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**Modernisation and governance in UK national governing bodies of sport:
How modernisation influences the way board members perceive and enact
their roles**

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Abstract

Modernisation has been a key objective of many national governments for at least the last two decades. A significant element of the modernisation agenda has been the focus on improving the governance of public sector and, more recently, voluntary sector organisations. In the UK voluntary sport sector, this has involved policy statements, governance monitoring systems linked to public funding and a number of ‘good governance’ guides, aimed primarily at the boards of national governing bodies of sport (NGBs). Previous research has critically analysed modernisation and explored its effects, most often at a macro level. Very little research, to date, however, has looked at the influence of modernisation on the boards of NGBs. This article seeks to do just that, drawing on the first national survey of board-level governance in the UK and an in-depth, longitudinal case study of one UK-based NGB. It empirically examines which board roles NGBs consider most important and statistically compares large and small NGBs. It then draws on direct observation of board and committee

meetings, in-depth interviews and analysis of key organisational documents to examine how modernisation influences the way board members perceive and enact their roles. In so doing, this article draws together the political science research on modernisation and the sport governance research on board roles and seeks to promote closer integration between these complementary streams of research.

Introduction

Modernisation – under one label or another – has been a conspicuous element of government policy in the UK and elsewhere since at least the 1980s. In the UK, it was especially prominent under successive Labour governments from 1997 to 2010 and it has continued under the Conservative-led coalition and current Conservative governments. During this period, modernisation has had a major impact on a range of public services, including local government (Hartley *et al.* 2002), health (Blackler 2006) and welfare (Powell 2008). It has also – and this provides the context for this article – had a major impact on the voluntary sport sector.

One significant aspect of the modernisation agenda has been a focus on governance. Indeed, Finlayson (2003, p. 65) argued that, in the UK, New Labour practised ‘not only the modernisation of governance but a kind of governance through modernisation’. In the voluntary sport sector, this has involved policy statements on governance reforms, the establishment of governance monitoring systems linked to public funding and the development and promotion of a

number of 'good governance' guides, focused primarily on the boards of national governing bodies of sport (NGBs). As part of the modernisation agenda, therefore, central governments and national sport agencies in various countries have deliberately attempted to influence the way that boards of NGBs operate.

But how has this influence been experienced by those within NGBs? In particular, how has modernisation influenced the way NGB board members perceive and enact their roles? This is a question that has seldom been addressed directly in the academic literature. Political science researchers have looked at the impact of modernisation on NGBs, but have rarely examined its influence on the perceptions and actions of individual board members. Conversely, governance researchers have looked at the way NGB board members perceive and enact their roles, but have rarely examined the influence of modernisation on these perceptions and actions. The question is significant, however, as NGBs are arguably the key 'delivery agents' in the voluntary sport sectors of many countries (Houlihan and Lindsey 2012, Sam and Macris 2014) and boards are the key decision-making entities within NGBs. This article seeks to address the question directly through empirical analysis of a UK-wide survey of NGB board-level governance and a single, longitudinal case study of a UK-based NGB. In so doing, it seeks to promote closer integration between political science and governance researchers in the area of sport policy.

The article is structured as follows. The next section provides further background on modernisation, with a particular focus on the voluntary sport sector in the UK. The following section examines the political science literature on modernisation

and the governance literature on board roles and professionalisation, arguing that there is a gap between these areas of focus, primarily to do with level of analysis. The following section describes the methods used in the current study and the section after that presents analysis of the key findings. It looks first at what roles board members consider to be most important (and how this differs between large and small NGBs) and then at how board members perceive and enact their roles and how this is shaped by elements of the modernisation agenda. Finally, the article draws conclusions and offers suggestions on how to move research in this area forward.

The context: Modernisation in the voluntary sport sector

Modernisation, despite its significance to government agendas in the UK and elsewhere, remains an elusive concept. Houlihan and Green (2009, p. 679) suggest that it can be understood variously as: a set of themes, such as managerialism, choice and responsiveness; a set of more concrete principles, such as partnership development and stakeholding; a set of tools, such as inspection and audit; and a wider narrative, which has negatively framed bureaucratic government practices, while privileging managerial knowledge and equating modernisation with social progress. In addition, Grix (2009) argues that modernisation is closely related, but not interchangeable, with concepts of 'new managerialism', 'new public management', 'managerialisation' and 'governmentality'.

Modernisation, as a term, is most associated in the UK with successive New Labour governments. However, analysis suggests it should be understood as one element of a much broader neo-liberal agenda (Newman 2001, du Gay 2003, Clarke 2004). Indeed, for many observers, modernisation under New Labour represented a continuation of previous Conservative efforts to reform the civil service – e.g. through ‘stimulating more entrepreneurship’ and ‘making civil servants more individually responsible’ (du Gay 2003, p. 675) – and demonstrated affinities with the U.S. as ‘part of a transatlantic neo-liberalism’ (Clarke 2004, p. 44). Furthermore, modernisation, located within this broader neo-liberal agenda, has been criticised as inherently contradictory. As du Gay (2003, p. 675) put it, modernisation:

involves a double movement of ‘responsibilization and autonomization’. Organizations and other agents that were once enmeshed in what are represented as the ‘bureaucratic’ lines of force of the ‘social’ state are to be made more responsible for securing their own future survival and well-being. Yet, at one and the same time, they are to be steered politically from the centre ‘at a distance’ through the invention and deployment of a host of techniques that can shape their actions while simultaneously attesting to their independence—techniques such as audits, devolved budgets, relational contracts and performance-related pay.

Such critical analysis alerts us to both positive *and* negative consequences of the modernisation ‘project’, issues we explore later in the article.

In the voluntary sport sector in the UK, a number of specific factors have reinforced the ‘modernisation imperative’ (Charlton and Andras 2003) generally evident elsewhere. First, the introduction of the National Lottery in 1994 meant

that sport organisations started to receive higher levels of public funding something that has been accompanied by increased expectations around governance and accountability. Second, and related, there have been a number of examples of poor management and governance failures among NGBs (e.g. the British Athletics Federation (see Grix 2009)). Third, sport has increasingly been seen as a way to address wider social policy objectives, such as reducing crime and improving education, which has entailed a greater focus on the needs of end-users and the development of public-private partnerships (Coalter 2007). Finally, and more broadly, there has been the general process of ‘professionalisation’ within voluntary sector sport, described by Shilbury *et al.* (2013, p. 353) as ‘sport’s transition from volunteer-delivered amateur sport to professionally managed and delivered sport supported by volunteers’.

This general process of professionalisation among NGBs is closely bound up with, and not easily separable from, the processes associated with modernisation. For example, Kikulis (2000, p. 293) stated that professionalisation, at a basic level, has been driven by ‘the growth of these organizations and the complexity of demands placed upon them’. This suggests a general process driven largely by commercialisation. However, in many cases, this growth is a direct result of increased government investment and the ‘complexity of demands’ refers primarily to the accountability ‘technologies’ and associated tensions among stakeholders that accompany public investment and modernisation reforms (Slack 1985, Slack and Hinings 1992, Hoye and Cuskelly 2003, Ferkins and Shilbury 2015). This makes it difficult both to conceptualise modernisation and professionalisation in empirical research and to assess the relative influence of

each set of processes on organisational governance. Kikulis (2000, p. 313) made this point when she called for research that could tease out ‘whether market forces or institutional pressures have a greater impact on organizations’. We return to this issue later.

Within the broad modernisation agenda, as noted above, there has been a particular focus on improving the governance of organisations. In the voluntary sport sector in the UK, this has involved reform of the two key non-departmental public bodies responsible for distributing funding, UK Sport and Sport England (Houlihan and Green 2009), and ongoing attempted reform of NGBs. Such attempts to ‘modernise’ governance were made clear in a succession of sport policy documents, such as *A Sporting Future for All* (DCMS 2000) and *Game Plan* (DCMS/Strategy Unit 2002), which both stated that NGBs would receive increased control over the allocation of public funding, provided they became more accountable and implemented robust management and planning systems.

They have also been evident in a succession of programmes, such as: the NGB Modernisation Programme, established in 2001 and administered by UK Sport; the Funded Partner Assurance Programme, administered by Sport England to ensure funded NGBs were ‘fit’ to receive public funds; and ‘Mission 2012’, set up by UK Sport in 2007 to focus on the performance of Olympic NGBs in the run-up to London 2012. Alongside these programmes, a number of agencies have published guidelines setting out the supposed principles and practices of good governance. For example, UK Sport published *Good governance: A guide for national governing bodies of sport* (UK Sport 2004), the Sport and Recreation

Alliance published the *Voluntary code of good governance for the sport and recreation sector* (Sport and Recreation Alliance 2011, 2014) and Sport England published *On board for better governance* (Sport England, 2012). These guidelines focus primarily on the board as ‘the strategic decision-making function at the top of an organisation’ (Sport and Recreation Alliance 2014, p. 7).

Together, we can see these policy statements, programmes and governance guidelines as some of the more tangible elements of modernisation in voluntary sport. They represent an attempt by central government and the (reformed) national sport agencies to modernise the governance of NGBs, with a focus on their boards. Alongside (or encompassing) this, we can see a more general process of professionalisation, in which NGBs are moving ‘from volunteer driven entities to those experiencing the forces of commercialisation and the infusion of paid staff to fulfil roles historically performed by volunteers’ (Ferkins and Shilbury 2014, p. 4). But how has the modernisation agenda actually influenced how NGB board members perceive and enact their roles? This is the central question of this article. Next, therefore, we turn to the academic literature on modernisation and governance to see what studies so far have found.

The research: Modernisation and organisational governance

Research on modernisation has typically examined its rationale(s), its implementation and its effects (Midwinter 2001, Newman 2001, Hartley *et al.* 2002). Most research to date has focused on the public sector, including health (Blackler 2006), welfare (Powell 2008) and local government (Hartley *et al.*

2002), although some has also looked at the voluntary sector (e.g. Lewis 2005, Elstub and Poole 2014). Much of the research so far has critically assessed the claims made by politicians and policy makers that modernisation would lead to greater autonomy and empowerment for service providers. For example, Newman (2001) argued early on that such proposed autonomy was inherently incompatible with the managerialist approach of New Labour (and the previous Conservative government). And studies of local government (e.g. Lusted and O’Gorman 2010) have indeed found that modernisation has not led to empowerment, but rather to the implementation of national government policies underpinned by increasing audit and regulatory oversight.

Drawing on this and some of the critical analysis discussed earlier (e.g. du Gay 2003), it is possible to highlight two of the key tensions within the modernisation ‘project’. First, the ‘false autonomy’ identified above means that, as Houlihan and Green (2009) argue, modernisation can be understood as an example of ‘government at a distance’ (Rose 1999, p. 49), in that government does not directly impose its authority, but creates pressures to ‘modernise’ that are strong enough to ensure changes in organisational behaviour. Second, as Newman (2001) found, many organisations adopt the ‘language and technologies’ of modernisation (e.g. around long-term strategic planning), but this is primarily directed at funders and other external stakeholders and does not always (or even often) serve as a guide to internal decision making. We explore these tensions in more detail later in the article.

In the voluntary sport sector in the UK, a number of studies have directly examined modernisation and its effects on governance. For example, Houlihan and Green (2009) provided a detailed analysis of modernisation processes in Sport England and UK Sport; Grix (2009) examined the influence of modernisation on the governance of British Athletics, the NGB for athletics in the UK; and Adams (2011) looked at the effects of modernisation on voluntary sports clubs. In addition, a number of studies have examined key aspects of modernisation within sport policy through notions of ‘network governance’ – in county sports partnerships (Phillpots *et al.* 2011), in school sport (Phillpots and Grix 2014), in voluntary sports clubs (Adams 2014) and in the sport policy sector as a whole (Grix and Phillpots 2011). Alongside this, international research has examined the impact of modernisation on national sport organisations in Australia (Hoye 2003, Stewart *et al.* 2004), Canada (Thibault and Harvey 1997), New Zealand (Sam 2009, Sam and Marcis 2014) and elsewhere.

To summarise crudely, this research has suggested that the promise of increased autonomy for service providers and the supposed shift from ‘big government’ to a form of decentralised network governance have not materialised. Instead, modernisation processes have led to lines of accountability being drawn upwards to national sport agencies, central government and commercial sponsors (Houlihan and Green 2006, Sam 2009) and the intensification of hierarchical, central control (Grix and Phillpots 2011). Overall, this stream of research provides significant insight into modernisation in the voluntary sport sector and the changing patterns of relationships and resource dependencies.

To date, however, this stream of research has seldom examined the influence of modernisation on the perceptions and actions of individual board members. In the main, this is because it is located within political science, which typically analyses governance at a macro or meso level. When research has sought to examine the influence of modernisation on NGBs at a more micro level, this has focused primarily on executives, performance directors, or coaches, rather than board members (Grix 2009, Macris and Sam 2014, Sam and Macris 2014). This means there is a lack of research from within political science that adopts a micro level of analysis to examine how modernisation influences NGB board members. Such research is potentially crucial, however, as it is the perceptions, actions and, ultimately, the decision-making processes of board members that constitute organisational governance, the very phenomenon that modernisation often seeks to influence.

There is, however, a stream of research that does focus directly on governance within NGBs and other sport organisations and more often adopts a micro level of analysis, namely non-profit sport governance research (Hoye and Cuskelly 2007, Doherty and Hoye 2011). This stream of research is located within the field of corporate and non-profit governance research and draws on the theoretical perspectives of the wider field of management and organisation studies. Such research has examined a number of different topics, including: board structure and performance (e.g. Papadimitriou 1999, Hoye and Cuskelly 2003, Taylor and O'Sullivan 2009, Balduck *et al.* 2010, Hoye and Doherty 2011); board roles and responsibilities (e.g. Inglis 1997, Shilbury 2001, Sakires *et al.* 2009, Yeh *et al.* 2009); board cohesion and conflict (e.g. Doherty and

Carron 2003, Hamm-Kerwin and Doherty 2010, Kerwin *et al.* 2011); shared leadership (e.g. Auld and Godbey 1998, Hoye 2004, 2006, Ferkins *et al.* 2009); and board involvement in strategy (e.g. Ferkins and Shilbury 2010, 2012, Shilbury and Ferkins, 2011).

Of most immediate relevance here is the research on board roles and, so far, it has revealed the following basic picture. There is now a relatively well-established, practitioner-oriented literature on the roles and responsibilities of the non-profit sport board. This includes descriptive academic accounts and agency-developed guidelines, such as those produced by UK Sport (2004), Sport and Recreation New Zealand (2004) and the Australian Sport Commission (2005). Such literature is useful, in that it can facilitate decision-making and help to ensure accountability (Hoye and Cuskelly 2007). However, it has been criticised as a form of ‘development by accumulation’ (Kuhn 1996, p. 2, in Carver 2010, p. 150), whereby ‘academics and practitioners alike can only focus on an intermittent slogging from one best practice to the next’. In addition, as Inglis *et al.* (1999) and Hoye and Cuskelly (2007) argue, such literature often fails to understand what boards ‘actually do’.

To date, just three published studies have explicitly sought to quantify which board roles are considered most important by board members themselves. In the earliest example, Inglis (1997) examined Canadian provincial sport bodies, looking at the perceptions of both executive directors and board members, and identified four composite board roles, which she labelled ‘mission’, ‘planning’, ‘executive director’ and ‘community relations’. In the next, Shilbury (2001)

examined state-level sporting organisations in Victoria, Australia, and empirically explored the differences in how paid staff and volunteer board members perceived they fulfilled a range of board roles, and how important they considered these roles were. He found that executive staff had an increasing influence on the management of non-profit sport organisations, although they also demonstrated a preference for more board involvement in strategic planning. More recently, Yeh *et al.* (2009) looked at state and national governing bodies in Taiwan, which, unlike UK-based NGBs, operate with a dual board structure. Their empirical analysis identified four composite director roles – ‘manage vision and purpose’, ‘board duty’, ‘human resource and fundraising’ and ‘stakeholder focus’ – and two composite supervisor roles – ‘monitoring results’ and ‘board duty and process’.

This stream of research complements the political science research by focusing more directly on sport governance and on board roles in particular. However, it too has limitations when it comes to our question of how modernisation has influenced the way NGB board members perceive and enact their roles. First, none of the studies to date directly examined board roles in UK-based non-profit sport organisations, or, in fact, in single-tier national sport organisations anywhere. Second, none of the studies specifically examined the influence of modernisation on how board members perceived and enacted their roles. Although the studies took place within the context of voluntary sport sectors that were undergoing various processes of modernisation and professionalisation, none of the studies sought to examine directly how these modernisation processes were influencing the perceptions and actions of board members. Third,

none of the studies involved direct observation of board practices or in-depth interviews with board members exploring their roles; instead, they all relied on questionnaire surveys.

These latter two limitations have, in fact, been noted within the wider non-profit sport governance literature. For example, Shilbury *et al.* (2013), among others, note the distinction between ‘organisational’ governance and ‘systemic’ governance and argue that research to date has focused too ‘internally’ on boards, without taking sufficient account of how board members are influenced by wider pressures within the governance system. Furthermore, they argue that understanding in this area has been ‘limited by a research approach that does not engage enough with those whose life-world involves the governance of organisations, and indeed governance between organisations’ (Shilbury *et al.* 2013, p. 351). They and others (e.g. Ferkins and Shilbury 2010, 2012, 2014) argue for a much greater focus on governance *processes* and more in-depth, qualitative work, which seeks an ‘insider’s perspective’.

This current study seeks to draw on the strengths of political science and non-profit sport governance research, while addressing some of their weaknesses. Specifically, it uses a questionnaire survey to provide a basic, descriptive picture of how UK-based NGB board members perceive their roles. Then, it explicitly adopts a micro perspective through an in-depth, qualitative case study to understand more precisely how board members perceive and enact their roles and how modernisation influences this. As such, it seeks to build on previous research on board roles by adopting an insider’s view and by examining ongoing

board interaction and decision-making within the wider governance context. In the next section, we explain how the study was conducted, before turning, in the following section, to an analysis of our findings.

Methods

The survey

We administered a questionnaire survey to all NGBs recognised by each of the four home country sports councils in the UK – Sport England, Sport Northern Ireland, sportscotland and the Sports Council for Wales. The questionnaire was sent to the chair (or equivalent) of the board of each NGB. The questions on board roles drew deliberately on previous empirical studies into boards of non-profit organisations. Specifically, we followed Cornforth's (2001) study of non-profit organisations by including 17 board roles and asking respondents to indicate how important they considered each role was on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 ('not at all important') to 4 ('very important') and how effective they considered they were at performing that role on a scale of 1 ('not at all effective') to 4 ('very effective'). We also asked for basic 'demographic' information, including number of full-time and part-time employees, number of volunteers, and so on. We received 75 usable responses from a 'population' of 300 – a response rate of 25 per cent, which is acceptable for a survey of this kind. Respondents varied in size, with the smallest having no full-time employees and the largest having 300. The mean number of full-time employees was 26 and the median was four.ⁱ

To analyse the data, we calculated means and standard deviations for each board role in relation to how important respondents considered it and how effective they considered they were at it. In addition, we examined whether there were any significant differences between respondents' ratings of importance and effectiveness (using Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests). We also examined board roles in relation to organisational size. Specifically, we tested for statistically significant differences between small and large NGBs on the perceived importance of, and their perceived effectiveness at, the 17 board roles, using the appropriate statistical technique (independent samples Mann-Whitney U Tests).

It is important to note that any distinction between small and large NGBs is somewhat arbitrary. In making our distinction, we were led by convention in the academic literature. Specifically, Rochester's (2003) study of board roles in non-profit organisations, which is one of the only published studies to statistically analyse differences between small and large non-profit organisations, used four full-time employees as the cut-off between 'small' and 'large'. In our survey, 69 of the 75 respondents reported how many full-time employees they had, allowing us – following Rochester (2003) – to divide respondents into two groups: 'small' NGBs with four or fewer full-time employees (36 NGBs; 52 per cent) and 'large' NGBs with more than four full-time employees (33; 48 per cent). There are definite limitations to analysing the data in this way. For example, it could be that the most important differences exist between those NGBs that have no full-time employees and those that have at least one full-time employee, as those board members in the former group would necessarily have to fulfil both

volunteer and executive roles.ⁱⁱ Alternatively, it may be that important differences exist between board members in those NGBs that receive public funding and those that do not. Future research should certainly examine differences between these different groups. In this article, while noting the possible limitations, we decided to define ‘small’ and ‘large’ in line with previous literature on non-profit organisations.

The case study

The case study employed a process-oriented, longitudinal approach (Pettigrew 1997). We selected the organisation primarily because it was an NGB funded by Sport England and therefore affected, at least in a basic sense, by modernisation processes. As such, it constituted an example of what Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 202) term ‘purposive sampling’. In addition, the board members themselves were prepared to allow access to board and committee meetings and key organisational documents, constituting what Ferkins and Shilbury (2010, p. 239) refer to as ‘a willingness and ability to engage’ and thus, in turn, what Stake (2003) refers to as the primary basis for case selection, namely ‘the opportunity to learn’.

The organisation itself was formed in 2000 and acts as the development agency for two sports in the UK. It has a ‘hybrid board’ (Ferkins and Shilbury 2012, p. 72), which has 12 members: an independent chair, six ‘federation directors’ (elected through the federations of the two sports) and five ‘independent directors’. In addition, the organisation has two joint chief executive officers who

attend the board (technically as non-voting members, but highly involved). The case study period lasted from November 2011 to June 2014, although the bulk of the data was collected between November 2011 and December 2012. We collected data through direct observation of board and committee meetings, semi-structured interviews and key organisational documents (see Table 1 for details).

[Insert Table 1 here]

We recorded all the interviews and transcribed them in full and we wrote up field notes from all observations and interviews. Along with the key organisational documents, we imported these into NVivo and analysed them. We used a ‘constant comparative method’ (Miles and Huberman 1994, Thomas 2011) to code the data – focusing on board ‘processes’, ‘functions’ and the ‘wider policy context’. We proceeded through several iterative stages of coding and, through close analysis of the data, we developed our interpretations of how modernisation influenced the way board members perceived and enacted their roles. We present these interpretations, following the descriptive analysis of the survey findings, in the next section.

Findings

Board roles in national governing bodies of sport in the UK

The survey provided a basic picture of how UK-based NGB boards perceive their roles (see Table 2). If we consider ratings of above 3.5 as high, then NGB respondents considered six of the 17 roles highly important. The two board roles considered most important related to financial oversight and financial systems and the next two related to the organisation's mission and values and strategic direction.

[Insert Table 2 here]

These findings, although basic, might be seen as tentative evidence of NGB boards 'modernising' by replicating the behaviour of boards in the for-profit sector. What might have been considered the traditional roles of (amateur) NGB board members – helping to raise funds, acting as a link with other organisations, and so on – appear from the survey to be less important now. In particular, 'representing the interests of stakeholders in the NGB', which might previously have been considered a crucial role, was considered the fifth least important out of 17. The findings also demonstrate clear differences between how important particular roles were to boards and how effective they considered they were at performing those roles. As noted, six of the 17 roles were rated higher than 3.5 for importance and, overall, 16 of 17 were rated 3.0 or higher. In terms of effectiveness, however, none were rated higher than 3.5 and only seven of 17 were rated 3.0 or higher.ⁱⁱⁱ

The final thing the survey enabled us to explore was whether there were any differences in the way large and small NGBs perceived their board roles. The

analysis found no statistically significant differences between large and small NGBs' ratings of their effectiveness at any of the 17 board roles.^{iv} However, it found several differences in their ratings of *importance*. Specifically, small NGBs considered two board roles more important than large NGBs, namely 'representing the NGB externally' and 'helping to raise funds or other resources for the NGB', while large NGBs considered two board roles more important than small NGBs, namely 'ensuring the NGB has adequate financial systems and procedures' and 'monitoring the NGB's performance and taking action when required'.^v

These results are noteworthy for our central question of how modernisation influences the way NGB board members perceive and enact their roles. Just above, we suggested that NGBs' overall ratings of board role importance might indicate a general shift from the traditional role of board members in amateur non-profit sport organisations (i.e. helping to raise funds and acting as ambassadors) to a more professionalised role (i.e. setting financial policy and strategy). These size-related differences suggest, however, that such a shift may be more evident within large NGBs than small NGBs. This does not negate the provisional interpretation that modernisation is influencing how NGBs perceive their roles. On the contrary, the fact that large NGBs, who are often publicly funded and therefore more directly involved in modernisation processes, appear to consider their professionalised role more important than small NGBs provides stronger evidence of modernisation's influence. However, these differences should caution us against making claims for all NGBs and should sensitise us to the possibility that modernisation influences different NGBs in different ways.

The influence of modernisation on how NGB board members perceive and enact their roles

Modernisation, as we have seen, is very difficult to conceptualise and processes of modernisation are closely bound up with broader processes of professionalisation. In the case study, we sought to focus initially on the relatively tangible aspects of modernisation, namely the funding-related monitoring system, associated accountability ‘technologies’ and ‘good governance’ guidelines. Seeking the ‘insider perspective’, we sought to analyse how these aspects of modernisation influenced the way board members perceived and enacted their roles. Over time, however, it became clear that certain fundamental perspectives, or ‘logics’, were shaping board members’ perceptions and actions; and so we sought to account for these too. In the following analysis, therefore, we attempt to reconstruct our own interpretive process, such that the things we discuss first appeared most prominent to us and the things we discuss later emerged as more significant, ‘underlying’ elements over time.

The board’s strategic role

First, in relation to strategy, it was clear from regular discussions at board and committee meetings that board members deliberately sought to ‘be strategic’ and to maintain a distinction between strategy, which they saw as a key part of their role, and operations, which they saw as the role of the CEOs and other staff

members. For example, in the November 2011 board meeting, in a 45-minute-long, reflective discussion specifically about the role of the board, one of the independent directors emphasised the importance of being strategic. He said: ‘That’s our fundamental responsibility as a board. I’m not worried about bean counting. That’s [the CEOs’] role.’ Likewise, in the November 2012 board meeting, the chair discussed the importance of working in what he called ‘that strategic space’. He said, ‘Committees, yes, roll your sleeves up, get involved in finance, development and so on,’ but the board, he said, should focus on the organisation’s mission and vision and how to get there.

This basic perception that the board ought to ‘be strategic’ was also, for the most part, reflected in ongoing board practices. For example, in a series of discussions at board meetings between November 2011 and March 2012, board members developed and agreed an overall vision and mission for the organisation. In addition, the board ‘strategised’ through an ongoing process in which members of the Development and Strategy Committee discussed the detail of particular strategic issues and made recommendations to the board, which the board then discussed and decided upon.

But were these perceptions and actions around ‘being strategic’ directly influenced by modernisation? This was more difficult to discern. While governance monitoring systems and ‘good governance’ guides consistently promote the notion of the board ‘being strategic’ – e.g. Sport England (2012, p. 9) states ‘The Board is strategically, not operationally, focussed’ – the case study research did not suggest that these things directly influenced board members’

perceptions and actions around being strategic. Instead, they appeared to draw directly on their own experiences from other organisations – for example, the chair’s experiences in his day-job at a multinational consulting company and one of the independent director’s experiences in her day-job at a law firm. This suggested a more fundamental ‘professional logic’ operating at board level – the incorporation of ‘institutional ideas for professional and business-like management practices’ (Kikulis 2000, p. 294).

Where the influence of modernisation on strategy was immediately and directly apparent, however, was in the *content* of the strategic discussions. Indeed, these strategic discussions were very strongly influenced by expectations around what Sport England, as the primary funder, would think. As just one example, when one of the joint CEOs discussed potential visions and missions at the February 2012 board meeting and framed his discussion by talking about ‘the three Ps – participation, performance and profile’, several board members immediately questioned whether Sport England used those particular terms. As one of the federation directors said, not without irony, ‘It helps if your main funder speaks your language.’ One of the joint CEOs, in her interview, reinforced this sense of ‘strategically orientating’ the organisation towards the wishes of Sport England. She said:

Yeah. I mean, there’s that sort of dichotomy of, you know, the message from Sport England is that you should first think about what would be good for your sport. And then, you know, they should see what parts of that strategy they would fund. But we don’t...in truth, we can’t operate like that. We first think about what they’re willing to fund and, you know...and obviously, we’re not talking about things that are

diametrically opposed to what would be good for our sports, but yeah, we would probably do things slightly differently if it was all about what we thought was best for [the two sports]. We know that for [Sport England] right now, it's participation numbers, so that has to be the most important thing to us.

The distinction, then, is a subtle one. While it was clear that modernisation, as manifested in the funding relationship between Sport England and the NGB, directly influenced how board members made strategic decisions, it was not clear that modernisation directly influenced board members' more basic perception that they should 'be strategic' (more on this below).

The board's financial role

This indirect/direct influence of modernisation was also apparent in the way board members perceived and enacted their 'financial role'. As our survey indicated, and as much previous empirical research (e.g. Inglis 1997, Shilbury 2001, Yeh *et al.* 2009) has shown, non-profit board members generally consider their financial role crucial. In the case study too, this was clearly evident in financial discussions at board and committee meetings. In addition, certain interviewees discussed the importance of a robust financial system. For example, one of the joint CEOs said:

In the finance committee, when we were setting up, you know, signing-off authorities and financial procedures and all sorts of, you know, expense claims. Yeah, all those sorts of budgeting processes. All of that stuff has really helped us just nail much more of the administration of the organisation to the point where I think we're very well-governed, we're very well-structured.

However, there was little evidence that modernisation – in the form of governance monitoring or ‘good governance’ guides – directly influenced this perception. There was one instance, in the November 2011 board meeting, when the chair questioned one of the joint CEOs very closely about some money left over from a funded capital project. He said, ‘If Sport England are looking for an audit trail, is there a problem with this being the fifth bullet point on a relatively insignificant looking report?’ This was followed by a very precise discussion about discretionary spending limits, which resulted in a new written policy approved by the board. Beyond this, however, there was little evidence that the financial reporting linked to Sport England funding, or the wider modernisation narrative ‘privileging managerial knowledge’ (Houlihan and Green 2009) directly shaped board members’ perceptions around their financial role. Again, like their basic sense of ‘being strategic’, their sense of ‘being financially responsible’ seemed a more inherent, taken-for-granted aspect of board behaviour.

Where modernisation did appear to influence board members’ perceptions and actions directly was on the issue of developing commercial revenue streams. This related to, but also differed from, the board’s ‘financial role’. One of the independent directors, in his interview, explained the distinction as follows:

If you look at the characteristics of the governing body, the finance director is a different name for a treasurer, i.e. they keep the books tight and they scrutinise the accounts and they report on accounts. [The finance director]’s great at that. You need that, but you also need the commercial director. And I think that’s the debate we should have...Now

[the joint CEOs] will be the first to admit they don't know that. So, I think that's where, I'd like to think that's where the board can move to.

This perception of the need for the board to adopt a more 'commercial' role was influenced by modernisation in what might be seen as both a 'positive' and 'negative' sense. In a 'positive' sense, Sport England and UK Sport both strongly encourage NGBs to develop their commercial capability and thus seek to influence board members to adopt a more commercial role. However, in board and committee discussions within the case study organisation, this was barely mentioned. Instead, modernisation – manifested in the funding relationship between the organisation and Sport England – influenced this perception in a more 'negative' sense. As Sport England funding accounted for around 85 per cent of total income and as this to a certain extent determined what the organisation had to focus on, board members recognised the need to reduce their reliance on this funding in order to achieve greater autonomy and sustainability. As one of the CEOs said in the July 2012 Governance Committee meeting, in response to a question about what he felt the board needed in terms of expertise, 'How we think about income streams, developing independence – lack of dependence on grant income, that kind of thing.' He then said, 'I think we need...someone from a pure commercial background, you know, a FTSE 100 company.' The board later sought to enact this more commercial role: in the February 2013 Development and Strategy Committee meeting, they invited a consultancy company to present proposals 'to increase the commercial income potential of the NGB'. Following this, the board set up a new committee – the Commercial Committee – to focus on this specific issue.

So board members' experience of the funding and accountability processes central to modernisation directly influenced their inclination to adopt a more commercial role. Yet, close observation of 'governance talk' at board and committee meetings revealed that this inclination also stemmed from a more fundamental 'professional logic' (Kikulis 2000) that was increasingly prevalent among board members. For example, in the November 2011 board meeting, the new chair introduced himself to the other board members by discussing his day-job in a multinational consulting company. He said that he intended to 'bring my business background now to sport'. He talked repeatedly about professionalisation and how he wanted to ensure the board and the organisation 'runs professionally'. Later, in the May 2012 board meeting – the first meeting after the appointment of two new board members from business backgrounds – the board held a specific, 40 minute discussion about its role and responsibilities. This discussion was clearly framed within a 'professional discourse'. For example, one of the new directors asked early on, 'If this was a business, it would be pretty simple. The board's fiduciary duty is to shareholders. How would that translate here? Who are the stakeholders?' 'The players are the shareholders,' replied one of the independent directors, 'The stakeholders are Sport England, sponsors and so on.' Other board members then contributed to this discussion. Later, one of the independent directors declared, 'We're not a business, but we have to be business-like. Return on investment for shareholders. We have to maximise that.'

The board's representative role

Finally, the influence of funding requirements, linked to modernisation, was clear in the way board members perceived another role discussed earlier, namely representing the interests of stakeholders in the NGB. In the survey, this role, which might be considered one of the key roles of the traditional (amateur) NGB board, was rated low in importance, certainly compared to financial, strategic and monitoring roles. We argued above that this could be seen as evidence of the way modernisation had influenced NGB board members to perceive the board less as a forum to represent local and regional sport structures and more as a strategic, commercial decision-making body. And much of the discussion at board and committee meetings and in board members' in-depth interviews bore this out. It was not, however, a simple, undisputed perception. As one of the board members said in the April 2012 Governance Committee meeting, referring to disputes around this perception, 'If you want to get an elephant and blow it up, we can fill the room with it.'

In short, the conflict centred on whether the federation directors should act as 'representatives' of their federations, or in 'the best interests' of the NGB. As one of the independent directors said in her interview:

There tends to be an awful lot of sitting in a board meeting, going, "What does [the federation] think?" I'm like, "*Guys*, you're not here as a director for [the federation], you're here as a director for [the NGB]." So, yes, we can have those conversations, but it's not appropriate to break the walls of the board meeting and ask someone to put on their [federation] hat and then berate them for not putting their [NGB] hat on two minutes later.

This is not to say that board members did not consider representing stakeholders' interests as an important part of their role. Indeed, as one of the independent directors said, in the November 2011 board meeting, 'it is important that sport owns the sport'. The issue instead was about *how* this ought to be achieved, i.e. whether it should be enacted through direct representation of the federations on the board, or whether the board should be composed of skilled, independent members, who decide on the strategic direction of the NGB and in this way represent the interests of stakeholders. The majority view of the board was the latter, although it was not unanimous, as some of the federation directors still felt that some element of direct representation was important.

This issue around representation has emerged strongly in recent research on sport governance (e.g. Ferkins and Shilbury 2010, 2012, 2015, Shilbury and Ferkins 2015), reflecting the increasing focus on systemic, rather than organisational, governance. Here, our primary concern was how modernisation influenced the way board members perceived and enacted their 'representative role'. And in one way, the influence was clear and direct, in that Sport England required that for all funded NGBs, 'All appointments, including those drawn from the membership, are informed by skills needs which are regularly assessed and there is evidence of a skills-based assessment and appointment process for all Board positions' (Sport England 2012, p. 9). This mandated the notion of a skills-based, rather than a simply representative, board.

In another way, however, the influence was more indirect, in that many of the policy statements and 'good governance' guides simply stated that board

members should act in the best interests of the organisation and not simply as direct representatives of their constituency. For example, the latest version of the Sport and Recreation Alliance's *Voluntary Code of Good Governance* states, 'Board members are appointed to serve the sport or activity as a whole, not their own region, function, background or group' (Sport and Recreation Alliance 2014, p. 21). Board members often invoked these prescriptions and guidance in their discussion and decision-making processes. For example, in the April 2012 Governance Committee meeting, the chair of the committee, an independent board member, pointed out that Sport England was now 'RAGging on governance [i.e. assessing NGBs using a Red, Amber, Green traffic-light system]'. He also specifically brought up the Sport and Recreation Alliance's *Voluntary Code*: he said, 'We need to look at where we are with the seven principles' and others agreed.

Later, in the November 2012 board meeting, the board held a specific, 40-minute group exercise and discussion around the *Code*: each board member voted for whichever of the seven principles she or he considered most important overall and which one the board should focus on immediately. The board considered that 'Principle 4: Objectivity: Balanced, Inclusive and Skilled Board' was the one that needed immediate focus and so discussion again shifted to the issue of 'representative' vs. 'skills-based' appointments. Most board members again emphasised that they felt the board should act as a group of skilled individuals 'leading' the NGB and 'providing direction', rather than directly representing 'the interests of the federations'. While they recognised that these objectives were not mutually exclusive, they also felt – as expressed by the *Voluntary Code*

and the modernisation agenda more broadly – that they should see the board as an executive, ‘commercial-type’ entity, rather than a representative forum.

Discussion and conclusion

The survey: Findings and implications

The survey, which examined board-level governance in UK-based NGBs, indicated strong similarities with previous research, but also some subtle changes over time. As we saw above, UK-based NGB boards rate their financial and strategic roles as most important and their roles relating to representation of stakeholder interests as less important. In general, these findings accord with previous studies in non-profit sport (Inglis 1997, Shilbury 2001, Yeh *et al.* 2009) and in the general non-profit sector (Inglis *et al.* 1999, Iecovich 2004).

However, we can also discern a subtle trend whereby, over time, these financial and strategic roles have become comparatively *more* important to boards, while stakeholder representation roles have become comparatively *less* important. For example, in the earliest study, Inglis (1997) found that the composite board role ‘Mission’, which included the specific board role ‘Being accountable to the members’, was rated higher in importance than the composite board role ‘Planning’, which included the specific board roles ‘Setting financial policy’ and ‘Developing and assessing long-range plans and overall strategy for the organization’. However, in Shilbury’s (2001) later Australian study, the three most important board roles, in order, were: ‘Setting financial policy’,

‘Developing and assessing long range plans’ and ‘Annual budget allocations’, while ‘Representing the interest of certain constituents’ was rated sixth out of nine.

In our study, continuing this trend, the four most important board roles concerned financial management, financial systems, mission and values and strategic direction, while ‘ensuring accountability to the NGB's stakeholders’ and ‘representing the interests of stakeholders in the NGB’ were rated eighth and thirteenth respectively. Of course, it is difficult to establish a clear pattern from empirical studies conducted in different countries over almost 20 years, but these descriptive results offer some indication of a general shift in perception among board members towards their financial and strategic roles. This, in turn, might be read as the general influence, over time, of modernisation and professionalisation on the boards of non-profit sport organisations, emphasising commercial-type considerations of finance and strategy and de-emphasising traditional considerations of direct member representation.

The other key contribution of the survey to the organisational governance literature concerns the differences between large and small NGBs. As we saw, large NGBs considered their ‘professionalised’ role – ensuring adequate financial systems and monitoring NGB performance – to be more important than did small NGBs, while small NGBs considered their ‘amateur/traditional’ role – helping to raise funds and acting as ambassadors – to be more important than did large NGBs. Discussion within non-profit sport governance has already emphasised how volunteer board members in small organisations often have to fill a number

of positions and are thus less able to focus on their financial and monitoring roles. However, this is the first time that research has empirically tested for differences between large and small NGBs. As noted earlier, while our designation of large and small NGBs followed previous research into non-profit organisations (Rochester, 2003), there may be important differences between those NGBs with no full-time employees and those that do have full-time employees. While our research did not examine these differences – and this can be considered a limitation – future research should seek to do this.

These survey findings have implications, then, for modernisation and governance in non-profit sport. In particular, they should sensitise those involved (policy-makers, academics and practitioners) to the potential differences between large and small NGBs. One of the criticisms of the modernisation agenda is that governments deliberately advance a narrative of ‘epochal dichotomization’ (du Gay 2003, p. 670), which depicts traditional public and voluntary sector organisations as out of date, bureaucratic (in a negative sense) and poorly performing, in order to legitimise the introduction of a rational, scientific management-type approach. This ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach not only tends to force accountability ‘upwards’, but also ignores differences between organisations – in size, culture and so on – or marginalises those that do not (or cannot) easily conform. The fact that boards of small NGBs are often entirely, or almost entirely, volunteer-run means they may not easily be able to fulfil the financial oversight and long-term strategic planning roles that funders mandate as a condition of funding. Small NGBs, therefore, may become progressively

marginalised as the wider sporting landscape becomes increasingly shaped by the ‘contracting’ arrangements typical of modernisation.

The case study: Findings and implications

The case study sought a more fine-grained understanding of NGB board roles and, through close observation of ‘governance talk’ and processes of interaction and decision-making, sought to examine the influence of modernisation. In short, it found that, at times, board members directly invoked the prescriptions of funders, or the text of particular governance guides, when constructing and enacting their board roles, whereas, at other times, their perceptions and actions appeared to be driven more by embedded ‘logics’. So, for example, several of their strategic *decisions* were clearly influenced by what they thought Sport England would fund. This supports Green and Houlihan’s (2006, p. 55) argument that the rhetoric of modernisation, while emphasising the empowerment of NGBs, masks the ‘reality of highly constrained choices of both strategy and practice’. On the other hand, their perception that they, as board members, should enact a strategic *role* appeared driven more by a ‘professional logic’. This professional logic underpinned much board discussion and decision-making and represents what Green and Houlihan (2006, p. 65) termed ‘the absorption of values and day-to-day practices typical of the commercial business sphere’.

A key question that emerges from this is to what extent we should also see this absorption of commercial values as the influence of modernisation. It is certainly true, as noted above, that the modernisation narrative depicts traditional public

and voluntary sector ways of working as outdated and inefficient and commercial ways of working as modern and efficient (du Gay 2003, Houlihan and Green 2009). In addition, the ‘tools’ of modernisation – accountability technologies (including funding bid processes), ‘good governance’ guidelines and so on – reinforce this narrative. This suggests that modernisation, in a broad sense, pushes these commercial values. Yet studies of professionalisation within non-profit sport from the early 1980s onwards (e.g. Schrodtt 1983, Beamish 1985) have emphasised this absorption of commercial values within NGBs and have not attributed it solely to the influence of government funding and associated accountability technologies.

Ultimately, as a number of researchers have noted (e.g. Slack and Hinings 1992, Kikulis 2000), it is very difficult to determine whether organisational changes have been driven by logics that have become institutionalised, or by (more immediate) compliance with funding regimes. What our case study did indicate – through a focus on ‘governance talk’ and ongoing interaction – was that board members’ perceptions of the board’s role as a strategic decision-making group, with clear responsibility for effective financial oversight, had a ‘taken-for-granted’ quality, which appeared based on an increasingly embedded professional logic. Certain actions, on the other hand, e.g. particular strategic decisions and the timing of those decisions, appeared specifically driven by the need to comply with funders’ requirements and were often justified by reference to the precepts of modernisation.

The case study also indicated that while there was consensus among board members concerning their strategic and financial roles, there was ongoing conflict around the board's representative role. This issue of delegate representation is complex. Indeed, Sam (2009, p. 502) labelled it a 'wicked problem' and Shilbury *et al.* (2013, p. 350) noted its 'important bearing on the governing role'. While there was little empirical research on this even five years ago, recent studies in Australia and New Zealand (Ferkins and Shilbury 2010, 2012, 2015, Shilbury and Ferkins 2015) have started to examine it in depth. Our study did not set out to focus on this issue, yet, as with Ferkins and Shilbury's (2010) study of strategic capability, it pushed itself to the fore.

While we cannot draw extensive conclusions, our study suggested the key *practical* conflicts around the board's representative role concerned: recruitment to the board (i.e. whether members should be appointed on the basis of their skills, or elected through membership structures); and behaviour on the board (i.e. whether acting as representatives of particular constituencies comprised board members' abilities to act in 'the best interests' of the organisation). It also suggested, in light of previous research, that the issue is not one of board composition alone. For example, the NGB in our study had a 'hybrid' board, i.e. both 'representatives' and 'independents', while those in previous studies had a fully appointed board that moved to a hybrid board within the study period (Ferkins and Shilbury 2010) and a hybrid board that had recently been a fully elected board (Shilbury and Ferkins 2015). Yet in each of these studies, there was persistent tension around the issue of representation and, more broadly, around the relationship between national and regional levels. Indeed, our study,

like the other, recent studies, suggests that this issue is complex and emotive and, fundamentally, one of competing logics – the professional logic discussed above and a ‘traditional/democratic’ logic that seeks to maintain some form of direct local/regional representation on the board. We echo Ferkins and Shilbury’s (2015, p. 102) call for more academic research in this area that can explore ‘options for change that protect the voice of the legal “members-as-owners” and acknowledge the sensibility of a democratic process’.

One other thing the case study suggested, concerning the issue of representation in the context of modernisation, is that certain board members might seek to ‘harness’ the modernisation narrative in order to drive change within the board. In our study, in board discussions around recruitment, composition and so on, the CEOs and independent board members (who generally favoured a fully independent, skills-based board) often directly invoked the notion of ‘epochal dichotomization’ (du Gay 2003) that is central to the modernisation narrative. That is, they invoked the ‘need to embrace change’ and the need to move away from the ‘old, traditional, representative model’, in which board members rise ‘through the ranks’, bolstering their arguments by referring to funder expectations and good governance guides. This was notable, given that the same board members displayed resistance (or, at least, resentment) when funder expectations impinged on their sense of autonomy. Although there is not space here to examine this issue in detail, future work on sport governance from within an interpretive paradigm might usefully explore the way board members exploit or resist modernisation narratives to (re-)shape perceptions and initiate change.

Finally, this article sought to bring together the political science literature on modernisation and the governance literature on board roles. By examining how the diffuse processes of modernisation played out in concrete board discussions and practices, this article sought to integrate the macro and micro levels of analysis that characterise these different streams of research. We argue that this integration is fruitful for research on modernisation and for research on governance more broadly, as it enables insight into the ‘translation’ of institutional processes through different levels. Cornforth (2012, p. 1129) recently argued for this in his recent ‘state of the union’ review of non-profit governance research, arguing that:

A broader conceptualization of nonprofit governance needs to recognize that boards are part of a broader governance system, including regulators, auditors, and other key external stakeholders, such as funders, that can place accountability requirements on an organization and its board...This opens up a variety of new research questions about how different regulatory and funding regimes influence governance structures and practices within nonprofit organizations.

This article, by examining the influence of modernisation on board members’ perceptions and actions, embraced this broader conceptualisation of governance and went some way towards addressing the new research questions that such a broader conceptualisation opens up. Future research should build on this and develop these insights even further.

ⁱ One issue we sought to address was the possibility of bias due to non-response error. We employed the most common method for assessing non-response error, namely comparing early to late respondents (Bartlett *et al.* 2008, Jordan *et al.*

2011). This involved grouping respondents according to waves of responses and testing for any significant differences on key variables, on the premise that those who respond late in the data collection cycle are most similar to non-respondents. The last two waves of data collection yielded 39 responses (above the recommended minimum number of 30), so we tested for any statistically significant differences between these 39 'late' respondents and the 36 'early' respondents on key variables, such as number of full-time employees, board size and overall board effectiveness. No statistically significant differences were found. Although late respondents cannot be treated as 'pure' non-respondents (Jordan *et al.* 2011), this gives us greater confidence that our 75 respondents are representative of the total population of NGBs in the UK.

ⁱⁱ We thank one of the anonymous reviewers for this observation.

ⁱⁱⁱ In all but one of these cases, these differences were statistically significant (using Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests). The difference between importance and effectiveness on 'acting as a link with important groups/organisations your NGB deals with' was not significant ($Z = -1.089$; $p = .276$); the differences on 'representing the interests of stakeholders in the NGB' ($Z = -2.407$; $p = .016$) and 'setting NGB policies' ($Z = 2.296$; $p = .022$) were significant at the 5 per cent level; and the differences on all other items were significant at the 1 per cent level.

^{iv} At the 5 per cent significance level.

^v The 'Z scores' for these differences were, in order, $Z = -2.741$ ($p = .006$), $Z = -2.068$ ($p = .039$), $Z = -2.168$ ($p = .030$) and $Z = -2.715$ ($p = .007$).

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Table 1. Data sources

| Observations | Interviews | Documents |
|--|-------------------------|--|
| (14 full meetings) | (11 interviews) | (39 key documents) |
| 2 Annual General Meetings | Joint CEO (separate) | 7 Board agendas (November 2011 – November 2012) |
| 6 Board Meetings | Chair | 7 Sets of board minutes (November 2011 – November 2012) |
| 4 Governance Committee Meetings | 3 Independent directors | 10 Sets of committee minutes (November 2011 – November 2012) |
| 1 Finance Committee Meeting | 2 Federation directors | 4 Committee reports |
| 1 Development and Strategy Committee Meeting | Committee member | 7 Annual accounts (2008 – 2014) |
| | Senior staff member | 2 ‘Whole Sport Plans’ (2009-13 and 2013-17) |
| | Joint CEOs (together) | 2 ‘Balanced Scorecards’ |

Table 2. Board roles: Importance and effectiveness

| Board role | Importance | Effectiveness |
|---|-------------------|----------------------|
| Overseeing the financial management of the NGB | 3.85 | 3.35 |
| Ensuring the NGB has adequate financial systems and procedures | 3.63 | 3.19 |
| Setting the NGB's mission and values | 3.60 | 2.95 |
| Reviewing and deciding the NGB's strategic direction | 3.60 | 3.07 |
| Ensuring that the NGB fulfills its legal obligations (e.g. submitting annual returns) | 3.58 | 3.22 |
| Selecting and monitoring the NGB's chief executive and/or senior staff | 3.53 | 3.06 |
| Monitoring the NGB's performance and taking action when required | 3.45 | 2.89 |
| Ensuring accountability to the NGB's stakeholders | 3.39 | 2.92 |
| Taking charge when things go wrong | 3.39 | 3.02 |
| Recruiting new board members | 3.34 | 2.49 |
| Supporting and advising management | 3.33 | 2.85 |
| Representing the NGB externally | 3.30 | 2.89 |
| Representing the interests of stakeholders in the NGB | 3.28 | 3.04 |
| Reviewing board performance and ensuring it works well | 3.20 | 2.26 |
| Helping to raise funds or other resources for the NGB | 3.08 | 2.06 |
| Acting as a link with important groups/organisations your NGB deals with | 3.00 | 2.90 |

| | | |
|--|------|------|
| Setting NGB policies (e.g. health and safety, equal opportunities) | 2.99 | 2.78 |
|--|------|------|
