

The Difficulties of Making Sport Policy Succeed: A Case Study of Sri Lanka

Journal of Health Management
25(4) 802–812, 2023
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DOI: 10.1177/09720634231196941
journals.sagepub.com/home/jhm



Anupa Jayawardhana^{1,3}, Ruth Crabtree² and Joe Piggin¹

Abstract

Although a new Sri Lankan sport policy framework was introduced in 2012, no research has been done to evaluate the implementation of the policy framework. Consequently, the purpose of this study was to evaluate and identify mitigating factors in achieving the strategic goals of the Sri Lankan sport policy framework. Qualitative data and a quantitative approach were used to analyse and investigate the sport policy framework. A questionnaire (N = 240) and interviews (N = 05) were utilised to gather data from sport participants, non-sport participants and top-level sport administrators. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses suggested that the goals of the national sport policy framework have not been achieved. Lack of financial support, deficiency of government provision, institutional structural issues, and negative attitudes of policy actors were identified as mitigating factors in the process of policy implication. Developing an umbrella organisation for coordinating sport and government's support are vital to resolve those problems.

Keywords

Sport policy, Sri Lankan sport, policy evaluation, sport policy issues, policy implementation

Introduction

Modern sport and sport governing systems in Sri Lanka were introduced by the British when Sri Lanka was under colonial rule. In 1937, the National Olympic Committee in Sri Lanka (NOCSL) was established, and it is the sixth oldest Olympic Committee in Asia. In the late 1940s, there was momentum towards sport participation, which was driven by newly established free education institutes around the country (Nanayakkara, 2014). Before the 1940s, competitive sports organised by national sport federations were limited to a few schools in Colombo, Kandy, and Galle (Gunawardhan, 2001). Leisure activities were included in the syllabus of missionary schools, and women also had the chance to participate in sports. The Free Education Act introduced by the government in 1945 changed the economic, social, and cultural situation in the country (Nanayakkara, 2014). As a result, after 1950, sports activities spread widely to free government schools around the island, and participation was stimulated by school curricula which also included physical education as a module, boosting the interest of children (Nanayakkara, 2014). In 1966, sport was identified as a subject under the Ministry of Nationalised Services. Further, the Department of Sports Development (DSD) was established in 1968 under the Sports Ministry for human resources development in sport (Ministry of Sport, 2011).

Sport law was introduced in 1973 (No. 25 of 1973) by the government appointed in 1970, and is still sanctioned in Sri Lanka. The National Sports Council, District Sports Committees, and a legal framework for the National Olympic Committee were established by the Sports Law Act. This act attempted to establish supervision for national sports federations, and guidelines for all matters concerning sport. However, 'the salient feature of the law is the unbridled powers vested in the Minister, to directly interfere with national sports at every level' (Weliamuna, 2014, p. 66). Consequently, the Sports Minister was set as a powerful person by the Sports Act in 1973. Thus, political interference in sport increased. Democratically elected national sport governing members were suspended several times by the Minister of Sport, and interim committees were appointed to run sports governing

¹School of Sport Exercise and Health Sciences, Loughborough University, Loughborough, United Kingdom

²Department of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation, Northumbria University, Newcastle, United Kingdom

³Department of Sport Science and Physical Education, University of Kelaniya, Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

Corresponding author:

Anupa Jayawardhana, School of Sport Exercise and Health Sciences, Loughborough University, Loughborough LE11, United Kingdom.

E-mails: anupa@kln.ac.lk; a.m.j.wilawa-mudiyanselage@lboro.ac.uk

bodies in a manner favourable to the minister. This situation has motivated politicians, political party supporters and retired military personnel to join the sports administration, which has negatively affected the structure of civil sports governance. As a result, often, national sport federations were at risk of being suspended by international sporting federations. For example, the Sri Lanka Badminton Association was suspended by the World Badminton Federation (BWF) in 2015, citing political interference and a flawed constitution (*The Sunday Times*, 2015). However, recently the question of political interference in the sports administration of Sri Lanka was raised by the NOCSL, following the intervention of other international sport federations (Weliamuna, 2014). Consequently, there was growing discussion on developing a new sport policy framework for a better sport governing system in the country. As a result, a national sports policy paper was presented to the Sri Lankan parliament in 2012 to mitigate mismanagement in sports and direct the long-term progress of the sports sector (Welmilla, 2012).

This sport policy paper was put forward in 2012 because the Sports Act of 1972 was recognised as obsolete, and major drawbacks had become visible over time. Each government elected to the parliament pursued its own sport policy, resulting in a number of issues. Thus, action has been taken to implement the Sri Lanka National Policy for Sports published in Gazette No: 1758/23 of 16 May 2012 with the approval of the Cabinet (Ministry of Sport 2012a). It has been proposed to develop the field of sports on a systematic and scientific footing. It has also been proposed to develop sports to play an integral role in the development process of the country, through developing Sri Lankan sport regardless of age, gender, social status, physical ability, and political and religious complexion (Ministry of Sport 2012a).

Seven goals have been set forward in the national sport policy document, such as: (a) provision of knowledge, (b) providing equal opportunities for everyone to participate in sports and enjoy the benefits of it, (c) making sports an integral part of Sri Lankan culture and society as well as enriching the quality of life, physical wellbeing and health of all Sri Lankans, (d) improving access to resources and appropriate infrastructure for the overall development of sport, (e) assisting every Sri Lankan to achieve the optimum potential in sports and (f) ensuring Sri Lanka's international image as a successful sporting nation is both viable and sustainable, as well as developing a Sports Industry in Sri Lanka, and (g) creating new employment opportunities and contributing towards economic growth (Ministry of Sport, 2012b). However, Weliamuna (2014) observes that there are no disclosed criteria in many vital aspects of sports such as the recognition of a new sport as a national sport, allocation of resources (including infrastructure), selection criteria for players, and how the sports economy is to be managed. Thus, it is important to identify the results of the policy implementation without these vital aspects.

On the other hand, Weliamuna (2014) states that an independent evaluation of this newly implemented sport policy is essential, as a national policy framework in Sri Lanka has never been implemented and neither has an evaluation of this policy been conducted by the government or academics. Thus, evaluating the national sport policy framework in Sri Lanka is important as academic research regarding sport policy and sport development has not been conducted in Sri Lanka. Consequently, this study endeavours to evaluate the strategic goals of the Sri Lankan sport policy framework.

Sport Profile of Sri Lanka

The responsibility for the development of sport and identification of talent in Sri Lanka involves different types of organisations such as the Ministry of Sport, Ministry of Education, Provincial Councils, and National Youth Services Council. Formulation of national policies, plans and programmes for sports, and the provision of resources for sports are the main responsibilities of the Ministry of Sport and Recreation. The Ministry of Education and nine provincial councils play a pivotal role in creating a sporting culture, identifying talented athletes, and bringing them onto the national level. Fifty-four primary sports federations, the National Sports Council, and the National Olympic Committee are the three pillars maintaining a competitive sporting culture in Sri Lanka. The NOCSL provides the bridge to international support for Sri Lankan sport. The National Youth Services Council (NYSC) also participates actively to deliver and organise sporting activities in Sri Lanka.

The DSD aims to develop human resources by providing formal training for sportspersons, arranging the required background to refer these athletes to national and international competitions, providing coaching workshops to coaches, and awarding national and overseas scholarships to athletes (Ministry of Sport, 2012b). Furthermore, the DSD is involved in infrastructure development and the supply of sports equipment and goods. The National Institute of Sports Science (NISS) was established under the provisions of the Sports Law No. 25 of 1973 to provide sports education for athletes and coaches. The Institute of Sports Medicine preserves both physical and mental fitness of athletes in Sri Lanka. The institute conducts physical fitness tests for athletes, helps in the maintenance of sports nutrition, and also assists with the protection of athletes' mental stability (Ministry of Sport 2012b). The Sugathadasa National Sports Complex Authority consists of six institutions providing the necessary infrastructure facilities for training sportspersons for national and international track and field sports events (Ministry of Sport, 2012a). These four primary institutions function to deliver the main goals of the Ministry of Sport, Sri Lanka.

Methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed for gathering data. The questionnaire was prepared in English and was translated into Sinhala so that everyone in the sample population was able to understand the questionnaire. In total, 240 research questionnaires (paper copies) were distributed, and every questionnaire was returned. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: the first part covered the bio data of the participants; the second consisted of evaluation questions of the present situation of the strategic goals; and the third part consisted of questions that identified people's suggestions for achieving the strategic goals efficiently. The demographic portion consisted of seven items including gender, age and level of education, income, distance to the city centre, and preferred type of sport or physical activity. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of 32 items, which were divided into eight major parts: providing knowledge, accessibility, providing opportunities for everyone, making resources available, creating appropriate infrastructure, assisting every Sri Lankan to participate in sports, creating new employment opportunities, and making sports an integral part of Sri Lankan culture and society. Responses to these questions were structured in the form of a five-point Likert scale rating, with options including 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'neutral', 'disagree', and 'strongly disagree'. Respondents were asked to evaluate the questions in terms of their favourable or unfavourable opinions on the achievement of particular goals of the sport policy framework. The third portion consisted of three questions focused on people's opinions of government interventions into sport. If they felt that there is a problem with achieving the strategic goals of the national policy framework, possible solutions were identified through the questions in the final stage.

A total of 240 questionnaires were distributed by six research assistants in three districts. Colombo District, Anuradhapura District, and Kegalle District were selected because those districts have a high variance of sport facilities. On the other hand, these three districts represent low-level poverty head count, middle-level poverty head count, and high-level poverty head count, respectively (Department of Census and Statistics, 2016). Thus, as the living condition of the people in these districts differs, utilising each will allow the collection of data showing different perspectives. The data in Colombo district were collected through the Sugathadasa Sports Complex, Independent Square, and Torrington Place. Anuradhapura district's data were collected near the Anuradhapura public ground, and data in Kegalle district were collected near the Kegalle public ground. These places were developed by the government recently and equipped with new jogging paths. Therefore, many athletes and people who regularly partake in physical exercise come to these places. This made it convenient to gather data reflecting a broader perspective in just a few locations. On

the other hand, professional athletes who participate in sports in these areas also come from different part of the districts. Thus, the data will not skew the results. The questionnaires were distributed randomly to participants in sports, including professional and amateur athletes, those partaking in physical activity, and recreational sport participants. Sport participants possess a better understanding of the existing sporting system in the country, as they interact with the current system. First, the participants were asked to read and sign the consent forms confirming their agreement to take part in the study. Then, they were asked to fill out the questionnaires and write their opinions regarding the last two questions at the end. Some research assistants were asked to write down opinions for the last two questions, as dictated to them by the participants.

The questionnaire data were transferred onto SPSS Version 22 manually to draw up descriptive statistics. The questions in the second part were categorised into eight variables, namely: providing knowledge, accessibility, creating opportunities for everyone, making resources available, creating appropriate infrastructure, assisting every Sri Lankan to participate in sports, creating new employment opportunities, and making sports an integral part of Sri Lankan culture. The mean value was calculated by dividing the total of the scores obtained from all the questions related to a particular variable by the number of questions asked in relation to that particular variable. The mean values of each variable were interpreted as follows: the highest score of an individual indicated that the national sport policy's strategic goals have not yet been achieved, and the lowest score suggested that they have been achieved. The demographic factors were converted into numeric values, assigning a special number to identify demographic factors through the questionnaire. Then, demographic factors were cross-tabulated with other factors to identify how different people responded to the questions.

Interviews were conducted with one administrative member of each sports organisation involved in delivering the national sport policy framework, such as the DSD, NISS, the National Sport Federations, the Universities Sport Department and the Provincial Sport Departments. As these organisations bear different responsibilities with regard to sport development, each officer represented a different coalition working towards different goals. Officers were selected from various levels of the organisations, ranging from the director of an organisation (top rung) to a sport development officer (bottom rung). In addition, officers' capability of providing facts and information as well as their experience in the sport sector were concerned to select them for interviews. One member from each policy delivery organisation was adjudged sufficient to gain a greater understanding of the present situation of strategic goals in the national sport policy framework. Specific administrators were chosen through existing contact networks of the researcher, but care was taken to ensure that they matched the

research criteria of the study. In addition, all interviewees have experience working in different areas of the country. Due to the need for confidentiality, interview participants' profiles have not been detailed in the article. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and questions were designed to identify the current situation and issues of implementing the policy. Particularly, questions were asked about the relationship between the government organisations' involvement in policy implementation, resource distribution, and political intervention.

The interviews were then transcribed and coded. The interview transcripts were pre-coded into broad categories according to the main policy areas. Selective coding was used to identify themes emerging from each interview carried out with each participant. Then, themes were used to identify the issues in the policy implementation.

Findings and Discussion

The following section discusses and evaluates the implementation of the strategic goals of the Sri Lankan national sport policy framework based on quantitative and qualitative data. The interview transcripts were pre-coded into eight sections: providing knowledge, accessibility, providing opportunities for everyone, availability of resources and appropriate infrastructure, government provision, creating new employment, making sports an integral part of Sri Lankan culture, and people's suggestions for overcoming problems. These are the main areas towards which the national sport policy framework has been targeted. The discussion has been structured on the basis of these eight codes, along with sub-codes drafted from each interview. The quotes from each of the five interview participants has been referenced as P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5, to indicate the specific interviewees from which particular opinions were gathered.

Providing Knowledge

'Providing sporting knowledge to everyone' is one of the main goals in the national sport policy framework of Sri Lanka. The government has established NISS as an independent institution to deliver sport-related knowledge to athletes, coaches, and the general public. Sotiriadou et al. (2017) observe that providing knowledge to athletes and coaches is a key factor in helping a country achieve international sporting success. The NISS, as described by one of its officers, delivers a wide range of sport-related educational programmes.

Furthermore, the government has provided opportunities for students who have participated in national and international level sporting events to be selected to universities. Recently, sport-related subjects have been introduced in many government universities as part of the programme, and this

has created more opportunities for expanding knowledge in sports. Thus, it can be seen, the government responsibility has been distributed into several arm's length agencies.

Now we provide opportunities for talented athletes to gain higher education. We have discussed with the University Grants Commission and got approval to grant entry to at least five to ten athletes into universities each year. Also when a student enters into a government university, the University Grants Commission provides a few extra points for students who have participated in national and international level sporting events. (P3)

However, when the behaviour of actors and the structures of the institute were analysed directly, some barriers to delivering educational programmes could be identified. The values and positive attitude of policy community positively impact on policy implementation stage (Harris & Houlihan, 2016). Thus, on the other hand, negative attitude of policy actors would hinder the policy implementation process and expected outcomes of the policy.

According to Houlihan (2005), institutions can create alternatives for problems and provide acceptable solutions by their capacity to shape actors. Holt et al. (2011, p. 497) suggested that 'the role of non-profits, the onus is on government and sport organisations to provide subsidies to sustain participation'. Therefore, government and governmental institutions support for enhancing sport participation is vital at the grass-root level. But the NISS's role of delivering national policy was questioned by interview participants.

The government's institutional involvement in professional coach education, and athlete education, and investment on sport science, and sport medicine, is vital for success in sport (Houlihan, 2014). However, several respondents stated that Sri Lanka's institutional mechanisms are not adequate for delivering a quality sport education system around the country. Although, Goodwin and Grix (2011) observed that contemporary governments tend to encourage para-statal and private organisation for delivering sport, people seek more government's involvement in sport sector. Thus, some participants emphasised that the lack of resources in government organisations is a barrier to achieving the goal of 'providing sport knowledge to everyone in Sri Lanka'.

Overall, quantitative data analysis indicated that the goal of 'providing sport knowledge to everyone' has been achieved to a certain extent ($M = 2.6292$). However, when the data was cross-tabulated with the distance of respondents' residences from the city centre, it could be seen that people living close to the city centre (less than 5 km away) were more satisfied (76%) with educational facilities, compared with only 45% of people living far from the city centre (above 20 km away). Further, while 70% of high-income respondents (over Rs. 60,000 per month) said that they have sufficient opportunities for sport education, only 40% of respondents from the lowest income group (up to Rs 7,500 per month) were satisfied with

the existing sport-related educational opportunities in the country. Thus, people's perception of the implementation of the goal varied according to their living area and income. Overall, the target of strategic goals in the national sport policy in Sri Lanka has been achieved to a certain extent. However, the policy delivery institution should create a programme for changing attitudes of the people to spread more knowledge about sport.

Ensuring Accessibility, Providing Resources and Appropriate Infrastructure

Ensuring accessibility for participation in sport is one of the major goals in the national sport policy framework. Wicker et al. (2013) observe that accessibility and appropriate infrastructures are one of main motivational factors to increase participation in sport. The previous Sri Lankan government invested significantly in sports infrastructure facilities (Ministry of Sport 2011, 2012a). However, the current government's investment on sports infrastructure facilities has been questioned. Interview participants observed that the recent government's priority for developing infrastructure facilities is at a low level in comparison with the previous government.

Participant 1's statement emphasises the unequal distribution of facilities in Sri Lanka, and clarifies the lack of sufficient resources below the district level. The unequal distribution of facilities and resources has meant limited accessibility to sport. Both Participants 1 and 2 emphasised that sport-related resources are limited to Colombo and a few main cities in the country. Some rural areas do not have infrastructure facilities or the necessary human capital.

We only have playgrounds. But it is not sufficient. In Kegalle district there are 11 divisional secretariat divisions. And the facilities differ among them. In some divisions there are no sports officers, in some divisions there are no proper playgrounds. When considering the facilities for the general public, there are no reasonable facilities for physical fitness for the general public as well. (P4)

Participants also stated that the NISS does not have an adequate staff strength for delivering its programmes across the country, and the DSD also faces a lack of sufficient staff for delivering an effective policy framework. Participant 3, for instance, stated that 'the department has only 104 coaches for 53 sport federations. Only 45 coaches for 9 provincial councils. So, only 149 government paid coaches in Sri Lanka'. On the other hand, Participant 5 observed that the staff members in the top administrative level do not have sufficient experience in sport, while secondary level administrators, such as those at the national federation level, do not have adequate knowledge about administration.

The quantitative analysis emphasised that while 60% of people who live close to city centres are satisfied with the available facilities, only 42% of rural respondents are satisfied with the available facilities in their areas. Although the majority of respondents were satisfied with the availability of sports facilities, one of high standard deviations (0.67801) indicate a high variation among answers. It implies that people have highly variate perceptions regarding the availability of resources and facilities.

It is important for administrative officers in charge of sport development to have knowledge of both management or administration and sport. Lack of either management knowledge or sport knowledge would result in organisational failure (Taylor et al., 2015). In the case of Sri Lankan sport, Participant 5 stated that administrative officers in Sri Lanka were satisfied with the amount of financial resources they were provided with. However, it was also observed that there could be unequal distribution of financial resources. Further, some administrators do not have sufficient knowledge about financial management to efficiently manage the ample funding.

Dramatically increased financial support and assistance for sport from the governments in South and East Asian countries can be observed in recent years (Mangan et al., 2013; Nanayakkara, 2012). Similarly, investment and assistance in sport has been rapidly increasing over the past few years in Sri Lanka. However, efficiency of financial usage has been questioned as priorities for investment have not been identified by the government.

The quantitative analysis indicated that there is a perception that the objectives of 'ensuring accessibility' and 'making available resources and appropriate infrastructure' have been partly achieved ($M=2.5365$). Overall, the government's endeavours to make resources available and create accessibility to sport were recognised. However, interview participants emphasised that the resource delivery process is hampered by structural problems and political interference.

Currently, sport is more associated with politics. So, the support given for sport depends on the power of the politician. It is understood that, rather than providing the necessary equipment to the Yatiyantota divisional secretariat, they provide it to urban divisional secretariats like Kegalle and Rambukkana. (P4)

Houlihan and Green (2008, p. 686) observe that political support and high legitimacy of institutionalised systems have helped to established successful sporting cultures. However, the findings of this study indicate that political interference negatively affects the implementation of the national sport policy in Sri Lanka. Cultural values and norms allow the influence of political interference into sport. There is a lack of people's voice against political interventions which negatively affect policy implementation.

Creating Equal Opportunities for Everyone and Assisting Every Sri Lankan to Achieve Optimum Potential in Sport

The national sport policy framework also endeavours to create equal opportunities for everyone, and to assist every Sri Lankan to achieve their optimum potential in sport. Bringing sport to everyone and creating more opportunities for people to participate in sports are the objectives targeted under these two strategic goals. The government has created several programmes as part of its endeavour to create equal opportunities and assist everyone to achieve their optimum potential in sports. According to Johnston et al. (2018), creating a proper talent identification process would be able to establish equal opportunities for everyone to achieve their optimum potential in sport at the international level. A talent identification process has been established in Sri Lanka by the Ministry of Sport and the Ministry of Education.

The talent identification programme was introduced very recently and the goals of the national sport policy framework are in the process of being implemented. O'Connor et al. (2016) observe that talent identification and development programmes should be dynamic and interconnected. Green and Houlihan (2005) observe that a strong inter-organisational relationship between Athletics Canada and its key delivery partners was taking Canadian athletes onto the international podium. However, according to interview participants, a lack of interconnection between responsible organisations can be seen in Sri Lanka.

The contribution of the Ministry of Education towards these programs is zero. The Education and the Sports Minister should act as one and should implement the necessary actions. (P1)

While students as a group come under the Ministry of Education, the responsibility for talent identification falls on the Ministry of Sport. However, the study's findings show that there is a lack of proper interconnection between these two institutions. Negative attitudes of some school principals, teachers, and parents towards these programmes have also impacted their success. A positive attitude of the community (Larkin & O'Connor, 2017) and support from responsible organisations (O'Connor et al., 2016) are the most important factors for the success of a talent identification process.

Participant 1 further emphasised that unequal and unfair selections have occurred in the school selection process. Collins and Buller (2003) observe that children's socioeconomic status has been a concern when they get selected for sports in England. This study found that their findings hold for Sri Lanka as well.

What is happening today is, several sports societies get together, create players, appoint officers, and collect some money and send the players abroad. Even that is unfair because the priority is given for those who can throw money around. (P1)

Participants observed that attempts at talent identification by the Ministry of Education failed due to a lack of financial support, and that a lack of human resources have prevented talent identification programmes from being applied everywhere across the country.

On the other hand, the government has introduced several fitness programmes aimed at the general public. These programmes are conducted through the NISS, DSD, and provincial councils. They have seen considerable participation and have generally been successful.

The societal values and norms in physical activities help to high rate of sport participation in a country (Ronglan, 2015). In Sri Lanka, interview participants observed, community support for government sport and physical training programmes has declined due to rapid changes in culture.

To tell you the truth, to be honest, via introducing jogging tracks we have attempted to get people involved in sports. In the past there were places where children got together to play volleyball, football and such sports. But now we rarely see those things even in villages. (P2)

Further, the quantitative analysis showed that 65% of male respondents felt that they have enough opportunities to engage in sport. On the other hand, 48% of female respondents felt that they do not get sufficient opportunities to get involved in sport. Further, almost 40% of respondents in the younger age group (less than 31 years old) think that they do not have appropriate opportunities to get involved in sport. However, 93% of people older than 42 years believed that they have adequate opportunities for sports. Thus, the perception of the availability of opportunities for everyone to achieve their optimum potential in sport varied according to gender and age of the respondents.

Overall, it could be seen that there are some existing programmes for creating opportunities to participate in sport and physical activities. However, government support has been questioned in terms of financial investment and the provision of sufficient human resources. Quantitative data analysis also suggested that the objective of 'creating equal opportunities for everyone' has been achieved to some extent ($M=2.6906$). Correlation analysis also suggested that income does not affect the process of delivering key objectives of the national sport policy framework. However, the targets of 'government provision to achieve optimum potential in Sport' have not been fulfilled yet. A high level of standard deviation also emphasised a high variance of people's perception of the

achievement of this goal ($SD=5.617$). The qualitative data analysis has emphasised that a lack of financial support and human resources are the reasons for the failure of the policy. The provision of financial support by the government is an important factor in implementing a successful policy framework in a country (Stewart, 2017). The results of the current study also confirm his findings.

Creating New Employment

‘Creating new employment’ is another objective targeted through the national sport policy framework. Developing post-career opportunities and creating new employment in the sports industry will lead a country to success in sport (De Bosscher et al., 2006). Government endeavours to develop career paths for athletes have been recognised. More recently, educational programmes and career development workshops have been conducted by the NISS. However, lack of knowledge of English and Information Technology have been identified as the main barriers for the development of successful career paths for athletes.

Debois et al. (2015) mentioned that support and education of athletes is essential for a successful transition from the athletic to the non-athletic stage. However, interview participants stated, proper plans to create career opportunities for athletes in the sporting industry could not be identified. Some ministers have been involved in providing employment opportunities to athletes in government organisations. However, most of the athletes do not have a proper career path after they retire from sport.

Only about 25% have that opportunity. And there are the 75% of athletes who do not get any job opportunity after walking out of sports. There is no such definite process for that. But they should be given an appointment as teachers or as coaches, or at least they (the government) should provide placements in private organisations. (P4)

Most of the job opportunities also relate to a few sports like rugby, cricket, or badminton. Many athletes work in the three-armed forces and the Sri Lanka police. Although many European countries have a proper policy framework to provide athletes with career advice, educational support, personal finances, and media and presentation skills training (Baron-Thiene & Alfermann, 2015; Lupo et al., 2015), model of post career support in Asian countries have been questioned (Tshube, 2014). This study could also not identify such kinds of specific processes for developing career opportunities for athletes in Sri Lanka. Even the private sector has not identified capabilities for athletes to work in organisations. The quantitative analysis also demonstrated people’s dissatisfaction (mean = 3.1736) regarding the government’s lack of

involvement in post-career support. Participant 1 emphasised that there should at least be a programme for providing employment opportunities to athletes in the private sector.

Overall, participants mentioned that the number of job opportunities (in terms of direct job opportunities such as PE teachers, sport and leisure centre managers and sport development officers) in the sports industry have increased in the last three years, especially in private schools and some private firms. However, they stated the need for proper programmes to create the desired qualifications in sportspersons to serve industry jobs.

The qualitative and quantitative data analysis ($M=3.1736$) suggested that the objective of ‘creating new employment’ has not been achieved because there is still no proper programme or structure for career development for athletes, and no proper programme to promote athletes’ capabilities for getting jobs in the private sector. Sum et al. (2017) also find that social-ecological environment should be developed properly for better dual career development in Hong Kong and Taiwan elite athlete. Thus, in here, the research would suggest a proper policy implementation for developing such an environment in Sri Lanka.

Making Sports an Integral Part of Sri Lankan Culture and Society

‘Making sports an integral part of Sri Lankan Culture and Society’ is an objective of the national sport policy framework aimed at encouraging every Sri Lankan to participate in at least one sport. De Bosscher et al. (2015) have mentioned the vital role played by the creation of a widespread sports culture in bringing about success on the international podium. Hutchins (2011) argues that the media plays a significant role in bringing people into sport for creating a sporting culture in a country. Grix (2009) emphasises that the UK has a good institutional structure to promote a sporting culture because subjects of media culture and sport have been integrated into one organisational structure. However, in Sri Lanka, there are several ministerial positions and several separate departments which lead to disunity between departments. On the other hand, there is no proper programme to get the media behind sports and to promote sports.

The economic situation is also a barrier for developing a sporting culture in Sri Lanka. As people do not have leisure time to engage in sport, members of the public would rather try to bolster their incomes than engage in a sporting activity. Dionigi and Litchfield (2018) identify that increasing disposable income of people would benefit to creation of a sporting culture. However, in Sri Lankan context, as majority of people do not get sufficient income, they always try to spend their time for earning money.

To create a sporting culture people should have leisure time as I've mentioned earlier. Without having leisure time in their lives, they don't have time for another thing. Only thing they could be thinking of is how they get to work and earn money from the moment they get up. In an economic struggle like this, how would people develop a sporting culture? (P2)

The quantitative analysis also indicated that the goal of 'making sports an integral part of Sri Lankan Culture and Society' has not been fulfilled yet. Furthermore, the quantitative analysis demonstrated that there is no significant difference in perceptions regarding this goal across age groups or genders. However, this category reported the highest standard deviation (0.93825) in the analysis, which emphasised the variation among perceptions regardless of age groups or genders. The overall perception was that the government has to implement a proper programme to bring together the media and sports organisations to promote sport across the country. At the same time, there should be a long-term agenda to create enough leisure time for the general public.

Overall Evaluation of Sri Lankan Sport Policy Framework

The Sri Lankan national sport policy framework was introduced in 2012 and has been in place for four years now. A key requirement of this policy framework is that various institutions work together to achieve its targets. Governance through networks and partnerships between organisations that have identified their own responsibilities are necessary factors for creating a strong sporting system in a country (Phillips et al., 2011). However, most of the policy delivery institutions in Sri Lanka have not satisfactorily identified their responsibilities, and do not cooperate with organisations above and below them. The lack of cooperation between organisations is one of main barriers for implementing the national policy framework. On the other hand, as participants observed, most of the national organisations organise only national championships and other provincial competitions.

In addition, the independent sample *t*-test has suggested that perceptions regarding the achievement of goals differ according to gender (male; $M = 3.02$, $SD = 0.49$; female $M = 2.83$, $SD = 0.47$; $t(239) = 2.92$, $p = .004$). Further, it can be identified that age groups of respondents affect perceptions of overall policy implementation ($r = -0.25$, $p < .00$). While younger people tend to have less satisfaction of overall policy achievements, older people do satisfy about existing achievement of the policy framework. However, the quantitative analysis found that the national sport policy framework has not achieved targets for its strategic goals (mean = 2.966, standard deviation 0.49104). Developing sport infrastructure facilities and introducing new sport programmes are essential to achieve the development goals

of a national sport policy framework (Hu et al., 2016). However, in Sri Lanka, proper sport development programmes and infrastructure development agendas had been initiated, but when the government changed in the 2015 national election, the process and programmes were also changed. There should be long-term constant support for achieving policy targets, which continues even though governments change.

Often, the responsible administrators do not continue one agenda due to a lack of legal enforcement in the policy delivery system. Proper legal enforcement to continue implementation of a policy framework has been suggested by several participants. It is important to increase the accountability between grassroots sport organisations and higher echelons, including Ministers of Sport to achieve the regional targets of implementation of a sport policy (Keat & Sam, 2013). However, it is difficult to find accountability between national organisations and the Ministry of Sport in Sri Lanka.

The correlation analysis has suggested that the goals of the policy framework have been successfully achieved in urban areas to a certain extent, but policy implementation is hampered in rural areas due to a lack of resources. There are several problems in non-urban areas in terms of a lack of human resources and infrastructure facilities. It is especially difficult to find sponsorship for athletes from rural areas. Moreover, the income of athletes from rural areas is much lower than those in urban areas.

Another point to be noted is that education system of the country has a negative effect on the implementation of a national sport policy. Children do not have sufficient time to engage in sports and parents do not provide enough support to participate in sports. Children are directed towards educational achievement, and attention has primarily been given to classroom-based education. Furthermore, it is difficult to identify robust government involvement in the resolution of these problems.

A lack of interconnection between institutions is the main barrier for implementing the national sport policy framework in Sri Lanka. There is no proper interconnection between the Ministry of Sport and the Ministry of Education for delivering the desired sport policy.

Though it has been started, no steps were taken to continue that. In particular, the issue faced is how to incorporate sport into the national school system. (P1)

Therefore, one of the necessities is for the government to implement a proper programme to incorporate sport into the national school system, as schools can play a major role in the development of sport (Houlihan & Green, 2009). Goodwin and Grix (2011) argued that a proper interconnection between policy delivery organisations will help to achieve the expected results of the policy framework. However, as previously

mentioned, the attitude of top-level governing officers and parents is one of the main barriers to implementing a sustainable system in the country.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to evaluate the national sport policy framework in Sri Lanka, and to identify the mitigating factors in achieving the targets of the policy framework. It could be concluded that the actions taken by the government to implement a national sport policy are not sufficient to achieve the goals of the national sport policy framework. In particular, the present neo-liberal government's involvement has been questioned by several policy delivery organisations. Fahlén et al. (2015) confirmed Goodwin and Grix's (2011) observation of a governance narrative from the strong executive to provide governance through networks. Fahlén et al. further observed that governments which promote new managerial concepts encourage private enterprises to invest in the sport and recreation sector. However, government contribution to sport development is still pivotal in Sri Lanka. Thus, people expect strong government intervention with a top-down approach to policy implementation. The DSD and NISS have introduced several educational, infrastructure development and career development programmes to fulfil the goals of the national policy framework.

Proving accessibility is one of the most successfully achieved goal of the policy framework. Contemporary governments' interest in investing money on facilities such as public park and jogging path, would be the reason for peoples' satisfaction on accessibility. On the other hand, after end of the civil conflict, private sector investment in fitness and health industry would case to high satisfaction in this policy goal. In addition, the goal of 'providing education knowledge to everyone' is another one of the most successfully achieved goal of the policy framework. The NISS and government universities have played a significant role in helping to achieve this target. The Ministry of Sport has invested a considerable amount of money on the development of sports. However, overall, the goals of the policy framework have not yet been achieved. In particular, the implementation of policy in rural areas is below the average level when compared to urban areas.

The study has identified several factors which can be regarded as barriers to the implementation of the national sport policy. The attitude of the individuals delivering policy and the attitude of the target groups are the main barriers for the implementation and achievement of the targets. Harris (2014) observed that negative attitudes of policy delivery individuals and target groups will negatively affect policy outcomes. Coaches' and athletes' attitudes towards sport education is another main barrier to the delivery of sport

education programmes. Children's participation in sport has declined due to parents' and teachers' attitudes towards sport. However, Rowe's (2015, p. 58) finding of giving children a 'quality experiences are likely to help reinforce their already positive attitudes towards sport'.

Lack of resources is another barrier to the implementation of the national sport policy framework around the country. There are no sport development officers in some divisional secretariat areas. Most of the divisional secretaries do not receive sufficient monetary support to develop sports and to identify talented athletes. The resources have been centralised to urban areas. However, it is important to decentralise the resources into local-level sport organisations to develop sport in non-urban areas (Liang, 2016). In Sri Lanka, most of the resources have been centralised in urban areas such as Colombo and Kandy. Policy delivery organisations such as the NISS and the DSD do not have sufficient human resources to deliver policy equally to all parts of the country. Research suggests that the government develop a proper network and partnership (Goodwin & Grix, 2011) with local organisations to deliver specific goals of the policy framework.

Further, most of the people in the National Sport Federations do not have appropriate managerial knowledge to deliver the national policy. Phillpots et al. (2011) identify the role of business persons with wider knowledge of management techniques and practices in creating effective and efficient organisational environments. Thus, individuals with managerial experience should be given top level positions in the policy delivery organisations. Whitson and Horne (2006) observe that political issues in society have influenced the sport sector too. The current study has also found that political issues in the public have influenced policy delivery. In particular, the process of resource distribution has been influenced by politicians. Emotional and personal attachments have been considered in resource distribution at the local level. Specifically, affiliation to particular political parties is considered when decisions are taken.

Institutional structures also negatively affect the policy delivery process. The study has suggested that it is necessary to form a central sport authority including all independent institutions, such as the NISS and the Institute of Sports Medicine. Weak interconnections between the Ministry of Sport and the Ministry of Education have negatively affected the policy delivery process. Houlihan and Green (2008) argue that a pyramid-style organisational structure would help to implement a sport policy framework effectively. Piggin et al. (2009) mentioned that the power relationship between organisations is important. Although research suggests decentralisation of power into local levels through partnership and para-statal organisations, a central organisation should have the control of power for monitoring the process of policy implementation. However, this research also identified Grix and Phillpots's (2011) finding of asymmetrical power relations and largely unchanged patterns of resource

dependency between national and local governmental institutions. The current study has also identified that rapid change of top-level administrative persons in policy delivery organisations has decreased the efficiency of the process. Debanne et al. (2014) observe that stability of individuals in the decision-making process will create an effective and efficient policy delivery process.

Overall, the government should provide more resources for policy delivery organisations and try to develop a programme to change the attitude of target groups in the policy delivery institutions. Furthermore, solutions should be identified to mitigate the issues in organisational structure of policy delivery organisations, particularly when the school system is getting involved to the policy delivery process. Responsibilities should also be divided between organisations, and there should be a legal mechanism drawn up to ensure adherence to the national policy framework.

The current research was carried out using mixed methods to evaluate the strategic goals of the national sport policy. The researcher has suggested that the qualitative research method could be used for further policy analysis research, which is exploratory in nature. Qualitative research methods could be deployed with a larger sample of the population to gather additional aspects of the policy process. Future studies could focus on one particular topic, such as a financial issue, structural issue, or the negative attitude of a target group, and could develop solutions for each. Furthermore, future research could be developed in several areas, such as public perception on national sport policy, provincial council intervention on national sport policy, and the responsibility of national governing bodies on delivering a national sport policy framework in Sri Lanka.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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