



Innovations in sports organizations: The case of Burkinabè federations of athletics, cycling, Handball and Volleyball

Zongo Ouambi Charles¹, Ilboudo Salfou¹, Moukala Mampassi S Thècle¹, Damani Diawé¹, Songnaba Florent²

¹ Laboratory of Social Dynamics, Education, Sport, and Human Development (Ladys-ES-DH, National Institute of Youth, Physical Education and Sport, University of Abomey-Calavi INJEPS/UAC), Benin

² Professor, Thomas SANKARA University, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

Abstract

Beyond the benefits for the body and as a game, physical activity and more particularly sport in its various disciplines appears nowadays as a powerful means of social and economic development. Thus, the sports industry creates jobs, generates money and positions people, associations, communities and States on the international scene. Convinced of its multifaceted challenges, the Burkinabè sports federations have invited themselves into the logic of innovation with a view to promoting many sports disciplines and energizing sports structures in order to get in tune on the international scene. This research aims to analyze the innovations undertaken by sports federations in Burkina Faso so as not to be left behind. To achieve its objectives, the study proceeded through interviews to reach 34 subjects composed of federal members and members of the National Olympic Committee and Burkinabè Sports. The results we have achieved reveal the existence of innovations implemented within sports federations on the organizational, regulatory, managerial and competition levels. Also, the low level of education of certain actors, the lack of financial and material means and finally, the phenomenon of insecurity which has plagued the country in recent years constitute difficulties which undermine the various actions envisaged within the framework of the innovations undertaken by the federations we studied.

Keywords: innovations, sports discipline, sports federation, Burkina Faso

Introduction

Sport is a socio-cultural activity that provides physical and mental well-being and helps to strengthen self-control, adaptation to the environment and social integration. Modern sports activity is used as a factor of development, mobilization and social progress. This is how the practice of sport and physical education was recognized by UNESCO in its first article of the international charter of physical education and sport adopted in 1978, as well as by the Olympic Charter, as being a fundamental right of every human being. It is characterized by the dynamism of the sports actors and by a permanent will to take up all the challenges. It is only natural that the many sports innovations initiated by the federative structures are revolutionizing the sector, by providing amateur and professional sportsmen with ever more technologically advanced products, with experts competing in ingenuity (Cardozo et al., 1993) [5]. In this perspective, innovation is considered as one of the key success factors of sports companies allowing their development (Zahra and Covin, 1994) [20]. The ability to innovate is both an engine of economic growth and a source of greater competitiveness in international sport (Foray and Freeman, 1992) [9]. To be able to offer innovative products, the sports industry needs talents brimming with creativity. Only a perfect mastery of the codes of the sector and a deep knowledge of its needs can give the necessary impetus to develop sports innovations to the height (Cardozo et al., 1993) [5]. It is skills in management, marketing, communication and the organization of sporting events that give rise to innovative ideas capable of transforming the sector.

Sporting innovations now concern practically all sports. Footballers thus benefit from connected balls and shin guards, while volleyball players can visualize their strikes, the power, or even the shots used through electronic devices (Cardozo et al., 1993) [5]. In cycling, bicycles, watches and helmets record speed and performance statistics.

Like other countries in the world in general and in Africa in particular, Burkina Faso has not remained on the sidelines of sports globalization. In Burkina Faso, where young people represent more than half of the population, the State intends to make sport a real means of mobilization, social cohesion and affirmation of national identity (PNS, 2007). To do this, the State will delegate its powers to sports federations in order to develop and promote this sector. However, it can be noted that in Burkina Faso, to our knowledge, no study has been carried out on the innovations undertaken within sports federations, whereas innovations represent a challenge for sports companies both from the point of view of their images than their relations with sports players.

In order to enlighten decision-makers on the innovative aspects within sports federations for possible decisions to be considered, an evaluation of the implementation of these during the last four (04) years is necessary, which is the subject of this study.

This research is structured around three parts, namely, a first part consisting of the conceptual framework and the methodology. A second part devoted to the analysis of the results and a third part reserved for the discussion.

1. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

In this first part, it is a question of stating the problem, of issuing the objective of the study and of declining the methodological approach.

1.1 State of the problem

In a world increasingly inclined to competition, organizations are required to stand out from their competitors. To do this, they must create competitive advantages through means such as innovation (Winand et al., 2013) ^[18]. It is a question of adopting a new idea, product or service which can be articulated globally around innovations, such as technological innovation which is the creation of an innovative technological response. Organizational innovation, which refers to the creation of new processes (Damampour, 1991).

Indeed, consumers are more and more demanding and rapid technological development with a scarcity of natural resources and ecological constraints. So many difficulties that organizations face. In this context, the ability to react quickly and bring new products to market in a relatively short time has become an imperative for competitiveness. Faced with these requirements, organizations in all sectors and of all sizes are reorganizing in order to anticipate needs, ensure the continuity of their activities, maintain their growth and remain competitive (Damampour, 1991).

Sports organizations are also bearing the brunt of this competition, whether private, public or commercial. In particular, not-for-profit sports organisations, such as sports federations and sports clubs, which are generally run by voluntary administrators, have to deal with this increased competition and the changes it necessitates. The primary role of these organizations is to enforce the rules of the game of the sports disciplines they establish within their country, to make them known and to represent them, as well as those who participate in them (Papadimitriou and Taylor, 2000). They are now forced to meet the expectations of their stakeholders (members, public authorities, sponsors) by developing new services. The competitive environment that surrounds them makes it difficult to satisfy their members and attract new members as well as, for some of them, the achievement of world-class sporting results.

However, as Hoeber and Hober (2012) ^[11] point out, very little work has been done on innovations in non-profit associations, such as sports clubs or sports federations, whereas with regard to the increase in competitive intensity in the world of sport, it is crucial for sports federations and clubs to innovate in order to retain their members.

In Burkina Faso, the question of innovation is often the subject of campaign speeches during the period of renewal of sports structures at the end of each Olympiad. What about Burkinabe sports federations in terms of innovations? To our knowledge, no scientific study takes stock of the innovations within these structures to highlight the realities between campaign discourse and implementation on the ground. This research falls under this angle, with the objective of analyzing the innovations undertaken within the sports federations in Burkina Faso.

1.2 Analysis model

As part of our study, we relied on the analysis model of Arcoly (2021) ^[2] dealing with innovations in non-profit sports associations (ASBL). For this author, non-profit sports organizations (federations or clubs) organize

activities for their members in order to promote their sport. To do this, they need to create or adapt new products, services or management tools already in place. This is the reason why they must innovate even if this sometimes involves problems for these organizations, because the innovation process is not always linear (Soulé et al., 2017). It is therefore important to specify that this initiative must be new to the organization. For Arcoly (2021), the innovations that we find in sports organizations are not classic innovations as we can observe in for-profit companies. Companies use internal sources to develop their innovations and then commercialize them through their own departments within their organization. Non-profit organizations use internal and external sources such as the participation of volunteers in the decision-making process but also the participation of players and parents in the development of new ideas (Bayle, 2007) ^[3].

In the sports management literature, two main types of sports organizations are distinguished due to their main purpose, namely, for-profit or not-for-profit.

While for-profit sports organizations (sports recreation centers, fitness clubs) seem to have several features in common with companies for which the scientific literature is abundant, the same is not true for non-profit sports organizations (sports federations, leagues, local sports clubs). Indeed, the latter are distinguished by four main characteristics which influence in particular the way in which the change and the implementation of a new idea are perceived. These characteristics have been highlighted by Bayle (2005), namely a social, societal and/or sporting mission, and therefore not oriented towards the accumulation of profits, a mixed economy combining private and public resources, belonging to a national and supranational sports system which, among other things, lays down the rules of sports disciplines and organizes international sports competitions, a mixed status of the actors who compose them, that is to say volunteers and employees.

There are also constraints related to rules from federations or new practices from clubs (Winand et al., 2013) ^[18]. It should also be emphasized that an innovation is not an isolated element but the result of continuous work called the "innovation process" (Hoeber and Hober (2012) ^[11]). Thus, there are three distinct stages followed by sports organizations in order to implement innovations: initiation, adoption and implementation. In the case of sports federations, innovative services are all sporting or non-sporting activities, initiatives or services adopted recently for the first time and still currently used to better satisfy members and attract new ones. These innovative services would involve organizational, structural, technical and even managerial change (Arcoly, 2021) ^[2].

For Wolfe, Wright and Mart (2006), the importance of sports tradition and the resistance to change of their stakeholders can prevent the implementation of an innovation. An important part of the success of an innovation lies in managerial support throughout its implementation. This author has developed a typology of sports federations based on the determinants of innovation in which they highlight that the most innovative sports federations would be those under high pressure to attract financial resources, a highly competitive regional environment to attract members and whose employees would be involved in running the organization and driving

change. Innovation is a complex process that requires a commitment from the actors of sports organizations and a favorable attitude to the development of new services. This attitude could be influenced by the perception that the actors have of the change that has taken place following the innovations put in place.

1.3 Methodological approach

In this part on the methodology, it is for us to justify our methodological choices and to present the different survey protocols likely to allow us to achieve the objectives of our research.

1.3.1 Nature and population of the study

This is a mixed search. It was carried out within Burkinabe sports structures. The study population is made up of federal members (Federation Presidents, National Technical Directors, Secretaries General, Treasurers, communication officers, organization officers) and members of the National Olympic and Sports Committee of Burkina Faso (CNOSB). The choice of this population is explained by their administrative functions or current elected representatives of associations, their experiences, but also by their knowledge of the sports environment. In principle, any definition of vision or strategies in terms of innovation falls primarily within their areas of action and their skills.

1.3.2 Sampling

Thus, the non-probabilistic method and the technique of reasoned choice were used for the choice of our study sample. They allowed us to retain thirty-four (34) individuals from four sports federations: athletics, cycling, handball and volleyball. Indeed, a priori, a minimum of thirty interviews is sufficient because beyond the number of interviews, what counts more is the quality and richness of these (Colle, 2006).

1.3.3. Technique, tools, data processing and analysis

To collect the data necessary for our study, we used the interview technique. This allowed us to carry out semi-structured individual interviews. This form of interview is likely to provide us with more in-depth information given the freedom given to the actors. The interview guide was divided into three themes and related to knowledge of innovation and its necessity, innovations made within Burkinabè sports federations and finally the constraints and prospects in this area.

Data analysis favored a method widely used in discourse studies, namely content analysis (Thiard, 2014). It was done using a grid. Thus, after the construction of this grid, we proceeded to a transcription of the remarks of each interviewee. The transcription made it possible to have a database which is analyzed and then distributed according to the themes addressed.

Before each interview, the respondents were given explanations and were reassured that the data collected will be confidential and rigorously used in the context of the research. The subjects being reassured, the investigations took place in peace.

2. Results

The data collected from the different components of this research after analysis and transcription are presented according to the objectives of the study.

2.1 Knowledge of innovation and its necessity within Burkinabe sports federations

From knowledge of innovation and necessity, the answers of all the interviewees overlap. For them, innovation is a good thing for the development of sports structures. It is an inevitable means in the world of sport. This emerges from the words of this respondent from the volleyball federation who affirms that: "Today, to face sporting competition, innovation is an imperative". It can be considered as the first vector of sport development. One of the managers of the handball federation underlines in this sense that: "Innovation not only makes it possible to produce high-level athletes but to develop the discipline. It is a means of motivating and revitalizing sports administration officials. He then adds that: "In view of the evolution of all aspects of human life, innovation is essential. It is a godsend for promoting activities, improving the performance of athletes and allowing them to measure themselves against the great nations of sport". And, according to an official of the Burkinabè athletics federation: "today, either you innovate or you disappear, the world is in perpetual innovation". In short, innovation is a godsend for promoting activities, improving the performance of athletes, and comparing themselves to the great nations of sport. In this, the respondents therefore have knowledge of innovation and confirms its necessity in the Burkinabe context.

2.2 Innovations undertaken within sports structures

Our results reveal that Burkinabè sports federations have undertaken innovations within their structures. These innovations are of several orders and relate to the organization, the regulatory framework, the managerial aspect and the competitions.

On the organizational level, the results of our surveys show that in the majority of sports federations, a long-term development plan has been put in place for the training of technical and administrative managers. Also, the creation of technical and administrative services was implemented for the development of the various structures at all levels of activity in certain structures.

During the last two renewals of the mandates of the executive offices, innovations such as the appointment of the presidents of zones or the vice presidents in charge of the supervision of the activities have been observed. Sports practice has also been divided into zones, in particular the organization of national championships.

In terms of communication, the use of platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook have become a reality in sports structures in recent years. In this sense, an interviewee from the cycling federation affirms: "The organization of the structures makes it possible to bring a dynamism going in the direction of the influence of these".

At the regulatory level, despite the sports federations being framed by appropriate texts, innovations are continuing in this area. The innovations undertaken in recent years in the various sports structures at the regulatory level concern the rereading of the texts which govern the national sports federations in order to comply with the requirements of the international federations, in particular professionalization. This includes, among other things, the development and proofreading of specific texts governing the various national championships of all categories, the proofreading of the statutes and internal regulations to accommodate the

evolution of sport and improve the functioning of the federations.

In terms of competitions, it appears from the interviews that arrangements have been made to allow national teams to be able to take part in an international competition at least every sports season.

The effectiveness of the national championships in the various structures for the 2021-2022 season is also a novelty. A respondent maintains in this sense that: "Efforts have been made by federal officials in collaboration with the supervisory authorities so that the various female and male categories can have their championships to ensure succession at the level of the national team".

The next generation of athletes has been the subject of innovations within the majority of sports federations through the training of players and the organization of competitions in the small categories.

Finally, it appears from the statements of the elements of the various disciplines surveyed that in recent years the national teams have benefited from camps or periodic training groups in order to strengthen themselves for international competitions.

On the managerial level, the majority of respondents mentioned a frank collaboration of the members within the structures in recent years. Federal officials have also undertaken initiatives for the effective participation of all players from leagues, districts and clubs in the various activities. In this sense, a federal member of handball affirms that: "meetings are held on a regular basis within the framework of exchanges on the development of the federation".

Finally, bonuses and rewards have been at the heart of the concerns of sports federations during these last mandates. They were instituted on the one hand in certain structures and on the other hand experienced a significant revaluation.

2.3 Constraints in terms of innovations within sports federations

The implementation of these various innovations is encountering or has encountered difficulties. Our interviews show that some players are resistant to change. With this in mind, a National Technical Director (DTN) underlines that: "The low level of education of certain actors constitutes a handicap in understanding the merits of innovations". In addition, the lack of financial and material resources constitutes a major difficulty in the implementation of certain innovative actions. Finally, it should be noted that the insecurity of recent years undermines the various actions envisaged in the direction of major innovations due to the fact that certain localities are inaccessible.

Despite these difficulties and in terms of prospects, it emerges from the comments of the respondents that particular emphasis is placed on the financial autonomy of the federations. This is revealed by the words of a member of the volleyball federation: "Each federation, in the future, must be able to support itself financially". We must also ensure that the various championships are broadcast live on national television. The idea of the next generation of athletes as well as the permanent regrouping camps of the national teams constitute actions to be perpetuated. In this sense, one of the DTNs indicates that we must "ensure that these sports federations can market quality products and services and to do so, we need clubs that are structurally and financially solid". They also suggest building skills through

training for actors. The operationalization of Law 50 on the orientation law on sport and leisure in Burkina Faso is also requested by the actors for the effective implementation of the professionalization of sport, a sine qua non condition for marketing the sporting product.

Discussion

This part concerns the discussion of the results, i.e. the analysis and comparisons of our results with previous studies carried out on similar themes or in the same scientific field.

3.1. Sports actors in tune with the phenomenon of innovation

On the knowledge of innovation and its importance in the sports field, the actors questioned are unanimous in recognizing that it is a condition for the development of sports structures and to face sports competition. These results are different from those of Arcoly (2021) ^[2] a study carried out with amateur football clubs in Wallonia. The members of the clubs interviewed in this study were initially unaware of what an innovation in the sports environment might look like. They often likened it to improvements rather than real new things at their clubs. It was only after explaining the concept of innovation that they became aware of all the innovations implemented in recent years. Stakeholders refer to their interpretation of innovation, which was seen more as a change or improvement in clubs. The knowledge of the sports actors of the innovation can be an advantage within the framework of the rocking of the Burkinabè sport in the professionalization because this one being the cause and the consequence of the innovation.

3.2 Beginnings of innovation within Burkinabè sports federations

From the results of this research, it appears that the sports federations analyzed in this study have set up new services and new activities in order to satisfy their members. However, the various actors do not express satisfaction with these innovations. These innovations are simply technical and administrative. The goal of these two types of innovation is similar, namely to satisfy and add value to end consumers either to attract them or to retain them as customers.

Our results are different from those obtained by Winand et al. (2013) ^[18] on innovative sports federations in the Belgian context. Indeed, on average just over a third of new initiatives are sports. The Belgian sports federations develop a majority of non-sporting initiatives (sports equipment rental service, online recording service for the results of sports competitions), that is to say, which are not of a sporting nature, but obviously linked to sport and the sporting activities they promote. These non-sporting initiatives would be intended to provide added value in relation to the membership fee. They would make it possible to increase the value perceived by the latter of the sports services located at the heart of the profession and the missions of the federations (sports days for members, sports courses for athletes, organization of championships). The results of this study indicate that sports federations develop more new initiatives related to these ancillary or secondary services (promotion, communication, management system, rental system) than for sports services as such. This could be explained by the fact that the sports federations have less

freedom in the development of their sport (under the constraints of the sports organizations of the guardianship), than at the level of the services which gravitate around it. They would therefore try to stand out by promoting ancillary services for which they would have greater room for maneuver.

Arcoly (2021)^[2] in his study on "what are the sporting and non-sporting innovations implemented in amateur football in Wallonia over the last 5 years" finds results similar to ours. Thus, sports innovations are the most observed. Among these, we find the training and professionalization of coaches, which leads to specific diplomas. The physical preparation of players is also an initiative observed within the football clubs questioned. Post-training and the creation of new teams have also been noted. In addition, non-sporting innovations have also appeared. New infrastructures such as synthetic pitches, LED lighting, annexes and new spaces are initiatives observed. The use of technology was observed in some clubs in the sample. Specifically, at the managerial level in the Burkinabe context, several innovations have been undertaken. These results are similar to those of Weil and Hatchuel (1992) carried out in the French context. For these authors, the federation by its structuring dimension and the involvement of actors it requires, it is wise to consider a federal sports policy as a management device.

It is the result of the articulation of three complementary elements such as a formal substrate, a managerial philosophy and an ideal vision of the role of the actors within the federation. In this sense, managerial innovation involves the introduction of novelty into the organization. The novelty of managerial innovation can relate both to the organizational context in which it emerges, but also to its absolute nature, in connection with the state of the art and recognized management theories. The key factors that influence the process of managerial innovation are the institutional conditions in which the organization evolves as well as the attitudes of the influential groups. Thus, organizations adopt new managerial practices in order to gain internal or external legitimacy. Our results corroborate those of Carballada and Garrigou (2001)^[4]. For these authors, the proper functioning or the dynamism of a federation lies partly in its management system of its actors. Management does not simply consist of serving as a transmission belt between the "top and the bottom". Today, it requires work to interpret strategic orientations and supervise subordinates.

At the organizational level, the results of interviews with federal leaders confirm innovations in this area. These federations do so in the sense of giving sports administration a new impetus and giving impetus to a new organization in their governing bodies. These results are similar to those of Olbia (2016) who points out that in sports organizations, to be well structured, it is essential to create a clear organizational chart in which the distribution of roles and responsibilities is very precise. Some federations have, for example, decided to make a clear distinction between the sporting aspect and the administrative aspect in order to define the role of each member in a clear way so that they can fully take care of their tasks without encroaching on the other members. To be even more precise, some federations have not hesitated to go into more detail and have subdivided the management of their game. It should be remembered that a sports structure works in stages and that

each person has their respective level in which they are sovereign. But that all substantive decisions must be validated by all levels.

3.3 Difficulties in implementing innovations

From our results, it appears that the implementation of the various innovations encounters or has encountered difficulties, mostly financial and material. These same results were obtained by El-Guennouni and Ezzahiri (2021) who found that the finances of the various Non-Profit Sports Associations were elements that hindered innovation. For these authors, although the majority of federations are in a healthy situation, more than half of them do not have sufficient resources or fail to attract new resources to implement the desired innovations. The federations must therefore sometimes postpone or even cancel them. This trend is mostly seen in smaller organizations that rarely have abundant resources. Winand and Hoerber (2017)^[17] indicate the presence of regulatory bodies that would also influence the innovation capacity of organizations, especially sports organizations. Depending on the freedom left by them, we can observe more or less new initiatives.

Our results reveal that some actors are resistant to change. However, for Winand et al. (2013)^[18], a favorable attitude towards novelty would encourage the realization of innovations within sports federations. This achievement would lead to a perception on the part of the actors that their sports federations are innovating, especially since the latter are in favor of it. This perception of innovating is linked to the perception that the actors have of their federation that it is changing (or has changed). Thus, this non-perception of sports actors would mean an insufficiency or a non-impact of innovations. Our results are contrary to those obtained by Winand et al. (2013)^[18] where there is a statistically significant correlation ($P < 0.01$) between perceptions of innovation and innovations implemented in sports organizations.

Winand and Hoerber (2017) also carried out a study with significant results ($P < 0.01$) on the correlation between the perception of change over a period of five years.

Conclusion

The notion of innovation has been little studied in the field of management of sports organizations. Some studies have been carried out on the development of innovative technologies in the sports industry, which take on an economist dimension of the notion of innovation, i.e. new for the sector or the industry, but no cross-sectional studies were interested in the notion of innovative services within organizations in the Burkinabe context. The general objective of this article was to analyze the innovations implemented within sports federations in Burkina Faso. Specifically, the aim was to identify the innovations made within these sports federations over the past four years. To achieve this objective, we carried out a literature review which allowed us to carry out an investigation by interview with 34 people. The results of the research reveal the existence of innovations implemented within sports federations on the organizational, regulatory, managerial and competition levels. Also, the low level of education of some actors, the lack of financial and material resources and finally, the insecurity in recent years are difficulties that hinder the various actions envisaged in the direction of innovation. This study helps inform stakeholders and decision-makers on the major trends in innovation in the sports field with a view to possible decision-making.

Failure to take into account the perception of grassroots actors on these innovations constitutes the limit of this research and could be the subject of further study.

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