative, Finance and Governance procedures, and by extension, participation will also be open and encouraged to Board Members of National Affiliates in order to better manage the affairs of their own Organizations. The length of this course should take no longer than 2 days.
8. The Dominica Olympic Committee Board Members should be required to sign a Code of Conduct and Ethics.

9. The Dominica Olympic Committee implement all Board Members of National Affiliates complete a basic Sport Administrative Course conducted by the NOC. This course will be tailored slightly differently from the NOC Administrative Course as mentioned in point #7, but will still cover some of the more relevant topics.
10. The Dominica Olympic Committee should establish Commissions to oversee the governance and management of its operations such as an Ethics & Integrity, Finance, Legal, Marketing & Public Relations, and Medical.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The interview data was transcribed, and descriptive statistics were run from the survey data. Findings from the data analyses are presented below according to the best practices identified during the analyses.

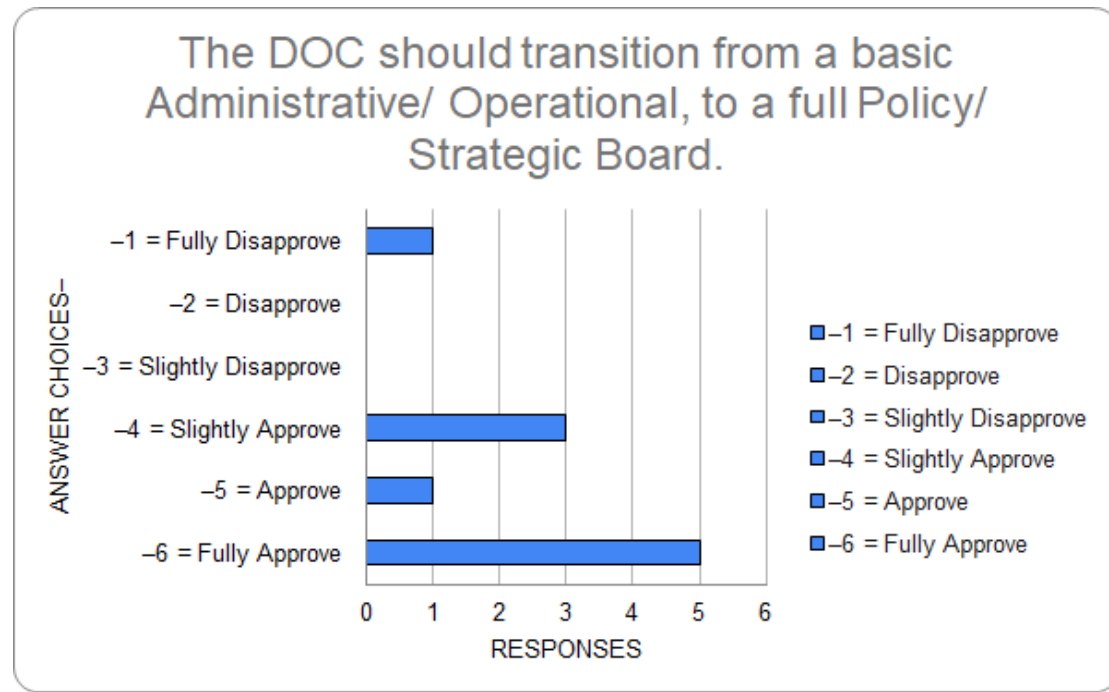
Best Practice 1: Having a Policy/Strategic Board

Findings indicate that a key governance best practice for NOCs is the use of a policy or strategic board. For example, Participant 1 revealed during the interview that, “by having a manager and full staff complement, it was no longer necessary to have board members involved in the day-to-day operations.”

In turn, Participant 4 noted, “has a full time Chief Executive Officer (CEO) along with 6 other members of staff. The CEO is also involved in marketing, and also has an assistant involved in communications including social media, and finance and some of the marketing is outsourced to a professional company. One person, plus an assistant, responsible for their elite sport program, Olympic missions and organising team support. There is another member of staff responsible for their grassroots sport program, a part timer responsible for communications, but not for social media, and mainly for general media and website information. The 7th member of staff is an apprentice who undertakes general office work and support for the other staff members.”

When the Dominica National Olympic Committee Affiliates were surveyed, 90% slightly approve, approve, or fully approve that the Dominica National Olympic Committee should transition to a full policy/ strategic board, as Figure 1 shows.

Figure 1. Best Practise 1 Survey Results



Best Practice 2: Having a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or General Manager (GM)

Another best practice identified in the dataset was the need for the NOC to have a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or General Manager, as well as other specialised staff to manage the day-to-day operations of the organisation.

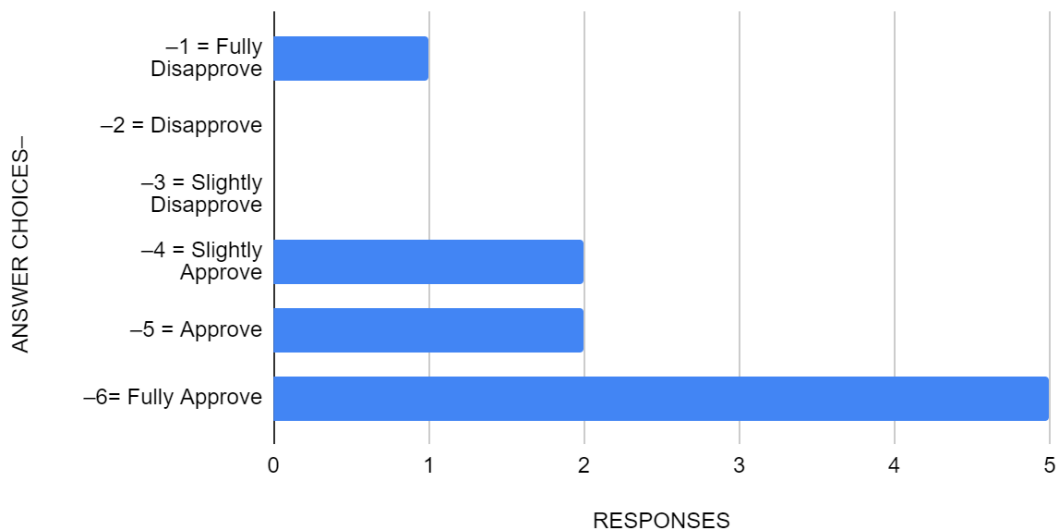
During the interview, Participant 2 noted, “the Secretary General performed the role as the CEO. They also had a member relations manager, an accountant, a projects officer, and 3 administrative officers. There is also a plan to hire 2 additional managers to deal with marketing specifically and the other to deal with constitutional matters. There is also an honorary consul which the board works very closely with on matters of their constitution and policy making.”

Participant 3 revealed during their interview that their office, “comprise a Senior Administrative Office, a Marketing Officer, an Administrative Assistant responsible for some of the accounting, however they also had an external Accountant. At some point in the future, it will be discussed whether there will be a transition for the office to have a CEO.”

The survey result revealed that, 90% of the National Affiliates of the Dominica Olympic Committee, slightly approve, approve, or fully approve of it having a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), or General Manager, as well as other specialised staff to manage the day-to-day operations of the organisation as Figure 2 shows.

Figure 2. Best Practise 2 Survey Results

The DOC should have a CEO or General Manager to manage the day to day affairs of the Organization. The roles of the current Administrative Secretary and Capacity Officer can be more defined and the office can be supplemented by more specialized staff such as Administrative/ Human Resource Officer, Finance Officer, Marketing Officer and Technical Officer. The role of the Technical Officer would be to develop an Elite Program.



Best Practice 3: Having Commissions

The data analysis also identified another best practice was the need for Commissions to oversee the governance and management and operations of the NOC.

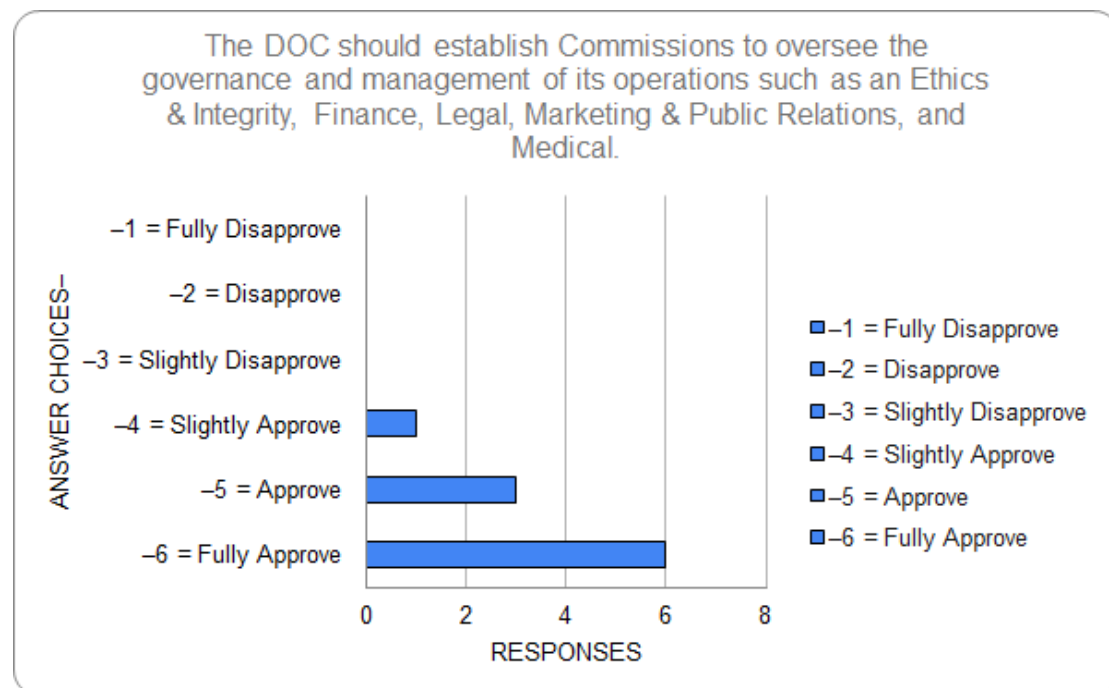
Participant 1 noted during their interview, “we have quite a few Standing Commissions, including an Administrative, a Finance and Audit, a Governance, an Allocations and Funding, a National Olympic Academy, and a Women in Sport. Each of the Commissions also have established charters which guide them in their operations. Persons from among the various national federations sit on these Commissions, however board members of the NOC are not allowed to serve on more than two or three Commissions. The President, Secretary General and general manager are invited to all meetings of the Commissions.”

Participant 2 noted they have “established Standing Commissions such as Finance and Audit, Corporate Governance, Games, Medical and Education. Each had their separate terms of reference specifying who can be a member, including disciplinary procedures and suspension and expulsion.”

One major point of Participant 2 which was especially noted is they “were also looking into plans to establish a Nominations Commission and an Ethics Commission. The Nominations Commission which will be set up to manage the elections process every four years.”

The survey results revealed that 100% of the Dominica National Olympic Committee Affiliates, slightly approve, approve or fully approve that it establish Commissions to oversee the governance and management of its operations, as Figure 3 shows.

Figure 3. Best Practise 3 Survey Results



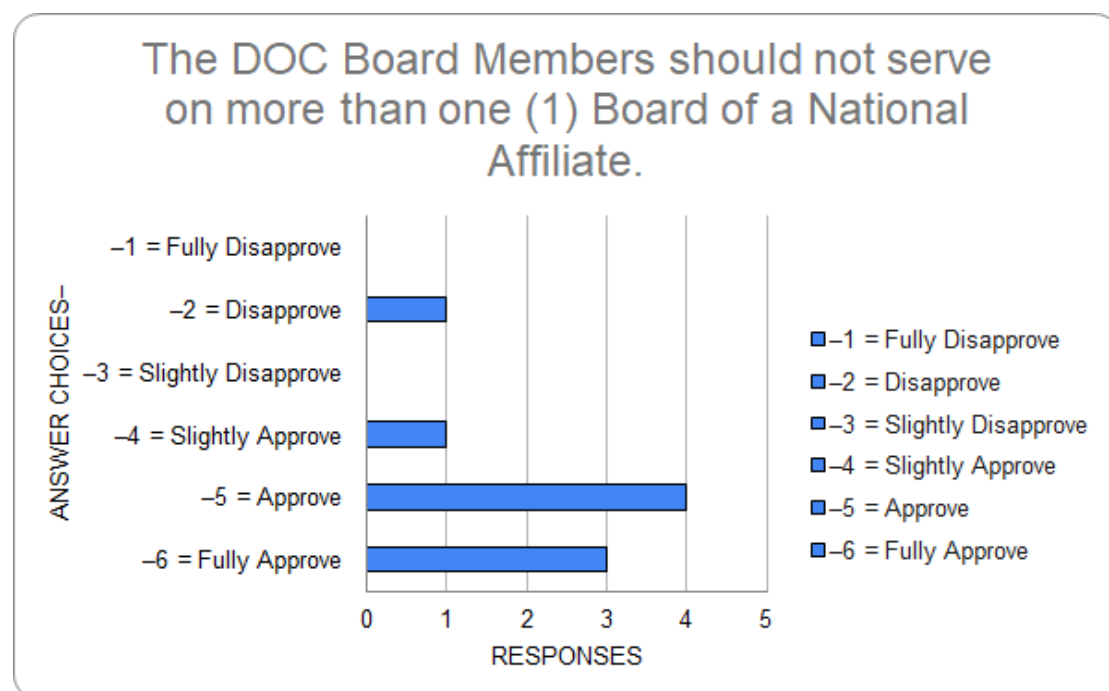
Best Practise 4: Restricting Executive Board Members from sitting on more than one (1) Board of a National Affiliate

Study participants also believed board members should not sit on more than one board of a National Affiliate. During the interview, Participant 1 stated that “although there were bylaws and a code of conduct, there is a thought up for discussion to now limit executive members from sitting on other boards of national affiliates. Although it is very difficult not to have persons who sit on another board wanting to be elected on the board of their National Olympic Committee, there was an unwritten rule that one should not be a President or executive member of another Federation. Fortunately for us, we also face no situations where there are actually persons serving on various Federations on our Board and also have in our code of conduct policy enacted in 2021 which the board and members of various commissions and staff are required to sign on annually and declare areas of potential conflict of interest.”

Participant 2 stated that the practise of Executive Board members serving on more than one (1) National Affiliate, “should be discouraged because it was not part of the charter of democracy. The thought being once you have been elected to a sport organisation, serve that organisation, and renounce the responsibility to the other. Currently we do not have any board member sitting on more than 1 other board.”

Supporting this idea, 88.88 % of the Dominica Olympic Committee National Affiliates surveyed, slightly approve, approve or fully approve that it restrict National Olympic Committee Board members from serving on more than one board of a National Affiliate as Figure 4 shows.

Figure 4. Best Practise 5 Survey Results

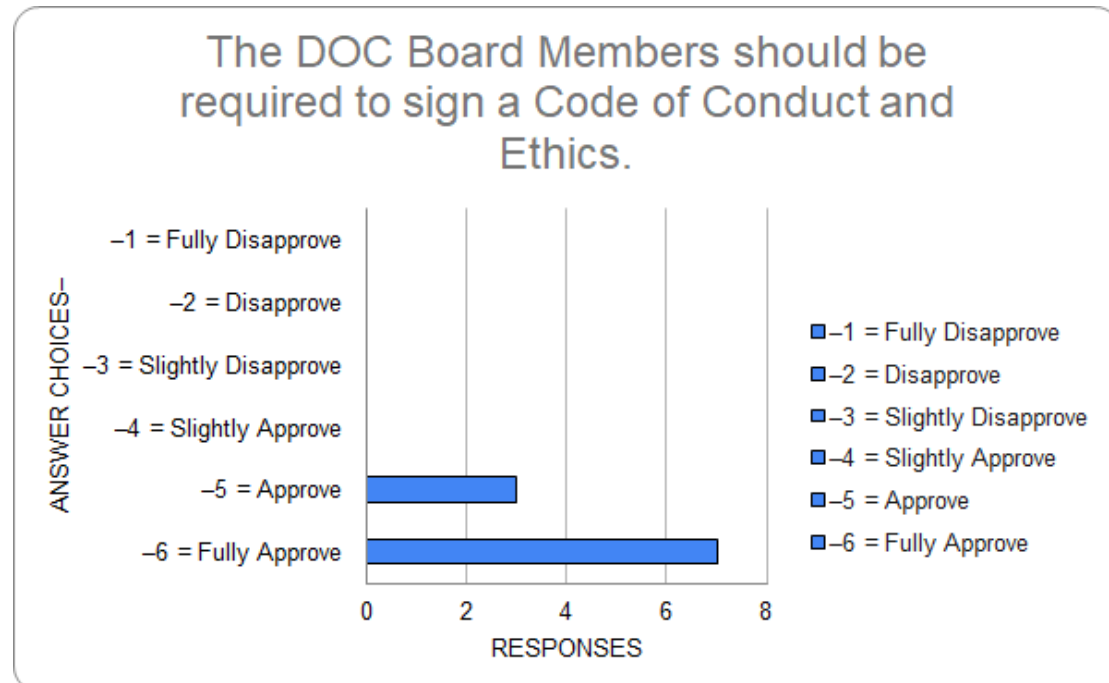


Best Practice 5: Requiring Executive Board Members to sign a Code of Conduct and Ethics.

In turn, study participants believed board members should sign a Code of Conduct and Ethics. During the interview Participant 2 said they “had a constitution and introduced a nondisclosure document when the new President came into power. Most of the board members signed; however, there was one who did not, and resigned shortly after. This particular nondisclosure document provided for infractions as well as consequences and conduct of the board. Within their Constitution it was also infused where a member could be expelled, and whereas the member is not an individual, an association could also suffer the same consequence for any violations or misconduct. Penalties are designed to be swift and certain things are considered non-negotiable.”

In the survey, 100% of the Dominica Olympic Committee National Affiliates approved or fully approved requiring Board members to sign a Code of Conduct and Ethics, as Figure 5 shows.

Figure 5. Best Practise 6 Survey Results



Summary of Findings

This research was conducted to find ways of developing a framework for effective and better governance in the Dominica Olympic Committee. The response to the interviews and surveys included participants from four (4) other National Olympic Committees, including one outside of the Caribbean, and fourteen (14) national affiliate members of the Dominica Olympic Committee, in which 10 responded to the survey.

It was revealed that most national affiliates supported the need for various critical changes related to the National Olympic Committee and its governance. It will, therefore, be incumbent on the current Dominica Olympic Committee leadership to ensure such changes are implemented to maintain any future integrity of its organisation, and trust from the general public.

The current and future leadership of the Dominica Olympic Committee has to instil a new “culture” and internal work ethic of governance and a better understanding of what it entails. This culture of change can only have a ripple effect on their national affiliates to make necessary changes within their own organisations as well.

It is imperative that a set of effective and best practises for better governance principles be agreed upon, and understood by all parties and stakeholder involved. The capacity within the Dominica Olympic Committee must be created and be made ready to accept and adopt these very critical changes.

The results of this study strongly suggest that the majority of the national affiliates are in favour of the transition from an Administrative/ Operational, to a Policy/ Strategic type of Board. With this transition, there will be a need to hire a General Manager or CEO, and consideration for increasing the capacity of the office to include other specialised staff.

The Recommendations being put forward, if implemented, will also place the Dominica Olympic Committee to a new standard within the region of the eastern Caribbean, as well as within the larger organization of the Americas.

Hopefully this will create a new example for the region for the adoption of best practises for effective and better governance within a National Olympic Committee.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended the Dominica Olympic Committee transition to a Policy/Strategic Board, with a General Manager or Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The current positions of Administrative Secretary and Capacity Support Officer can be retained, and are already supplemented by an Administrative Assistant and an Intern. Consideration should be given to hiring an in-house Finance Officer or Accountant, and a Marketing Officer or Assistant to add to the day-to-day management and operations of the organisation. The need to employ a Technical Officer would have to be considered as a medium to long term objective, as this role will be critical in building from local grass root level to an elite national sport development program. In the interim, the NOC would have to employ someone from overseas to develop and oversee the programme until there is sufficient local knowledge and expertise to take over.
2. It is recommended the Dominica Olympic Committee restrict Executive Board Members to sitting on other boards of national affiliates to only one (1).
3. It is recommended the Dominica Olympic Committee establish Standing and Ad hoc Commissions to oversee management and operations of the organisation. These Commissions will have their own specific mandates such as Audit & Finance, Ethics, Governance, and Integrity, Legal, Marketing and Public Relations, Medical. If a Legal Commission is not able to be formed, then it would be imperative of the organisation to retain or have at its disposal a legal counsel who is familiar with its Constitution, as well as sports law, with the advice and guidance from the IOC Legal Commission.

4. It is also highly recommended that a Nominations Commission or Committee be set up every four years to manage and supervise the elections process to ensure rules and regulations are being followed. This Commission will also be able to “screen” out those who are not eligible for elections, and a Declaration of Assets would also have to be signed by perspectives who are running for elections. Members of that Nominations Commission would not include any NOC Board Members, or Members of Boards of national affiliates. It would comprise either the national Chief Electoral Officer, or any official returning officer, an attorney or a legal counsel, and 3 other independent members. Board Members of national affiliates will also be eligible to serve on Boards of Commissions except the Nominations Commission. Already existing Commissions such as the Athletes, National Olympic Academy and Women in Sport would also need to be revamped.
5. It is recommended the Dominica Olympic Committee require all board members to sign a Code of Conducts and Ethics.

The details specified in Table 1 are set to specific timelines, with full transition by 2029-30. They also indicate how each of the 5 recommendations should be enacted in order of priority, and the specific actions that need to be taken.

Table 1. Recommendations for Management and Policy

Priority	Recommendation	Action	Lead	Resources	Time scale	Critical success factors
1	The DOC restrict Executive Board Members to sitting on other boards of national affiliates to only one (1).	Consult with legal & other relevant stakeholders, present to Board and get endorsement. Present to General Membership and agree to implement by the set time frame.	Pres & Sec Gen & Board	Time, legal, and professional expenses, Administration	Dec 2024	Start of implementation of best governance practises by early 2025 and in preparation for elections Commitment of Board and national affiliates

2	Highly recommended that a Nominations Commission or Committee be set up every four years to manage and supervise the elections process to ensure rules and regulations are being followed. Commission will “screen” out those not eligible for elections, Declaration of Assets signed by perspectives running for board positions. Members of Nominations Commission not Board Members, or Members of Boards of national affiliates. Include national Chief Electoral Officer, or any official returning officer, an attorney or a legal counsel, and 3 other independent members.	Consult with legal & other relevant stakeholders, Commission members, present to Board and get endorsement. Present to General Membership and agree to implement by the set time frame.	Pres & Sec Gen & Board Advisory group or Committee	Time, legal, and professional expenses, Administration	Dec 2024	Start of implementation of best governance practises by early 2025 and in preparation for elections Commitment of Board and national affiliates
3	The DOC require all Board Members to sign a Code of Conduct and Ethics.	Consult with legal & other relevant stakeholders, present to Board and get endorsement. Present to General Membership and agree to implement by the set time frame.	Pres & Sec Gen & Board	Time, legal, and professional expenses, Administration	Post-election 2025	Implementation of best governance practises by early 2025 Commitment of Board and national affiliates Must be signed by new board in a timely manner after elections.

4	The DOC transition of the current board structure of Administrative/ Operational/ Representation to Policy/ Strategic Hire a CEO and other specialized managers and officers.	Consult with legal & other relevant stakeholders, present to Board and get endorsement. Present to General Membership and agree to implement by the set time frame.	Pres & Sec Gen & Board or Advisory Group or Committee	Time, travel, legal, and professional expenses, Administration	2029-2030	Full acceptance and implementation of best governance practises Commitment of Board and national affiliates Continued integration into constitutions and strategic plans
5	The DOC establish Standing and Ad hoc Commissions to oversee management and operations. Commissions will have own specific mandates such as Audit, Governance, Ethics, Finance, Integrity, Legal, Marketing and Public Relations, Medical. If there is no Legal Commission then retain or have at its disposal a legal counsel who is familiar with its Constitution, as well as sports law, with the advice and guidance from the IOC Legal Commission.	Consult with legal & other relevant stakeholders, Commission members, present to Board and get endorsement. Present to General Membership and agree to implement within time frame.	New Policy/ Strategic Board & New CEO	Time, travel, legal, and professional expenses, Administration	2029-2033	Full transition into Policy/ Strategic board, Commitment of new management and operations, national affiliates and Commissions Continued integration into constitutions and strategic plans.

Concluding Note

For any organization, putting new measures and policies in place and implementing effective and better governance can be very difficult, especially because of the wide range of characteristics and diversity of all the various stakeholders involved. From the board down to the athletes, coaches, clubs, technical and office staff, commercial and non-commercial entities, education and social, to even political sectors, each wanting to have their own stake.

Power should be placed in the hands of those with integrity, and those who can deliver the most effective and better governance for the organization. Protective structures built around it, and firm policies implemented which will deter anyone bent on engaging in corrupt practises. The future of the organization must be safeguarded and secure from any unscrupulous leadership who want nothing more than to get into power and cause chaos and confusion.

In the case of the Dominica Olympic Committee, its future is looking a bit brighter, and hopefully the current board will continue with the strategic consultations it has started. That it will continue to work harder to ensure that the next election cycle starts off on the right foot, as this will be a big positive step in the right direction.

All key stakeholders need to know clearly, what their defined roles and responsibilities are, and be transparent. There must also be constant monitoring and enforcement of best practises.

As the major sport organization on the island, the Dominica Olympic committee gets much attention and scrutiny from the general public, so in a way, it has a type of moral obligation to ensure good social responsibility. Any pressure from the public will hopefully help ensure that the organization will do its job right.

In conclusion, it can be said that there is a need for more research in the area of governance of small island National Olympic Committees in the Caribbean. This one hopefully is a start to this process, and it will be necessary to broaden and continue more in-depth research in this area for years to come. Any ongoing and future study is bound to be useful and would help fill the gap in the literature which is severely lacking.

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