Policy 'Shapers' or Policy 'Takers'? The case of three small to mid-sized national governing bodies of Olympic sports in England

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Abstract

This study evaluated the extent to which changes in UK sport policy have impacted on three selected small to mid-sized national governing bodies (SMNGBs) of Olympic sports in England, considered to be competitive-community-grassroots sports rather than elite (by virtue of their loss of elite funding), and the strategies utilised by them to adapt to changing policy and operational environments, to determine their position as primarily 'policy shapers' or 'policy takers.' The analysis was informed by the advocacy coalition framework (ACF).

The extent to which sport policy has impacted on SMNGBs, the strategies used to adapt to changes in policy, the changing nature of their relationship with government and governmental agencies, and their role in sport policy, have seldom been addressed directly in academic literature. While community sport policy has received some interest from scholars, there has been far less analysis on the significance of SMNGBs at the community level.

The research adopted a qualitative approach within a multiple case-study design. The cases selected were England Handball, Volleyball England, and Table Tennis England. Primary data collection methods were document analysis and semi-structured interviews with key actors.

A thematic analysis of the data revealed a sport policy subsystem constructed or substantially shaped by government and agency-led coalitions, engineered on the basis of shared-beliefs (which are partly common to SMNGBs and Sport England [SE] and partly imposed by SE), and a culture of contract-compliance, shared-interests, financial inducements/sanctions and organisational interdependencies, to deliver on the shifting priorities of government's pro-social agenda. The research identified SMNGBs as primarily 'policy takers', based on: i) a largely unopposed acceptance of policy change by SMNGBs; ii) a willingness to adapt to change and comply with contractual obligations; and iii) the utilisation of various opportunistic and pragmatic strategies to align with the 'core beliefs' of government and SE, achieve policy outcomes, and maintain membership of the SE-led coalition. The impact of which has significantly shaped SMNGBs, both organisationally and operationally, heightened levels of resource-dependency and tensions within SMNGBs,

predominantly attributable to a compliance versus autonomy dichotomy, and exposed their weakness and vulnerability to policy change, as well as a lack of understanding of the policy environment.

Application of the ACF illuminated a number of key points relevant to the fundamental assumptions of the framework, particularly in relation to the formation, composition, and boundaries of advocacy coalitions and policy subsystems, the ACF's hierarchical belief system, and the ACF's capacity to explain both policy change and stability, which contribute to debates on the utility of the ACF as an analytical framework. The evaluation of the ACF highlighted its usefulness as an analytical framework, but also potential weaknesses, particularly in regard to the limited insight given to government-constructed agency-led coalitions.

Key words: Sport England, small to mid-sized NGBs, community, sport, policy, advocacy coalition framework (ACF).

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Table of Contents:

List of Appendices 312

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

ACF	Advocacy Coalition Framework
AGM	Annual General Meeting
APS	Active People Survey
ASC	Advisory Sports Council
BOA	British Olympic Association
CCPR	Central Council for Physical Recreation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
C4L	Change 4 Life
CSP	County Sports Partnership
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DfE	Department for Education
DNH	Department for National Heritage
EH	England Handball Association
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HEVO	Higher Education Volleyball Officer
HLSCOPL	House of Lords Select Committee on Olympic and Paralympic Legacy
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LA	Local Authority
Lottery	National Lottery
MSF	Multiple Streams Framework
NGB	National Governing Body of Sport
NGBCEOF	National Governing Body CEO Forum
NPM	New Public Management
PE	Physical Education
PESSYP	PE and Sport Strategy for Young People
PL4S	Premier League 4 Sport
PM	Prime Minister

SE	Sport England
SMNGB	Small to Mid-sized National Governing Body of Sport
SRA	Sport and Recreation Alliance
TTDO	Table Tennis Development Officer
TTE	Table Tennis England
UKS	UK Sport
VE	Volleyball England
WSP	Whole Sport Plan
YST	Youth Sports Trust

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1) Introduction

This study has evaluated the extent to which changes in UK sport policy have impacted on three selected small to mid-sized national governing bodies (SMNGBs) of Olympic sports in England, and the strategies utilised by them to adapt to changing policy and operational environments, to determine their position as primarily 'policy shapers' or 'policy takers.' More specifically, the three SMNGBs are considered competitive-community-grassroots sports rather than elite, by virtue of their loss of elite funding from UK Sport (UKS). They have also received lower levels of community sport funding from Sport England (SE) relative to the average funding awarded to national governing bodies (NGBs) of Olympic sports.

The extent to which sport policy has impacted on SMNGBs, the strategies used to adapt to changes in policy, the changing nature of their relationship with government and governmental agencies, and their role in sport policy, have seldom been addressed directly in academic literature. While community sport policy has received some interest from scholars, there has been far less analysis on the significance of SMNGBs at the community level. Previous contributions to research have mainly focused on elite sport policy and sporting excellence (e.g. Houlihan, 2000a; Oakley and Green, 2001; Green, 2003, 2004a, 2004b; Green and Houlihan, 2004, 2005; Grix and Carmichael, 2012; Houlihan and Zheng, 2013), and school sport (e.g. Houlihan, 2000a; Grix and Phillpots, 2014; Mackintosh and Liddle, 2015).

The analysis of sport policy and the three case studies was informed by the advocacy coalition framework (ACF), particularly as Green and Houlihan (2004, p.400) suggested the potential for a less prominent advocacy coalition consisting of a 'cluster of competitive, but not high performance sports', to actively engage in shaping sport policy, thus signposting the application of the ACF towards SMNGBs. Payán *et al.* (2017) also highlighted the limited attention given by the ACF to state agency-led advocacy coalitions within policy subsystems, as well as the lack of academic interest. Additionally, the increasing governmental interest in sport as an

important cross-departmental policy area, and an ‘extremely malleable resource’ to achieve ‘a wide variety of domestic and international [policy] goals’ (Houlihan and Green, 2008, p.3), has not been matched by similar levels of academic interest in the analysis of UK sport policy (Houlihan, 2005, p.164), and less so in the context of SMNGBs. The intention of this research has been to contribute to knowledge surrounding the impact of changing sport policy and governmental relationships on SMNGBs, the mechanisms adopted to adapt to change, and their capacity to influence or at least shape sport policy. Similarly, this study aimed to contribute further towards debates on the analysis of UK sport policy and the utility of the ACF as an analytical framework.

The following sections within this introductory chapter provide details of the research aims and objectives that have underpinned this study, a rationale for investigating sport policy and NGBs, and the structure of this thesis.

1.2) Research aims and objectives

The aims that underpin this research are twofold:

1) To evaluate the extent to which changes in sport policy have impacted on small to mid-sized NGBs, and the strategies utilised to adapt to changing policy and operational environments; and
2) To determine whether small to mid-sized NGBs are primarily ‘policy shapers’ or ‘policy takers.’

In order to achieve the aims, the research objectives are to:

(a) Understand the historical context of contemporary sport policy within which SMNGBs operate;
(b) Examine the development of governmental relationships with SMNGBs;
(c) Investigate the impact of changing sport policy on SMNGBs, by means of a thematic analysis of operational activities;
(d) Ascertain the strategies utilised by SMNGBs to adapt to, and operate within, a changing policy and operational environment; and
(e) Evaluate the utility of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF).

1.3) Investigating sport policy and NGBs: a rationale

Historically, NGBs have been characterised as 'traditionally voluntarist' organisations, involved in and responsible for harmonising and enforcing the rules, administration, stimulating the sport's development, selecting international teams, organising events, and representing the interests of the domestic sport in the international federation (Houlihan, 1991, pp.115-116). Prior to the 1980s, NGBs operated within a sport policy context best characterised as 'traditional pluralism', where 'market and voluntary sectors represented the major providers of sporting opportunity', with the state only playing a supplementary role (Bramham and Henry, 1991, p.140). This was followed by a 'neo-liberal' phase of political thinking and the 'rejection of state-led provision' (Bramham and Henry, 1991, p.141), there being 'no strong impulse or desire' for a *hands-on* approach to sport (Jefferys, 2012, p.11). Of course, it would be misleading to suggest that government had no interest in sport or disregarded the attributes or impact of sport, particularly when it was in the national interest to do so. For example, the utility of sport at times of national and economic crisis (Horne, 1986; Horne *et al.*, 1999), and sports' promotion of tourism and national pride, such as government's backing of the 1948 London Olympic Games (Jefferys, 2012). Thus, reflecting Sugden and Bairner's (1993, p.10) claim that irrespective of the idealistic rhetoric that 'sport is and should be free from politics, historic evidence reveals that this is rarely the case.'

From the late 1980s, governmental interest and involvement in sport became more regular and consistent, prompted by the belief that sport was a legitimate aspect of welfare provision, although government intervention and motives varied significantly (Houlihan, 1997; Houlihan and White, 2002). Houlihan and White (2002) noted further that sport policy, unlike other policy areas (e.g. education), had a more blurred focus and unclear legislative boundary, attributable to *inter alia*: i) sport's emergence as a legitimate focus for welfare provision only in the last [50] years; ii) instability of objectives and variability in outputs and outcomes, highlighted by government's tendency to utilise sport to achieve a range of non-sport political objectives; and iii) a lack of continuity in sport policy attributed to varying salience to government.

According to Houlihan and White (2002; Pickup, 1996), increased government attention toward sport created a sense of unease among many NGBs, concerned with the imposition of uniformity from increasing government interference, and the undermining of NGBs' capacity to determine their own role. Furthermore, the pattern of change within the operational environment of NGBs prompted increased levels of bureaucratisation (Houlihan, 1991), professionalisation (Coalter *et al.*, 1988; Thibault *et al.*, 1991; Henry, 1993, 2001), and resource-dependence (Borrett, 1991).

It is generally accepted that sport was increasingly acknowledged as falling within the remit of government during the period between the 1960s and 1990s. However, sport's elevation to a higher degree of salience, arguably gained momentum from the mid-1990s following the introduction of the National Lottery (Lottery), particularly in relation to elite sport and youth/school sport. Equally, the relationship between government and NGBs has changed dramatically from one of deference and entitlement, to one of contractual complexity and greater resource-dependency. Table 1.1 illustrates the dimensions of change in the political status of sport policy and its significance to NGBs since 1960.

It is clear that the increasingly dynamic policy and operational environment of NGBs, identifiable within Table 1.1, has placed a premium on the ability of NGBs, particularly SMNGBs and those that have suffered a loss of elite funding, to anticipate and adapt to change, and acquire new entrepreneurial and political qualities to engage with government and governmental agencies at a policy level. It is these set of challenges which are of interest to this study. The significance of community sport policy, although not neglected completely, has been overlooked (Thurston, 2017), as have those sports considered to be emerging, developing or declining within the UK, where previous studies have been weighted towards traditional British sports (e.g. football, rugby union, cricket, and athletics).

Table 1.1: *Dimensions of sport policy change and significance to NGBs*

Dimension	1960-1990	1990s	2000s	2010s
Salience to government	Low.	Increasing following John Major's appointment as Prime Minister (PM).	Notable level of continuity following Labour's return to government.	Consistently and significantly higher than 1960–1990; increasing use of sport to meet government's pro-social agenda.
Public Policy objectives for Sport (direct and indirect)	Vague, except in response to specific problems (e.g. football hooliganism).	Emerging strong focus on elite/school sport.	Vague aspirations; dual prioritisation elite/school sport; hosting major events (e.g. successful bid to host the 2012 Olympics in London.	Shifting focus from 'sports for sports sake' to 'sport for social good.'
Machinery of government concerned with sport	Neglected with limited resources; confused overlapping remits.	Reduction in overlapping remits, due to the establishment of UKS, and appointment of a Minister for Sport, within a ministry responsible for sport. Still very complex.	Performance management culture; reform and modernisation; continued complexity.	Still complex – greater intent for joined-up government; changing remits of governmental agencies; continued modernisation and reform.
Distribution of power in the policy sub-sector	Lobbying capacity weak in both the not-for-profit and commercial sectors.	Increasing lobbying activity by Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) and NGBs.	Aggressive lobbying from NGBs, especially from the 'big 5.'	More vigorous policy network with more effectively organised interests, especially elite sport, but also in relation youth/school sport and social sport, though less intensified.
Sport Policy Outcomes	Limited connection between public policy inputs, outputs and outcomes.	Significant increases in resources available from central government (via National Lottery funding).	Increased funding and new role for UKS/SE – narrower focus on 'sport for sport's sake'; shift from mass participation to a nationally-defined strategy to increase participation and elite success.	Tighter integration between public and not-for-profit sectors; substantial success at elite-level (increasing Olympic/Paralympic podium success); gradual decline in mass participation; shifting emphasis towards social/health benefits of sport.
Significance for NGBs	Increased government attention and funding; role uncertainty and confusion; increased intervention and bureaucracy.	Fundamental change in cultural, policy and operational environments of NGBs; major shift from entitlement to evidence-based monitoring and resource distribution.	Greater government intervention; reduced autonomy; complexity and confusion; resource-dependency; changed remit to 'deliverers' of sport to meet policy objectives.	Significant government intervention; changed remit for NGBs from deliverers of sport back to 'core' market; shift away from 'one size fits all' agenda; continued compliance and resource-dependency; reduced funding.

Source adapted from: Houlihan and Lindsay (2013)

The community-social sport policy and operational environment of NGBs has also been subjected to a further significant change following the publishing of government's policy document, *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation (2015)*[1], which has strengthened the relevance of this research. In particular, the sport policy pendulum has again swung away from 'sports for sport's sake' back to 'sport for social good', reversing the role of NGB/SMNGBs within the sport policy environment from a key mechanism for achieving government's overall outcomes for sport, back to 'core' market delivery (i.e. those who maintain a strong and resilient relationship with sport and activity) within a more intense *mixed economy model* for community-social and grassroots sport.

1.4) Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of three theoretical chapters and four empirical chapters, followed by a final discussion and conclusions chapter.

Chapter Two, *Sport Policy and NGBs*, focuses on the historical context of UK sport policy. The chapter provides a chronological review and analysis of the development of sport policy within which NGB/SMNGBs have operated, and examines how changing policy since the early 1960s has altered governments' expectations of and relationships with NGBs, and affected the functional and operational environments within which they work. Apart from highlighting the lack of academic research focused on NGBs, especially SMNGBs, the review of sport policy identified the themes that informed and guided this research.

Chapter Three, *Theorising Policy at the Meso-level*, reviews the theoretical literature that underpins this study, in particular, an understanding and assessment of three analytical frameworks, namely, new institutionalism, the multiple streams framework (MSF), and the ACF, since the principal level of analysis in this research is at the meso-level. The evaluation of macro-level assumptions and the nature of power relations have served to sensitise the researcher to particular relationships and different aspects of the policy process. The chapter concludes by identifying the

[1] Referred to as, *Sporting Future*, throughout this thesis.

framework found to be of greatest potential value for analysing sport policy in relation to NGB/SMNGBs.

Chapter Four, *Methodology and Research Design*, outlines the research strategy for this study utilising the structure advocated by Grix (2002), beginning with the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin this research, followed by a more detailed discussion on the critical realist research paradigm adopted for this study. The chapter continues with a discussion on the research strategy and methods considered to be the most logical and appropriate in achieving the research aims and objectives, including rationales and justifications for: the use of a multiple case-study research design, and case selection; the qualitative approach to this study and use of document analysis and semi-structured interviews as the primary methods of data collection; and the use of a thematic analysis of the data. This is followed by a discussion of periodisation, and justifications and explanations for the particular time periods that have been adopted for the purposes of this study. The chapter closes with a discussion on validity and reliability.

Chapter Five, *The UK Sport Policy Subsystem*, is the first of the empirical chapters, focused on the conceptualisation of the sport policy subsystem within the UK, utilising the ACF as the theoretical framework for analysing sport policy. The purpose of this chapter is to identify and define the UK sport policy subsystem and policy actors; the existence of advocacy coalitions; the factors that have influenced policy change over a decade or more; and the key impacts of policy change on NGBs. Operational aspects of power are also embedded within discussions. The chapter closes with concluding remarks on the key findings of the research.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, present evidence within a common structure on the three selected SMNGBs. Each chapter starts with an introductory profile of the SMNGB, followed by a discussion on governmental relationships and the thematic analysis on operational activities, as guided by the research objectives, literature review and further findings within Chapter 5. Threaded throughout the chapters are relevant links and discussions that reflect the nature of power and the utility of the ACF. The concluding section summarises the key findings of each case study in relation to the aims and objectives of this research.

Chapter Nine, *Theoretical and Empirical Evaluations and Research Implications*, presents the key findings and conclusions drawn from the empirical chapters that directly address the aims and objectives of this study, drawing particular attention to the similarities and differences between the selected SMNGBs, and the utility of the ACF as a theoretical framework for analysing UK sport policy. Included within this chapter are the implications of this study for UK sport policy, SMNGBs and the ACF. A concluding section completes this chapter.

Chapter 10, *Conclusions*, is the final chapter of this thesis and presents a summary of the key findings and conclusions drawn from each chapter that directly address the aims and objectives of this study. This is followed by a review of the limitations of this research and directions towards future academic enquiry. This final chapter concludes with a reflection on the research process.

Chapter Two

Sport Policy and NGBs

2.1) Introduction

An understanding of the historical context of contemporary sport policy within which SMNGBs operate, and an analysis of the impact of policy change on SMNGBs, are an integral part of this study. This chapter provides a review of literature appertaining to the development of UK sport policy since the 1960s, with an emphasis on community sport policy and its implications for NGBs. The inclusion of policy development between 1960 and 1995 is considered important contextually to set the scene for the more in-depth review of policy documents from *Sport: Raising the Game (1995)*, through to the current published policy document *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation (2015)*, illustrating the extent to which governments' expectations of and relationships with NGBs have altered, and affected the functional and operational environments within which they work. The review also highlights the lack of academic research focused on NGBs, especially SMNGBs, and the impact of sport policy post-2008, as well as supporting the identification of initial analytical themes that were considered relevant to inform and guide the case study research, as seen in the concluding section of this chapter.

2.2) Wolfenden and the Sports Council 1960 to 1995: setting the scene

The Wolfenden Report, commissioned by the CCPR and published in 1960, was a response to the challenges faced by sport in post-war Britain (Holt and Mason, 2000; Jeffreys, 2012). According to Coghlan and Webb (1990, pp.8-12), Wolfenden provided the public at large with 'formal recognition' of society's responsibilities in the field of sport, and challenged government to provide for sport as never before. Thus, providing NGBs with potential opportunities to develop and expand, while still preserving their autonomy. Government intervention in sport was premised on three key assumptions: i) sport had a role in alleviating the problem of (adolescent) urban

disorder (Hargreaves, 1986; Holt and Mason, 2000); ii) a need to respond to increasing electoral pressure to improve sport and recreation opportunities; and iii) a realisation that state-funded sport could help to improve Britain's ailing international sporting achievements (Houlihan, 1991; Holt and Mason, 2000).

In line with Wolfenden's recommendations, and despite political infighting between government departments and Whitehall inertia (Jefferys, 2012), the Advisory Sports Council (ASC) was established in 1965, signposting the recognition of sport as a legitimate interest of government (Coghlan and Webb, 1990; Binfield and Stevenson, 1993; Houlihan and White, 2002). According to Coghlan and Webb (1990, p.21), the ASC's remit was to advise government 'on matters relating to the development of amateur sport and recreation', focused on the provision of community sports facilities, planned and coordinated distribution of community resources, and sport development. Yet, Coalter *et al.* (1988; Coghlan and Webb, 1990) noted that the ASC had initially directed a large proportion of funding into elite sport, particularly to strengthen the administrative and coaching structure of NGBs; albeit dependent upon their ability to meet funding criteria and close scrutiny of proposals that demonstrated the need for funding. Arguably, this identifies the first signs of extended state influence over NGBs, where the ASC's 'use of economic power' can be viewed as directly 'rationalising and modernising the elite sector' (Coalter *et al.,* 1988, p.58). That said, the relationship between sport/NGBs and government/ASC remained one of deference and uncertainty, in part due to restrictions on funding and political reluctance to fully priortise sport, as seen by the 'lack of a comprehensive and intelligent approach to sport and recreation' (Polley, 1998, p.24).

However, the reconstitution of the Sports Council in 1972, by Royal Charter, signalled a significant change in the relationship between sport and government. The stated aim of SC was to 'raise standards of performance in sport and physical recreation' (Coghlan and Webb, 1990, p.67), primarily focused on encouraging participation, improving the provision of new sports facilities for the wider community, and improving Britain's international performance (Holt and Mason, 2000), although Houlihan and White (2002) claimed that the allocation of funding remained skewed towards elite sport, as opposed to mass participation. Notwithstanding the above, the Sports Council launched its *Sport for All (1972)* campaign, in a concerted effort to increase mass participation in sport. However, while Coghlan and Webb (1990, p.69)

suggested that *Sport for All* was influential in shifting policy beliefs towards the 'value of sport in society, increasing participation in sport and physical recreation and promoting sport as a desirable social concept', other authors argued that *Sport for All* was merely a slogan, since resources were targeted to a greater extent towards ameliorating government's wider social policy concerns (Coalter *et al*., 1988; Henry, 1993, 2001; Green, 2003).

According to McIntosh and Charlton's (1985) *Sport for All* was well supported by NGBs, although in varying degrees, although a review of Sports Council-led political strategies for sport, including *Sport for All (1972), Sport in the Community – The Next Ten Years (1982)*, and *Sport in the Community – Into the 90s. A strategy for sport 1988-1993 (1988)*, has shown the lack of a clearly defined role for NGBs in the development and implementation of sport policy (see Appendix I). Coghlan and Webb (1990) also noted a minimal response from NGBs to the Sports Council's 1982 strategy, which signified a lack of understanding of the social or welfare role of sport, rather than a lack of interest, although Keech (2011, p.218) argued that the above strategy had been 'ill-defined, resulting in ineffectual organisations responding to ineffectual policy goals.' This echoed Houlihan and Green's (2009, p.678) earlier observations of the 'fragmentation, fractiousness and perceived ineffectiveness of organisations within the sport policy area.' The lack of a clear definable role for NGBs, arguably a reflection of the persistent entanglements between the Sports Council, the CCPR (acting in the interests of NGBs), and the British Olympic Association ([BOA] – who also believed they acted in the interests of NGBs) (Coghlan and Webb, 1990; Roche, 1993; Pickup, 1996; Horne *et al.,* 1999).

Furthermore, the Sports Council's 1988 strategy (Sports Council, 1988) acknowledged the constant disharmony and discord within England's sport system, and that participation in many traditional sports had become static, particularly due to decreased participation among young adults aged 16-24, also signposting a decline in NGBs' own memberships (Pickup, 1996). Moreover, the 'New Right' Conservative government's social and economic policies under Thatcher, encapsulated decreasing public expenditure, competitive tendering (privatisation and contracting-out), efficiency maximisation, and the reshaping of school curriculums, which created new challenges for sport (Sports Council, 1988) and those NGBs in receipt of considerable financial support. The latter having raised concerns over how much

was sport doing for itself to help improve its revenue base, and alleviate its dependence on Sports Council grant-aid (Coghlan and Webb, 1990; Pickup, 1996). NGB involvement in raising participation levels also continued to be marginal, consistent with the divided opinions on their ability to meet participation objectives, partly due to their 'lack of supporting structures and the absence of clear objectives' (Sports Council, 1988, p.45). Houlihan and White (2002, p.61) also noted that the Sports Council had demonstrated a desire to 'redefine its relationship with its [NGB] partners on a more contractual basis', arguably to establish greater uniformity and central direction among NGBs (Sports Council, 1988), and the improvement of their financial and governance controls (Coghlan and Webb, 1990). Conversely though, it was also the Sports Council's belief that 'total rationalisation' of NGBs was an 'impossible dream', and interestingly, a 'mixed economy was inevitable' (Sports Council, 1988, p.47).

2.3) Major's Raising the Game and the Lottery

According to Houlihan and White (2002, p.2; Holt and Mason, 2000; Jefferys, 2012; Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013), the election of John Major as leader of the Conservative Party in November 1990, 'brought sport … closer to the centre of the political stage', signposting an improved position for sport/NGBs as a strategic priority for government policy. For Major, sport was not a peripheral concern, but a 'central part of Britain's National Heritage' (Department of National Heritage [DNH], 1995, p.2) and 'part of the fabric of society' (Major, 1999, pp.402-405). Furthermore, during his time at the Treasury, Major (2006)[2] concluded that:

> '[L]eisure pursuits could never expect to receive sufficient money or encouragement from public funds; in any race for resources, the demands of health, education, pensions and defence would … always come first.'

Major's solution to the funding problem was the introduction of the Lottery to provide resources for sport (as one of the five good causes), which would benefit from 20% of the funds generated (Oakley and Green, 2001) and an estimated annual allocation of £300m, thus providing sport organisations, in particular NGBs, with much needed

[2] Direct quotations not displaying a page number refer to online sources.

financial support to ease some of the financial pressures that had developed over the previous decade, although the demands of funding criteria often left some poorer sports unable to raise the required 35% match-funding for their project (Houlihan and White, 2002). More importantly, the Lottery gave government considerable leverage over the direction of policy, and the ability to keep a tight rein on central government funding/expenditure (Jefferys, 2012).

While the Major government's published sport policy document, *Sport: Raising the Game (1995)*[3], was viewed as a concerted effort to bring the focus of sport to the attention of Parliament (DNH, 1995, pp.1-2), it is likely that tabloid assertions suggesting sport was 'under-funded … [and] … second-rate' and 'the reason why sport was in such a dire state was a direct responsibility of the Government' (Jefferys, 2012, p.210), were also explicit enough motives for Major to reassert greater government control over sport, particularly now that sport/NGBs would have access to previously unimaginable financial resources. The key priorities of *Raising the Game* were threefold (DNH, 1995, pp.1-2): i) to bring about a sea change in the prospects of sport from pupil to podium; ii) rebuild the strength of every level of British sport; and iii) re-establish sport as one of the great a pillars of education, predominantly based on the belief that sport in schools was 'the single most important element in the sporting continuum' (DNH, 1995, p.6). This signalled a shift in government priorities from mass participation to a twin track of elite performance and school sport (Houlihan, 1997).

For NGBs, there was an indication of a more defined role, albeit a vague focus on forging links with schools and filling in the gaps where possible, through the provision of resources and coaching, encouragement of youth inclusion within affiliated clubs, and the development of inter-school competitions (DNH 1995). In support of government's aspirations for school sport, the Youth Sports Trust (YST) was established in 1994 as a non-governmental organisation, to manage the development of youth sport and develop better communication between schools and NGBs (DNH, 1995). More importantly for NGBs, *Raising the Game* conveyed the message that future funding allocations to NGBs would be conditional on the explicit support of government objectives (Houlihan, 1997, p.95).

[3] Referred to as, *Raising the Game,* within this thesis.

Despite a change in political administration to a New Labour government following the 1997 General Election, a high degree of continuity was observed within UK sport policy, especially the emphasis placed upon school/elite sport development to facilitate British international success (Houlihan and White, 2002), although Houlihan (2000, p.175) claimed that while New Labour had 'begun to make good its policy commitments in the area of sport', notably, there had been 'far greater progress in addressing the issues associated with the elite end of the sports continuum.'

According to Keech (2011), the election of 1997 coincided with the emergence of significant tension within sport policy and sport objectives, particularly in the debate between investment in community sport and investment to meet the specialist needs of elite sport, although arguably this represents a central dichotomy in most, if not all domestic sport policies (Bailey and Talbot, 2015). Partly in response to this tension, government opted to restructure the Sports Council by dividing its responsibilities between UKS and SE (and other Home Nation Sports Councils). Accordingly, SE's remit was the advancement of sport across the development continuum and to work alongside UKS, now solely responsible for the progression of elite athletes and related policy objectives (e.g. sport event hosting) (Houlihan and White, 2002). However, the restructuring of the Sports Council received a negative response from those sports organisations who perceived the bifurcation between British and Home Nation sport, as an increase in jurisdictional complexity. As noted by Houlihan and White (2002), NGBs were frustrated by the changing governmental expectations that required them to deal with an additional body, and cope with increasingly complex procedures to secure funding.

Moreover, an emergent strategy from New Labour's 'Third Way' political ideology, the *Best Value* scheme, was utilised to drive the modernisation and reform of a broad range of public services, including sport, in order to improve levels of efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery (Robinson, 2004; Green and Houlihan, 2005). The impact of the *Best Value* policy on NGBs can be seen through SE's incorporation of the policy as part of its 'priority sports' criteria, whereby only prioritised sport/NGBs received financial support, and only upon addressing welfare related goals (e.g. improved social inclusion). The scale of change facing NGBs was clearly signalled by SE (Sport England [SE], 1999, p.34):

'[W]hereas previously, a [NGB] was often a small concern, run by committed volunteers; it can now be a multi-million pound business. This brings far greater responsibility for efficient management and financial propriety.'

2.4) Sporting Future for All, Game Plan, Playing to Win: the 'Third Way'

Under Tony Blair's New Labour government, the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS – formerly DNH) published *Sporting Future for All: The Government's Plan for Sport (2000),* and *Game Plan: A strategy for delivering Government sport and physical activity objectives (2002)*[4]. Both policy documents reiterated John Major's claim that '[s]port matters' (Department for Culture Media and Sport [DCMS], 2000, p.2), and was an under-used, yet powerful political tool (DCMS, 2002a, p.5). Indeed, Blair (2000) raised the political profile of sport across government departments by proclaiming that *Sporting Future for All* was 'not only a sports policy, it is a health policy, an education policy, a crime policy, and an anti-drugs policy.'

As alluded to previously, a notable level of continuity existed between New Labour's policies for sport and the Conservative's *Raising the Game*, especially the dual prioritisation of school sport and elite sport development (DCMS, 2002a, p.11; Green and Houlihan, 2005, 2006). Observable differences between the policy strategies were a renewed focus on sport and *physical activity* in schools to increase grassroots participation (particularly for health benefits), and a move towards 'identifying and nurturing sporting talent to facilitate sustainable improvements at an international sporting level' (DCMS, 2002a, p.7). Arguably though, *Game Plan* did not change the policies established in *Sporting Future for All*, but provided a more comprehensive statement of policy objectives and delivery mechanisms, in part due to the Cunningham Report[5] (2001, p.5; UKS, 2002a), which concluded that 'radical steps' were required to 'create a world class system capable of producing consistent success in the international arena.'

[4] Respectively referred to as, *Sporting Future for All* and *Game Plan*, throughout this thesis.

[5] The Cunningham report laid out a constructive set of proposals aimed at the continued evolution of UKS's elite funding system, and an increased focus on the ever-changing needs of top athletes and coaches.

Government had branded *Sporting Future for All* as a new way of thinking about sport (DCMS, 2000), although not in terms of what sport could do for government, but rather how this could be achieved through a 'radical rethink of the way sport [was] funded and organised' (DCMS, 2000, p.19), and a 'radical change in the relationship between government and NGBs' (DCMS, 2000, p.20). More specifically, the government's intention was to realise its vision for sport through a reform agenda and a 'modernisation partnership with [NGBs]' (DCMS, 2000, p.19), which was a key recommendation within *Game Plan*. The organisation and management of sport was still regarded as 'fragmented and too often unprofessional', and criticised for being 'inefficient, lacking vision, and failing to develop common goals', especially in high public profile sports (DCMS, 2000, pp.5-7; Deloitte and Touche, 2003; Green, 2009). A common claim was that British sport was plagued by 'infighting and turf-wars generated by overlapping organisational responsibilities' (DCMS, 2000, p.163; Foster, 2004). Foster (2004, p.11) explicitly cited the existence of 'backbiting, prejudice, blindness to the facts and a disturbing resistance to change' in athletics, which could equally apply to other sports (see Dutton, 2006). According to Deloitte and Touche (2003, pp. 1-2), change was clearly necessary within some NGBs, where evidence suggested a 'lack of basic administrative and professional support which is essential for any organisation', and that if NGBs were to realise their full potential in meeting the challenges of sport in the 21st Century, 'many will need to reform.'

Sporting Future for All asserted that NGBs should develop 'a clear strategy for participation and excellence' to receive public funds (DCMS, 2000, p.20), whereby greater emphasis was placed on the importance of target-setting, with the caveat that 'success or failure in achieving milestone targets in performance plans [would] be an important factor in deciding future levels of funding' (DCMS, 2000, p.14). According to Green and Houlihan (2006, p.58), *Game Plan* set priorities for 'a wide range of sporting activity including participation rates, elite sport development, the hosting of major events, and, notably, the overly bureaucratic nature of sports administration in the UK.' A clear example of the impact of *Game Plan* is the modernisation of SE and its radical transformation from a sports development agency concerned with mass participation, to a strategic-lead agency responsible for community sport and the co-ordination of government policy through other

organisations (Keech, 2011). Despite government critique of the inadequacies of NGBs, both UKS and SE had received sustained levels of criticism by major political parties and NGBs, for example, Houlihan and Green (2009, p.678) noted that both agencies were accused of being:

> 'unresponsive to the needs of their clients, overly bureaucratic and complex, especially in relation to accessing funds; and incoherent due to overlapping responsibilities, the lack of strategic clarity and the generation of an excess of what are often termed short-term initiatives.'

While SE acknowledged some of the criticism and the need for reform and modernisation, the momentum for change was largely government-driven, resulting from government's acceptance of the salience of sport and physical activity programmes as solutions to various policy issues, such as health and education (Houlihan and Green, 2009, p.687).

As noted in *Game Plan* (DCMS, 2002a, p.18), SE's new, rationalised role recognised the governmental agency as 'investors in sport rather than deliverers.' The alternations of which prompted a greater focus on customer-based funding and revised Lottery criteria for mass participation/community sport funding, within a performance regime of 'constant measuring, monitoring and evaluation', to ensure valued delivery from limited resources (SE, 2003, p.2). The latter included the introduction of two major surveys, SE's Active People Survey (APS) conducted on an annual basis, and DCMS's Taking Part, both contributing to the evidence base in sport (Robinson, 2004). According to Houlihan and Green (2009, p.689), the increasing use of contractual arrangements from DCMS to SE/UKS, down through the 'spine of accountability', not only captured the 'new expectations from government' of its agencies and those in receipt of public funding (e.g. NGBs) further down the 'sporting-food-chain', but ensured compliance with government policy.

The above critique of SE also prompted the publishing of the new 'Framework for Sport in England' (SE, 2004b), which identified seven generic key performance indicators (KPIs) for NGBs to work towards, as part of an effective policy monitoring process. The KPIs related to mass participation, club accreditation, membership numbers, coaching qualifications, volunteer loyalty, international success, and British representation (SE, 2004b, p.7). Furthermore, NGBs were required to develop a

thorough and robust Whole Sport Plan (WSP) in order to receive funding, which articulated long-term goals, agreed outcomes and delivery plans for individual sports, while also outlining the level of investment required (over the four-year funding cycle), and how funding was to be spent, monitored and evaluated (SE, 2004b, p.17). It is clear that the level of reform had daunting implications for many of the more traditional NGBs within British sport, which had not previously considered adopting the principles and practices of strategic management. For example, Robinson (2004) highlighted four main challenges experienced by sport organisations in relation to the modernisation agenda: i) the limited understanding or appreciation of performance management processes; ii) the use of poorly specified KPIs; iii) the inadequacy of existing organisational structures; and iv) the defensive attitudes of sport organisation management who were threatened by the prospect of change. It is this final challenge that has arguably been the most restrictive in the application of performance management systems within sport. According to Melville (2012), the increasing dependency of NGBs on public funding for their survival and/or expansion, and the criteria for receiving public funding, slowly forced attitudes to modernise and incorporate more professional managerial approaches, through a 'process of continuing development … towards greater effectiveness, efficiency and independence' (Deloitte and Touche, 2003, p.2).

While DCMS (2002a, p.18) claimed that the modernisation of UKS mirrored many of the hallmarks of SE's experience, Houlihan and Green (2009, p.692) argued that 'the level of disdain shown by government to [SE was] not as evident', the most important manifestation of reform for UKS being the appointment of Sue Campbell as Reform Chair that 'signalled the start of something very different.' A significant change was the sharpening of UKS's wider strategic goals and the implementation of its *No Compromise* approach, in a bid to increase Treasury funding for 2012. The *No Compromise* principle prioritised Olympic success, fundamental pre-requisites of which were modern, fit-for-purpose and professional NGBs, and the targeting of elite resources 'solely at those athletes capable of delivering medal-winning performances' (UKS, 2006a, p.1). UKS's remit was to ensure that investment of public funds was not wasted, to challenge NGBs to spend funds to maximum effect, and to exert influence and intervene in NGB affairs to ensure that they were in good shape. The rationale behind such intervention reflected UKS's modernising agenda,

also aimed at reducing NGBs' dependency on UKS and the encouragement of greater self-sufficiency. However, as argued by Houlihan and Green (2009, p.693), this also led to incidents of 'enforced self-sufficiency.'

Green (2009. p.131) provided a particular critique of government's modernisation agenda, by questioning whether 'such radical restructuring of the major national sports bodies would have been effected … with such expediency, had the IOC votes for the 2012 Olympic games not favoured London.' Interestingly, UKS (2005, p.1, cited in Green, 2009, p.131) noted that following the award of the Home Olympics in 2005, 'NGBs of Olympic sports argued that a single agency should have responsibility for performance pathway … from talent identification through to podium.' For Green (2009, p.131), this hinted towards restructuring favouring Olympic success, rather than 'organisational repair' to achieve the 'primary policy objectives for elite success and youth participation in sport', as argued by Houlihan and Green (2009, p.682). Indeed, Jefferys (2012) suggested that *Game Plan*'s policies had been distorted following London's successful Olympic bid, leading to the safeguarding of elite funding in the medium term, particularly as the Conservative-led Coalition government believed the Home Olympics would secure a range of benefits over and above the impact on sport. The skewed focus towards elite sport was a prominent feature of government's sport policy document, *Playing to Win: A New era for Sport (2008)*[6], which undoubtedly reflected the pressures and expectations associated with London 2012. As noted by DCMS (2008, foreword), *Playing to Win* was a plan 'to expand the pool of talented English sportsmen and women [in all sports]; and to break records, win medals and win tournaments for this country', where such endeavour would be achieved through 'shared goals, clear responsibilities, and everyone playing their part.'

Notwithstanding the above, the London Olympic bid in 2005 was also premised on the utility of the 2012 Olympic Games to promote a sporting legacy of increased sports participation. The DCMS (2008), within its legacy plans, outlined government aims to make the UK a world-leading sporting nation by inspiring people to get involved in sport to increase participation levels, and advance elite-level achievements. However, according to Girginov (2013, p.4), this 'could not be

[6] Referred to as, *Playing to Win,* throughout this thesis.

achieved without developing the organisational capacities of NGBs who form the backbone of the UK national sporting system', which was certainly reflective of DCMS's (2008, p.14) statement that:

> 'It was essential to review and refocus community sport and [SE] to give greater clarity of purpose; reduce inefficiency and bureaucracy; and make it easier for NGBs and sports to access funding to improve sport and ensure that under-represented groups get equal treatment.'

According to Keech (2011, p.220), NGBs had also aggressively lobbied government for 'increased funding and a redefined role for national sports', as the belief was that SE responsibilities were too broad. The result was agreement from government to shift governmental objectives away from sport's role in broader social outcomes, returning to a narrower focus on developing 'sports for sport's sake'. Thus, signalling a 'substantial shift from a "bottom-up" mass participation strategy to a nationally-defined strategy for each sport' (Keech, 2011, p.221), and government's intention to put 'experts and enthusiasts in charge, offering sports more freedom and control …, [as this] goes with the grain of what people in sport want' (DCMS, 2008, p.21). As Parnell (2007, cited in Keech, 2011, p.220) argued, 'we will never build a world class community sports infrastructure unless we are clear that sport is a good thing and competition is a good thing', and that for sport development and participation to have a clearly defined focus, 'NGBs (and clubs, coaches and volunteers within their domain) need to excel.'

According to SE, NGBs were 'placed at the heart' of SE's 2008-11 strategy, the assumption being that the networks of NGB community clubs would 'drive delivery' (SE, 2008, p.10; Green, 2009) on SE's *Grow, Sustain, Excel* outcomes. The NGB-centric approach undertaken by government/SE challenged NGBs to (SE, 2008): i) increase adult sports participation by one million by 2012-2013; ii) ensure more people were satisfied with important aspects of sport to sustain participation and avoid drop-off; and iii) develop talent support systems and pathways for each sport to improve and maintain talent identification. However, Keech (2011, p.226) noted an open acknowledgement from SE that half the projected increases in participation were based on the targets of eight key popular, well-managed and resourced sports, and argued that such a narrow focus could lead to failure if a 'culture of greater

participation' amongst all sport was not achieved. Keech (2011, p.226) also argued that WSPs empowered NGBs with 'greater autonomy and control over the investment of public funds' to meet targets set-down by SE, although additional assistance and support would inevitably be required for NGBs with fewer resources, weaker governance and smaller memberships. More importantly, NGBs were in the spotlight having wanted and achieved greater responsibility, but such autonomy equated to achieving participation targets to secure future investment of public funds into community sport (Keech, 2011, p.229).

According to Green (2009, p.131), modernisation and reform within the sport policy environment required NGBs to 'embrace funding decisions and new governance arrangements characterised by New Labour's bias for "strong tools of government"', with far less discretion within their own operational environment. A clear indication of which, was the requirement for NGBs to radically modernise to *earn the right* (emphasis mine) to partner with government (DCMS, 2002a, pp.145-147; DCMS, 2008, p.15). The drive for modernisation reinforced by the threat financial sanctions, whereby 'any sport not wishing to accept this challenge – funding [would] be switched to those that do' (DCMS, 2008, p.2). For Houlihan and Green (2009, p.690), SE had become a 'mechanism to control and not to actually delegate', the increasing complexity of performance regimes posing a challenge for some NGBs still wedded to the notion 'that they know what is best for their sports' (Houlihan and White, 2002, p.165), and those resistant to self-regulation (Fahlén *et al*., 2015).

2.5) Creating a Sporting Habit for Life: an Olympic legacy

The change in government in May 2010 from New Labour to a Conservative-led Coalition brought about a 'sea change in politics', and the transformation of the political landscape with heightened levels of scrutiny (d'Ancona, 2010). Indeed, SE (2011, p.2) acknowledged that sport was now 'under the spotlight as never before', particularly as the increased levels of scrutiny within the sport policy domain reflected continuing austerity and economic uncertainty (SE, 2010a, 2011). DCMS (2012, p.3) also highlighted the decreasing trend in 16-25 participation rates since 2005 (especially in more traditional sports), and the continued drop-off among school leavers. Thus, the emphasis of government's policy statement for sport, *Creating a Sporting Habit for Life: A new youth sport strategy (2012)*[7], was a renewed focus on youth sport aimed at harnessing 'the power of the Olympics and Paralympics to create a deep and lasting legacy of sports participation in every community' (DCMS, 2012, p.1). While the collective focus for sport continued to endorse the objective of mass participation, albeit with a particular focus on 14-25 year olds (SE, 2012a, p.4), the ultimate goal was to achieve a tangible 'transformation of the UK's sporting culture' towards becoming an active nation (DCMS, 2012, p.2). To the extent that, against a backdrop of centralised austerity budgeting, government commitment to sport policy included an investment of £1bn of Exchequer and Lottery funding (SE, 2012d, p.4), and the restoration of the Lottery to the original four pillars, increasing sport's share to 20% (DCMS, 2012, p.1; SE, 2011) from 16.6% (UKS, 2010, p.6).

The idea that the Home Olympics could provide a unique opportunity to deliver a 'long-term step change in people playing sport' (DCMS, 2012, p.3), was plausible, but also decidedly questionable. Previous research suggested that mega-sporting-events had no measurable impact on sports participation rates post-games, and limited effects on sports club membership (Hindson *et al.*, 1994; Hogan and Norton, 2000; Coalter, 2004; Veal *et al.*, 2006; Girginov and Hills, 2008). According to Girginov (2013, p.6), while the Home Olympics had encouraged both cooperation and competition among NGBs, few had undertaken a holistic approach to leveraging the Games as an integral part of their WSP strategy, and most had utilised a more 'tactical approach by leveraging different programmes, initiatives and areas, thus

[7] Referred to as, *Creating a Sporting Habit for* Life, throughout this thesis.

narrowing the scope of the impact to a limited number of beneficiaries.' In addition, Girginov (2013) claimed that NGBs felt that government's positioning and promotion of the Home Games provided a stimulus for the development of their sport, increased the awareness of their sport, and stimulated resources in the key areas of grassroots development, sport talent systems and international success.

However, Richard Caborn[8], within his evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Olympic and Paralympic legacy (HLSCOPL) (House of Lords Select Committee on Olympic and Paralympic legacy [HLSCOPL], 2013a, p.206), stated that SE had made 'a fundamental mistake on legacy, and that was to change (*sic*) most of the funding to [NGBs].' To some extent, SE subscribed to that view, as noted by the evidence given by Jennie Price, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of SE:

> 'There is not really a clear pathway to follow for this [increase in community sport participation]. We have to experiment; we have to draw from other sectors, because this is effectively a behavioural change challenge … If things do not work, and particularly if [NGB] funding does not work, we have a mechanism to remove that money' (cited in HLSCOPL, 2013a, p.698).

For SE (2013a, p.7), it was unlikely that any transformation of the nation's sporting habits would be achievable without a degree of collaboration among their 'strong network of organisations', which would also require a 'significant shift in focus for many NGBs' (DCMS, 2012, p.9) to increase participation in young people aged under-16. Furthermore, SE (2012f) pointed towards the requirement for a new and sharper focus to achieve a meaningful and lasting community sport legacy, and increased participation at grassroots-level, which would be extremely challenging due to the declining trend in participation and tough economic climate. While government/SE signalled their intention to continue working alongside NGBs, it came with a tougher performance regime within a 'strict payment-by-results system', and a greater intent to use punitive action against those NGBs not performing. According to SE (2012f, p.3), NGB investment funding was a 'privilege, not an entitlement', awarded on a 'competitive basis' to those that provided the strongest plans and demonstrated 'value for money.' A clear statement from DCMS (2012, p.9) asserted that for those NGBs 'fail[ing] to meet contracted objectives', withheld funding would

[8] Richard Caborn served as the Minister for Sport (2001-07).

be made ‘accessible to other groups which can offer strong business cases for increasing participation.’ The aim of which was to send ‘a clear message to those NGBs who needed to change’ that it would be they who would lose out not the sport, which would continue to be funded ‘through other bodies, such as local authorities or charities’ (SE, 2014f). A strategy that had been adopted previously in relation to sports such as basketball, tennis, and fencing, wherein SE’s lack of confidence in the ability of those sport/NGBs to increase participation, resulted in the re-distribution of funds to non-affiliated organisations (SE, 2014e). For example, £6m was awarded to StreetGames to deliver Doorstep Sport Clubs, in addition to £3.38m previously invested in recognition of their significant progress in getting more young people from disadvantaged communities into sport (SE, 2014f).

Evidence from the HLSCOPL Report (2013b, pp.8-11), also highlighted a number of policy concerns relating to community sport participation, including *inter alia*: the infrastructure at grassroots-level was ‘patchy’; a disconnect existed between grassroots and high performance; there was a ‘lack of a clear legacy plan for capturing the enthusiasm of the Games within all sports’, not helped by the limitations of the APS methodology; and a key driver to broadening NGBs’ participation base should be ‘a change of culture and board composition’ that also reflected participants’ views.

By contrast, government’s continued recognition of and commitment to elite sport policy stability, also received criticism within the HLSCOPL Report (2013b, pp.8-11) on the basis that UKS’s *No Compromise* approach to elite funding was: ‘principally retrospective’; ‘not a “one size fits all” panacea’; and the ‘heavy focus on the volume of medals [had] an inherent bias against team sports.’ However, it is argued by Houlihan and Zheng (2013, p.338) that ‘the cost of maintaining a country’s relative position in the medals table is considerable and arguably locks countries on to a path from which it is difficult for them to deviate’, which resonates strongly with the UK government’s policy decision-making for elite sport.

2.6) Sporting Future: ‘sport for sport’s sake’ to ‘sport for social good’

The General Election in May 2015 brought about an unexpected victory for the Conservative party (Parker, 2015). This was followed shortly after by a Parliamentary debate on Sport and the 2012 Olympic legacy, the tone of which was clearly influenced by the HLSCOPL Report (2013b). Parliamentary discussions centred on key issues that were considered attributable to the non-delivery of the Olympic legacy, leading to then Minister for Sport, Tracey Crouch’s, announcement that she had ‘ripped up the old strategy, and … shall publish a consultation on a brand-new sport strategy that will reform how we deliver sport in this country’ (Hansard, 2015a)[9]. This arguably supports Houlihan and White’s (2002, p.223) claim that when politicians are confronted with ineffective policy, they too often 'turn to administrative reform as a highly visible solution when a more effective response might be to improve leadership capacity of management.’

The Parliamentary debate raised a wide range of sport policy issues including *inter alia* (Hansard, 2015a):

i. The lack of communication and cooperation between government departments, not helped by numerous Ministerial changes within sport during the term of the Coalition government (four Secretaries of State and three Ministers for Sport);
ii. The perceived malaise of ministerial preoccupations other than sport and the laissez-faire, hands-off attitudes towards sport;
iii. A blame culture aimed at NGBs and the fixation on measuring participation figures through the APS, the latter deemed to be a blunt tool;
iv. The use of alternative deliverers of sport who may be better placed than NGBs to tackle harder to reach groups;
v. The need for a cross-government long-term policy and plan for sport that does not change as a result of a bad set of figures or Ministerial changes; and
vi. A broader focus and definition for sport that should include the inactive and outdoor recreation.

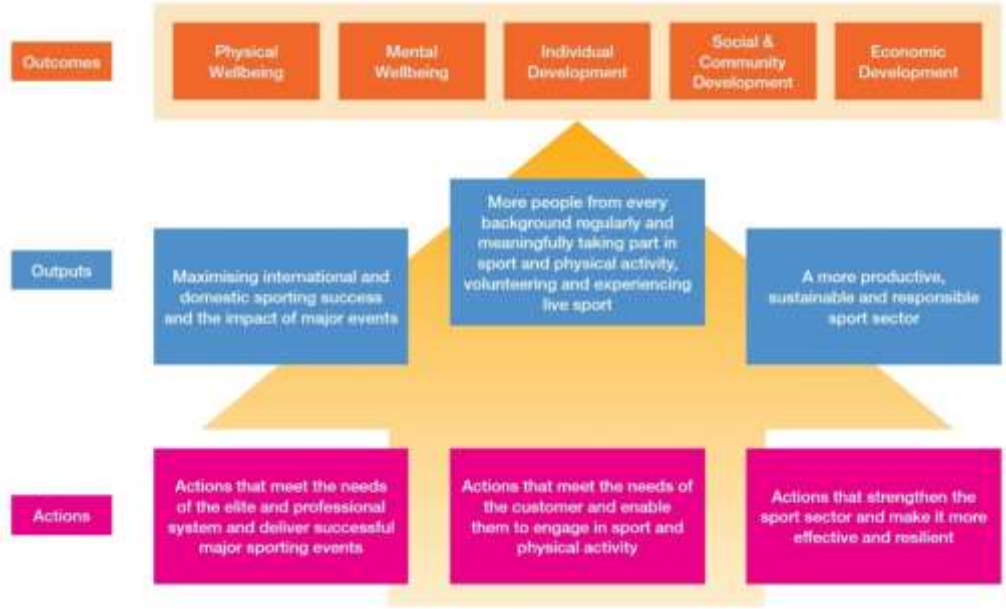
[9] See Column 1002.

In addition to the Parliamentary voices that had debated the Olympic legacy, the first Triennial Review for UKS and SE (DCMS, 2015a, pp.5-6) suggested that both agencies should remain in their current form, but their effectiveness could be improved through *inter alia*: 'closer working specifically in the areas of talent, participation and the governance of NGBs'; increasing participation levels by 'continuing to drive forward current reforms on channels of intervention, and evaluation and appraisal'; and significant efficiencies through NGB shared services and co-location. In addition, too many participation initiatives using different delivery mechanisms measured in different ways had caused difficulties in determining the levels of success, leading to the conclusion that sport was a 'fragmented sector with several key players and no critical mass (DCMS, 2015a, p.43). The key recommendations of the Triennial Review in connection to UKS, SE and NGBs, are provided in the appendices (Appendix II).

In December 2015, DCMS published *Sporting Future,* its first strategy for sport in more than a decade. Of particular note, was the inclusion of key headline themes contributed by ten different government departments (DCMS, 2015b), suggesting a genuine cross-Whitehall effort for joined-up government, to achieve the principal aim of harnessing the potential of sport and physical activity to deliver 'social good' and 'change people's lives for the better' (DCMS, 2015b, p.10). While the cross-departmental nature of *Sporting Future* received strong political support, joined-up and co-ordinated delivery of sport had been a constant theme within previous governments' sport policies. According to DCMS (2015b), the government's policy intervention through *Sporting Future* had not resulted from previous government inefficiencies. Neither did SE receive any criticism (Gibson, 2015). The responsibility for the litany of failures was laid firmly at the feet of NGBs, as noted in *Sporting Future* (DCMS, 2015b, pp.10-20), sports' inability to increase participation was attributable to 'complacency' amongst those who run sport, poor governance and corruption within sport, and the lack of a customer 'demand-led' focus, although DCMS (2015b, p.72) did acknowledge that the focus on participation numbers had 'disincentivised organisations from engaging those who have most to benefit from value of sport.'

The objectives of *Sporting Future* were to harness the power of sport for the good of society, invest in talent and stand up for the integrity of sport, through three key components (DCMS, 2015b, pp.6-7): i) a change in the way sport was funded – to ensure a more meaningful and measurable impact on improving people's lives, rather than merely focusing on people taking part in sport; ii) NGBs of non-Olympic sports to be prioritised alongside NGBs of Olympic and Paralympic sports; and iii) a new mandatory governance code that would be rigorously enforced. Government's reaffirmation of its commitment to Olympic and Paralympic success clearly extending policy continuity for elite sport (DCMS, 2015b, p.11). However, *Sporting Future* also sought to move sport policy away from the narrow focus on participation and medals (DCMS, 2015b, p.8), by way of a broader focus on engagement in regular and meaningful participation not only in sport and physical activity, but also volunteering, and experiencing live sport (DCMS, 2015b, p.19). For SE, *Sporting Future* demanded the development of innovative sports offerings that were not only 'accessible, sustainable environments – practically, financially and emotionally', but also engaging enough to attract a more diverse audience (SE, 2016d, p.4). Central to the aims of *Sporting Future* has been a focus on five fundamental outcomes linked to: *physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development, and economic development*, driven through three broad outputs within a new sport strategy framework, as shown in Figure 2.1. The key elements of the three strategic outputs particularly relevant to NGBs are provided Table 2.1.

Figure 2.1: *Framework for a new Sport Strategy 2016-21*



Source: DCMS (2015b, p.18)

Table 2.1: *Strategic outputs of Sporting Future relevant to NGBs*

Output	Key Implications for NGBs
Sporting success	Olympic/Paralympic support aligned to achieving key strategic outcomes. UKS's primary objective to deliver medal success. UKS, NGBs, BOA, and the British Paralympic Association to acquire a better understanding on how medal success delivers the strategy's outcomes, and work to increase their impact.
Engagement in sport and physical activity	Broader remit for SE - responsible for sport outside of school from the age of 5 (with a focus on core physical literacy skills at an early age); NGBs – greater customer-focus and increased partnership-working with charities and local authorities to use their 'collective power' to deliver results; strategic and best value investment of public funds to prioritise those who are least active; continued evidence-based monitoring and assessment against agreed KPIs to measure performance against outputs and outcomes.
A strong and resilient sport sector	A more productive, sustainable and responsible sport sector. Organisational and financial sustainability, 'excellent governance', and collaboration considered key concerns for the effective delivery of strategic outcomes; A more 'sustainable mixed funding model' desirable, in particular for those organisations considered to be resource-dependent, and orchestrated by both UKS and SE to: a) reduce the funds received from a single public sector source; b) increase the overall level of non-public investment; and c) increase back office efficiencies, co-locations and shared services among sporting bodies (e.g. NGBs); A new mandatory governance code to be introduced for those organisations seeking public funding. Organisations unable to meet the requirements of the code will not be eligible for public funding.

Source adapted from: DCMS (2015b)

However, *Sporting Future* was relatively agnostic as to precisely who should receive investment funding. SE advocating greater inward investment of public funding into the sporting sector (SE, 2015b, p.2), while DCMS considered those who could deliver on the outcomes were best placed to receive funding:

> 'All new government funding for sport and physical activity will go to organisations which can best demonstrate that they will deliver some or all of the five outcomes in this strategy … [I]t is likely that organisations which show that they can work collaboratively and tailor their work at the local level will be best placed to access funding' (DCMS, 2015b, p.16).

A clearer indication on how funding would be prioritised was provided within SE's *Towards An Active Nation 2016-2021* Strategy (2016e), which included a radical new approach to investment funding decisions, clearly aligned to government objectives and outcomes. In particular, the distribution of funding would focus on inactivity and under-represented groups, including women and girls and those with disabilities, lower socio-economic groups, and older people (DCMS, 2015b, p.10); and improved community cohesion and standards in school sport (DCMS, 2015b, p.6). In addition, there would be a greater drive towards sustainability in 'organised' sport, in recognition of the 'dependence of many bodies on SE funding' (SE, 2015b, p.2), and more significantly for NGBs, *organisational-neutrality* as the method of delivery to achieve agreed policy outcomes (SE, 2016e, p.12 – emphasis mine). Furthermore, the controversial APS monitoring system has been replaced by Active Lives (a system of measurement focused on how people are active overall rather than how often take part in sport) (DCMS, 2015b, p.11). For elite sport, however, while there were no significant changes in terms of sport policy, there were significant affordability challenges (UKS, 2016b) due to declining Lottery income (UKS, 2017, p.1), which by its very nature is 'inherently volatile' (UKS, 2017, p.3), to the extent that not every sport with medal potential has received funding for Tokyo 2020 (UKS, 2016c).

2.7) Discussion and Conclusion

Having reviewed the literature on UK sport policy, five overarching themes have been identified that reflect the aims and objectives of this study. Firstly, *the changing relationship between the government, its sporting agencies (SE and UKS) and NGBs*. It is clear that the increased salience and legitimacy of sport to government, the introduction of the Lottery, and sport policy since *Raising the Game*, has heralded a fundamental change in the relationship between government and NGBs from one of deference and a culture of entitlement, to a more client-contractual relationship that has encompassed a degree of ambiguity in the role play of NGBs within varying governmental visions for sport, and attitudinal fluctuations to excel or face the consequences. The relational realignment between government and the Sport Councils, as anticipated by Houlihan (1997, p.113), having redefined the roles of SE and UK to become the 'policeman of sport rather than the developer of sport.'

Secondly, *increased centrality of NGBs to a range of government strategies*, has not only generated substantial opportunities for increased provision and development, but also contributed to resource-dependency and a loss of autonomy. For example, conditional grant funding awarded to NGBs in support of government objectives, particularly with regard to health, education and social inclusion (Oakley and Green, 2001; Houlihan and White, 2002; Green, 2003), and financial sanctions for non-compliance. Green and Houlihan (2005) also noted that the Sports Councils, with encouragement from government, have been explicit in the exploitation of such resource-dependency through linking public funding to social objectives and a performance management style of monitoring.

Thirdly, *the requirement for NGBs to reform and modernise*, in line with New Labour's 'Third Way' ideology, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. The impact of *Best Value* on NGBs is clearly evident, not only through increased conditional funding (the last 15 years has seen huge increases in state funding for NGBs, and for the most part they are far richer organisations now than they were in 2001), but also through SE's incorporation of the policy as part of its 'priority sport' criteria. NGBs have had to take greater responsibility for efficiency management and accountability, to ensure that they are 'fit' and 'trustworthy' partners for government and its agencies. The changed role of SE to a strategic-lead

agency to coordinate government policy through other organisations, and UKS's *No Compromise* approach (both in line with *Game Plan*), have had a substantial impact on NGBs, particularly the adoption of principles and practices of strategic management to comply with government's modernisation agenda.

The fourth theme refers to *the complexity of the performance management regimes,* such as WSPs, resulting from NGBs' increased dependency on public funding and the government's critique of their inadequacies in terms of governance, professionalism, and abilities to deliver on policy outcomes. Although no longer applicable, WSPs were subjected to continuous monitoring and evaluation within a 'strict payment-by-results system', where failure to meet contractual and performance obligations resulted in withholding and removal of funding from under-performing NGBs.

The final overarching theme is the *increased willingness of SE to use alternative participation delivery partners unaffiliated to NGBs*. SE's mixed investment approach to sport delivery to achieve desired outcomes, demonstrating further the challenges faced by NGBs to respond to the multifaceted demands placed upon them by government, and its agencies (Green and Houlihan, 2005, 2006). For example, the obligations of NGBs to meet the needs and demands of SE and those of their members, and with that the potential implications for future funding, and internal tensions at the point where the worlds of amateurism and professionalism collide.

In sum, this chapter examined how changing sport policy has altered government's expectations of and relationships with NGBs, and affected the functional and operational context within which they work. The review of literature highlighted the increasing prominence of professionalism as a constituent of community sport policy involvement; the trend away from a passive to a contractual phase of governmental intervention; the emergence of conditional funding for NGBs in support of and delivery on government social objectives/outcomes; and allowed for identification of five initial analytical themes to guide and inform the selected analytical framework and case studies, as discussed in more detail within Chapters 3 and 4. The review also draws attention to challenging times ahead for NGBs and community sport (e.g. performance regimes and increasingly complex web of deliverers of sport) and lack of academic research in this field.

Chapter Three

Theorising Policy at the Meso-Level

3.1) Introduction

According to Houlihan and Lindsey (2013), theory relevant to policy analysis can be largely divided into three categories: macro, micro and meso-level. Macro-level theory 'seeks to provide an interpretation of the social world' (Houlihan *et al*., 2009, p.4), micro-level examines individual actions and the decisions of actors in a specific locale, underpinned by a theory of individual behaviour (Green, 2005), and meso-level theory is focused on problem identification, agenda setting, policy formulation and implementation processes, at both the policy sector level and that of national organisations (for example national sports organisations and governing bodies) (Houlihan, 2005; Parsons, 1995).

This study is focused on national sport policy and SMNGBs, therefore the principal level of analysis is at the meso-level, where not only has recent theory-building and conceptual innovation generally taken place (e.g. Kickert *et al*., 1997; John, 1998; Marsh, 1998; Sabatier, 1999, 2007), but also much of the theorising within sport policy (Houlihan *et al*., 2009), particularly with regard to '[analysing] policy at the sectoral or sub-system level' (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013, p.12). This is not to deny the significant insights generated from macro- or micro-level theorising, as purported by Houlihan (2005). Indeed, it is acknowledged that meso-level frameworks 'are not value free and are derived from often highly contentious and ideological theorisations at the societal level' (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013, p.12). However, within this study macro theory has served to 'sensitise the researcher to particular relationships and different aspects of the policy process' (Houlihan *et al.*, 2009, p.3), as will an understanding of the concept of power, since 'any discussion of the policy-making process must necessarily be grounded in an extrinsic consideration of the nature of power within the state' (Hill, 2009, p.8).

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate three analytical meso-level frameworks, namely, new institutionalism, the MSF and the ACF, each assessed against a set of criteria to determine the most appropriate framework for analysing sport policy in this

study. This is followed by discussions on macro-level theories that have previously been applied to sport policy, and the concept of power, to acknowledge their importance within policy analysis and this study, and to sensitise the researcher to particular assumptions concerned with 'the distribution of power at the societal level; the significance of the pursuit and protection of interests; and the relationship between the state and society' (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013, p.12). An overview of the theoretical evaluations is then provided, identifying the ACF as the selected theoretical analytical framework for this study, having satisfied, more fully, the selection criteria adopted for this research. A concluding section completes this chapter.

3.2) Meso-level analytical frameworks

Prior to evaluating the utility of the selected meso-level frameworks for policy analysis, it is important to further understand why the theoretical constructs for this study are seated at the meso-level rather than at the micro or macro-level. As alluded to above, it is acknowledged that all meso-level frameworks incorporate macro-level assumptions, for example, the ACF has neo-pluralist foundations and a notion of power, where power is dispersed, and coalitions compete for influence (as illustrated within sections 3.2.3 and 3.3 of this Chapter). Indeed, it could be argued that with the hierarchical dependence of UKS, SE and NGBs clustered around government, neo-pluralism could be utilised as a revealing explanatory framework within this current research. However, this study is interested in national level policy change and the interaction between national level organisations, down the spine of accountability from government to SE to SMNGBs (top-down), and the capacity of SMNGBs to have influence or not over policy direction (bottom-up), rather than a thesis focused on a societal- or individual-level (e.g. sports clubs).

While the above has provided further justification for the analysis of policy at the meso-level within this research, Sabatier (2007, p.4) made the point that analysing policy at this level requires the analyst to:

> ‘find some way of simplifying the situation in order to have a chance of understanding it … [, since] … the policy process requires a knowledge of the goals and perceptions of hundreds of actors …, involving possibly very technical scientific and legal issues over periods of a decade or more when most of those actors are actively seeking to propagate their specific “spin” on events.’

Policy analysis is further complicated by the range of concepts and theories available, for example, Sabatier (1999) identified the potential utility of eleven meso-level approaches, each of which would view ‘the same situation through quite different lenses and are likely to see quite different things’ (Sabatier, 2007, p.5). Add to this the evolution and analysis of UK sport policy, then, as noted by Houlihan and Lindsey (2013, p.15), the ‘volume of applications of meso-level frameworks is certainly too small to suggest that one framework provides the most accurate description of the sport policy process or is the most effective tool for analysis.’

To evaluate the utility of meso-level frameworks for policy analysis, both Sabatier (1999, 2007) and Houlihan (2005) developed key selection criteria, as outlined in Table 3.1. Accordingly, Sabatier’s conceptualised selection criteria supports non-specific policy analysis, whereas Houlihan’s adaptation of Sabatier’s work offers greater specificity towards sports-related policy.

Table 3.1*: Selection criteria for meso-level analytical frameworks*

	Sabatier	Houlihan
1	Address a broad set of factors to explain policy stability and change, including, conflicting values and interests, information flows, institutional arrangements, and variation in the socio-economic environment.	Have the capacity to explain both policy stability and change, which is of particular importance in the sports domain.
2	Have a positive theory to explain much of the policy process.	Have the capacity to illuminate a range of aspects of the policy process.
3	Subject to recent conceptual development, appropriate scrutiny, and/or empirical testing, to confirm their value and suitability as models and frameworks that credibly analyse the policy process.	Have applicability across a range of policy areas, beyond sport, to provide a greater sensitivity to the distinctive features of the sport policy area, and the substantial potential for ‘spill-over.’
4	The concept and propositions of each framework must be relatively clear and internally consistent; identify clear causal drivers; give rise to falsifiable hypotheses; and apply to most of the policy process - over a time span of a decade or more, as that is the minimum duration of most policy cycles’ (2007, p.3).	Facilitate a medium term (5-10 years) historical analysis of change, on the basis that: a shorter duration merely produces a snapshot of policy; periodisation of a decade enables minor fluctuations in policy direction to be distinguished from sustained change and the identification of significant explanatory factors.

Source adapted from: Houlihan (2005), Sabatier (1999, 2007)

Houlihan (2005, p.167) places emphasis on the importance of understanding the environmental conditions of stability and change, due to their particular relevance to the sports policy domain and the relatively rapid turnover of sports policy in many developed countries. In consideration of the above, the adoption of Houlihan's criteria to examine three potential meso-level frameworks is the most logical option for this research.

3.2.1) New Institutionalism

To understand policy and the policy-making process, the concept of an institution is seen as important (Steinmo, 2001; Cairney, 2012), despite the argument that 'no-one is entirely sure what an institution is and what institutionalism means' (Cairney, 2012, p.70), which is problematic for institutional analysis. Cairney (2012, p.69) suggested that '[i]nstitutions are not just the buildings or arenas within which people make policy – they are also the rules of behaviour that influence how they make policy.' Ostrom (2007, p.22), identified 'many different types of entities, including both organisations and rules' within institutions, which 'structure patterns of interaction within and across organisations.' Thelen and Steinmo (1992, p.2), argued that institutions 'shape how political actors define their interests and … structure their relations of power to other groups', seen here as significant constraints and mediating factors in politics that 'leave their own imprint' (Thelen and Steinmo, 1992, p.8). Cairney (2012, p.70) referred to this as new institutionalism, with a greater focus on rules and norms than on formal structures or 'bricks-and-mortar institutions', where new institutionalists 'seek to show how institutions actually structure the play of power, often in ways hidden from view' (Fischer, 2003, p.29). Arguably, the vagueness of institutionalism offers some explanation for the number of variants (see Lowndes, 2010), as Cairney (2012, p.77) claimed, 'there are no hard and fast distinctions between each version … [and] … too much disagreement on which texts fit into which camps and too much variation within those camps.'

While such theoretical problems and debates provide a potential distraction from the value of institutional analysis, Marsh and Stoker (2010, p.78) claimed that the strength of new institutionalism 'may be found precisely in its multi-theoretic

character, which allows assessment of competing propositions drawn from different political theories.' In addition, Hall and Taylor (1996, p.936) argued that some ambiguities could be dispelled if new institutionalism was disregarded as a 'unified body of thought', and that each analytical framework considered itself to be the 'new institutionalism', which could explain its increasing appearance in political science.

In view of the diversity of institutionalist literature, this study has focused on three key variants (Cairney, 2012) that have been frequently debated (Hall and Taylor, 1996), notably, historical institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism, and sociological institutionalism. The key assumptions and features of which are provided in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2*: Key assumptions and features of selected new institutionalisms*

Historical Institutionalism	Rational Choice Institutionalism	Sociological Institutionalism
Conceptualises the relationship between institutions and individual behaviour, based on group conflict and structural-functionalism theories (see Steinmo, 1992). Conflict among rival groups for scarce resources lies at the heart of politics – privileging some while demobilising others. Institutional development through three key concepts: **Historical contingency**: events and decisions made in the past contribute to the formation of institutions that influence current practices; **Path dependency**: when commitment to an institution has been established and resources devoted to it over time, it produces 'increasing returns' and effectively becomes increasingly costly to choose a different path (see Pierson, 2000; Peters, 2005; Greener, 2005; Kay, 2006); **Critical juncture**: substantial institutional change creates a 'branching point' from which historical development moves onto a new path.	Emphasises the importance of property rights, rent-seeking, transaction costs to the operation and development of institutions, and the role of strategic interaction in the determination of political outcomes. Institutions structure interactions, by affecting the range and sequence of alternatives on the choice-agenda, or by providing information and enforcement mechanisms that reduce uncertainty about corresponding behaviour of others. Allows 'gains from exchange', thereby leading actors towards particular calculations and potentially better social outcomes, e.g. the dilemma of collective action when individuals acting to maximise the attainment of their own preferences are likely to produce an outcome that is collectively sub-optimal. Behavioural assumptions posit that relevant actors behave strategically to maximise the attainment of preferences through extensive calculation. Assumes actors create institutions in order to realise value.	Bureaucratic structures (government departments, firms, interest organisations, quangos) are seen as the product of intensive effort to devise ever-more efficient structures for performing the tasks associated with modern society. Seeks to break down the conceptual divide between 'institutions' and 'culture.' Assumes individuals are socialised into particular institutional roles, internalise the norms associated with these roles, and in this way, institutions affect behaviour, as relationships are built on practical reasoning. Institutional forms and practices are embraced and widely valued by organisations within a broader cultural environment. Practices may actually be dysfunctional with regard to achieving the organisations goals, described by Campbell (1989) as the 'logic of social appropriateness', in contrast to the 'logic of instrumentality.' E.g. expanding regulatory scope imposes many practices on societal organisations by public fiat, and professionalisation to press certain standards onto their members.

Source adapted from: Hall and Taylor (1996), Cairney (2012)

According to Hall and Taylor (1996, p.936), new institutionalisms 'seek to elucidate the role institutions play in the determination of social and political outcomes.' Within the sport policy arena, Houlihan (2005, pp.169-170) pointed towards two broad

orientations of institutionalist literature that have a particular relevance to sport policy analysis: first, an organisational perspective that emphasises the significance of institutions as organisational entities, for example, agencies, departments and the state; and second, a cultural perspective that highlights shared values, norms and beliefs. Houlihan (2005) argued that both perspectives have an historical dimension, which highlights the 'relative autonomy of political institutions from the society in which they exist …, and the unique patterns of historical development and the constraints they impose on further choices' (Howlett and Ramesh, 1995, p.27). In other words, institutions have the ability to constrain choice (Campbell, 1998), 'through their capacity to shape actors' perceptions of both the problems and acceptable solutions' (Houlihan, 2005, p.170). Essentially, Houlihan's observations reflect elements of historical, rational choice and sociological institutionalisms, hence the continued debate surrounding the practicalities of utilising new institutionalism as a fully articulated analytic framework.

Nonetheless, the relevance of new institutionalism within sport policy analysis is evident from the works of Roche (1993), Henry (2001), Houlihan and White (2002), and Green (2003), all of which identified the organisational infrastructure of sport as an important variable in shaping policy, particularly as:

> 'the allocation of functional responsibility for sport, federalism, the use of 'arm's length' agencies, for example [SE] and [UKS], and the presence of a minister of sport are all seen as having a noticeable impact on sport policy and its implementation' (Houlihan, 2005, p.170).

From a cultural perspective, the beliefs, norms and values associated with social class (Birley, 1996), gender (Hargreaves, 1994), disability (Thomas, 2003), and ethnicity (Carrington and Macdonald, 2000) have impacted on the character of UK sport policy (Houlihan, 2005).

Arguably, the changing societal value of sport, the introduction of the Lottery, the changing roles of SE (to deliver government social objectives) and UKS (to deliver medals), and the changing functional and operational environment of NGBs, resonate with the historical contingency, path dependence, and critical junctures of historical institutionalism. In a similar vein, the reduction in the size of the state, the greater use of non-government agencies working at arm's length, the increased use

of audit and accountability and performance measures to ensure compliance with government objectives, and the discipline and punishment for non-compliance, closely associate with rational choice and sociological institutionalism. Furthermore, NGBs have had to embrace institutional forms or practices through a 'logic of appropriateness' and resource-dependency, but for some these practices have actually been dysfunctional and attributable to decreased levels of participation.

An evaluation of new institutionalism suggests two of the four selection criterions are met. There is a plausible, yet limited explanation for both stability and change, and applicability across a range of policy areas. However, facilitation over a medium term historical analysis to policy change is not clear and an explanation of the whole policy process is difficult, 'due to its privileging of structure over agency' (Houlihan, 2005, p.171). According to Houlihan (2005, p.170), the potential use of new institutionalism reflects the attention it directs to 'both the behaviour of actors and the structures within which they operate, and its strength as a 'powerful corrective to those who are ready to ignore the significance of state institutions in the policy process.' However, Houlihan and Lindsey (2013, p.17) claimed that such significance is in many ways self-evident, and the extent to which and in what circumstances institutions matter, are invariably questions that remain unanswered. Houlihan (2005, pp.170-171) also argued that the indistinct treatment of policy dynamics, the tendency to 'substitute ideas for interests, and the assumption that institutions strongly influence interests' are notable weaknesses, the under-theorised framework serving at best as an 'analytical or sensitising concept', and at worst 'privileges institutions on the basis of weak evidence.'

Literature also points towards neo-pluralism and governance as foundational macro-level theories that underpin the analytical frameworks of new institutionalism. As Houlihan and Lindsey (2013) observed, there are noticeable links to neo-pluralism and governance theory, and less so with market liberalism as it is potentially at odds with the rhetoric of evidence-based policy. Lukes' conceptualisation of power is also relevant to an understanding of the above analytical frameworks, particularly Lukes' second and third dimensions (Hall and Taylor, 1996).

3.2.2) Multiple Streams Framework

Drawing inspiration from Cohen *et al.'s* (1972) 'garbage can model' of organisational choice, the MSF emphasises the anarchical character of organisations and the policy process (Houlihan, 2005). Policy choice is considered to be a 'garbage can', within which 'various kinds of problems and solutions are dumped by participants as they are generated' (Cohen *et al.,* 1972, p.2). Zahariadis (1999, p.6) noted that 'complexity, fluidity and fuzziness are particularly appropriate characteristics of policy-making', where decision-making situations are characterised in terms of organised anarchy. Fischer and Forester (1993) claimed that argument, persuasion and reasoning are also fundamental to policy formation, although Zahariadis (2007, p.69) argued that if 'ambiguity is pervasive and central to politics, manipulation is the effort to control ambiguity … [and that] … political manipulation is more than just persuasion and identity construction.' For Zahariadis (2003, 2007), political manipulation is primarily aimed at providing meaning, clarification, and identity, the logic of which sets the MSF apart from other lenses, as it uncovers the nature of the relationships between those who manipulate (policy entrepreneurs) and those who get manipulated (policymakers), thus pointing towards a neo-pluralist notion of power.

Given the extent of ambiguity, complexity and residual randomness in the policy-making process (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013), Kingdon (1995) identified three distinct streams as key aspects of the MSF, namely, problems, policies and politics. According to Zahariadis (2007), three assumptions guide the streams: i) individual attention or processing is serial, systematic attention or processing is parallel (see Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; True, Jones, and Baumgartner, 2007; Cairney, 2012); ii) policy-makers operate under significant time restraints – limiting the range and number of alternatives to which attention is given; and iii) the streams flowing through the system are independent. Policy windows and policy entrepreneurs are further structural elements highly significant to the framework (Zahariadis, 2007).

- *Problem stream*

Comprised of conditions and issues that the public and policy participants want addressed, or policymakers have identified as requiring action, as opposed to those they have chosen to ignore (Kingdon, 1995; Houlihan, 2005). The media and policy entrepreneurs affix attention to problematic issues (Jones, 1994), as do focusing or triggering events, the degree of consensus given to the latter signposting a key strength of the MSF (Birkland, 1997, 2005). In sport, the lack of national sporting success or the decline in sport participation could be considered focusing or triggering events. However, Zahariadis (2007, p.720) pointed out that 'attention is to an extent a function of what else preoccupies the minds of policymakers', the scope of which can have a significant negative effect on the efficient utilisation of information, or a strong positive effect on the ability to predict the policy issue's place on the agenda (Zahariadis, 2003). In addition, policy actor's values and ideological beliefs shape their view of certain phenomena, and therefore, they are likely to advocate or even manipulate the definition of the problem to promote their own interests (Zahariadis, 2007).

The use of indicators to monitor (routinely or specifically) the changing scales of the problem, and politically assess the magnitude of conditions, scope of change, and the performance of current policies (Zahariadis, 2007), are considered important focusing or triggering events within the problem stream. For example, the APS monitoring of participation in sport indicated reduced levels of participation, resulting in a consultation process to ensure reliable source data collection. In contrast, Houlihan (2005, p.172) suggested that successful ideas 'can have a ripple effect through the political system by spilling over into other policy fields', for example, sport policy actors becoming assimilated into social policy objectives (King, 2009). Interestingly, it is argued that the articulation of inclusivity concepts within the sport policy system, shows a vulnerability of sport policy to manipulation by diplomatic, health and educational interests (Dery, 1999; Houlihan, 2000a), and a capacity to explicitly consider the role of agency in the policy process (Houlihan, 2005). Arguably, this is a consequence of the 'lack of systematic embeddedness of sport in national policy systems' (Houlihan, 2005, p.172; Roche, 1993; Houlihan and White, 2002).

- *Policy stream*

Conceptualised as the 'primeval soup' (Kingdon, 1984, 1995), within which ideas sponsored by particular policy communities float around and occasionally combine, and rise to the top of the agenda. Alternatively, they are adopted by policy entrepreneurs who promote particular ideas, mobilise opinion (Houlihan, 2005, p.171), and maintain their salience on the political agenda (Green, 2003, p.19). However, few ideas reach the top of government's agenda and receive serious consideration, and those that do must be considered technically feasible (delivered within certain resource parameters), and compatible with the dominant values and beliefs of the key policy actors (Kingdon, 1995). Zahariadis and Allen (1995; Zahariadis, 2007) argued that the level of institutional arrangements is also important, since the level of integration or linkages among participations affect how ideas develop in the policy stream, and how quickly they advance to prominence. Within the UK sport policy, the policy stream could be associated with the proposals for change amongst specialists, lobbyists and policy actors in terms of elite sport, community sport, and Physical Education (PE) and school sport. Other examples could include the central role given to NGBs to drive up participation levels, and the 'mixed economy' approach of SE to tackle decreasing participation.

- *Political stream*

According to Houlihan (2005, p.171; Kingdon, 1995; Zahariadis, 2007), the political stream 'is independent of the other streams and comprises a number of elements including the national mood, organised political forces (political parties and interest groups for example), and government.' Zahariadis (2007, p.73) noted that politicians frequently 'formulate[d] an image of the balance of support and opposition' from interest groups, and that the perceived trajectory 'directly affects the issue's prominence or obscurity.' By monitoring public mood, government can act to promote certain items on the agenda or, conversely, dim the prospects of others. Similarly, a change in government or key administration personnel has a significant influence on politics, the combination of turnover in government and national mood exerting the most powerful effect on agendas (Zahariadis, 2007). For example, the success of elite athletes at the Beijing 2008 Olympiad resulted in greater government

investment for the 2012 Home Olympics, as well as an ongoing and proactive commitment to hosting more international sports events in the UK.

- *Policy window*

Kingdon (1995, p.165) defined policy windows as momentary 'opportunities for advocates of proposals to push pet solutions, or to push attention to their special problems.' Windows are opened by compelling problems or focusing events (predictable or unpredictable) in the policy stream (where a problem triggers a search for ideas), or the political stream (where ideas are being presented). At this point the three streams are likely to be coupled together at critical moments in time, and often for a short duration, wherein policy choices are made (Zahariadis, 2007). The coincidence and coupling of the three streams is a central aspect of the MSF, where issues achieve political recognition and attract policies (solutions). For example, predictable windows of opportunity within sport could be the four-year funding cycle that SE and UKS employ for NGB funding, whereas an unpredictable window of opportunity could be the decreased levels of participation, or a scandal such as match-fixing or a high-profile doping case.

- *Policy entrepreneurs*

For Kingdon (1995), policy entrepreneurs are policy actors who attempt to couple the three streams, the significance of which has been widely noted (Houlihan, 2005; Houlihan and Green, 2006; Sabatier, 2007; Zahariadis, 2007). According to Zahariadis (2007, p.74), 'they are more than mere advocates of particular solutions; they are actors that are power brokers and manipulators of problematic preferences and unclear technology.' Problematic preferences refer to decisions that are made without having formulated precise preferences, that is, 'a collection of ideas [rather] than as a coherent structure' (Cohen *et al*., 1972, p.1). Unclear technology refers to the blurred processes of organisations to turn inputs into outputs, where, for example, organisations have an awareness of responsibilities, but display a 'rudimentary knowledge' of their role (where past experience and trial and error procedures are considered learning tools) (Zahariadis, 2007). For Zahariadis (2007), windows of opportunity require policy entrepreneurs to seek immediate seizure of the opportunity to initiate action; have persistence and be skilled at coupling by attaching problems to their solutions and find politicians receptive to their ideas; and be

cautious to ensure that the right policy window is used. The most successful are those with greater access to policymakers (e.g. matching ideology or beliefs), greater resources (e.g. time, money and energy), and employ manipulating strategies to accomplish their goal of coupling the three streams – to induce policy change. For example, Houlihan and Green (2006) presented Sue Campbell (the then CEO of the Youth Sports Trust [YST]) as a key policy entrepreneur in advocating the potential of PE and school sport to support the broader academic agenda.

Despite the MSF's wide appeal among policy analysts, criticisms resonate around the framework's unrealistic assumptions and under-specification of certain processes (Zahariadis, 2007). Sabatier (1999) highlighted the lack of clear, falsifiable hypotheses within the MSF, while Bendor *et al*. (2001) were critical of the logic and conclusions of the original 'garbage can' model, arguing that results from the model were not findings, but flowed directly out of the assumptions of the MSF. Zahariadis' (2003) counter-argument suggested that MSF decisions were conceived from the result of energy fluctuations in each stream, coupled purposefully by policy entrepreneurs, and that Kingdon (1995) had provided considerable empirical evidence across different countries and different policy fields (Birkland, 1997; Zahariadis, 2003). However, both Mucciaroni (1992) and Bendor *et al*. (2001) questioned the appropriateness of conceptualising independent streams, arguing that the streams should be viewed as interdependent, one triggering or reinforcing changes in another, 'making coupling less fortuitous and the process more purposive and strategic' (cited in Zahariadis, 2007, p.81).

An evaluation of the MSF suggests that the framework offers at best a partial fulfilment of the first selection criterion on stability and change, by drawing attention to the 'the role of agency, happenstance and opportunism' (Houlihan and Green, 2006, p.79), but 'challenges the assumption of deeply entrenched institutionalised interests' (Houlihan, 2005, p.172). Houlihan (2005) argued that such myopia towards structural factors and institutionalised power provides a less convincing explanation for policy change, particularly as Birkland (2005) claimed the framework does not examine change beyond the window of opportunity. The MSF has been successfully applied across different countries and different policy domains as noted above, including the study of sport policy (Houlihan, 2005), thereby fulfilling the third criterion. Arguably, timeframes of change are not an explicit part of the framework,

although Houlihan (2005) noted that its structure allows for the fourth criterion of medium-term historical analysis to be met. The second criterion is clearly not fulfilled as the MSF is a lens that focuses primarily on policy formation (agenda setting and decision-making), and neglects other stages in the policy process, especially implementation. It is therefore less illuminating in more centralised political systems like the UK (Houlihan, 2005). Furthermore, King (2009) and Houlihan and Lindsey (2013), questioned the suitability of the framework for analysing sport policy, as evidenced by its limited application to this field. Indeed, King (2009) rejected the theory due to a lack of empirical testing, citing two studies by Chalip (1995, 1996) as the sole evidence base for its application. However, Houlihan and Green's (2006, p.89) study of the school sport policy process concluded that the MSF offered 'a more plausible explanation of policy change.' Houlihan (2005) also claimed a potential utility of the MSF in sport policy research, given the degree of change and opportunism in complex areas such as sport, where a high level of organisational fragmentation exists. Kristiansen and Houlihan (2017, p.447) provided such an example, having utilised the MSF to analyse private sport schools and elite athlete development in Norway. The research suggesting that 'multiple and overlapping problems have received, at best, only partial policy solutions', and that through government inaction sport schools have been allowed policy space to expand.

Within this study, evidence suggests that focusing events and indicators have received political recognition, opened windows of opportunity, and attracted policy solutions from within policy communities. For example, social wellbeing, international sporting success, and arguably the APS and NGB four-year funding cycle. There is also evidence demonstrating how changes in government administrations and political ideologies have legitimised sport and influenced sport policy. Examples of which could be the large-scale government-wide priorities such as Labour's 'social inclusion' and the Coalition's 'Big society', which have arguably enhanced the utility of 'spill-over' and the 'policy entrepreneur' in UK public policy. Therefore, despite the limited appeal of MSF to sport policy research, the framework has potential value in the analysis of sport policy from an NGB perspective.

The MSF also has distinctive pluralist and neo-pluralist features aligned to Lukes' (1974, 2005) three dimensions of power. As noted by Zahariadis (2003, 2007), 'ideology' within the MSF is viewed as invoking 'idea-guided behaviour' in policy

actors and the role and influence of policy manipulators (elites), which arguably indicates a shift towards a neo-pluralist account of power (King, 2009, p.40). King (2009) also argued that ideas and time constraints are important ingredients to the policy process, which emerge from a 'contingent and often contradictory selection process' (John, 1998, p.175), and as such provide a powerful corrective to rational models of decision-making. An argument supported by Houlihan (2005, p.172), who claimed that the framework 'plays down too strongly the importance of structural factors and institutionalized power, perhaps due to its roots in pluralist macro-level theory', placing the MSF distinct from macro-level ideological orientations such as market liberalism.

3.2.3) Advocacy Coalition Framework

The ACF was developed by Sabatier (1988; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith,1999 – also see Sabatier and Weible, 2007; Jenkins-Smith *et al.*, 2014) to deal with 'wicked problems', characterised as 'problems involving substantial goal conflicts, important technical disputes, and multiple actors from several levels of government' (Sabatier and Weible, 2007, p.189). The framework emerged as an alternative to the heuristic stages model that previously dominated policy studies. By combining 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches to policy implementation, together with a commitment to give technical knowledge a more central role, the nuance of the ACF was to focus analysis on a broader set of processes than previous works (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Schlager, 1995; Green and Houlihan, 2004; Sabatier and Weible, 2007). Sabatier (1998, p.98) claimed that:

> '[i]ts goal was to provide a coherent understanding of the major factors and processes affecting the overall process – including problem definition, policy formulation, implementation, and revision in a specific policy domain – over periods of a decade or more.'

According to Pierce *et al*. (2017, p.35), over the past two decades, the ACF has emerged as a 'popular, durable, and flexible framework' for policy analysis. Indeed, the increasing scope of application of the ACF has led to significant revisions (Schlager, 1995; Sabatier and Weible, 2007), to the extent that it is now considered

a ‘framework supporting multiple, overlapping theoretical foci’ (Jenkins-Smith *et al.*, 2014, p.188).

At the heart of the ACF are three ‘foundation stones’ (Sabatier and Weible, 2007, p.191): i) a macro-level assumption that most policy-making occurs among specialists within a policy subsystem, although the behaviour of these actors is affected by factors in the broader political and socio-economic system, pointing towards the ACF having roots embedded within neo-pluralism; ii) a micro-level ‘model of the individual’ that is drawn from social psychology; and iii) a meso-level conviction that the best way to deal with the multitude of actors in a subsystem is to attempt to aggregate them into advocacy coalitions. Policy subsystems consist of ‘those actors from a variety of public and private organisations who are actively concerned with a policy problem or issue … and who regularly seek to influence public policy in that domain’ (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999, p.119). Advocacy coalitions are defined as groups of policy actors (e.g. elected and agency officials, interest group leaders, researchers and journalists), ‘sharing policy core beliefs [(a set of basic values, causal assumptions, and problem perceptions),] who coordinate their actions in a non-trivial manner [over time] to influence a policy subsystem’ (Jenkins-Smith *et al.*, 2014, p.195).

According to Sabatier and Weible (2007), the ACF assumes that actors seek out other actors with shared fundamental beliefs or potential beneficial resources in order to translate their beliefs into policy, and influence rules, budgets and government personnel to achieve goals over time (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier, 1993a), by adopting one or more strategies (Sabatier, 1999). A key assumption is the time perspective of a decade or more for the analysis of policy change, reflecting the significance of Weiss’ (1977) enlightenment function in policy research, and the ACF’s focus on policy-oriented learning (Green and Houlihan, 2005). Furthermore, ‘mapping beliefs and policies on the same canvas permits assessing the influence over time of the role of technical information or beliefs on policy change (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier, 1994, p.180; Jenkins-Smith *et al.*, 2014).

The origin or emergence of a subsystem is most likely to result from dissatisfaction with or neglect of a particular problem, enticing, for example, ‘a minority coalition breaking away to form its own subsystem or a new subsystem essentially the

product of a subset of a dominant coalition becoming large and specialised enough to form its own' (Sabatier, 1988, p.139). A subsystem is characterised by both a functional/substantive dimension and a territorial one, fundamentally focused on the 'substantive and geographic scope of the institutions that structure interaction' (Sabatier and Weible, 2007, p.193). However, defining the political subsystem to be analysed is considered a key challenge within the ACF. As noted by Sabatier and Weible (2007, p.193), 'delimiting the appropriate scope for a subsystem is … complicated by the existence of overlapping and nested subsystems …, [and that] … identifying the appropriate scope of a subsystem is one of the most important aspects of an ACF research project.' For Sabatier (1988, p.160), the delimitation of subsystem boundaries is based on the relational existence among actors and 'the frequency of interaction and transitivity of influence.' The multiplicity of actors within sport seeking to influence policy decisions most likely include government departments, the Sports Councils, other relevant sporting organisations (e.g. NGBs, BOA, County Sports Partnerships [CSPs], and Sport and Recreation Alliance [SRA]), and specific academic institutions and media organisations.

However, it is unclear whether UK sport policy sits within one policy subsystem or crosses multiple policy subsystems. The number of competing coalitions is also uncertain, the existence of which is arguably made more complex by the interests of actors primarily concerned with the utility of sport as a social tool (e.g. local authorities and social actors/organisations), against those more concerned with a commitment to sport for sport's sake (e.g. NGBs). The delimitation issue is further complicated by related subsystems that occur along both functional and territorial lines (Zafonte and Sabatier, 1998) – a subsystem maybe be nested within another (the former is a subset of the latter) or two subsystems may overlap and interact frequently enough that a subset of actors is part of both (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999). An example of which could be the involvement and overlapping of NGBs across potential competing advocacy coalitions for elite and community-grassroots sport. It is claimed that in any policy subsystem there will be between two and five competing coalitions, with at least one dominant coalition (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Houlihan, 2005; Sabatier and Weible, 2007), Pierce *et al*. (2017) having identified two or more advocacy coalitions in a vast majority of ACF applications.

Furthermore, the ACF distinguishes mature policy subsystems from nascent ones, the former characterised by a set of participants who regard themselves as a semi-autonomous community, share expertise in a policy domain, and have sought to influence public policy in that domain for an extended period (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999, pp.135-136). For Green and Houlihan (2005), the distinction between 'nascent' (forming) and 'mature' policy subsystems, the conditions appertaining to their existence, and the ACF's focus on regular interaction between groups of actors over a medium-term, are relevant to the sport policy sector, particularly as it is a relatively new and often marginal area of public concern. Indeed, Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier (1993b, p.47) stated that:

> '[I]n a new policy area, knowledge about the seriousness of the problem and the validity of various causal assumptions is normally sufficiently uncertain, and the political resources of those challenging the status quo sufficiently modest that the initial governmental programme involves a significant research component, but little coercion.'

It is important to acknowledge here the significance of the concept of policy brokers within the sport policy sector. According to Green and Houlihan (2005, p.17), the organisational complexity within sport signposts a requirement for policy brokers to act as mediators, 'interested in keeping conflict within acceptable limits.' As noted by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999, p.122), 'conflicting strategies from various coalitions may be mediated by a third group of actors, … whose principle concern is to find some reasonable compromise that will reduce intense conflict.' Proponents of the ACF also make the point that a vast majority of modern societal policymaking occurs within policy subsystems, and that to have any influence over policy participants must be specialists and negotiators within a policy subsystem (Sabatier and Weible, 2007), thus highlighting the neo-pluralist nature of the ACF.

Moreover, the ACF posits that policy change over a decade or more is a function of three key processes, as illustrated by the flow diagram in Figure 3.1 and the summative explanation provided by Pierce *et al*. (2017, p.15):

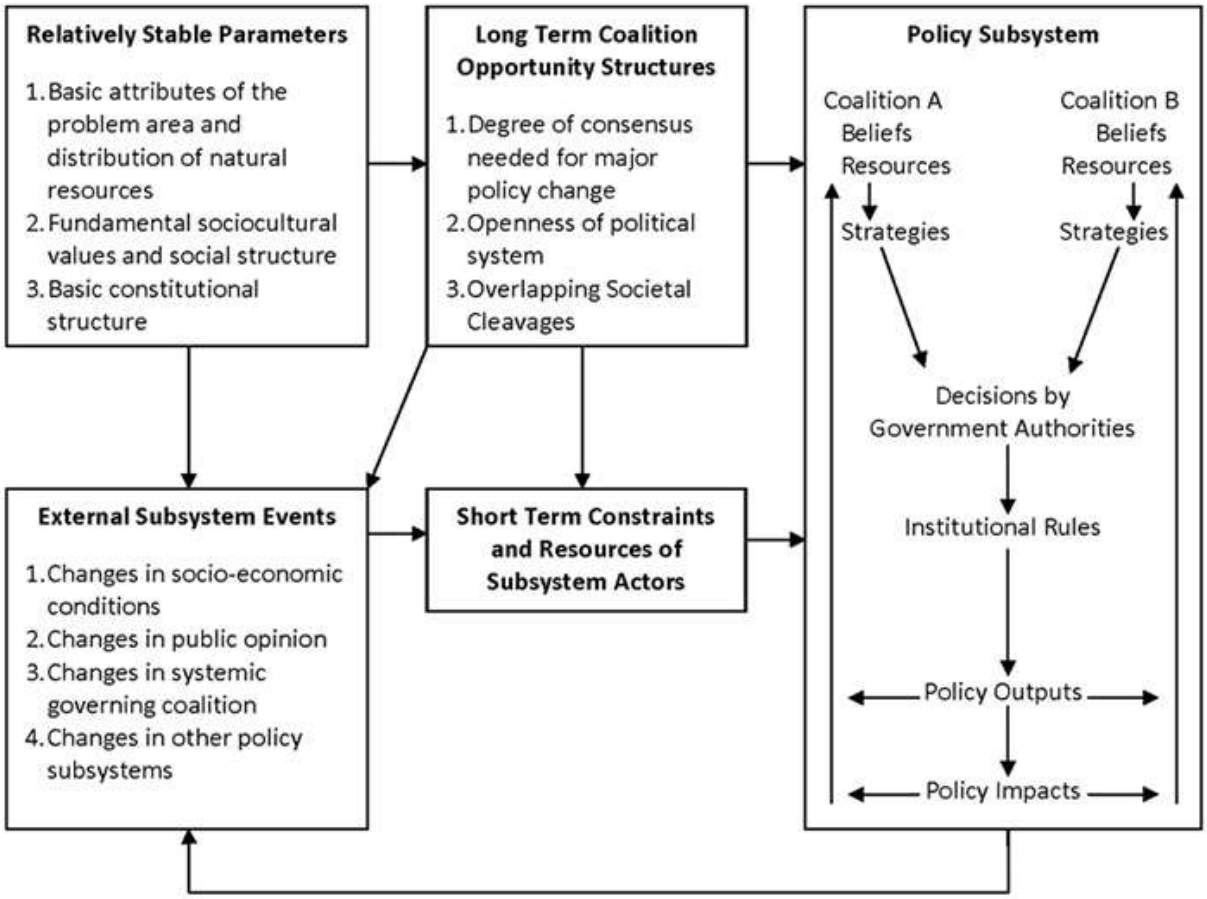
> ‘[C]oalitions compete within a policy subsystem to translate their beliefs into policy. They use strategies to influence government authorities, which eventually influence policy. Coalition beliefs and actions are impacted by long- and short-term opportunities, constraints, and resources that are affected by both relatively stable parameters and external system events. The impacts of government decisions feed back into the subsystem, and also may affect factors external to the subsystem.’

According to Green and Houlihan (2005, p.16; Marsh, 1998, Marsh and Smith, 2000; Hay, 2002), the ACF ‘takes account of the ‘interplay’, or dialectical relationship between *exogenous* and *endogenous* factors, which ‘frame the constraints and resources of actors in the subsystem and the interactions within the policy subsystem itself’ (Parsons, 1995, p.196). While *endogenous* processes are pursuant to the interaction of competing advocacy coalitions (Green and Houlihan, 2005, p.14); *exogenous* processes deal with: i) relatively ‘stable system parameters’ that rarely change or give impetus for behavioural/policy change, but are ‘important in establishing resources and constraints within which subsystem actors must operate’ (Sabatier and Weible, 2007, p.193); and ii) dynamic external subsystem events, which are assumed to be ‘more susceptible to change over a decade or more and are a critical prerequisite for major policy change’ (Green and Houlihan, 2005, p.15). Sabatier and Weible (2007, p.199; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993) argued that the impact of external perturbations or shocks on a policy subsystem could, potentially, ‘shift agenda, focus public attention, and attract the attention of key decision-making sovereigns.’ The effect of which is more likely to be ‘the redistribution of resources or opening and closing venues within the policy subsystem, which can lead to the replacement of the previously dominant coalition by a minority coalition.’

Arguably, external perturbations or shocks to the subsystem have potentially shaped UK sport policy or prompted policy change, for example: *changes in socio-economic and technology conditions* - funding cuts and realignments to UKS, SE and NGBs during the 2008 global economic crisis, and the controversial use of the APS to gather empirical evidence on sports participation; *changes in public opinion* - media attention following the Atlanta 1996 Olympic Games, and consultations to determine how future elite funds should be distributed; *changes in the systematic governing coalition* – Thatcherism dramatically altered the composition of resources of various

coalitions and, in turn, public policy within the subsystem (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier, 1994, pp.182-183). In contrast, Major is widely acknowledged for changing governmental approaches to sport and creating the Lottery; and *changes in other policy subsystems* - school sport receiving influence from elite sport, and health issues impacting on the societal value of sport.

Figure 3.1*: Advocacy Coalition Framework (Revised version)*

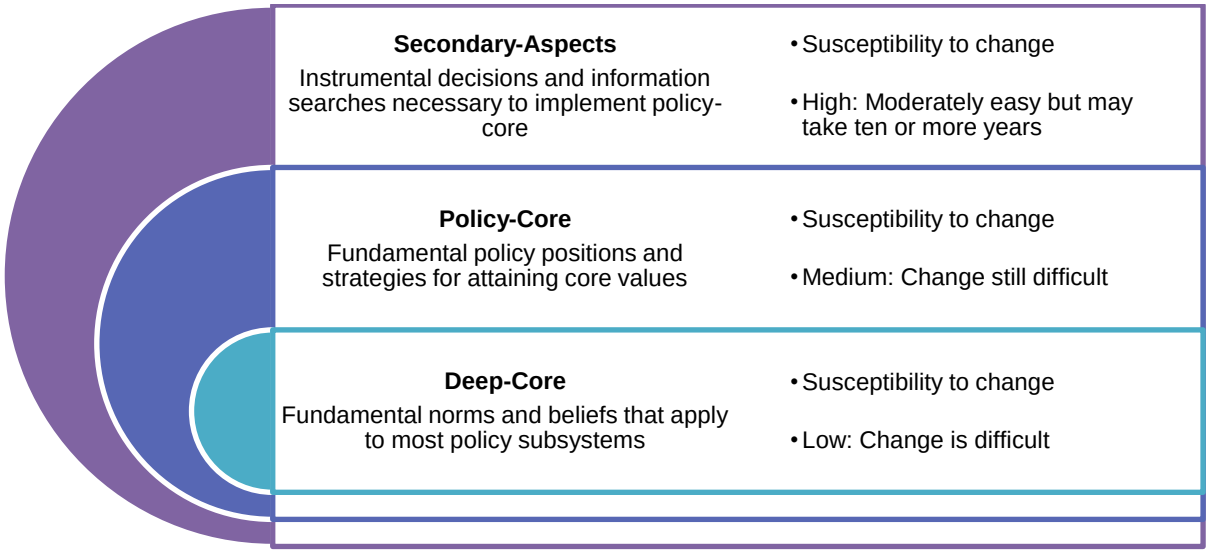


Source: Sabatier and Weible (2007, p.202)

Within Sabatier's (1999; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999, Sabatier and Weible, 2007) conceptualisation of coalition shared-beliefs, the ACF utilises a tripartite hierarchy of beliefs, namely, 'deep-core', 'policy-core' and 'secondary-aspects' (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999, p.133). The assumption being that these structural categories of beliefs offer decreasing resistance to change, where 'deep-core' (normative) beliefs offer the greatest resistance and 'secondary-aspects' the least (Kübler, 2001, p.624). The latter requiring 'less evidence and fewer agreements among subsystem actors and thus should be less difficult' to change (Sabatier and

Weible, 2007, p.196). 'Policy-core' belief preferences are considered to be the glue that binds a coalition together (Sabatier and Weible, 2007, p.192; Zafonte and Sabatier, 1998). Figure 3.2 illustrates the ACF's structure of beliefs and their susceptibility to change.

Figure 3.2*: ACF: structure of beliefs and susceptibility to change*



Source adapted from: Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1988; 1999); Sabatier (1991); Parsons (1995)

According to Green and Houlihan (2005), 'deep-core' beliefs include basic ontological and normative beliefs, for example, the relative valuation of individual freedom versus social equality or in sport, gender and race equality, and the importance of competitive sport or health benefits of sport. Such normative beliefs *span most policy subsystems* and are very difficult to change (Sabatier and Weible, 2007). At this level the ACF assumes that beliefs 'must be empirically ascertained and does not *a priori* preclude the possibility of altruistic behaviour' (Sabatier and Weible, 2007, p.194). Actors tend to relate to the world through a set of perceptual filters composed of pre-existing beliefs that are difficult to alter, where dissonant information is screened out and endorsing information reiterated (Sabatier and Weible, 2007, p.196). In addition, actors from different coalitions are also likely to perceive the same information in very different ways, leading to distrust or 'devil shift'. In other words, there is a tendency for actors to view opponents as less trustworthy, more evil, and more powerful than they actually are (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Sabatier and Weible, 2007).

‘Policy-core’ beliefs represent a coalition’s basic normative commitments and causal perceptions *across an entire policy subsystem* (Green and Houlihan, 2005; Sabatier and Weible, 2007). Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) defined eleven components of ‘policy-core’ beliefs, including *inter alia*: the priority of different policy-related values; whose welfare counts; the relative authority of governments and market; the proper roles of the general public, elected officials, experts; and the relative seriousness and causes of policy problems in the subsystem as a whole. In sport, ‘policy-core’ beliefs could arguably be the priority of elite sport development over sport for all, or the use of NGBs as a delivery mechanism to increase participation in sport. For Sabatier and Weible (2007, p.195), the general assumption of the ACF is that policy actors are ‘knowledgeable about relationships within their policy subsystem’, and will ‘apply certain deep core beliefs to develop policy core beliefs in that subsystem’, however, change is still very difficult. ‘Secondary-aspects’ are relatively narrow in scope (*less than subsystem-wide*) and address, for example, the seriousness of a problem or the relative significance of various causal factors in specific settings, or specific policy preferences regarding funding allocations (Green and Houlihan, 2005; Sabatier and Weible, 2007). Within sport policy, ‘secondary-aspects’ might relate to the availability of sport facilities, the collection of sport participation data, or how NGBs perform and manage state funding.

Furthermore, the ACF is characterised by two critical paths to policy change. The first path is policy-oriented learning, defined by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999, p.123) as ‘relatively enduring alternations of thought or behavioural intentions that result from experience and/or new information and that are concerned with the attainment or revision of policy objectives.’ Based on the fundamental premise that ‘policy-oriented learning often alters aspects of the coalition’s belief system, [but] changes in the policy core aspects of a governmental programme require a perturbation in non-cognitive factors external to the subsystem’ (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999, p.123). Thus, the ACF argues that a second significant path of external perturbations is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of major policy change (Sabatier and Weible, 2007), although it can lead to rapid changes in subsystem structure and individual ‘policy-core’ beliefs (Weiss, 1997).

Since its revision in 1999, the ACF has added two further paths to major policy change, primarily borne out of criticism of its American pluralistic origins (Sabatier and Weible, 2007). The ACF acknowledged that major internal shocks can also occur from within a policy subsystem, which not only confirm 'policy-core' beliefs in minority coalition(s), but also increases doubt within the dominant coalition. For example, monumental failures of policies and behaviours of a dominant coalition, leading to major policy change. In addition, both internal and external shocks (that put a policy subsystem problem in the public eye) have the capacity to 'redistribute critical political resources (public support, financial support, etc.) … [that] … may tip the power structure of the policy subsystem' (Sabatier and Weible 2007, p.204). However, while 'policy-core' belief systems 'determine the *direction* in which an advocacy coalition (or any other political actor) will seek to move governmental programmes, *its ability to do so* will be critically dependent upon its resources', which will vary between coalitions and change over time, and strongly affect a coalition's 'ability to translate their beliefs into authoritative policy decisions' (Sabatier, 1988, p.143). Examples of political resources that could be available for strategic utilisation by coalitions, include: (Sabatier and Weible, 2007, pp.201-204): allies in positions of legal authority; public opinion; empirical evidence to solidify coalition membership, influence decision-makers, and swaying public opinion (e.g. through 'professional fora'); and skillful leadership to create attractive visions for a coalition, utilising a strategic and efficient use of resources, and seen as an important strategy, particularly as skillful leadership can bring about actual changes in policy (Kingdon 1995).

Criticism of the ACF has primarily focused on its presumption that shared-belief systems and interests of individual members are homogeneous, and the disregard of 'heterogeneous actors overcoming collective action problems and agreeing to coordinate their actions to achieve shared goals' (Schlager, 1995, pp.264-265; Schlager and Blomquist, 1996). As Schlager (1995, p. 263) argued:

> 'being treated fairly, rather than similarly, by policies endorsed by a coalition, raises a critical distinction. To put it prosaically, a policy can treat actors similarly, only if the actors are similar, i.e. homogeneous. Thus, heterogeneity presents an obstacle to cooperation, but they matter, under certain conditions they leverage cooperation.'

Lober and Grin (1999) endorsed Schlager's argument by stating that the ACF 'forgets that most actors have a more fundamental belief system relating to basic goals of their organisation or profession' (cited in Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999, p.134). Fenger and Klok (2001) criticised the ACF's lack of acknowledgment of the contribution of interdependency, as an explanation for the behaviour of single actors and advocacy coalitions. It is important to provide here a distinction between dependence and interdependence. For this study, dependence refers to a reliance on external resources (e.g. public funding) for self-preservation (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978, cited in Slack and Hinings, 1992; Berry and Manoli, 2018), while interdependence relates to the contribution of policy actors towards the achievement of each other's goals or objectives (Fenger and Klok, 2001).

According to Fenger and Klok (2001, p.162), the concept of interdependency is related to the role scarce resources play in enabling actors to perform their actions, and as such is an important aspect of coalition formation and coordination. *Competitive interdependency* refers to action of one actor that interferes with another actor's ability to take action to achieve its goals', thereby facilitating conflict. S*ymbiotic interdependency* refers to 'one actor's action contributes to another's actions or goal achievement', and as such is a springboard for cooperation. While Zafonte and Sabatier (1998) introduced imposed interdependencies into the ACF, it was based on coordination among actors with specific shared 'policy-core' beliefs, within and across subsystems. For Fenger and Klok (2001, p.163), Zafonte and Sabatier's model of congruent and divergent beliefs required modification to include, 'indifferent beliefs' and 'independent interdependency' as additional values, where no coalition would be formed as 'actors would have no reason to coordinate their actions and no need to get into conflict. This changes when interdependency is brought in as an additional factor influencing coalition behaviour', particularly in terms of the concept of 'coalitions of convenience.' This has potential value in the formation of coalitions within sport policy, particularly as NGBs have shifted from a position of autonomy to that of conditional autonomy, resource-dependence, and collective action to protect their interests. Figure 3.4 shows the modified version of coalition behaviour as a result of interdependency and belief congruence.

Fenger and Klok (2001) argued further that the ACF offered 'little insight in the mechanism that would cause policy actors to change coalition behaviour', following some external event that would have a major factor in policy change, which might lead to 'intensified conflict and increasing competitive interdependency among actors' (Jenkins-Smith and St. Clair, 1993 cited in Fenger and Klok, 2001, p.164).

Figure 3.3: ***Coalition behaviour: Interdependency and Belief congruence (modified version)***

Interdependency	**Beliefs**		
	Congruent	***Indifferent***	***Divergent***
Symbiotic	**Strong Coordination**	**Coalitions of convenience**	**Unstable conflict, de-politisation, learning**
Independent	**Weak coordination**	**No coalitions**	**Weak conflict**
Competitive	**Coalition with a severe collective action problem**	**Weak conflict**	**Strong conflict**

Source adapted from: Fenger and Klok (2001, p.164)

Additional criticisms of the ACF question whether successful coalitions are those that learn better than others or those that hold greater resources and power. In this sense, coalitions may change as they advance 'core' interests, and in doing so, the ACF may not be robust enough for understanding any 'mobilisation of bias' in policymaking (Parsons, 1995). As noted by Bulkeley (2000, p.733), the ACF:

> 'does not address the ways in which actors "create" the social and political world in which they operate, inasmuch as it fails to grasp the interaction between actors within policy coalitions by conceptualising discourse as a means through which learning is communicated.'

Skille (2008, p.189) noted further that while the ACF 'implies collective action, based on coordinated individuals with a shared-belief system, it does not [consider] the influences of institutions.' Schlager (1995, p.244) had previously argued that the ACF finds difficulty in explaining 'why actors holding similar beliefs form coalitions to collectively press their policy goals, how coalitions maintain themselves over time, or the strategies coalitions adopt to pursue policy goals.' For Schlager (1995, p.250),

the focus on strategies was particularly important for 'understanding when, how, and why coalitions skilfully exploit opportunities to promote their positions.'

Evaluating the ACF against the selection criteria, the framework arguably satisfies, in the most part, all four criteria. As noted by Houlihan (2005, p.173), the ACF 'offers valuable insights into policy stability, where stability is explained in terms of dominant coalitions and the persistence of deep core and policy core beliefs.' Although, Houlihan (2005) also argued that the explanation of policy change is 'less convincing', given the ACF's reliance on a combination of exogenous events, instrumental rationality, and policy learning as the basis for change. In this respect, the ACF partly meets the first criterion. The second criterion is satisfied in full, as the ACF has a broader focus than many other meso-level frameworks and has the potential to illuminate aspects of the policy process beyond the preoccupation with agenda setting. As Parsons (1995, p.203) concluded, the ACF is 'a notable contribution to synthesising a range of approaches into a coherent and robust theory which links the early phases of the policy cycle – problem definition and agenda-setting with decision-making and implementation.' However, Skille (2008, p.189) has been critical of this argument, suggesting that the ACF 'does not consider the process of implementation accurately.' The third criterion is met, as the ACF has been widely applied across a range of different policy sectors and has been subject to substantial debate and refinements as a result of application in the field (Houlihan, 2005; Sabatier and Weible, 2007; Pierce *et al*., 2017). According to Sabatier (1999, p.120) the utility of ACF lies in the fact that it 'provides a vehicle for assessing the influence of actors over [a decade of more]', and thus fulfils the fourth criterion of policy change over a medium-term.

In terms of the application of the ACF within this research, its potential value is strong, particularly as research utilising the ACF suggests that 'actors tend to coalesce into discrete coalitions within the subsystem around some watershed event(s) that clarifies underlying conflicts regarding the particular (policy) issue in question' (Green and Houlihan, 2005, p.18). Examples of which could be sport as a legitimate and regular focus for government expenditure and policy since the 1960s (Houlihan and White, 2002), and evidence that demonstrates increasing public policy involvement over the past three decades. Despite the limited application of the ACF in the sports policy arena (see Houlihan and White, 2002; Parrish, 2003; Green and

Houlihan, 2005), studies have highlighted the ACF as a 'point of entry' into understanding sport policy, particularly given its broad-based approach to the whole policy process' (King, 2009, p.46). According to Green and Houlihan (2005) the attraction of ACF is its capacity to take account of structure and agency, and to offer explanations for both stability and change that can prompt further lines of enquiry in relation to sport policy and NGBs, which is the focus of this study. In this regard, with its attention to the role of ideas and beliefs, the ACF can be viewed as part of the post-positivist tradition in policy analysis and thus supports a critical realist position. As argued by Howlett and Ramesh (1995, p.48, 2003), 'an important element of post-positivist approaches is their emphasis on the manner in which political actors group together in the form of discourse or advocacy coalitions.' The evaluation of the ACF also suggests that the concept of policy subsystems and advocacy coalitions is closely linked to neo-pluralist macro-level assumptions and conceptualisation of power, an argument endorsed by a number of authors (Parsons, 1995; Green and Houlihan, 2005; Sabatier and Weible, 2007; King, 2009).

3.3) Macro-level theorising: a sensitising approach

From the review of meso-level theoretical literature, notable macro-level theories applied to the field of sport policy, include, neo-pluralism, public choice theory, and governance, the key dimensions of which have been provided in the appendices (Appendix III), to articulate the researcher's awareness and understanding of state theory. The literature review identified a clear lineage of the ACF, the MSF and to a lesser extent new institutionalism, to neo-pluralism. Of particular note, neo-pluralism offers a macro-level framework by which power can be understood within the policy-making process (Houlihan, 1997), emphasises the interactions across diverse actors and institutions (Dryzek and Dunleavy, 2009), and acknowledges active participation of the state, rather than control by citizens (Dunleavy and O'Leary, 1987). According to Finer (1966 cited in Smith, 1990) neo-pluralists accept that relationships between interest groups and government agencies can become very close and exclusive, but also acknowledge that not all groups have equal access and power to influence the policy arena (Smith, 1990, p.303; Dryzek and Dunleavy, 2009). Thus, neo-pluralism illuminates the nature of the relationship between actors and the strategies that

actors adopt to influence policy, as well as identifying the resources available to different actors involved in the negotiations (Houlihan, 1991).

The relevance of neo-pluralism to this study is indicated by its strong association with the evaluated meso-level frameworks and the aims and objectives of this research. This is despite the potential utility of public choice theory, in the context of the role of strategic interaction in the determination of political outcomes, and the creation of institutions to realise value through the use of, for example, new public management (NPM) (Hood, 1991; Rhodes, 1994; 1997) and self-organising policy networks (Rhodes, 1997, pp.46-53, 2006). While there is also potential utility in governance theory, particularly where evidence suggests the use of a more of competitive entrepreneurial and consumerist ethos (e.g. consumer choice, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness) within the policy environment (Dunleavy et al., 2006; Thompson, 2008; Dryzek and Dunleavy, 2009), many assumptions of governance theory are considered complementary to neo-pluralism, hence its connection to the ACF. As Dryzek and Dunleavy (2009, p.149) claimed, at the very least 'governance provides a new context for pluralism', or as Green (2009, p.141) remarked, 'an illusory screen of plural, autonomous and empowered delivery networks for sport [that] obscures the very close ties to, and regulation from, the centre', particularly in the context of the contractual-compliance and resource-dependent nature of the sport policy domain.

3.4) Conceptualisation of Power

While it is recognised that power is 'probably the most universal and fundamental concept of political analysis' (Hay, 1997, p.45; Cairney, 2012), it is equally considered a slippery concept that is consistently debated. As Lukes (2005, pp.70-71) claimed:

> 'thinking clearly about power is not easy and it gets more difficult, offering more opportunities for confusion when we try to think about power in social life, not least because we all talk and write about it … in confusingly different ways.'

The inclusion of the conceptualisation of power within this thesis, however, is not to advance any definitional debate on power, but rather to provide an understanding

and a clarification of how power is conceptualised in this current analysis (Lukes 1974, 2005; Layder 1985; Hay 1995, 1997, 2002) of sport policy. As noted by Green and Houlihan (2005, p.6), considering 'the conceptualisation of power relations, in the initiation of policy, in influencing policy outcomes, and in setting agendas … [is] central to an understanding of the policy process.' Cairney (2012, p.46) also argued that power's 'wide range of meanings and applications produces the need to be specific about its use in public policy analysis.' Broadly speaking, there are two contrasting views of power, as noted by Haugaard (2012, p.33), 'power as domination, largely characterised as power over, and … power as empowerment, frequently theorized as power to.' To demonstrate how power is operationalised in meso-level theorising of the sport policy process, focus is concentrated on two key theorists, Lukes and Foucault.

3.4.1) Lukes: Three dimensions of power

According to Hay (2002), the 'faces of power' controversy is perhaps the key post-war debate over the nature and definition of the concept of power, centred on the extent to which power is defined and easily measured, the key characteristics of which are provided in Table 3.3 to highlight the distinctiveness of political power within three dimensions of power.

While Lukes treats power as a capacity generated from a specific source, there are other social theorists, such as French post-structuralist, Foucault, who believed that power was omnipresent and diffused amongst society as a whole, and far more than a capacity or form of hegemony or ideology. Foucault's conceptualisation of power is considered to be the fourth dimension of power (Digeser, 1992; Haugaard, 2012).

Table 3.3: *The 'faces of power' controversy: political power in three dimensions*

Key Characteristics	One-dimensional view	Two-dimensional view	Three-dimensional view
Conception of power	Power as decision-making.	Power as decision-making, non-decision making, and agenda-setting.	Power as decision-making, agenda-setting (not necessarily through decisions), and preference-shaping and ideological control.
Focus of analysis	Formal political arena; behaviour and issues; and subjective interests seen as policy preferences revealed by political participation.	Formal political arena; informal processes surrounding corridors of power; issues and potential issues; subjective interests seen as policy preferences or grievances.	Civil society, especially the public sphere (in which preferences are shaped); issues and potential issues; subjective and real interests.
Nature of power	Visible, transparent and easily measured. Observable (overt) conflict.	Visible and invisible (visible to agenda-setters or through gaining inside information).	Largely invisible - power distorts perceptions and shapes preferences.
How power is operationalised	*'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do'* (Dahl 1957, p.201). Power is perceived as a zero-sum game - gains or losses of one party are exactly balanced with the gains or losses of the other party (Hyland, 1995). Some individuals or groups are more successful in dominating decision-making arenas (Dahl, 1961, Scott, 2001). '[P]ower is totally embodied and fully reflected in "concrete decisions" or in activity bearing directly upon their making' (Lukes, 2005, p.20). Power is an agency-centred account borne out of the 'concentration on the actions of individuals within the decision-making process' (Hay, 1997, p.46).	*'A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A'* (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, p.149; Lukes, 2005, p.20). Power redefines *'the boundaries of what is to count as a political issue'* (Lukes, 2005, p.23), through the setting (or systematic distortion) within the policy process and or action or inaction in decision-making. Regulatory power controls the parameters of debate on future policy direction and delivery processes for current policy (Houlihan *et al.*, 2011). Unobservable power - erection of barriers (elites or hegemonic group) strategically limit agents' ability to bring difficult issues to the table. Decision-making only considers minority interests (non-prevailing or threatening to pre-existing power dominance) (Hay, 2002, p.176).	*'A exercises power over B when A affects B, in a manner contrary to B's interests'* (Lukes, 2005, p.37). Focused on the shaping of preferences or distorting of the perceived interests of others (a critique to the behavioural dimension of other power perspectives) (Hay, 2002). Subtle use of largely invisible power to modify interests of potentially opposing members of society, to the extent that their new and programmed desires may be contrary, or even harmful, to their real interests (Lukes, 1986). Power is assumed to be an expression of ideological indoctrination, or psychological control (Wrong, 1995).

Source adapted from: Hay (2002); Lukes (2005)

3.4.2) Foucault: Fourth dimension of power

A key characteristic of Foucault's conceptualisation of power is that 'power is not a thing or a capacity which can be owned by the State, social class or particular individuals' (O'Farrell, 2005, p.99). Rather, power is omnipresent and located at the micro-level of social relations between agents (individuals and groups) (Faubion, 2000). Foucault viewed this form of omnipresent power as productive, insomuch as it supports cooperation, contributes to and generates knowledge, and furthers cultural order (Faubion, 2000), in contrast to coercion and repression (Foucault, 1986; O'Farrell, 2005; Markula and Pringle, 2006). Power in Foucault's conception is thus constructed as a pervasive, ubiquitous feature of all social relations (Hindess, 1996).

Of particular interest are Foucault's views on the power of domination through panoptical surveillance, and the notion of governmentality, the latter being defined as the 'art of government' (Foucault, 1994, p.201). The relevance of panoptical surveillance pertains to its presupposition of 'induc[ing] … a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power … , [where] the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary' (Foucault, 1977, p.201; Hay 2002; Lukes, 2005), through self-disciplining (Hay, 2002). Foucault used 'governmentality' to describe 'the regulation of individuals' lives, which includes procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations and tactics that allow for the exercise of power through the governing of others' (Piggin *et al*., 2009, p.89). Foucault (1994, p.202) explained the concept as the 'problematic' of government and how a population should 'be ruled, how strictly, by whom, to what end, [and] by what methods.' According to Rose (1990, p.xxii), the process advocates the 'interlocking (although not necessarily synergistic) apparatuses for the programming of various dimensions of life … through which we are urged, incited, encouraged, exhorted and motivated to act.' Rose (1993, p.286) also argued that governmentality, as conceived by Foucault, 'suggests alternative ways of thinking the activity of politics', that is, 'various forms of power are used by governments, although not to impose constraints on a population.' Instead, governing power ensures citizens believe in a 'kind of regulated freedom' (Rose and Miller, 1992, p.174). However, Raco and Imrie (2000, p.2191; Enroth, 2014) claimed that

‘increasingly, government seeks not to govern per se, but to promote individual and institutional conduct that is consistent with government objectives.’

3.5) Evaluation of meso-level frameworks

The evaluation of meso-level frameworks indicated a degree of overlap and complementary features among the different approaches, and that all demonstrate potential utility for this study, despite their weaknesses and limited application to UK sport policy. The evaluation also supported of Houlihan’s (2000) conjecture that no particular framework has the capacity to be a *perfect fit* (emphasis mine), in part due to the peculiarity of sports policy in the UK. Table 3.4 provides an overview of the meso-level evaluation and the potential usefulness of each framework.

Table 3.4*: Overview of meso-level framework evaluation*

Frameworks	New Institutionalism	MSF	ACF
Macro-level assumptions	Noticeable links to neo-pluralism & governance	Distinctive pluralist and neo-pluralist features	Neo-pluralist foundations
Power relations	Lukes’ 2nd and 3rd dimensions; Foucault’s governmentality	A neo-pluralistic notion of power (Lukes).	A neo-pluralistic notion of power (Lukes)
Key features	Greater focus on rules and norms than formal structures. Uses rationality and beliefs, norms and values approaches to explain institutional roles and relationships in social and political outcomes.	Primarily concerned with agenda setting & policy choice under conditions of ambiguity & time constraints. Conceptualised through three streams: problems; policies & politics. Synergy of streams enhances policy adoption. Dominant features include focusing events/indicators, policy windows, policy entrepreneurs, policy manipulation, and spill-over.	Focused on advocacy coalitions, technical knowledge and beliefs within policy subsystems; interrelationships between exogenous/ endogenous factors that constrain/resource the policy community; dominant features include specialist policy subsystems, policy brokers, tripartite hierarchy of beliefs; and policy-oriented learning.
Key strengths	Powerful corrective to state significance; directs attention to actor behaviour within operational structures.	Wide appeal - three streams conceptualise complex processes; significance of policy entrepreneurs is supported.	Illuminates the whole policy process over time; accounts for structure/agency; highly regarded framework for policy analysis; the existence of advocacy coalitions is not disputed.
Key limitations	Not a fully articulated framework; privileges structure over agency; indistinct treatment of policy dynamics; under-theorised. Best utilised as a sensitising concept.	Plays down the importance of structural/ institutional power; independence of streams questioned; focused too much on agenda setting; limited application to UK sport policy.	Difficulties identifying and delimiting ‘coalitions’; weak underlying theory of power; lack of understanding of mobilisation of bias; limited application to UK sport policy.
Meso-level selection criteria	Satisfies fully 3, 4; partially 1 Not satisfy: 2	Satisfies fully 3, 4; partially 1 Not satisfy: 2	Satisfies fully 2, 3, 4; partially 1

The evaluation of meso-level frameworks has shown that while there are strengths in all three frameworks, the ACF satisfies, more fully, the selection criteria adopted for this research. Sabatier (2007) argued that the range of variables contained within meso-level frameworks and the relationship between them, serve as a conceptual map to guide the analyst, facilitating a deeper, more rigorous study, thus pointing towards the use of multiple theories to analyse policy. In this regard, the revisions of the ACF suggest that the framework supports multiple, overlapping theoretical foci, which strengthens the justification for its use within this current research, the underlying aim of which is to determine the extent to which SMNGBs are primarily policy 'shapers' or policy 'takers', within the UK sport policy domain.

To answer this question, it is important to understand the historical implications for NGBs of sport policy, the political environment in which they operate, and the causal effects on their own field of operations, all of which have neo-pluralistic values, as has the ACF. For example, interest groups such as NGBs lobbying for greater responsibility, increased funding, and a redefined role, has arguably resulted in government's shifting priorities from a 'bottom-up' mass participation strategy for sport, to nationally-defined strategy for each sport. Houlihan and Lindsey (2013, p.199) also noted a 'relative vacuum of organised interests has created an opportunity for an extension of influence by NGBs', and as Sabatier and Weible (2007) claimed, to have any influence over policy, policy actors must be specialists and negotiators within a policy subsystem, which points towards the utility of the ACF in the analysis of sport policy and SMNGBs.

The ACF also emphasises the importance of 'exogenous shocks' or external events in the promotion of policy change, where arguably, John Major's approach to sport policy, the Lottery, and the London 2012 Olympic Games stimulated changes in policy and relationships with NGBs. Thus, pointing towards a neo-pluralistic focus on the power of groups in policy-making and the dependency on resources, within an institutional and historical context. Similarly, neo-pluralism and its association with Lukes' second and third dimensions of power, acknowledges the decentralisation of the modern state as a network of multiple agencies (Dunleavy and O'Leary, 1987). Marsh (1995, p.273) claimed further that 'political outcomes are … the product of conflict between interests … for the allocation for scarce resources in a context characterised by structural inequality', which is a key constituent of the ACF. As

Hoye *et al*. (2010, p.111) argued, youth sport policy was developed by a coalition of interests (including YST, SE and DCMS), who 'dominate the discourse around school sport and PE and make it difficult, if not impossible, for some issues, especially those around non-competitive sport, to receive an airing at this senior policy level' (Lukes' second dimension). The same authors suggested that school staff and pupils were subtly socialised through the PE and Sport Strategy for Young People (PESSYP), towards accepting 'school sport opportunities as not only normal, but desirable' (Lukes' third dimension). It could also be argued that the increased level of operational accountability placed upon NGBs by government/SE/UKS, in particular SMNGBs, has influenced or shaped NGB preferences contrary to their genuine interests.

From a governance standpoint, while many assumptions of governance complement neo-pluralism, it is clear that past changes in government administrations have affected the way politics is conducted, with a shift towards governing 'at arm's length' (Green, 2009), the influence of NPM on NGBs and the resource-dependent relationships that exist. However, Houlihan and Green (2009, p.681) also observed:

> '[an] apparent paradox between the rhetoric of empowerment and autonomy, on the one hand, and the strengthening of the government's capacity to set the strategic direction for policy and also micro-manage the activities of the units of the state, on the other.'

This resonates with debates on power and the state associated with Foucault's work on governmentality. As argued by Lemke (2002, p.60):

> '[The] concept of governmentality construes neoliberalism not just as ideological rhetoric, as a political-economic reality … but above all as a political project that endeavours to create a social reality that it suggests already exists … and that collective bodies and institutions … and states have to be "lean", "fit", "flexible", and "autonomous."'

An example of governmentality would be the greater responsibility given to NGBs for efficiency management and accountability, to ensure that they are 'fit' and 'trustworthy' partners for government, in line with the '*Best Value'* scheme introduced by New Labour under their 'Third Way' ideology. For Houlihan and Green (2009, p.682), 'the net effect of the application of these technologies is to ensure that

organizations are instrumental in their own self-government and engaged in the reflexive monitoring of their organization's actions', which is again reflective of Foucault's notion of panoptical surveillance. It could be argued that the level of monitoring of NGBs through performance measurements and disciplining for failure to achieve government targets, has induced a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power, as can be seen from Houlihan's (1997) conjecture that the Sport Councils *police* sport rather than develop sport.

3.6) Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the theoretical literature on policy analysis and evaluated three meso-level analytical frameworks that were considered to offer the greatest potential value in the analysis of the UK sport policy process, in relation to SMNGBs. While the evaluation identified the ability of all three frameworks to cast some light, in different ways, on the analysis of sport policy, the ACF offered a richer, more complete and satisfying framework to use. The evaluation of macro theories acknowledged that meso-level theories are not value free and are underpinned by macro-level assumptions. Similarly, any discussion of the policymaking process necessitates an extrinsic consideration of how power is distributed and operationalised. The consideration given macro-level assumptions and nature of power relations has served to sensitise the researcher to particular relationships and different aspects of the policy process, while the ACF and analytical themes identified have served to inform and guide the choice of instruments in terms of the collection and analysis of research data for this thesis, as discussed more fully within the methodology and research design Chapter that follows.

Chapter Four

Methodology and Research Design

4.1) Introduction

The previous two chapters discussed the historical and theoretical context of this research. The purpose of this chapter is to outline and justify the philosophical position, methodology and choice of instruments that have informed and guided the research design of this study, the overall aim of which has been to determine whether SMNGBs are primarily policy 'shapers' or policy 'takers', supported by the following research objectives:

(a) Understand the historical context of contemporary sport policy within which SMNGBs operate;
(b) Examine the development of governmental relationships with SMNGBs;
(c) Investigate the impact of changing sport policy on SMNGBs, by means of a thematic analysis of operational activities;
(d) Ascertain the strategies utilised by SMNGBs to adapt to, and operate within, a changing policy and operational environment; and
(e) Evaluate the utility of the ACF.

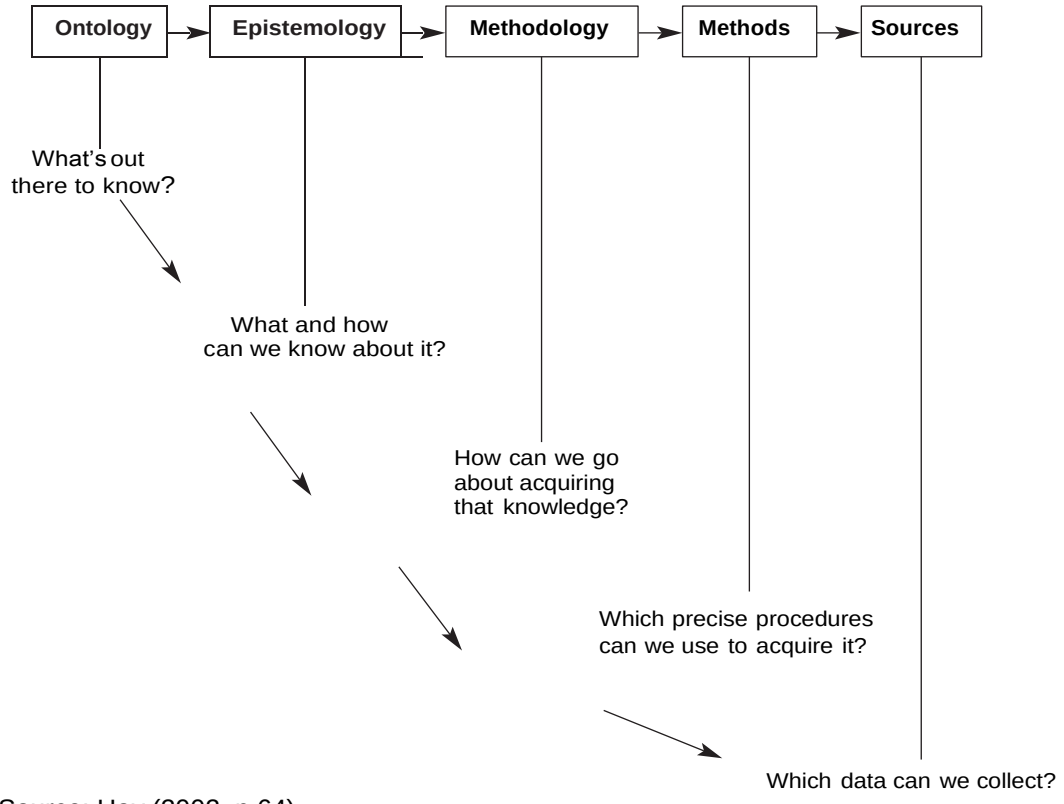
The structure of this chapter follows the 'directional, and logical, relationship between the key components of ontology, epistemology, methodology, methods and sources' within the research process, as advocated by Grix (2002, p.179; Hay, 2002). The chapter therefore begins with the ontological and epistemological assumptions that have served to shape this thesis, reflecting on the critical realist approach adopted for this study. This is followed by discussions on the qualitative methodology and multiple case-study research design adopted for this current research, and the use of document analysis and interviews as primary methods of data collection, including rationales for the selection of case studies, documents and interview participants. The chapter continues with a discussion on the use of a thematic analysis of data, and the identification of specific themes that were considered more appropriate dimensions and mechanisms to determine the capacity of SMNGBs to shape or take

policy. This is followed by a discussions on reliability and validity and the utilisation of a periodised timeline. The concluding section of this chapter summarises the logic and appropriateness of the methodology and methods used in this study, within a critical realist paradigm.

4.2) Ontology

‘Research is a systematic process of discovery and advancement of human knowledge’ (Gratton and Jones, 2010, p.4), linked together by an interrelated set of core components that constitute the ‘building blocks’ of generic social research (Grix, 2002, p.175), as illustrated in Figure 4.1. As ontological and epistemological assumptions underlie research (Grix, 2002), the presupposition is that ‘ontology logically precedes epistemology which logically precedes methodology’ (Hay, 2002, p.5) and so on, which does not mean each component is a co-determinant of the other, but rather shows the order of constituent parts (Grix, 2002).

Figure 4.1*: The interrelationship between the building blocks of research*



Source: Hay (2002, p.64)

Ontology is the study of existence, the very nature of being (Furlong and Marsh, 2010; Gratton and Jones, 2010) and the 'starting point of all research' (Grix, 2002, p.177). The ontological position determines the answer to the questions, 'what is the nature of the social and political reality to be investigated' (Hay, 2002, p.63), 'what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how [they] interact with each other… [, and] … what we believe constitutes social reality' (Blaikie, 2000, p.8). Only by answering the ontological question can the epistemological question of what can be known about this reality, be addressed (Grix, 2002). It follows then that epistemological considerations reflect the underlying ontological assumptions, which then logically flow with clear methodological implications (Furlong and Marsh, 2010). However, the relationship between ontology and epistemology is a contentious issue with no 'uncontentious' resolution (Furlong and Marsh, 2010, p.188; Bates and Jenkins, 2007; Hay, 2007).

According to Furlong and Marsh (2010), there are two broad ontological positions: *foundationalism*, also termed objectivism, realism or positivism; and *anti-foundationalism*, also termed constructivism, relativism or interpretivism. The different terminology refers to the same position (Furlong and Marsh, 2010). Foundationalism posits that there is a 'real world out there', independent of our knowledge of it (Furlong and Marsh, 2010, p.185), and those that adopt such a position postulate the existence of objective, absolute and unconditional truths (Johnson and Lakoff, 1997). This implies that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence beyond the reach or influence of social actors (Grix, 2002; Bryman, 2004). Thus, foundationalists focus upon identifying the causes of social behaviour in order to establish causal relationships between social phenomena with an emphasis on explanation (Furlong and Marsh, 2010). By contrast, anti-foundationalism sees the world as socially constructed, the assumption being that 'social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors and produced through social interaction' (Bryman, 2004, p.17; Blaikie, 2003). For Blaikie (2003, p.203), anti-foundationalism is 'a pre-interpreted, inter-subjective world of cultural objects, meaning and social institutions', the focus of which is on the meaning of behaviour with an emphasis upon understanding rather than explanation (Furlong and Marsh, 2010). According to Parsons (2010, p.80), social constructs are shaped by 'ideas, beliefs, norms, identities, or some other interpretive filter through

which people perceive the world', where truth comes from such human engagement with the world (Crotty, 1998). Although not dismissive of the existence of structure or institutions in reality, Furlong and Marsh (2010, p.191) argued that such 'reality' has 'no social role/causal power independent of the agent's/group's/society's (*sic*) understanding of it.' The distinction between foundationalism and anti-foundationalism is made easier by Bryman's (2001, p.17) reference to an organisation, whereby foundationalism sees an organisation as a 'tangible object' and something that has 'a reality that is external to the individuals who inhabit it', whereas anti-foundationalism views an organisation as being defined and shaped by the people within it.

4.3) Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with the theory of knowledge, 'the claims or assumptions about the possible ways of gaining knowledge of social reality, whatever it is understood to be' (Blaikie, 2000, p.8). Epistemological assumptions provide 'a view and justification for what can be regarded as knowledge - that is, what can be known, and what criteria such knowledge must satisfy in order to be called knowledge rather than beliefs' (Blaikie, 1993, p.7). According to Furlong and Marsh (2010, p.185), epistemology relates to: i) identification of 'real' or 'objective' relations between social phenomena; and ii) the extent to which 'real' relationships between social phenomena can be established simply through direct observation, or whether there are relationships which 'exist' that are not directly observable.

Ontologically, a foundationalist would assume that reality and therefore social phenomena exists independently of our thought processes. In contrast, an anti-foundationalist would argue that there is not a 'real' world, which exists independently of the meaning actors attach to their action, and suggests no observer can be 'objective' as the world is affected by the social constructions of 'reality' (Marsh and Stoker, 2002, p.19). Thus, anti-foundationalism posits an interpretivist theory of knowledge and evokes a double hermeneutic, whereby the world is interpreted by the actors (one hermeneutic level), and their interpretation is interpreted by the observer (a second hermeneutic level) (Furlong and Marsh, 2010, p.186). Foundationalists, on the other hand, follow a scientific approach, which aims:

> 'to detect the regularities in nature, propose a generalisation, deduce what it implies for the next case and observe whether the prediction succeeds. If it does, no consequent action is needed; if it does not, then either discard the generalisation or amend it' (Hollis and Smith, 1990, p.50).

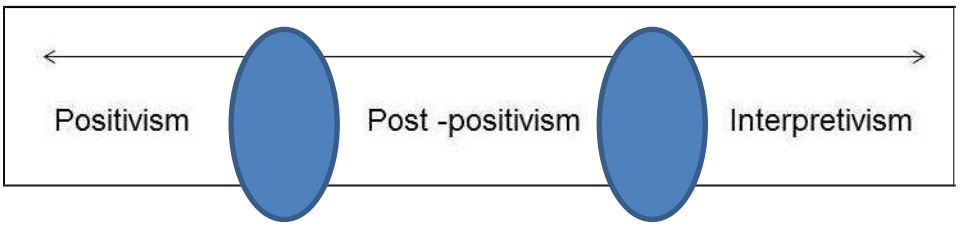
The argument here is that direct observation is the only way through which knowledge can be generated, thereby rejecting anti-foundationalist assumptions of unobservable, deeper structures to the social phenomena.

Within the competing epistemologically scientific and hermeneutic approaches are different classifications of epistemological positions, which have an even greater degree of ambiguity and disagreement (Furlong and Marsh, 2010). In broad terms, there are three common epistemological positions - positivism, critical realism (post-positivism), and interpretivism, which have been widely adopted in social and political science. Grix (2010, p.77) described these three 'broad headings' as models for research within specific disciplines, which collectively house 'many "families" of research strands' along a continuum to denote that definition is not absolute, as seen in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: ***Continuum of key paradigm/epistemological positions in human and social sciences***

Foundational Anti-foundational

Critical Realism



Source adapted from: Grix (2010)

The shaded areas depict the borders between paradigms where much of the 'real-world' research is prevalent, and signify the point at which 'hard' proponents of one paradigm meet 'soft' proponents of the other, the gradation towards an epistemological approach dependent upon your direction of travel (Grix, 2010, p.62). A clinical division between foundationalist and anti-foundationalist paradigmatic

research is therefore problematic. Indeed, research to understand and to inform policy and management debates in sport is arguably a case in point, as Downward (2005, p.304) claimed, such research poses 'quite fundamental philosophical challenges.' The differences between the three epistemological approaches can be seen by highlighting distinctions in the core epistemological perspectives of each of the above positions, as illustrated in Table 4.1. According to Blaikie (2003, p.127), however, no epistemological or ontological approach lacks critics since 'there is not neutral ground from which it is possible to make 'objective' evaluations.' Indeed, Clough and Nutbrown (2002) argued that a philosophical approach is the one that is most appropriate to the underlying aims and objectives of the research.

Table 4.1: ***Core epistemological perspectives of Positivism, Critical Realism and Interpretivism***

	Positivism	Critical Realism	Interpretivism
Ontology	Foundationalist	Foundationalist	Anti-Foundationalist
Epistemological Assumptions	Scientific/Objectivist Phenomena: directly observable. 'Advocates the application of the … natural sciences to the study of social reality and beyond' (Bryman, 2004, p.11). Knowledge must be free from social values.	Scientific/Subjectivist Phenomena: not directly observable. '[P]redicated upon the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural science and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action' (Bryman, 2004, p.13).	Hermeneutic/Subjectivist Phenomena: not directly observable. Provides 'scientific principles that are capable of capturing the nature of reality' (Blaikie, 1993, p.59).
Methodology	Objectivity: knowledge is derived from human sensory, experimental or comparative analysis. **Quantitative** methods privileged - use of rigorous scientific methods.	Science is an empirically based, rational and objective enterprise, to provide true explanatory and predictive knowledge. **Quantitative (observable data) and Qualitative (unobservable data)**	Knowledge is derived from socially constructed concepts and meanings. **Qualitative** methods privileged.
Role of research	Contribute to predictive and explanatory knowledge of the external world, and causal relationships to make causal statements, including human behaviour. Findings: objective/generalisable	Contribute to explanatory knowledge of the connections between phenomena and underlying structures and mechanisms at work, e.g. causal relationships, and importantly, relationships between social phenomena that can't be observed.	Believe objective analysis is impossible in research as all knowledge is discursively laden and causal relationships impossible. Thick forms of description are the primary objective, concerned with understanding not explanation.
Theoretical dependency	Concepts and generalisations can be established between social phenomena, using theory to generate hypotheses which can be tested and falsified.	Models are hypothetical, which may reveal the underlying mechanisms of reality.	At one level these accounts are re-descriptions of everyday accounts; at another level they are developed into theories.

Structure Vs Agency Debate	Structure-centred approach: there are no deep structures which cannot be observed	Structures do not determine outcomes, rather they constrain and facilitate agency determined behaviour, therefore contends not all phenomena are directly observable.	Agency-centred approach: focused on the meaning of agents. Contends the world is socially constructed and therefore phenomena are not directly observable.

Source adapted from: Sparkes (1992); Marsh *et al.* (1999, pp.11-14); Blaikie (2003); Bryman (2004); Furlong and Marsh (2010)

On reflection of the above ontological and epistemological perspectives, a critical realist paradigm has been adopted for this study, on the basis that critical realism offers: i) a view of reality that sees the world as 'structured, potentially hierarchical and has both individual and social features' (Downward, 2005, p.307); ii) a useful and coherent interdisciplinary approach to sport (Downward, 2005); iii) a causal relationship in the production of outcomes (Lawson, 1997, 2003; Sayer, 2000), seen as constituent features within this research; and iv) a strong link to the ACF as a theoretical framework for analysing policy.

4.4) Critical Realism

According to Baert (2005, p.87), critical realism fills a philosophical void in the natural and social sciences, salvaging 'the naturalistic project of positivism and falsification while taking on board that knowledge is a social construct.' Given the attention to social theory and its penchant for wholeness, critical realism is regarded as within the blurred boundaries of the broad philosophical constructs. Yet, despite its relatively new orientation, critical realism is on the ascendance (Baert, 2005; Easton, 2010) within many disciplines including, economics (Lawson, 1997), sociology (Sayer, 2000) and sport policy, management and tourism (Downward, 2005). As advocated by Baert (2005, p.89), its importance echoes what many social and political scientists are already doing, that is, establishing social research:

> 'as a scientific endeavour …without relying on a heavily deductive-nomological outlook …, [and] does so by providing a long overdue cogent critique of positivist epistemology, and, significantly … avoids the looming spectre of relativism.'

Indeed, critical realism purports to 'recognise the reality of the natural order and events and discourses of the social world' (Bryman, 2012, p.29), and posits that 'we will only be able to understand – and so change – the social world if we identify the

structures at work that generate those events and discourses' (Bhaskar, 1989, p.2), both observable and unobservable. This is in contrast to naïve realism that 'fails to recognise that there are enduring structures and generative mechanisms underlying and producing observable phenomena and events', and is therefore 'superficial' (Bhaskar, 1989, p.2). According to Easton (2010, p.119), critical realism 'combines ontological transcendental realism and an eclectic realist/interpretivist epistemology.' In other words, explanations of cause emerge from the combination of agency and institutions to bring about effects. As explained by Downward (2005, p.313), '[i]ndividuals are borne into a world of pre-existing structures and norms, which help to mould but not determine behaviour, which is intentional and has the potential for spontaneous change', thus avoiding 'epistemic fallacy[10].'

According to Sayer (1992, p.5), key assumptions of critical realism posit that:

- 'The world exists independently of our knowledge of it' and is 'differentiated and stratified', where natural or social objects (entities/structures), 'necessarily have particular powers or ways of acting and particular susceptibilities', capable of generating events;

- Knowledge is fallible, theory-laden, not immune to empirical check, and its effectiveness to inform and explain is not accidental. It neither develops 'wholly continuously, as the steady accumulation of facts within a stable conceptual framework, nor discontinuously, through simultaneous and universal changes in concept.' It is a 'social practice', and largely linguistic, where 'social relations of knowledge production influences its content … , and the nature of language and the way we communicate are not incidental to what is known and communicated'; and

- Social phenomena (actions, texts, institutions) are concept dependent, 'which necessitates explanation, understanding, and interpretation of their production, material effects and meaning, and exist regardless of researcher's interpretation of them. In order to be able to explain and understand social phenomena we have to evaluate them critically.'

[10] 'Epistemic fallacy' is the assumption that ontological issues can be reduced to epistemological ones (Bhaskar, 1978; Collier, 1994; Lawson, 1997).

Critical realists assume reality is a structured open system, subscribing to a stratified notion of reality that encompasses three distinct organically related domains (Bhaskar, 1978). As explained by Baert (2005):

The *'real' domain* - denotes the intransitive dimensions of knowledge, where real events, structures and mechanisms that make up the world exist, independent of people's knowledge of them, and where actual causes, structures and powers to make things happen exist (e.g. the health benefits of sport);

The *'actual' domain* – describes the point at which powers and causes act, and patterns of events occur (e.g. changes in government priorities and policy);

The '*empirical' domain* – illustrates the transitive dimensions of knowledge (tools available to the researcher), where previously established facts or antecedent methods and theories reside, and observations are perceived, made and experienced by observers (Downward, 2005; Easton, 2010) (e.g. the ACF as a tool for analysing sport policy or the APS as an instrument for measuring NGB performance).

The distinction between 'transitive' and 'intransitive' objects of knowledge has been used to validate the credentials of critical realists (Bhaskar, 1978; Collier, 1994). As noted by Baert (2005, p.91), critical realism is 'at variance with transcendental idealism in taking the objects to be intransitive opposed to transitive, and it opposes empiricism in treating the intransitive realm as layered, not simply limited to the instantly observable.' For Baert (2005, p.93), this generative theory relies on a notion of 'natural necessity', which explains change or stability of phenomena in terms of their intrinsic features. To explain further, using sport as an example, if participation levels reduce against the objectives of sport policy, it is possible to argue that NGBs were the cause. Indeed, NGBs have received criticism for their inability to increase the numbers of those playing sport. But realists would argue that participation has reduced due to the internal structures or 'molecular make-up' (Baert, 2005) of NGBs, and that relationships and the increased complexity of performance measures, have merely triggered the mechanisms (the sport policy process) in place to deliver government objectives.

For the social and political researcher, the stratified notion of reality predicates a double hermeneutic operational environment (Downward, 2005). As Sayer (2000, p.17) pointed out:

> 'critical realism acknowledges that social phenomena are intrinsically meaningful, and hence that meaning is not only externally descriptive of them but constitutive of them (though of course there are usually material constituents too). Meaning has to be understood, it cannot be measured or counted, and hence there is always an interpretative or hermeneutic element in social science.'

Downward (2005, pp.316-318) also suggested that there is logic for a triple hermeneutic by way of 'policymakers synthesising and acting upon research findings', and argued that 'by construction, sport policy and management insights presuppose a realist perspective.'

Critical realists also espouse the notion of 'retroduction' that sums up the way in which knowledge depends on 'knowledge-like antecedents' (Collier, 1994, pp.160-167), or 'retroductive reasoning' (Blaikie, 2004, p.29). This refers to a 'mode of inference in which events are explained by postulating (and identifying) mechanisms which are capable of producing them (Sayer, 1992, p.107). In other words, as purported by Baert (2005, p.94), 'it indicates the process by which researchers account for new phenomena through analogies with phenomena with which they are already familiar, to uncover mechanisms, structures and power underneath the immediately observable surface.' This is in contrast to deductive and inductive approaches, the former using theory to develop hypotheses, while the latter constructs theories from observations and findings (Bryman, 2012). This research has adopted a retroductive approach using existing theory to guide the research to determine whether SMNGBs are primarily 'policy shapers' or 'policy takers', within an historical context.

4.5) Methodology

Methodology is concerned with ‘the ways we can go about acquiring … knowledge’ (Hay, 2002, p.64; Grix, 2010), whereas research methods are defined as the ‘techniques or procedures used to collate and analyse data’ (Blaikie, 2000, p.8). According to Grix (2002, p.179), methodological considerations or issues relate to the 'potentialities and limitations of research methods', which are generally reduced to the quantitative-qualitative dichotomy debate (Bryman, 2012). For some authors, the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is ambiguous and false (Layder, 1993; Silverman, 2000; Grix, 2010; Bryman, 2012). For others the differences are ‘deeper than the superficial issue of the presence or absence of quantification’ (Bryman, 2012, p.35). While the distinction between the two research strategies is useful, it is important to acknowledge that both quantitative and qualitative research are considered umbrella terms, under which a diverse range of ‘paradigms, approaches to data, and methods for the analysis of data’ are categorised (Punch, 2000a, p.139). According to Silverman (2005, p.6), ‘no method of research, quantitative or qualitative, is intrinsically better than the other’, particularly when the aim of both types of research is to make inferences, and use ‘the facts we know to learn something about facts we don’t know’ (King *et al*., 1994, p.119).

What is important, however, is that the chosen methodology and techniques for data collection are the most appropriate to logically fit the research question(s) being asked (Punch, 2000b; Mason, 2002), and ‘the nature of the object of study and what one wants to learn about it’ (Sayer, 2000, p.19). In consideration of the aims and objectives of this study, a qualitative research methodology was adopted, comprising of an intensive multiple case-study research design within which the primary research methods for data collection were document analysis and semi-structured interviews. The use of qualitative methods also fits within a critical realist paradigm, since ‘critical realism endorses or is compatible with a relatively wide range of research methods’ (Sayer, 2000, p.19). Sayer (2000, p.21) also made the point that critical realism can be linked to an intensive approach, aimed at discovering substantial relations or connections between ‘causal groups in which particular individuals are actually involved, that is, the groups or networks of specific people,

institutions, discourses and things with which they interact', as is clearly the case within this research.

4.5.1) Multiple case-study design and rationale

In simple terms, case studies 'take as their subject one or more selected examples of a social entity which are studied using a variety of data collection techniques' (Hakim, 2000, p.59), deemed to be most appropriate for developing a full understanding of the case(s) (Punch, 2000b). According to Yin (2003b, p.4), case studies are the 'method of choice when the phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from its context.' For example, investigating the extent to which SMNGBs are 'policy shapers' or 'policy takers', could be thought of as a case study into the capacity of non-traditional sports or unfunded-elitist sports to influence national sport policy. The underlying premise being a study of an occurrence or response to an event/mechanism/policy outcome in one sport constitutes a case study of the wider phenomena, as opposed to a complete study of an aspect of that sport. Furthermore, Yin (2003c, p.9) posits that a case study is best used when 'a "how" or "why" question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control', such questions dealing with 'operational links … traced over time, rather than mere frequency or incidence' (Yin, 2003c, p.6). For example, within this study the researcher has no control over whether NGBs influence sport policy or not.

According to Stark and Torrance (2005, p.33), case studies seek to:

> 'engage with and report the complexity of social activity in order to represent the meanings that individual social actors bring to those settings and manufacture in them (*sic*), [the assumption being] that 'social reality' is created through social interaction, albeit situated in particular contexts and histories, and seeks to identify and describe before trying to analyse and theorize.'

In other words, a holistic understanding of 'a set of issues, and how they relate to a particular group, organisation, sports team, or even a single individual' (Gratton and Jones, 2010, p.107) or in this case SMNGBs. The intensive nature of case studies aim to 'tease out and disentangle a complex set of factors and relationships' (Easton,

2010, p.119), rather than generalising to the population at large. In doing so, the intention is to achieve a 'rich description' (Geertz, 1973) of a phenomenon in order to represent it from participants' perspectives, and seeks to 'illuminate' the researcher/reader's understanding of an issue (Parlett and Hamilton, 1988; Gall *et al*., 1996; Stark and Torrance, 2005; Bryman, 2012). As argued by Phillpots *et al*. (2010), case studies address the complexity, diversity and uniqueness of each social entity (SMNGB), and the key agent's perceptions, beliefs, values and ideas, and the role of structures in shaping them, which strongly endorses a critical realist position.

The use of multiple case studies has been validated by a number of authors. Herriott and Firestone (1983), for example, emphasised the robustness of the multiple-case study, while Yin (2009) argued that multiple-case studies result in more compelling findings, as the single-case study 'cannot be regarded as a complete study on its own' (Yin, 1994, p.41), and creates potential 'fears about the uniqueness or artificial conditions surrounding the case' (Yin, 2003c, p.54). In many respects, multiple-case studies involve 'focused comparisons', whereby the logic of multiple-case design enables researchers to provide an 'intensive comparison of a few instances' (Hague *et al*., 1998, p.280). This study, however, has not adopted a comparative research design; rather the use of multiple-cases has served to draw cross-case conclusions between two or more cases. The logic of comparison implying that 'we can understand social phenomena better when they are compared in relation to two or more meaningfully contrasting cases or situations' (Bryman, 2012, p.72). For Yin (1994, p.47), the logic underlying the use of multiple-case studies advocates that 'each case must be carefully selected so that it either (a) predicts similar results (a literal replication) or (b) produces contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication).' In this sense, the three cases selected for this study may not only provide similar results regarding their capacity to influence national sports policy or not, or the strategies used to adapt to policy changes, but also offer distinct variations. Furthermore, cross-case conclusions underpinning the theoretical basis and framework of this study might be useful for investigating policy influence or conformity in other sports, or indeed the same sports in other countries or comparisons between countries. Thus, the utility of the logic of comparison 'directly tackles the question of generalizability by demonstrating the similarities and

differences across a number of settings' (Peräkylä, 2004, p.296 cited in Silverman, 2005, p.129).

Criticism of case study research is centred firmly on the external validity or generalisability debate (Lincoln and Guba, 2000; Stark and Torrance, 2005; Easton, 2010; Bryman, 2012). Interestingly, Schlager and Blomquist (1995, p.651) argued that within the ACF, 'case studies are not general theoretical explanations of how political actors create, implement, and change public policies in order to advance their own purposes and respond to perceived problems.' However, a counter-argument to the above critique, resides in the claim that the role of theory in case studies is 'the single most important aid in doing case study research', as not only is 'theory helpful in designing a case study, [it] also becomes a vehicle for generalising a case study's results' (Yin, 2003b, p. xiv). It is further argued that the use of multiple-case studies has the potential to improve theory-building (Bryman, 2012), by establishing the circumstances in which theory will or will not hold (Yin, 2009). This is clearly seen in the context of this study by way of an evaluation of the utility of the ACF in examining the sport policy process, and SMNGBs, as policy actors, to determine their capacity to influence policy direction, which also has a distinct link to critical realism's notion of retroduction, whereby existing theory is used to uncover mechanisms, structures and power underneath the immediately observable surface. For example, the ACF's notion of deep structures, coalitions and beliefs is strongly related to the critical realists' view of reality, as being structured, potentially hierarchical and has both individual and social features. This can be seen through the spine of accountability within community sport policy from government through to SMNGBs, where structures do not determine outcomes, but rather constrain or facilitate agency determined behaviour, which are constituent features within this research and fundamental to critical realism.

Retroduction within this multiple-case study design is augmented further through the integration of Lukes' three dimensional theory of power within the ACF, when applied to multiple cases to provide insight into the dynamics of coalitions and relationships between SE/UKS and SMNGBs. Indeed, it is possible to view the closeness of the neo-pluralistic origins of the ACF with Lukes' dimensions of power through each dimension. Lukes' first dimension of observable and concrete decision making would be reflective of SMNGBs doing something wouldn't otherwise do, in this case

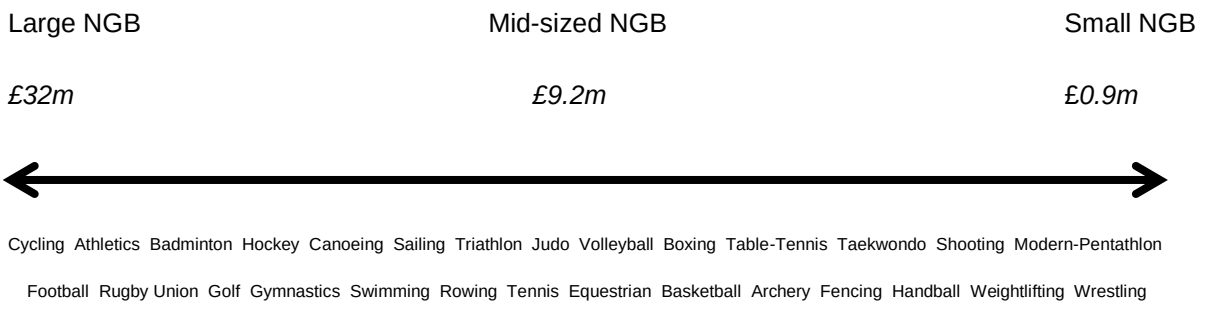
involvement within the sport policy environment, and undertaking SE's bidding in return for financial resources, target-setting-resource-dependency relationship. Power is unequal in terms of dominant NGBs versus those that are marginalised, for example, medal winning sports versus non-medal winning sports. The second dimension of power, focused on agenda setting and barriers to entry into the decision-making process of policy, can be seen through SE and the pendulum swing in community sport between sport for sport's sake, sport for social good and physical activity, where the influence of even the largest of NGBs has been marginal. While Lukes' third dimension of power and ideological control is more challenging, it is observable through the acceptance of the idea that sport does good things, is good for communities and individuals, and an idea that has been deeply entrenched in popular consciousness. The shaping of NGB/SMGB preferences also has a strong connection to ideological and psychological control of Lukes' third dimension, particularly government's action through SE to remove 'Blazer Brigade' from within NGBs to ensure NGBs are professionally managed, the impact of which has been an organisational-identity crisis among SMNGBs, as revealed within the empirical findings of this research.

4.5.2) Case selection and rationale

According to Yin (2003b, p.9), selecting cases 'is one of the most difficult steps in case study research.' Cases should not simply be the most convenient or accessible, but selected through a process that incorporates specific reasons for inclusion, and a 'sufficient level of prior screening … to help the researcher decide whether a case meets … pre-established criteria' (Yin, 2003b, p.10). As this study is informed by a qualitative research methodology and follows a theoretical rather than statistical logic, Mason (1996, pp.93-94) argued that the selection of cases should be centred on 'their relevance to your research questions, your theoretical position … and most importantly the explanation or account which you are developing.' The underlying research question for this study is a critical realist investigation on whether SMNGBs are primarily 'policy shapers' or 'policy takers' within the UK sport policy domain, utilising the ACF as a theoretical framework from which to evaluate the sport policy process.

A rationale for SMNGBs as the unit of analysis can therefore been seen from a theoretical position, however, greater clarification is required as to what is meant by a small to mid-sized NGB and their importance to this research. Thorhallsson and Wivel (2006) argued that the identification of smallness is problematic given the myriad of ways size can be expressed. Trõnurist (2010) and Sutton (2011) suggested that smallness can be best viewed lying on a continuum. In this sense, the organisational size of NGBs can been conceptualised along a continuum of state funding for NGBs, reflecting SE investment awards for community/grassroots sport during the 2013-17 funding cycle, as illustrated in Figure 4.3 (ring-fenced funding has been excluded based on the assumption that they are unconfirmed awards). It is important to note that this study is interested in Summer Olympic sports in England and not Paralympic sports, hence the exclusion of those NGB/sports from the selection process.

Figure 4.3: ***Continuum of NGB state funding (Sport England 2013-17 Olympic sport investment)***



Source adapted from: SE (2013c – see Appendix IV)

Accordingly, SMNGBs of Olympic sports in England with potential value for inclusivity within this study were those that met the following initial phase of pre-selection criteria:

(a) Regarded as competitive/community sports but not elite sports, due to the removal of elite funding by UKS (for the Rio 2016 funding cycle), as indicated from UKS's historical funding data[11]; and

(b) Receive smaller levels of funding from SE (in relation to community/grassroots participation) relative to the average funding of NGBs of Olympic sports during the 2013-17 funding cycle (i.e. less than £9.2m – see Appendix IV).

It should be noted that the Olympic sports of football, golf, rugby union and tennis receive no elite funding from UKS, as there is an 'expectation that they self-fund' (UKS, 2012, p.4). However, the above sports were excluded from selection on the basis that they are generally considered to be traditionally larger NGB/sports in England, receive higher levels of SE funding above the calculated average, and are highly self-funding.

To ensure that case study selection provided contrasts for cross-case comparisons and conclusions, a second phase of pre-selection was undertaken linked to SE's APS (1x30) 16-plus data (2006 to 2016) on levels of participation, with each potential SMNGB case being representative of one of the following criteria:

i) An insufficient sample size to provide statistical data for the APS;

ii) No change or a significant change upwards in participation levels between APS1 and APS10; and

iii) A significant change downwards in participation levels between APS1 (and APS10.

[11] UKS's historical funding data. Available online from: http://www.uksport.gov.uk/our-work/investing-in-sport/historical-funding-figures

To demonstrate the results of the second pre-selection phase, a snapshot of SE's APS data has been provided in the appendices (Appendix V), focused on the changes in participation levels between APS1 (2006) and APS10 (2016). Table 4.2 identifies those Olympic sports that met the above pre-established selection criteria.

Table 4.2: *Pre-selected Olympic Sports as potential case studies*

Olympic sports with a representative NGB in England	Removal of funding provided by UKS ('No compromise' principle)	Smaller levels of SE funding relative to more traditional sports in England	Insufficient sample size to provide statistical data for the APS	No change or a significant change upwards in participation levels between APS1 and APS10	A significant change downwards in participation levels between APS1 and APS10
Basketball	✓	✓			✓
Fencing	✓	✓	✓		
Handball	✓	✓	✓		
Table Tennis	✓	✓		✓	
Volleyball	✓	✓			✓
Weightlifting	✓	✓	✓		
Wrestling	✓	✓	✓		

The potential SMNGBs available for selection and inclusion as case studies within this research were as follows:

Olympic sport	**SMNGB**
Basketball	**Basketball England**
Fencing	**England Fencing**
Handball	**England Handball Association**
Table Tennis	**Table Tennis England**
Volleyball	**Volleyball England**
Weightlifting	**British Weightlifting**
Wresting	**British Wrestling**

From the second phase of pre-selection, table tennis and its representative SMNGB, Table Tennis England (TTE), met the criterion for a sport with no change or a significant increase in participation levels, as measured by APS. The sports of volleyball and basketball both met the criterion for a significant decrease in participation levels, as measured by APS. Following a review of document availability and accessibility, Basketball England documentation was found to be very limited in contrast to Volleyball England (VE), and thus Volleyball England was selected as the case study from which more could be learnt for this study, as endorsed by Stake (2005). Fencing, handball, wrestling and weightlifting all met the criterion for a sport having an insufficient sample size to be measured by APS. However, in consideration of Hakim's (2000, p.62) argument that 'some degree of prior knowledge may be necessary for suitable cases to be selected', handball was the selected case study on the basis of accessibility, and the researcher's prior knowledge of handball and the England Handball Association (EH).

4.6) Research methods and sources

According to Mason (2002, p.27; Punch, 2000a), the choice of research methods and sources should be strategic and 'the most appropriate for answering your research questions.' The data collection techniques deemed most appropriate for this study, included document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Such techniques clearly lend themselves to qualitative enquiry (Grix, 2010), as interviews 'collect data concerned with concepts that are difficult or inappropriate to measure … and tend to explore questions of 'why' and 'how', rather than … 'how many and 'when' (Gratton and Jones, 2010, p.155). The analysis of documentary sources is seen by many qualitative researchers as a meaningful and appropriate method of social and political research (Mason, 2002). This research has also been guided by theoretical assumptions that signpost an appropriate strategy for data collection, Pierce *et al*. (2017) pointing towards document analysis and interviews as the primary research methods of the ACF, especially when the ACF posits a tripartite hierarchy of beliefs, values and norms to explain policy change that cannot be easily investigated using quantitative methods.

As shown previously, the methodology of this research logically fits within the critical realist paradigm, as do the research methods for data collection and interpretation. While getting a clear understanding of the nature of deep structures may have its limitations, the analysis and critical evaluation of empirical data can provide the means to move closer towards a greater understanding, by being skeptical about what is heard or read, thus reflecting the critical aspect of critical realism. While documents represent the output of government and national organisations, interviewed participants, speaking on behalf of SMNGBs, government and SE, provide an insight into their perspectives on particular issues or policy. The beliefs/values/ideas of, for example, CEOs, in their capacity as representatives of the organisations they serve, are not talking about themselves, but talking about the experiences of the SMNGB in relation to impact of sport policy, strategies utilised, and the potential influence or not shape national sport policy, rather than policy concerned with individual clubs. The latter giving rise to the potential for another layer of meaning beyond the empirical data, which has to be understood, not measured or counted, and therefore interpretative or hermeneutic. The above emphasing the critical realist's stratified notion of the real, the empirical and the actual, strengthening the justification for the methodological approach, multiple case-study design and choice of instruments that have informed this study.

Notwithstanding the above, an element of quantitative data has been utilised for the purpose of: i) understanding the operational environment of NGBs from a financial and policy perspective (e.g. state funding and participation rates); ii) using numerical data to support the process of case selection; and iii) to corroborate the empirical data collected from interviews and document analysis. It is also important to note that the use of quantitative data in combination with qualitative should not be regarded as a mixed method approach, but as a useful source of secondary data to support the research process.

4.6.1) Document Analysis

According to Yin (2003a), document analysis is an important source of data in case study research, particularly as Scott (1990, p.28) claimed it provides an understanding of 'the meaning and significance of what the document contains', and for May (2011, p.208), an understanding of 'events, process and transformations in social relation.' Grix (2010, p.134) noted further that 'you have a resource from which you can construct … interview questions [and] 'check' against reality in fieldwork.' Document analysis is also considered a primary method of triangulation (MacDonald, 2008), since 'both accuracy of documents and their authorship [can] be validated by individuals who produced them' (Forster, 1994, p.155). In addition, documents are viewed as being a distinct level of reality in their own right (Atkinson and Coffey, 2011), especially their contribution to 'a behind-the-scenes view of many aspects of a phenomenon that might not be revealed through observations and interviews' (Tenenbaum and Driscoll, 2005, p.599), for example, minutes of Board meetings.

Scott (1990) broadly distinguishes documents between those that are personal (e.g. diaries, letters, autobiographies), and those that are official, deriving from either the state (e.g. policy-related documents) or a 'very heterogeneous' (Bryman, 2012, p.550) group of private sources (e.g. company documents) (Yin, 2003a; May, 2011). For Bryman (2012, p.554), mass-media outputs (e.g. newspapers, magazines and online videos) are potential document sources and, increasingly, virtual documents are considered a 'potent source of documents for both quantitative and qualitative data analysis.' This supports the use of online SMNGB magazines and video content from Annual General Meetings (AGMs), as sources of empirical data. The latter becoming data when transformed into text (Silverman, 2001; Mason, 2002).

Generally speaking, all documents are written with a purpose in mind and based on particular assumptions, the presentation of which is variable (Mason, 2002; Yin, 2003a; Grix, 2010; Bryman, 2012) and inevitably creates consequences – 'intended or unintended' (Mason, 2002, p.110). Prior to selecting specific documents, it is essential to be 'fully aware of the *origins, purpose* and original *audience*' (Grix, 2010, p.133), and to scrutinise each document to the same degree within a clear and consistent set of principles, for dealing with 'selectivity and perspective in handling documents' (Mason, 2002, pp.106-113). Scott (1990, p.6; Bryman, 2012, p.544),

produced a robust set of criteria to assess the quality of documents, which reflected a document's *authenticity* (originality, consistency, source, author), *credibility* (sincerity, accuracy), *representativeness* (subject, timeframe, untypicality), *and meaning* (literal or interpretative, clarity and comprehensibility).

Within this study, documents investigated and analysed derived from the state and government agencies (e.g. DCMS/SE/UKS - policy-related strategic documents, Board meeting minutes, annual reports), private sources (e.g. SMNGB annual reports, strategic documents, WSPs, Board meeting minutes), and virtual documents (e.g. official magazines, online sources). The use of the internet reflecting its intensive use by government, its agencies (UKS/SE) and selected SMNGBs, where published documents are generally available online and within the public domain. Referring to Scott's (1990) document quality assessment criteria, Bryman (2012, p.550) argued that state documents are considered authentic and have meaning in the sense of being clear and comprehensible, although the issue of bias has potential implications in terms of credibility. In this respect, the researcher should resist temptations to treat such documents as a 'depiction of reality', since documents in the public domain, state or otherwise, 'are shaped by the structure and activities of the departments or organisations responsible for them' (Scott, 1990, p.96). In assessing the representativeness of state documents, while Bryman (2012, p.550) considered their uniqueness to complicate document quality, it is the official or quasi-official aspect of the state document that is of greater interest to the qualitative researcher, to establish a 'cogent theoretical account' within single or possibly multiple contexts.

In terms of documents deriving from private sources, Bryman (2012) suggested that authenticity and meaning are likely to be evident, but the evaluation of credibility and representativeness requires greater analysis, particularly as written documents are from the authors' viewpoint (Scott, 1990). In addition, there is the potential representative issue of 'survival' and 'availability' of selected documents (Scott, 1990, p.25; McCulloch, 2004). This has implications for completing the research (Yin, 2003a), since '[m]aterial which might enable a wealth of insight [could] be tantalisingly elusive' (Andrew, 1985, p.156 cited in McCulloch, 2004, p.43). For virtual documents and or media outputs, while there is deemed to be an element of authenticity, Bryman (2012, p.553-4) contended that authorship is often unclear,

accuracy is unreliable, and credibility a frequent issue, although uncovering the 'errors or distortions is often the objective of the analysis.'

While the use of document analysis raises potential problems, for example, bias and inaccuracy (Scott, 1990), it has also been extensively employed within sport policy-related research (e.g. Theodoraki and Henry, 1994; Green, 2004, 2006; Green and Houlihan, 2005, 2006; Piggin *et al*., 2009), and is one of the most frequent data collection methods for the ACF (Pierce *et al.*, 2017), inclusive of government and governmental agency reports, responses to government consultations, secondary literature, and newspaper reports. Interest group publications (e.g. SMNGBs) also offer better prospects for systematic empirical work on changes in belief systems, especially 'given the rather technical nature of many Secondary Aspects and the focus on changes in beliefs over a decade or more' (Sabatier, 1988, p.147). The complementary use of other methods of data collection and data sources minimises the effect of bias (Grix, 2010) and enhances reliability (McCulloch, 2004).

4.6.2) Interviews

Interviews are the most commonly used method of data collection in qualitative research (Mason, 2002; Gratton and Jones, 2010), and an important source of case study information (Yin, 2003a), particularly where such information is considered to be of a complex and contextual nature (Veal, 1997). Interviews are also seen as 'a resource for understanding how individuals make sense of their social world and act within it' (May, 1997, p.129), through a focus on beliefs and personal experiences and the distinct features of situations and events (Vromen, 2010). Such different interpretations of reality embrace the ontological and epistemological position of critical realism. In this sense, 'if individual agency is deemed important in aiding the understanding of policy-making, then the 'assumptive worlds' (Young, 1977) of 'key actors should be explored' (Green and Houlihan, 2005, p.7).

According to Grix (2010), interviews can be broadly classified under four categories: structured, semi-structured, unstructured, and group interviews or focus groups. Within this research, semi-structured interviews were considered to be the most appropriate interview technique, especially since their in-depth and intensive nature

‘allow people to talk freely and to offer their interpretations of events’ (Green and Houlihan, 2005, p.7). Indeed, the semi-structured interview’s use of ‘an interview guide, open-ended questions and informal probing to facilitate a discussion of issues’ (Devine, 2002, p.198), has the potential to encourage ‘thick and rich descriptions … in order to fill out the picture of whatever the researcher is trying to understand’ (Smith and Caddick, 2012, p.64). As Keat and Urry (1975, p.205) argued, the in-depth interview is appropriate when seeking to ‘understand actors’ perspectives that attach subjective meaning to their actions and interpret action of their own situation and that of others.’ Justification for adopting semi-structured interviews is further endorsed by Green and Houlihan (2005, p.7), who argued that interviews enable the researcher to: i) gain a more (agent-) informed understanding of historically-developed processes and developments relating to sport policy and NGBs; ii) allow distinctions to be made between the tendency towards ‘rhetoric’ in public policy documents, and the greater chance of obtaining a realistic opinion from NGBs, government and government agency insights into their perspectives on particular issues or policy; and iii) attempt to discern the normative values and belief systems underlying NGBs, government and government agency perspectives, as well as their perceptions of the constraining/facilitating structural context within which they operate. The use of semi-structured interviews within multiple case study research is also supported by Bryman (2012, p.472; Yin, 2003a), since some structure is needed ‘to ensure cross-case comparability.’

The potential weaknesses of qualitative interviewing were also considered, for example: the use of greater resources (time, travel and costs that may result in reduced sample sizes), and the potential to introduce bias on behalf of the interviewers, often unconsciously (verbal and or non-verbal reactions such as nodding and gesturing) (Gratton and Jones, 2010, pp.157-158); and interviewee domination (elite interviews – see Peabody *et al.,* 1990; Richards, 1996; Lilleker, 2003) can create directional change, problems of recall, misperception and insufficient or incorrect knowledge, all of which could impact on the quality of the data collected. More specifically, reliability and validity problems still remain, since the interpretation of the data is required on behalf of the researcher, and ambiguity is residual no matter ‘how carefully we word the questions and report or code the answers’ (Fontana and Frey, 1998, p.47).

To minimise, or where possible, eradicate the impact of such potential limitations, the researcher drew upon a number of interview procedures and techniques within qualitative research, particularly in relation to the interview design, the method of conducting interviews, the researcher's skills to maximise the benefit of the interview, and the analysis of the data collected from interviews (Mason, 2002; Gratton and Jones, 2010; Bryman, 2012). The researcher's interview preparations also provided a limiting effect on potential issues (Peabody *et al.,* 1990; Lilleker, 2003), for example, the use of a structured interview guide to meet the research aims and objectives (Bryman, 2012), using language that was comprehensible, relevant and unambiguous (Gratton and Jones, 2010). In addition, rigorous planning complemented the researcher's 'set of intellectual and social skills' (Mason, 2002, p.67; Kvale, 1996), the interviews being undertaken in a professional, enthusiastic, and confident manner, throughout the whole interview process (Gratton and Jones, 2010). In this respect, the researcher, who is aged 55, has previous experience as a senior executive, interacting and communicating with people at all levels, is a graduate of and lecturer in sport management and policy, and as such has a 'repertoire of demeanours and sets of social skills' that could be drawn upon (Mason, 2002, p.73). Furthermore, a pilot interview was undertaken prior to conducting the research interviews, to ascertain the 'substance and style, scope and sequence' (Mason, 2002, p.67) of the interview questions, and act as a mechanism for developing and enhancing the researcher's interviewing skillset (Kvale 1996; Gratton and Jones, 2010; Bryman, 2012).

Additionally, the interviews were conducted using digital audio-recording devices and transcribed verbatim, considered by many as the method of choice within qualitative research (Bryman, 2012). This is particularly the case for semi-structured interviews, since the 'interviewer is supposed to be highly alert to what is being said – following up interesting points made, prompting and probing, [and] drawing attention to any inconsistencies in the interviewees answers' (Bryman, 2012, p.482). Moreover, recording the interview places a greater focus on the conversation, and enhances the rapport between the interviewer and interviewee that may result in the divulgence of unexpected data (Gratton and Jones, 2010). The recording and transcribing of interviews also allowed for repeated examinations of the interviewees' answers; public scrutiny of the data to counter accusations of bias, and provided a record of

the exact words, phrases and tone of the interviewee thereby enhancing the reliability of the data collected (Bryman, 2012).

4.6.3) Selection of interview participants and rationale

The selection of interview participants requires a clear rationale to demonstrate that selection is 'appropriately conceived and executed' (Mason, 2002, p.120), and encapsulates a 'relevant range' of 'pivotal significance' to allow the researcher to 'develop an empirically and theoretically grounded argument' (Mason, 2002, pp.121-124). Bryman (2012, p.406) argued that 'how people are chosen' for interview is often one area that lacks transparency within qualitative research, and selection size is often 'a common area of confusion' (Gratton and Jones, 2010, p.168).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p.370), 'many qualitative researchers employ … purposive, and not random sampling methods. They seek out groups, settings and individuals where … the processes being studied are most likely to occur'. In other words, purposive sampling is a strategic way to link sources of information to research questions (Bryman, 2012). Mason (2002, p.124) described this method of 'strategic sampling' as 'theoretical sampling', concerned with 'constructing a sample … which is meaningful theoretically and empirically, because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria which help to develop and test your theory or argument.' Mason seemingly treats theoretical and purposive sampling as synonyms, whereas for Bryman (2012, p.416), purposive sampling acts as a 'master' concept around which other sampling approaches such as theoretical and snowball sampling, can be distinguished. For Silverman (2005, pp.129-130), however, the only difference between the theoretical and purposive sampling is when the "'purpose' behind "purposive"' sampling is not theoretically defined, and that purposive sampling 'demands that we think critically about the parameters of the population we are studying and choose our sample case carefully on that basis.'

In light of the above discussion, this research adopted a purposive approach to selecting interviewees on the basis that the selected participants were 'key informant[s]' (Gratton and Jones, 2010, p.170), directly relevant to the research aims and objectives, and considered to be meaningful theoretically, empirically and

contextually (Mason, 2002). Participant selection was based upon positions, relevant experiences, and the ability to provide specialist knowledge, to 'complement data collected from other sources' (Gratton and Jones, 2010, p.170; Grix, 2009). Participant pre-selection constituted the fulfilment of one or more of the criteria detailed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: *Pre-selection criteria for interview participants*

Currently holds or has held a position of strategic overview with the selected NGBs, and potentially, UKS and SE, e.g. CEO, Chair, Board member or senior manager/team member.
Has been or is currently involved at a senior strategic level of planning, decision-making and publishing of documents within their organisation, in particular, sport policy documents, WSPs, strategic documents, annual reports and so on.
Has been or is involved in a specific role directly with the selected SMNGB case studies/sports, the government and government agencies (UKS, SE), for a period of time over a decade or more in order to map changing policy decisions and operational environments of SMNGBs, as required by the ACF to acquire a reasonably accurate account of policy change.
Has had or has direct responsibility for liaison and relationship management between the government, its agencies (UKS, SE) and the selected SMNGBs.

Participants meeting pre-selection criteria, and subsequently interviewed are detailed in Table 4.4, which also provides information on the coded identity of interviewees and interview dates for the ensuing empirical chapters.

Table 4.4: *List of interview participants*

Interview Code	Interview Date	Role/Position	Organisation
CEOEH	15/08/2018	CEO	SMNGB: England Handball
CEOVE	14/08/2018	CEO	SMNGB: Volleyball England
CEOTTE	24/09/2018	CEO	SMNGB: Table Tennis England
SMTTE	05/10/2018	Senior Management	SMNGB: Table Tennis England
SEC	04/09/2018	Chair	Sport England
SESLR	17/08/2018	Strategic Lead NGBs	Sport England
DCMSa	11/10/2018	Senior Management	DCMS
DCMSb	11/10/2018	Policy Advisor	DCMS
SRADP	26/09/2018	Director of Policy	Sport Recreation and Alliance

In-text citations relevant to interviewees refer to the above interviewee code, and relate to the transcribed interview and interview date, unless otherwise stated. A short biography of those interviewed has been provided within the appendices (Appendix VI), to demonstrate their relevance to the research aims and objectives of this study. A copy of the semi-structured interview guide and questions, and an exemplar transcribed interview are also included within the appendices (Appendix VII and Appendix VIII, respectively).

4.7) Data Analysis

According to Smith and Caddick (2012, p.67; Bryman, 2012), several 'analytical lenses' are generally used within qualitative research, notably, analytic induction, content and discourse analysis, grounded theory, narrative analysis, and thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was considered the most appropriate and applicable method to achieve the research aims and objectives of this study, particularly its capacity to provide a more detailed analysis by 'identifying, analyzing, interpreting and reporting patterns [and themes] within data' (Smith and Caddick, 2012, p.68). Braun and Clarke (2006, p.77; Boyatzis, 1998) argued that thematic analysis offered 'an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data' (see Hall *et al.,* 2012 for an example application to sport research).

Furthermore, the utilisation of thematic analysis has vastly increased as a means of making sense of qualitative data analysis (Bryman, 2012; Smith and Caddick, 2012), as it encompasses the activity of searching for themes or codes (Bryman, 2012), which are not seen as being finite, but are identifiable 'before, during and after data collection' (Ryan and Bernard, 2003, p.275). For example, the literature review and the researcher's existing knowledge contributed to this process, as well as the data collection itself (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Ryan and Bernard, 2003), as seen by the emergence of themes within this study. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), additional advantages of thematic analysis include *inter alia*: a useful method for working within a participatory (e.g. multiple case studies) research paradigm, with participants as collaborators; the summation of key features from voluminous data, and/or a thick description of the data set; illumination of similarities and differences

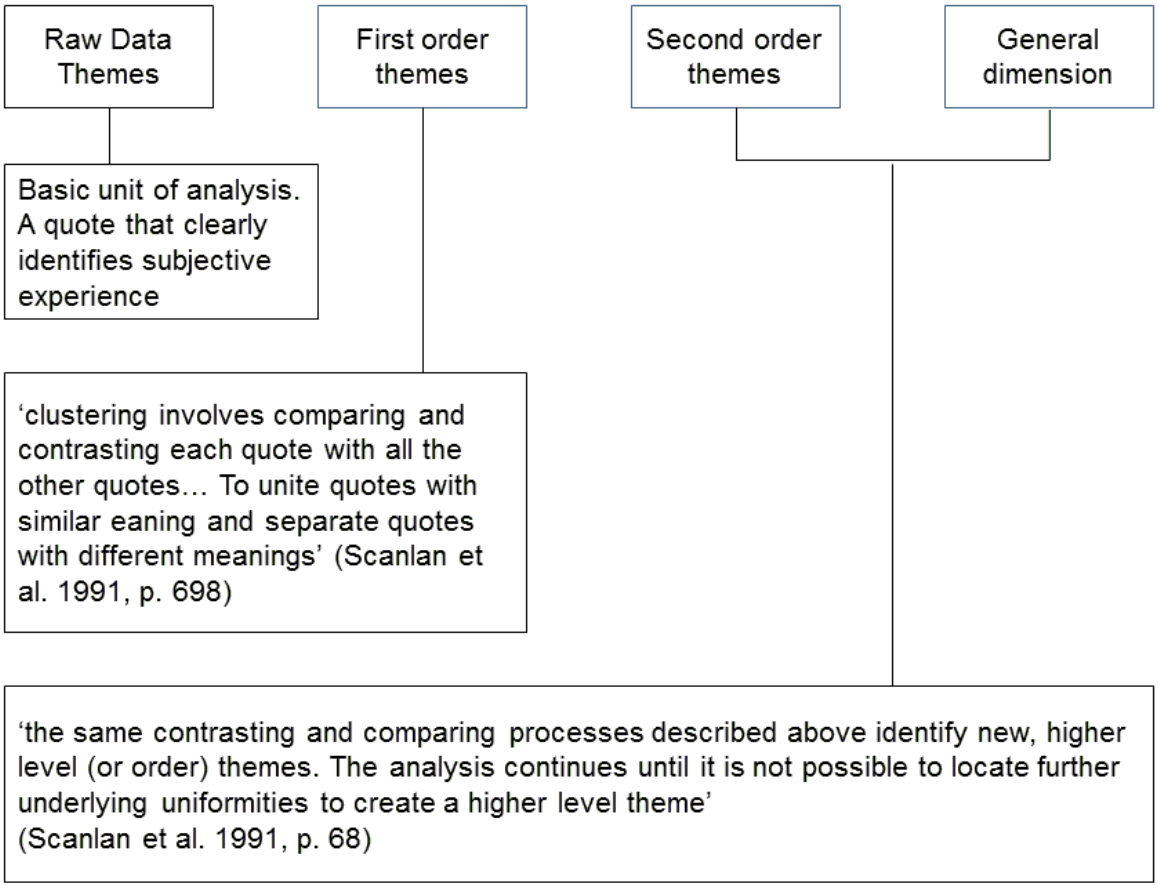
across the data set, and the emergence of unexpected insights; and an allowance and usefulness for the interpretation of data from different theoretical perspectives.

However, it is important to acknowledge that thematic analysis has potential weaknesses, such as its lack of an 'identifiable heritage' (Bryman, 2012, p.578), and minimalistic organisation and description of the data collected (Smith and Caddick, 2012). According to Patton (2002, p.433), thematic analysis also refrains from following any 'formulae for determining significance' or allowing any provisions for 'replicating the researcher's analytical thought processes' or 'measuring reliability and validity.' Boyatzis (1998) identified three further potential obstacles in the process of thematic analysis: i) the researcher projecting their own values; ii) inadequate sampling; and iii) the researcher's mood and their style of working. A significant disadvantage, according to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.97), is its 'limited interpretative power beyond mere description if it is not used within an existing theoretical framework.'

To counter some of the limitations stated above, this study has used existing theoretical constructs to explain empirical findings thus negating the issue of limited interpretative power. The selected case studies and interviewees for this research are also considered adequate, appropriate and applicable. The researcher also has knowledge of the subject area, although it is accepted that some aspects of the researcher's values, mood and working style may have had a limited impact on the study. However, as argued by Grix (2010, p.118), 'no one can be fully detached from any type of research – or offer a value free analysis – precisely because researchers are the sum of their accumulated knowledge, which is based on certain assumptions about the world.'

In terms of theme identification and codification, Bryman (2012) suggested that a framework approach (e.g. Ritchie *et al*., 2003) and recommendations from Ryan and Bernard (2003) were useful pointers for data analysis. Of further usefulness is Biddle *et al.'s* (2001) framework for organising data units (statements, sentences, and so on) into clusters of common themes from raw data to first order and second order themes in a logical sequence, as illustrated in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4: ***A framework for the thematic analysis of qualitative data***



Source: Biddle *et al.* (2001, p.797 cited in Gratton and Jones, 2010, p.243)

Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2006; Bryman, 2012, Smith and Caddick, 2012) provided useful descriptions and explanations of analytical phases when undertaking thematic analysis, as summarised below:

1) *Immersion* - familiarisation with all data - from literal, interpretive and reflexive perspectives (Mason, 2002);
2) *Generating Initial Codes* - timely and systematic identification and production of coding across the entire data set, and gathering and collation of data relevant to each code;
3) *Searching for and identifying themes* - re-focused analysis, extracting coded data into more meaningful overarching themes;
4) *Reviewing themes* – checks and balances – to ensure themes fit within the entire data set, and data coheres 'meaningfully, while clear distinctions between themes [are] identifiable' (Smith and Caddick, 2012, p.68);

5) *Writing the report* - prevalence of the theme (evidence), embedded within a compelling analytical tale that provides a clear interpretation of the data, illustrates what the idea is all about and addresses the research question(s). Miles and Huberman (1994) also recommended the use charts, tables, networks and other graphical formats for a good display of data on a continual basis, as is the case within this study.

A manual thematic data analysis was also adopted for this research, which does not imply any dismissiveness of the potential advantages of using analytical computer software, such as NVivo (Bazerly, 2007). Rather, a manual process was considered more desirable as 'it gives a "feel" for the data and allows increased familiarity with transcripts' (Gratton and Jones, 2010, p.246), viewed as particularly relevant for Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of thematic analysis. Furthermore, Dey (1993, p.61) argued that 'the use of a computer can encourage a "mechanistic" approach to analysis', whereby 'the roles of creativity, intuition and insight into analysis are eclipsed', which may impact on the generation, identification and reviewing stages of theme selection, and fail to identify context (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Krane *et al*. (1997, p.215) also pointed out that 'none of these procedures [manual methods or computer programmes] directly affects the value of the study; they are merely ways for the inquirers to work with their data … [and] … are really doing the same thing conceptually', provided 'the analysis is carried out correctly' (Gratton and Jones, 2010, p.246). In other words, the analytical effort that allows for the 'construction of explanation and argument in relation to your intellectual puzzle' (Mason, 2002, p.171).

Following a more in-depth analysis of relevant sport policy documents and NGB-related documents, in line with the analytical phases described above, a degree of overlap was revealed between the themes identified from the literature review. In consideration of those overlaps, a more specific set of analytical themes were identified to guide the selected case studies and achieve the research aims and objectives, as detailed in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: ***Specific analytical themes and determining factors***

Analytical Themes	Determining Factors
Governance	Constant scrutiny, measuring, monitoring and evaluation on the basis of 'earned autonomy'; the requirement for effective governance; the shift from good governance to excellent governance, and from a voluntary code to a mandatory code.
Funding	The impact of the Lottery; scepticism regarding NGBs' professionalism, and organisational and managerial capacity; modernisation reinforced by the threat financial sanctions; the *No compromise* funding system for elite sport; progressive reliance on public funds - reduced subsidies; and income diversification and commercial revenue generation.
Capacity Building: workforce and facilities	Implementation of WSPs in terms of capacity building and effective use of government funds, particularly in respect of workforce development and facilities, and development of accessible, sustainable environments.
Participation	Introduction of KPIs to meet government objectives for increasing participation; reassessment of management, plans, or subsequent performances; delivery of stretching and difficult targets; slow progress to deliver contractually agreed WSP outcomes and harsher performance regimes for NGBs; and the use of alternative delivery mechanisms.
Partnerships	Delivery of community sport through partnerships; a more concerted effort towards a mixed economy approach to funding grassroots participation; resource maximisation through value for money, funding partners, and collaborative brokerage at a local level to access funding.

More importantly, the specific themes related to dimensions of operational activities within SMNGBs, which were considered priorities for both SE and SMNGBs and mechanisms for delivering desired policy outcomes, and as such viewed as determinants relevant to policy shaping or taking, for example, the imposition of governance on SMNGBs as a policy directive. The multiple case-study research design and the selection of three SMNGB case studies allowing for a reflective and iterative methodological approach, using the critical realist notion of retroduction to provide analytical generalisations to theoretical propositions, to determine the capacity of SMNGBs to shape or take policy.

4.8) Reliability and Validity

Qualitative research is often thought to produce 'soft, unscientific results' (Devine (2002, p.204), yet Silverman (2005, p.209) argued it is not 'a soft option … [and] demands theoretical sophistication and methodological rigour.' Indeed, Smith (2007, p.5) stated that qualitative research is 'more than method … It is about methodology.' According to Silverman (2005, p.209), such methodological awareness provides an indication of the quality of research through the researcher's commitment to demonstrate that the procedures used ensured methods 'were reliable' and 'conclusions valid.' Validity is essentially another word for truth (Smith and Caddick, 2012; Silverman, 2005), or the 'truthfulness of one's conclusions' (Vaughn and Daniel, 2012 cited in Smith and Caddick, 2012, p.69). More specifically to this research, 'the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers' (Hammersley, 1990, p.57). Reliability on the other hand, is concerned with the consistency of methods and procedures by which data are collected (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Gratton and Jones, 2010).

However, the issue of research quality and the appropriateness of reliability and validity, in relation to qualitative investigations, is a contested area (Gratton and Jones, 2010; Bryman, 2012). The slipperiness of the concepts is compounded by the lack of consensus, the proliferation of criteria lists, and the alternative views of reliability and validity (see Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Yardley, 2000; Bryman, 2012; Smith and Caddick, 2012). According to Gratton and Jones (2010, p.98), qualitative research should be 'trustworthy, authentic, reliable, rigorous, and credible', which are seen as a set of operationalising criteria to address the reliability, validity, and quality issues/limitations within this study, particularly as Yin (1994, 2003c) highlighted a lack of reliability and construct validity as a common criticism of case study research.

To address reliability and construct validity issues, this study adopted Yin's (1994, pp.90-99) recommendations to demonstrate consistency and transparency, including: i) utilisation of multiple sources of evidence, aimed at the development of converging lines of inquiry, and thus a process of triangulation; (ii) creation of a case database to organise and document the data collected from the case studies, including interview transcripts, observations on document analysis, and rigorous recording of references used. Within which the setting, context, participant, research

strategy and data analysis methods, are described in a sufficiently detailed manner (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006); and (iii) maintenance of a chain of evidence – the principle of which, is to allow an external observer to trace the derivation of any evidence from initial research questions to ultimate case study conclusions. In addition, this research broadly followed Yin's (2009) iterative model, which implies 'a continuous moving back and forth between diverse stages of the research project' (Verschuren, 2003 cited in Easton, 2010, p.119). In this regard, the analysis of the first case study provided an initial insight and further understanding of the concepts used in the analysis of the data, and together with the analysis of subsequent cases made certain that a reflective and reflexive approach was adopted for the whole research process. The use of three case studies serving to strengthen validity by providing cross-case analyses for analytical generalisations to theoretical propositions (Yin, 2003a).

Furthermore, authenticity in terms of honesty, accuracy (Mason, 2002), and fairness (Gratton and Jones, 2010), can be seen by the careful selection of participants, based on their relevance to the research questions, the theoretical position, and the explanation or account developed (Mason, 1996) within this study. The same can be said for the confidential and structured nature of the interviews, undertaken by informed consent at neutral times to minimise 'subject error', with anonymity stressed to avoid 'subject bias' (Gratton and Jones, 2010, p.93). The recording and transcription of interviews allowed for repeated examinations of the interviewees' answers and public scrutiny of the data to counter accusations of bias, as well as offering alternative explanations to support the judgement of evidence and its interpretation (Lieblich *et al*., 1998), from a range of different perspectives. Thus, providing a form of 'within-interview triangulation' (Dean and Whyte, 1978 cited in Gratton and Jones, 2010, p.167). Reliability, credibility and rigour are demonstrated further through professional scrutiny from supervisors and internal reviewers, and the chosen research strategy, inclusive of the techniques used for data collection and analysis, which were deemed the most logical and appropriate for this research (Mason, 2002). The latter signposting the construct of a coherent and meaningful picture, both internally (how the constituent parts logically fit together – Grix, 2010), and externally, using existing theories and previous research (Lieblich *et al*., 1998).

As alluded to above, a significant, though contested technique for demonstrating validity is 'triangulation of method' (Mason, 2002, p.190). Whereby, multiple methods of data collection are utilised to investigate the same phenomena (Mason, 2002; Gratton and Jones, 2010; Grix, 2010), the aim of which is to share strengths, eliminate weaknesses and corroborate results (Houlihan and Green, 2006). Arguably, the popular conception that triangulation simply means observing 'an object of study from different angles using different methods' is problematic, due to the 'different ontological and epistemological underpinnings of research strategies, consisting of combinations of methods' (Grix, 2010, pp.135-136; Mason, 2002). That said, Grix (2010) argued that methods should be viewed as tools for collecting data and should not be looked upon as being automatically 'rooted in epistemological and ontological commitments' (Bryman, 2001, p.445). Grix (2010, p.135) elaborated further on this point by stating:

> 'As long as you are aware how you are employing specific methods and what this method is pointing towards, and how this relates to the ways in which you employ other methods, there should be no problem. The key point is to check whether your methods are ontologically consistent with one another, and, as a consequence, whether they are epistemologically consistent.'

In addition, it is argued that the use of data triangulation to cross-check data collected from semi-structured interviews and document analysis, 'attempt[s] to get a "true" fix on a situation by combining different ways of looking at [the phenomena] or different findings' (Silverman, 2005, p.212). According to Mason (1998, pp.25-26):

> 'seeking to corroborate one source and method with another, or enhance validity and reliability through some form of triangulation of method … you will need to think about on what basis one set of data, or method, can corroborate another. This will involve asking whether the two sets of data tell you about the same phenomena or whether the two methods yield comparable data.'

The data collection methods for this study were considered both complementary and comparative, and seen as both reliable and valid by many researchers (Gratton and Jones, 2010).

While data triangulation may give the impression that validity has been strengthened, there is emphasis on the researcher to err on the side of caution, and to remain aware of any potential problems (Mason, 2002; Gratton and Jones, 2010), particularly as the blurred boundaries of reliability and validity can be challenging for the qualitative researcher. However, rather than allow this research to be ground down by such methodological issues (this is not a methodological thesis), it is an awareness of the operationalisation of the concepts of reliability and validity, and the degrees to which they are attainable and demonstrable that has been of importance to this study. The aim being to ensure that the end product of this thesis is a methodologically informed, critical, engaging, interesting and exciting piece of sport qualitative research, which can be held to be 'valid or true [as] it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise' (Yin, 1994, p.92). As Hammersley (1992, p.69) argued, 'we must judge the validity of claims [about truth] on the basis of the adequacy of the evidence offered in support of them.' Thus, findings or conclusions are 'likely to be much more convincing and accurate if … based on several different sources of information.' Although for Devine (2002, p.206), 'all empirical material, be it quantitative or qualitative in kind, is subject to different interpretations', and so in essence, 'there is no definitive interpretation that is the "truth."'

4.9) Periodisation

An integral part of this study has been an understanding of the historical context of contemporary sport policy within which NGBs operate, an analysis of the impact of changes in sport policy on SMNGBs, and an evaluation of the explanatory value and utility of the ACF within the UK sport policy process. In order to fully comprehend the development of UK sport policy, a periodised timeline was utilised to map the evolution of the policy area. While an in-depth debate on the concept of periodisation is beyond the scope of this research, it is acknowledged that periodisation is a contentious matter (see Struna, 1985; Katznelson, 1997; Hobsbawm, 2000; Lieberman, 2001; Phillips, 2002; Hérubel, 2008; Houlihan and Lindsay, 2013).

According to Houlihan and Lindsey (2013, p.5), the dimensions of change within sport policy 'involves the search for, and analysis of, pattern, trends, key events, continuities and breaks with the past with the aim of giving meaning to a collection of events and policy decisions in a particular time period', where a metaphor style of periodisation has the potential to highlight surface or superficial change. For example, changes in the way Lottery funding is distributed to sport and how this impacts on the administration of NGBs, or changes that occur at a much deeper, societal level, such as actions by the state or changes in societal values regarding the importance or role of sport (Houlihan *et al.*, 2011). Furthermore, Houlihan and Lindsey (2013) highlighted the usefulness of the metaphor of levels within the ACF to analyse sport policy, while Sabatier (2007) claimed that a time period of at least 10 years is a pre-requisite for an accurate analysis of policy change. Arguably though, a period greater than 10 years may be required to identify policy trends and watersheds that influence the trajectory of sport policy. Despite the slipperiness of the concept, it is possible to take a more pragmatic approach to periodisation within this study, based on significant events or moments that prompted sport policy change and provide distinctions between time spans, as illustrated in Table 4.6.

The identified time periods relate to periods of stability and continuity, following a particular watershed, usually a change in government or PM, which have impacted on government/UKS/SE relationships with, and expectations, functions and operations of NGB/SMNGBs. Indeed, it could be argued that the salience of sport to government was a *new menalité* that embraced Labour, Conservative and Coalition political thinking of sport as a tool for social good, which was not present pre-1960 when sport was 'almost the quintessential voluntary activity' (Holt and Mason, 2000, p.146). The final period identified began in 2015 and it is acknowledged that this may well extend beyond the end date for this research in 2018.

Table 4.6*: Periodised Timeline*

Periodisation	1960-1995	1995-2000	2000-2010	2010-2015	2015-2018
Justification	Labour's Welfare state; Thatcherism's 'New Right'; Sport – legitimacy as welfare provision; Setting the scene.	Conservative Major's 'One Nation'; Traditionalist ideology; Government and sport – 'passive' relationship; Sport for sports sake.	New Labour, Blair's 'Third Way'; *Best Value* ideology Government and sport – 'compliance-contractual' relationship; Swinging pendulum between sports for sport's sake and sport for social good.	Coalition's 'Big Society'; Sport for sports sake Olympic Legacy	Conservatives - Cameronite modernisation, May's pragmatism; Sport for social good
Significant Events or Moments	Wolfenden (1960); GB Sports Council established (1965) - reconstituted (1972) *Sport for All* (1975); *Sport in the Community: The Next Ten Years*, (1982); *Sport in the Community – Into the Nineties* (1988).	DNH established (1992); DCMS created (1997); National Lottery (1994); *Sport: Raising the Game* (1995) Failures at Atlanta 1996 Olympic Games Restructure of GB Sports Council (1999).	Reform and modernisation of UKS/SE (2003-04); Successful Home Olympics bid (2005); *Sporting Future for All* (2000); *Game Plan* (2002); *Playing to Win* (2008) NGB-centred strategy for sport	London Olympic Games (2012); *Creating a Sporting Habit for Life* (2012).	*Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation* (2015); Changed remit for NGBs.

4.10) Conclusion

This chapter has provided discussions and an overview of the research strategy, and the methods considered to be the most logical and appropriate, in relation to the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions of this research, the achievement of the research aims and objectives; and answering the research questions within this study. The directional relationship between ontology, epistemology, methodology, methods and sources presupposes a logical link between the above constituents of research. This implies that ontological and epistemological assumptions impact on the choice of methodological approaches, which equally have a bearing on the selection of research methods within any given

study. It is therefore argued that this research is judged on how its constituent parts logically link together, as endorsed by Grix (2002).

A critical realist position has been adopted for this study, the assumptions of which are that both observable and unobservable social and political phenomena exist independently of our individual beliefs, structures constrain and facilitate rather than determine outcomes, and causal explanations and meaning of social phenomena require an understanding of the dialectical relationship between structure and agency (institutions and causal groups), within broad historical, political and social contexts of which the phenomena are located. Critical realism supports an intensive qualitative multiple case study approach to investigation, and the use of document analysis and interviews as methods for data collection. Within this research, three small to mid-sized NGBs of Olympic sports in England were selected as case studies, namely, England Handball, Table Tennis England, and Volleyball England. The aim here being to analyse the complexity, diversity and uniqueness of each social entity, their perceptions, beliefs, values and ideas, and the role of structures in shaping them (Phillpots *et al.*, 2010). The relationship between SMNGBs and sport policy has been treated theoretically through the use of the ACF, to analyse sport policy and provide competing explanations to understand the effect of sport policy on the structure of SMNGBs, their external relationships with government and its agencies (UKS/SE), and their position as 'policy shapers' or 'policy takers' within the UK sport policy domain. This links with the critical realist notion of retroduction.

The choice of document analysis and semi-structured interviews as the primary methods of data collection, were considered strategic and appropriate to answer the research questions, complementary and comparative (Mason, 2002), as well as having the greatest potential to yield corroborative findings that were 'convincing and accurate' (Yin, 1994, p.92), and develop an empirically and theoretically grounded argument (Mason, 2002). The semi-structured interviews with key informants, together with the analysis of key documents (e.g. strategic documents, WSPs, annual reports, and sport policy documents) invited useful insights into the beliefs, interpretations, perceptions, opinions and judgements in relation to the relevant themes of governance, funding, capacity building, participation, and partnerships. The themes selected were considered to be dimensions of operational activities

linked to mechanisms for delivering desired policy outcomes, and determinants of policy shaping or policy taking.

A periodised timeline was used to identify time spans as periods within which sport policy directives changed or remained stable under particular political ideologies. The significance of which was to illuminate the impact of government and governmental agencies on SMNGBs, and vice versa. The employment of retroductive thematic analysis offered ‘an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.77), where the initial case study was analysed to provide greater insight and understanding of the theoretical concepts for subsequent case study analysis, and thus allow theoretical generalisation. The emphasis on data triangulation and the precise documentation of the data base and maintenance of a chain of evidence, providing a demonstrable and attainable degree of validity and reliability for the reconstruction of the study from research question to conclusions. Document analysis, thematic analysis and cross-case analysis of similarities and differences between the data yielded from the different sources and the theoretical policy framework, building a picture of the causality between structure and agency, and therein the extent to which SMNGBs are primarily ‘policy shapers’ or ‘policy takers’, in line with the critical realist paradigm adopted for this study, and as demonstrated in the empirical chapters that follow.

Chapter Five

The UK Sport Policy Subsystem

5.1) Introduction

This chapter is focused on the conceptualisation of the sport policy subsystem within the UK, utilising the ACF as a theoretical framework for analysing sport policy, which has received only partial application in previous studies. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to provide a stronger application of the ACF to identify and define: the UK sport policy subsystem and policy actors; the existence of advocacy coalitions, the factors that have influenced policy stability and change over a decade or more; and importantly, to give context to the empirical SMNGB case-study chapters that follow. The evidence provided in this chapter has illuminated a number of significant findings in relation to the aims and objectives of this research, including *inter alia*: i) a sport policy subsystem that has yet to reach the stage of maturity occupied by older and more established policy subsystems; ii) the existence of sport advocacy coalitions engineered by government; iii) compliance, shared interests/objectives, economic/financial motivations, and interdependencies are also conditions for participation within the UK sports policy subsystem and coalition membership; iv) the sport policy subsystem is complex and subject to overlaps within and between subsystems; and v) major policy change in sport can be seen as the effect of external and internal shocks at all levels of the ACF belief system.

5.2) Development of the sport policy subsystem

It is evident that prior to the 1960s central government 'played little or no part in sport' (Coghlan and Webb, 1990, p.5), and no clearly definable policy for sport existed (Holt and Mason, 2000). However, evidence points towards the existence of a CCPR-led advocacy coalition that stimulated government's interest in sport, and the subsequent emergence of a 'nascent' sport policy subsystem within the UK. As noted by Coghlan and Webb (1990), the CCPR, whose bulk of membership was formed of NGBs, enticed a host of influential names in sport, academia and public life, to coalesce around the belief that sport had an important role to play in society,

and that government could and should have a greater involvement in sport. While this supports ACF assumptions that coalition formation can be the product of the belief in collective action as a means to bring about beneficial policy change (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Jenkins-Smith *et al*., 2014).

This was clearly a watershed event for UK sport policy, Wolfenden having given 'a focus to political debate that sport [had] lacked prior to 1960' (Jefferys, 2012, p.73), which 'no government could ignore' (Coghlan and Webb, 1990, p.11), and is quite rightly viewed as a significant moment in the history and development of British sport' (Holt and Mason, 2000, p.149). However, Wolfenden should equally be viewed as the architect of UK sport policy, a 'nascent' sport policy subsystem having resulted from a gradual process of incremental changes in attitude towards sport, and an acceptance by the major political parties of the benefits of sport. Stritch (2015, p.438) having defined 'nascent' subsystems as:

> 'issue areas that have only recently emerged on the public agenda, which have little history of public policy outputs, which have previously received little or no serious consideration in public decision-making forums, and where advocates have only recently become active.'

Arguably though, the government's construction of the Sports Council in 1972, as a semi-autonomous body, and its absorption of operations previously undertaken by the ASC/CCPR, weakened the power and authority of the CCPR (Macfarlane, 1986), thus displacing a potentially dominant CCPR-led coalition, to exercise greater control over sport, not less. For example, the Sports Council was obligated to give due regard policy statements set by government (Coghlan and Webb, 1990), was controlled by a system of ministerial appointments at Board and Executive levels, and its power to lobby had been 'muted by its governmental masters' (Macfarlane, 1986, p.80). This system of control illustrates Lukes' first dimension of power of observable and tangible decision-making; the second dimension by defining the boundaries of the Sports Council to limit its scope within the policy process; and the third dimension by shaping the Sports Council's preferences. Arguably, this nullifies any consideration given to the existence of a Sports Council-led coalition.

Instead, it could be argued that the Sports Council acted as a 'policy broker', keeping conflict among the sports lobby membership within acceptable limits, while arguing discretely for a change in the status quo. As noted by various authors, self-interest, mistrust, infighting and wars of attrition had become habitual among many of those purporting to represent the interests of sport, while government demonstrated a distinct lack of enthusiasm in support of the Sport Councils' strategic plans for sport (Houlihan, 1991, 2000b; Pickup, 1996; Jefferys, 2012). Government's inactivity and non-decision-making highlighting Lukes' second dimension of power. Conversely though, evidence suggests that SC's attempts at policy brokerage had weakened its potential influence and power, to the extent that it had become a 'pale shadow of its original concept' (Jefferys, 2012, p.193, 2016).

For the ACF, a mature policy subsystem is characterised by a set of participants who regard themselves as a semi-autonomous community, share expertise in a policy domain, and have sought to influence public policy in that domain (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999), for a period of a decade or more (Sabatier, 1998). Utilising the assumptions of the ACF, evidence would suggest the UK sport policy domain had reached maturity. In this regard, many policy participants were at best only semi-autonomous, as evidenced by the increasing levels of compliance and resource-dependency of various sports bodies (e.g. NGBs) in the receipt of government grant-aid, but are likely to have shared expertise through inclusion within the Sports Council's policy initiatives (Sports Council, 1982, 1988) and attempted to influence sport policy by way of involvement in the construction of the 'nascent' policy subsystem beliefs, though with less influence on content of the belief system than government and the Sports Council. Paradoxically, the limited involvement from government and the extent of conflict and fragmentation among policy actors (e.g. conflict between BOA and CCPR), would suggest an enduring 'nascent' policy subsystem, in line with ACF assumptions (Jenkins and Sabatier, 1993b; Stritch, 2015).

However, it is evident that government intervention, following the Prime Ministerial change from Thatcher to Major, prompted the swift development of the sport policy subsystem and arguably its progression to an observable of phase of maturity. Yet evidence also points towards government constricting the transition of the sport policy subsystem to a higher stage of maturity, as seen by government's indecision

on the location of sport within Whitehall and its eventual attachment to DCMS, itself regarded as a 'bit player' among the heavyweights such as health, education, and defence (Burrell, 2016). As noted by interviewee DCMSa[12], government perceived sport as part of the 'Ministry of Fun[13].' Again, this has a strong connection to Lukes' second dimension of power, by distorting sports involvement within the policy process to restrict its capacity for setting agendas and influencing policy decisions.

Interestingly, further evidence suggests that the sport policy subsystem has remained 'nascent' for longer, owing to sports' lesser significance as a social tool and lower status as a policy domain within the heights of government:

> 'Sport has always been perceived as a nice to have and not necessarily as significant a social good as perhaps some other social goods within communities. It's just something that people do; it's a game that's played, and so in that way sport policy is kind of still very nascent in that respect' (Interviewee: DCMSb[14]).

While the perception is that a 'nascent' sport policy subsystem still exists, this is arguably not the case, as seen by the development of sport policy from *Raising the Game* to *Sporting Future*. What can be said is that the sport policy subsystem has not reached a stage of maturity relative to older established policy subsystems, as noted above, but has considerably increased the degree of its maturity, as demonstrated by the conversational change within Whitehall, evidenced by the remarks of interviewee DCMSa:

> '[N]obody ever says to [DCMS] anymore do you realise there's a government department dealing with sport, where they might have done a few years ago.'

The above evidence drawing attention to the potential vagueness in the ACF's defining characteristics of a mature policy subsystem, and the difficulties determining the point at which a 'nascent' policy subsystem reaches maturity, while also suggesting that policy subsystems can transition through different stages of maturity, dependent on the extent of government intervention and public awareness of particular subsystems.

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[12] References to interviewee DCMSa relate to an interview dated 11th October 2018.

[13] "Ministry of Fun" sobriquet, coined by David Mellor in an effort to brighten up the dowdy "Department of National Heritage" title by which the DCMS was known before 1997. Available online from: https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/the-ministry-of-fun-has-serious-challenges-ahead-a6818071.html

[14] References to interviewee DCMSb relate to an interview dated 11th October 2018.

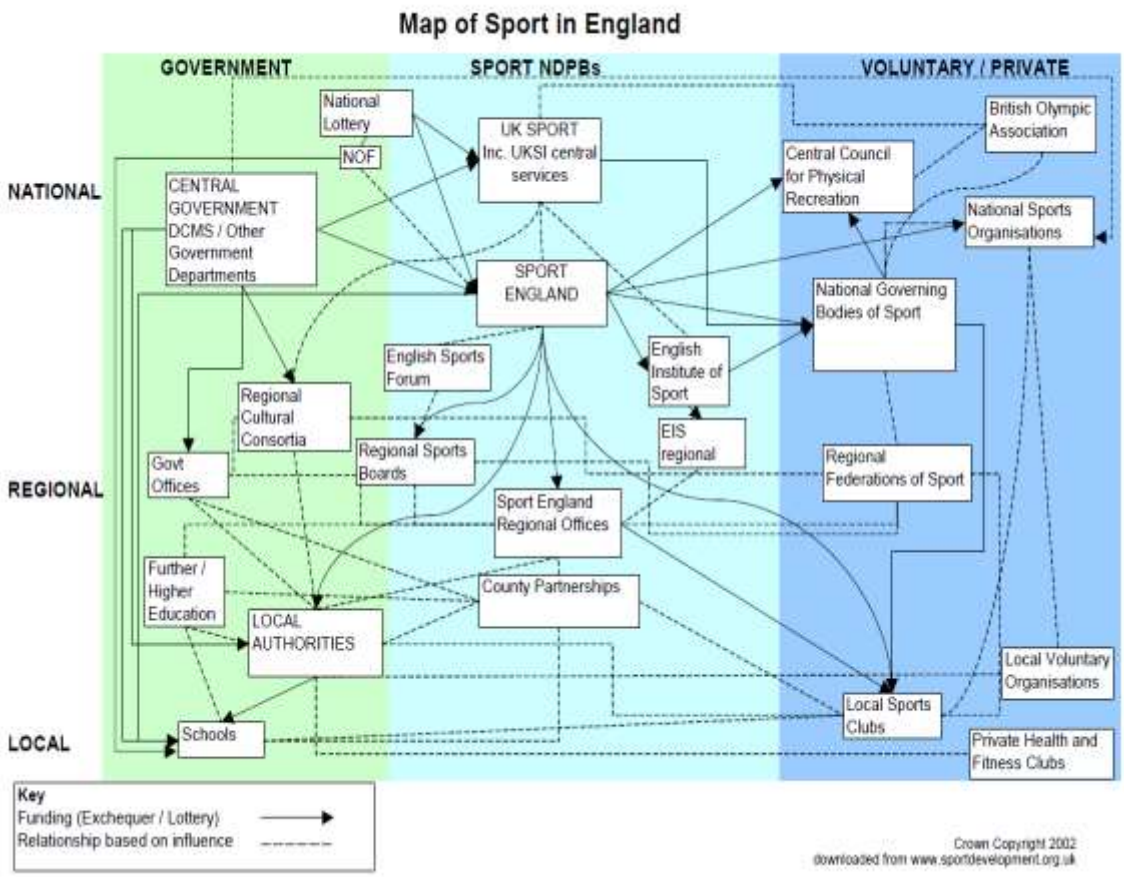
5.3) Relational patterns of policy actors and subsystem boundaries

The ACF assumes that the delimitation of subsystem boundaries is based on the relational pattern among policy actors and the 'frequency of interaction and transitivity of influence' (Sabatier, 1988, p.160). Figure 5.1 provides a representative view of policy actors involved within the UK sport policy subsystem, and identifies their relational existence based on influence, as denoted by DCMS (2002a). As can be seen, there is a definable, yet complex, multiplicity of actors (individuals/organisations) or coalition partners[15] that potentially seek to influence sport policy. While the direction of influence is somewhat vague, there is a strong link between influence and the directional flow of funding. Governmental intervention having moved from passive to more contractual-based, in recognition of increased conditional funding in support of government social objectives. This connects strongly to Lukes' first dimension of power, in terms of compliance and financial dependency, and the third dimension in respect of shaping NGB preferences to meet policy outcomes.

Furthermore, the increasing use of sport as an instrument of government for 'social good', and the expansion of the 'mixed economy' funding model for sport at a societal level, has provided an opportunity for social actors in sport to become active within the sport policy domain. Thus, emphasising the greater potential for overlapping policy subsystems, as evidenced by the contribution of sport and physical activity across ten different government departments within *Sporting Future (*DCMS, 2015b*).*

[15] Coalition partners are considered distinct from the wider network of partners, and represent those partnerships that may share similar beliefs or interests within coalitions, and provide possible opportunities to enhance the capacity to influence sport policy.

Figure 5.1: ***Relational pattern of policy actors based on influence***

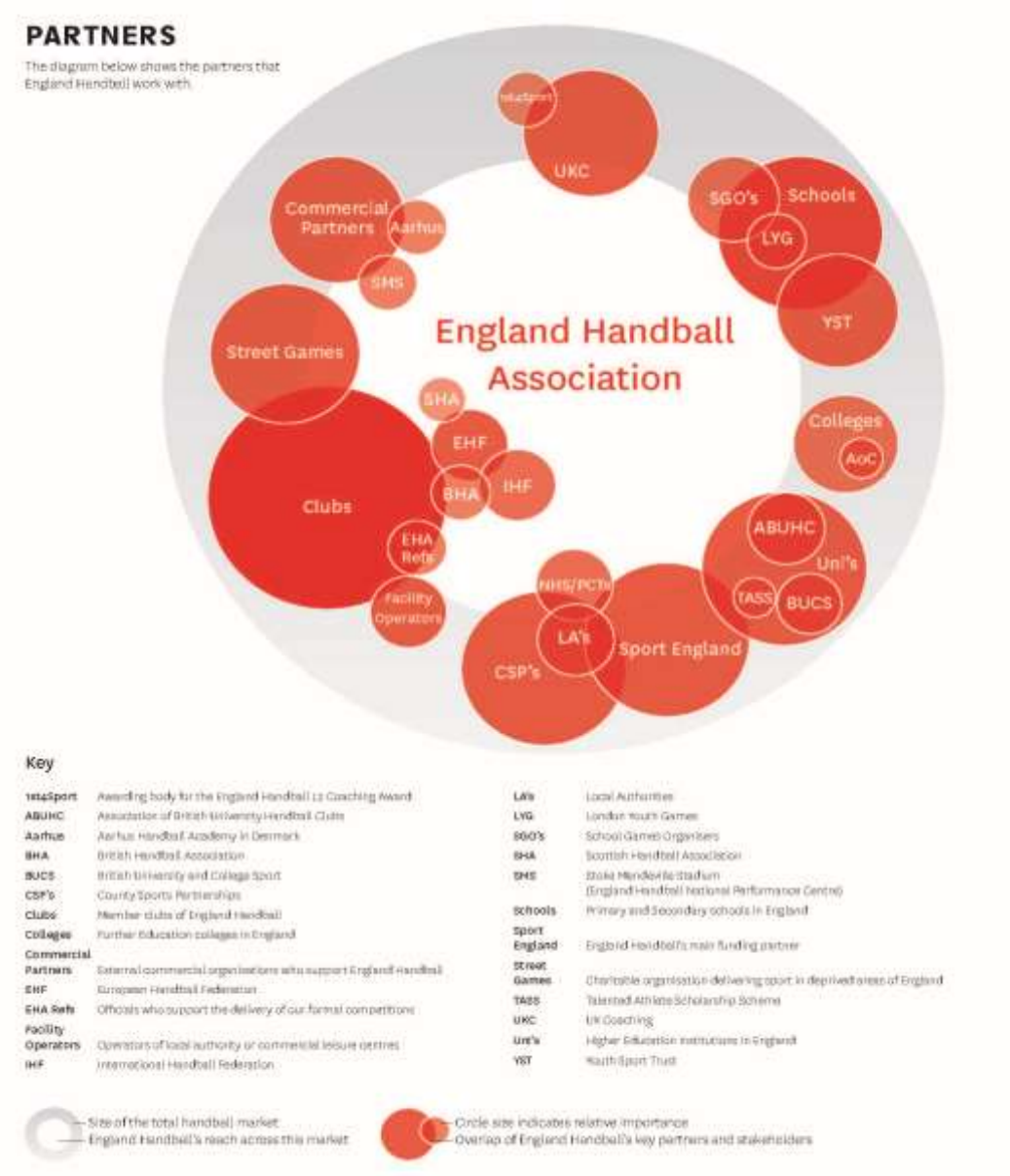


Source: DCMS (2002a)

The involvement of NGBs as a key partner of and delivery mechanism for government and governmental agencies' policy objectives, has also accentuated the degree of overlap between coalitions and different subsystems. To provide a sense of the potential overlaps, Figure 5.2 illustrates the partnership base of England Handball, and its involvement within and across different policy subsystems, such as social, health and education, as well as sport, such overlapping characteristics of the UK sport policy subsystem also endorsed by all interviewees, for example, interviewee SRADP[16] asserted that 'sport absolutely delivers across multiple areas of responsibility.' This has clear implications for delimiting the scope of the ACF, where the existence of overlapping and nested subsystems is considered a complication (Sabatier and Weible, 2007).

[16] References to interviewee SRADP relate to an interview dated 26th September 2018.

Figure 5.2: ***Partnership base of England Handball***



Source: England Handball[17] ([EH] 2017, p.18)

[17] NHS/PCTs refer to National Health Service and Primary Care Trusts, respectively – missing at source.

5.4) Mapping sport policy subsystem beliefs

It is assumed within the ACF that 'mapping beliefs and policies on the same canvas' allows an assessment of the influence of technical information or beliefs on policy change over time (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier, 1994, p.180). From the analysis of government and SE documentation, it has been possible to identify key subsystem beliefs since 1995, which highlighted a high degree of alignment and overlap at all levels of the ACF belief system. This suggests that the sport policy subsystem has been constructed or at least substantially shaped by government, as have the agency-led coalitions that currently occupy the policy subsystem.

By mapping the beliefs of government and SE, it has also been possible to see how technical information and beliefs have influenced sport policy, for example: modernisation and reform through New Labour's 'Third Way' ideology; the use of NGBs as a delivery mechanism to increase participation in sport as 'repositories of social capital' (Sam, 2009, p.499); and the increased salience to government of health related issues. Evidence has also shown that policy actors have the potential to move beyond the boundaries of coalition shared-beliefs, and policy subsystems and coalitions can be engineered by government on the basis of compliance, shared- interests, priorities, and objectives, financial incentives and punitive sanctions, as well as shared-beliefs. Due to the extent of material relating to the belief system of government and SE, detailed information has been presented in the appendices (see Appendix IX [Deep-Core beliefs], X [Policy-Core beliefs], and XI [Secondary-Aspects]). The belief system of UKS has been excluded on the basis that elite policy has remained relatively stable over the medium term, and SMNGBs investigated within this study are primarily considered competitive/community sports, as a result of their loss of elite funding.

Canvas mapping beliefs and policies has also highlighted potential issues with the ACF's belief system, in particular, the ACF takes no account of *cultural*, *societal* or *philosophical* 'deep-core' beliefs (which may also be subsystem specific in origin), for example, Evidence also suggests that the fundamental value of the sport policy belief system is not based on empirical evidence, as the ACF would assume, but philosophical in terms of government's role in society, in that 'a civilised society should support sports and arts' (Interviewee: DCMSa).

5.5) Advocacy Coalitions in Sport Policy: Reality or Myth?

According to Sabatier and Weible (2007), 'policy-core' shared-beliefs are the glue that bind coalitions together, the ACF assuming that actors seek out other actors with shared fundamental beliefs or potential beneficial resources in order to translate their beliefs into policy, and influence rules, budgets and government personnel to achieve goals (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier, 1993a). As alluded to above, the emergence of the UK sport policy subsystem can be attributed to the collective action of a CCPR-led coalition, based on shared-beliefs and potential beneficial resources. Evidence suggests that three advocacy coalitions now compete within the sport policy domain, constructed or substantially shaped by government, each with a distinct clarity of purpose, roles and responsibilities for elite sport, community (social and grassroots) sport, and school sport. As noted within *Playing to Win* (DCMS, 2008, p.6):

> 'The sporting landscape has changed. Out of the confused structures of previous years has come a structure that puts three bodies in charge of the main building blocks of sporting success across England and the UK: PE and school sport ([YST]), community sport ([SE]) and elite sport ([UKS]).'

Evidence of an elite sport advocacy coalition was previously identified by Green and Houlihan (2004, p.399), on the basis that:

> 'the endogenous drive towards greater elite success was powerfully reinforced, on the one hand by [UKS] through its modernization agenda and the promotion of the rational–bureaucratic model of NGB organization, and by the increasing resource dependency of NGBs on National Lottery funding on the other.'

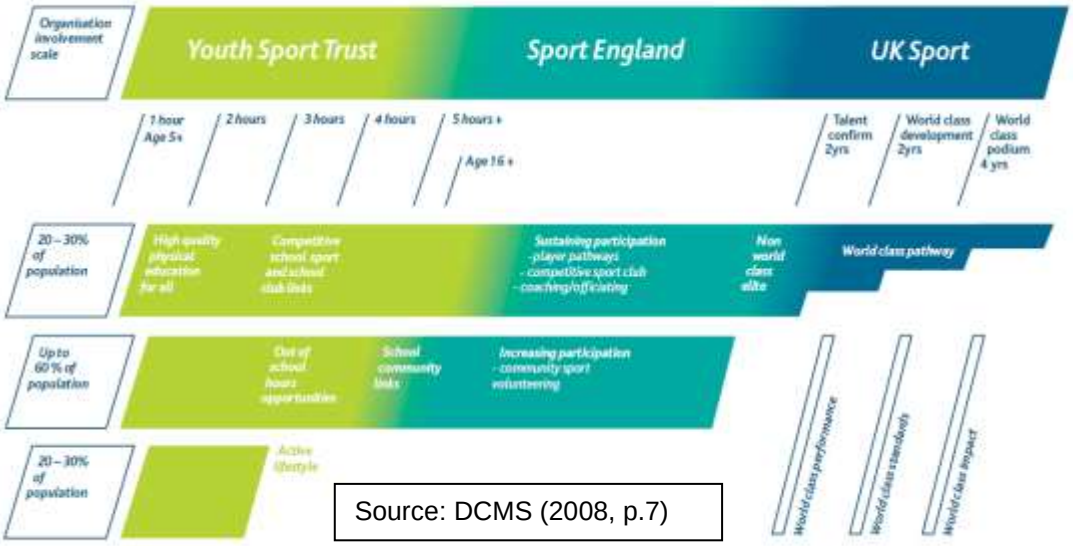
Interestingly, Green and Houlihan (2004) noted the potential for an advocacy coalition in social and community sport, although its likelihood remained remote due to limited access to funding and organisational resources. However, evidence strongly indicates the existence of a SE-led community sport coalition, where the *endogenous* drive towards mass participation has been powerfully reinforced by SE (particularly for health benefits), again through modernisation, reform, and the increasing dependency of NGBs on public funding arising from the greater access to opportunities and Lottery funds; *exogenously* derived from government's pro-social agenda. This evidence in itself suggests that coalitions are not merely a product of

shared ‘policy-core’ beliefs, but also engineered on the basis of compliance, shared-interests/objectives, financial incentives and sanctions. Evidence also infers that coalitions can be constructed by government to act as a mechanism for realising government objectives, linked to changes in government priorities and political agendas. As demonstrated by government’s relationship with SE:

> ‘We have a management agreement with [SE], which stipulates the Secretary of State’s priorities, and these are therefore government’s priorities … [SE] have to write their own strategy and have operational independence from government, [but] they are there to deliver on government’s priorities … It’s for [SE] to set itself up, to construct itself in such a way that it feels best able to deliver on those priorities. So, we would very much see SE absolutely aligned with what DCMS want to achieve’ (Interviewee: DCMSb).

It is also argued that coalitions within the sport policy subsystem, and NGBs for that matter, have the potential to overlap as illustrated in Figure 5.3. The diagrammatic overview of the lead responsibilities of the trio of sporting coalitions indicating the points of intersection between the coalitions, for example, the interconnection between community-school links and the talent pathway.

Figure 5.3: ***Overlaps across the trio of sporting coalitions***



Source: DCMS (2008, p.7)

The interaction between government/SE/UKS and NGBs demonstrates a high degree of coordinated activity to meet shared goals, and an alliance that benefits from resources, such as public funding, which arguably meets ACF assumptions of the composition of advocacy coalitions, that is, shared 'policy-core' beliefs and significant engagement in coordinated activity over time (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999).

5.6) Changing tides of UK sport policy

The persistence of the Sports Council's *Sport for All* campaign from 1972 to 1993, arguably resulted from the disarray characterised by a 'nascent' policy subsystem and a weakened Sports Council, as evidenced by the conflict and competition among policy actors (McIntosh and Charlton, 1985; Pickup, 1996), and limited governmental coercion (Houlihan, 1991; Jefferys, 2012). Attempts to develop a more coherent policy met with continued governmental resistance, disruption, and attitudinal fluctuations, epitomised by the dysfunctional relationship between government and the Sports Council. The lack of a strong or unified ministerial responsibility for sport, arguably a consequence of the shifting designations and definitions of what sport was and where it belonged, to the extent that by 1994, 15 different departments apart from the DNH had an interest in sport policy (Houlihan, 1991; Jefferys, 2012).

However, evidence suggests that a sequential set of external shocks within the sport policy subsystem brought about not only a major change in sport policy, but also a level of subsystem maturation. The Prime Ministerial change in the early 1990s from Thatcher to Major provided a change in the systematic governing coalition implicit within the assumptions of the ACF, and a change in 'policy-core' beliefs, elevating sport as an instrument of government, as noted by Major (1999), sport had been previously subjected to 'misguided attitudes and mistaken policies' (DNH, 1995, p.1). It is also evident that public criticisms concerning failure at the Atlanta 1996 Olympiad were sufficient external perturbations to bring about major policy change. As Dutton (2006, p.21) claimed these factors had 'created pressure on the government, politicians and [SE] to introduce Lottery revenue programmes … to

begin to reverse the failures', as seen by the shift in government priorities from mass participation, to a twin track of elite performance and school sport within *Raising the Game*, there being a serious intent to focus on sport 'in a way it had never done before' (Holt and Mason, 2000, pp.153-154). Moreover, it is argued that the creation of the Lottery provided a significant external development to the sport policy subsystem, which facilitated government intervention in sport policy, and signified a key moment in the UK and government's relationship with sport. In particular, the Lottery provided government with a policy instrument to achieve its priorities, while providing sport/NGBs accessibility to previously unimaginable financial resources. Yet, there is an apparent disregard within the ACF of government-led initiatives, such as the Lottery, which act as external shocks to stimulate a policy subsystem, and enable major policy change.

If Wolfenden is seen as the 'architect' of the UK sport policy subsystem, Major should be acknowledged as the person who raised the political status of sport; revolutionising the prospects for sport through the introduction of the Lottery; and laying the foundations for the development of future strategies and policies for sport, as evidenced by the high degree of overlap between New Labour's *Sporting Future for All (2000)* and Major's *Raising the Game (1995)*, particularly the twin track for elite performance and school sport. However, Blair's New Labour government raised the profile of sport as a 'social tool', having highlighted its potential to cross the boundaries of different policy subsystems, such as health and education. For example, policy change included a renewed focus on physical activity in schools for health benefits, signposting health's increasing salience to government. Policy change was also evident from an elite perspective with a move towards improvements in talent identification and the talent pathway, to help achieve consistent success in the international arena, as recommended by Cunningham (2001, p.5). International sporting success was seen as a means to generate 'pride and a sense of national identity, a *'feelgood factor',* (DCMS, 2002a, p.9), in part due to an apparent 'growing public awareness that success in, and support of, international competition is as important as providing access to sporting opportunities' (UKS, 2003, p.8).

Game Plan (2002) signified a further significant change in policy and the adoption by government of a contractual approach to funding, which clearly reflected New

Labour's *Best Value* political philosophy, and arguably represented a 'deep-core' belief. The key impact on 'policy-core' beliefs was the implementation of policy through a process of reform and modernisation, to ensure a 'fit-for-purpose' regime to partner government and 'joined-up delivery against sporting objectives' (SE, 2001a, p.12). From an ACF perspective, it is possible to argue that policy change resulted from not only an external perturbation to the sport policy subsystem (change in government), but also a change in the relatively stable parameters in terms of the 'deep-core' beliefs of political ideology. An example of the impact of ideological change would be the requirement for NGBs to *earn the right* to have a partnership with government, and the drive for NGB modernisation reinforced by KPIs and the threat of withdrawal of funding, whereby 'any sport not wishing to accept this challenge – funding [would] be switched to those that do' (DCMS, 2008, p.2). Such evidence not only demonstrates Lukes' third dimension of power, but also illuminates the shift in government values from passive to contractual subsystem politics, as well as the rise of compliance regimes, shared-interests/objectives, and economic/financial motivations as conditions for participation within the UK sport policy subsystem, and coalition membership, exemplifying both the first and second dimensions of Luke's concept of power.

Evidence also indicates that London's successful bid in 2005 to host the 2012 Olympic Games provoked a further external shock to the sport policy subsystem, which triggered a change in the way sport policy was funded and delivered, as seen in *Playing to Win (2008)*. It is evident here that NGBs had been elevated to the forefront of government and agency consciousness as a delivery mechanism capable of achieving government aims and objectives, which also coincided with NGBs' lobbying for greater involvement within the policy environment:

> 'We'd won the right to host the Olympics in 2005, and there was a great debate about what should be our aims and objectives for that … The idea grew up that actually it shouldn't just be about elite; it should be about [being] transformational for all sport, and therefore "who's going to do that?" Well, it's got to be [NGBs]' (Interviewee: SEC[18]).

[18] References to interviewee SEC relate to an interview dated 4th September 2018.

> ‘[I]nfluential [NGBs] were vocalising the fact that they could drive [SE’s] outcomes, if they were given the money [through a single investment, rather than disparate amounts of investment]’ (Interviewee: SESLR[19]).

While the above evidence points towards NGBs’ collective willingness to achieve shared-objectives, further evidence indicates that the use of NGBs was more opportunistic than strategic, on the basis that no alternative delivery mechanism existed:

> ‘[NGBs] were the only show in town, so [government] had to invest in them as there was nothing else’ (Interviewee: SRADP).

Interviewee DCMSb also claimed that the relationship between government and NGBs had developed ‘very organically’, as NGBs had ‘access to the largest number of people in the sport market that government could talk to.’

Arguably, the Coalition government’s *Creating a Sporting Habit for Life (2012)* was merely old wine in a new bottle; the historical issues of stemming the flow of school drop-off and increasing youth participation, having been evident in previous policy documents. For elite sport, evidence suggests a strong desire for continuity, in particular, UKS’s strategy for high performance sport investment was seen as being ‘increasingly understood and respected’ (UKS, 2011, p.9). DCMS (2014, p.6) asserting that there were ‘no plans to review the [*No Compromise*] approach, as we have no wish to give other nations a competitive advantage over Team GB.’ However, the lack of progress by government in achieving participation targets, signified policy on the verge of failure rather than in a state of equilibrium. It also signalled challenging times for community sport and NGBs, particularly in lieu of the new payment-by-results performance regime, and the widening of an already complex network of deliverers of sport. For example, the government’s new partnership with SE was arguably less about policy objectives and more to do with process, specifically a ‘more rigorous, targeted and results-orientated way of thinking about grassroots sport’, which would focus ‘all energies into reaching out to young people more effectively’ (DCMS, 2012, p.1).

[19] References to interviewee SESLR relate to an interview dated 17th August 2018.

SE's changed remit was to take 'sport out of its traditional structures and environments and into young people's lives' (SE, 2012d p.2), signposting a more concerted effort towards a mixed economy approach to funding grassroots participation, while the collective focus of sport would continue to have 'the spirit of mass participation, but with a particular focus on 14-25 year olds' (SE, 2012d, p.4). For example, SE's increasing support of StreetGames, who not only aligned to SE's strategy (SE, 2012d, p.5), but also reflected a more attractive proposition than the 'single sport NGB option', for solving problems with youth engagement (SE, 2012e, p.6). Support for non-NGB organisations is demonstrated by the meteoric increase in the level of funding invested into StreetGames from £300,000 in 2010-11 (SE, 2011, p.8) to an in-principle four-year award close to £19.5m for the 2013-17 funding cycle (SE, 2012b, p.5). It could be argued that increased role of 'social actors', such as StreetGames, provided an internal shock to the sport policy subsystem by increasing doubt in the ability of NGBs to meet policy objectives, which provided a critical path to major policy change within Sporting Future.

Since *Game Plan*, the central objective for SE had been increased regular and sustained participation in sport, especially through a core strategy of developing long-term relationships with and investment in sports' NGBs to deliver 'stretching and difficult targets' (SE, 2011, pp.2-3). However, it is evident that in support of *Creating a Sporting Habit for Life*, SE would *not* have a government-set target for national participation, DCMS being 'merely keen' on increasing participation in 14-25 year olds (SE, 2012a, p.3). While this raises doubts over government's commitment to its own legacy plans, NGBs would be 'performance managed' to meet *internal* WSP 2013-17 agreed targets, so that SE could 'demonstrate to the [National Audit Office] that both impact and value for money were being delivered' (SE, 2012a, p.3). Such evidence not only highlights SE's determination to preserve its status quo with government, through the continuance of the compliance nature of the SE-led coalition, but also the prospect of major policy change.

Indeed, the question of government's commitment to sport policy was significantly criticised within the HLSCOPL Report (2013b). Arguably, this set in motion a further game-changer in the way sports participation and community sport was funded and delivered. A lack of robustness in government policy to deliver on its legacy ambitions, and a 'lack of a clear legacy plan for capturing the enthusiasm of the

Games within all sports', having been highlighted (HLSCOPL, 2013b, p.8). It could be argued that this represented a major internal shock to the sport policy subsystem (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier, 1994; Sabatier and Weible, 2007), with these serious criticisms of the sport policy subsystem having been placed in the public domain. The consequence of the accumulation of criticism of policy failure was a redistribution of critical political resources, particularly financial support, away from NGBs and 'sports for sport's sake' to 'sport for social good', thus altering the structure of the policy subsystem by way of a clearer focus on physical activity for the inactive. The nature of the government's *Sporting Future* (DCMS, 2015b, p.10) policy document can thus be considered a radical departure from historical central government policy, and signified not only a step-change in community and grassroots sport policy, but also a dramatic change in emphasis for SE. The changed focus of government priorities, premised on a genuine cross-Whitehall effort for joined-up government, was intended to achieve a principal aim of harnessing the potential of sport and physical activity to deliver 'social good', and 'change people's lives for the better.'

However, evidence points towards the continued existence of a quandary within government as to the role sport can play in public service. As noted by Baroness Heyhoe-Flint, '[government] must manifest itself in understanding the role that sport and recreation can play in achieving its objectives' (Hansards, 2015b[20]). Yet, evidence suggests a lack of coordination within government, and that sport's potential contribution to an array of government departmental agendas remains under-valued, unacknowledged and misunderstood:

> '[Within] Sporting Futures there is a signature there from the ministers of all the various departments, but the inter-ministerial group has only I think met once, since Sporting Future was written. So, to what extent do they truly buy into this in every department? Sport can do so much for so many of their agendas, yet I don't think that every one of those departments quite gets the power of sport to achieve its aims' (Interviewee: SEC).

[20] See column 402.

Conversely though, it could be argued that the sporting sector demonstrated a reluctance to utilise its significant influence to shape policy, in contrast to other policy sectors, which has potential implications for the application of the ACF, in the analysis of UK sport policy. Evidence suggests that sport policy actors' preferences have been framed by a fear of 'rocking the boat', a reluctance to promote their valuable contribution to society, an acceptance of sustained levels of conservatism and compliance, and a willingness to be subjected to policy rather than shape it. Thus, pointing towards the notion of power as psychological control (Wrong, 1995) in association with Lukes' third dimension of power:

> 'the sports sector punches very significantly below its weight, in terms of its influence on government, in relation to the size of the sector, the economic role of the sector, the genuinely great stuff that the sport sector does at local level, and the social impact [of] sport. The profile and the credit that the sector gets for doing that within government is minimal. As a sector we are very subject to rather than shaping changes in the strategic environment. Culturally, the sector is very conservative and very compliant as well, so people do as they're told and uphold the rules, which is different from other sectors' (Interviewee: SRADP).

5.7) Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to provide a more in-depth utilisation of the ACF to provide a theoretical conceptualisation of the UK sport policy subsystem, and provide context for the following case-study Chapters, particularly with regard to the identification and definition of sport policy subsystem and policy actors, advocacy coalitions, and factors that have influenced policy stability and change over a decade or more, in line with ACF assumptions. The findings also point towards potential issues with the ACF in terms of the characteristics of mature subsystems, the ACF's belief system, delimitation boundaries of coalitions and subsystem boundaries, and the height from which the ACF observes policy subsystems, which are discussed in detail within Chapter 9.

Evidence suggests that a CCPR-led advocacy coalition and the Wolfenden Report of 1960, provided an opportunity for policy actors to coalesce around the issues identified within the Report, to produce a 'nascent' policy subsystem to translate their

beliefs into public policy. Arguably, the UK sport policy domain remained in a 'nascent' state for nearly three decades, due in the most part to limited government coercion and the enduring conflicts among policy actors, as the ACF would expect to see in a 'nascent' policy subsystem, despite the Sports Council's potential positioning as a 'policy broker', and arguably the semi-autonomous nature of various policy actors (NGBs, BOA, CCPR and SC). While evidence signposts a degree of maturity in the development of the sport policy subsystem, its failure to reach the stage of maturity attained by other policy subsystems (e.g. health and education), is arguably a consequence of sports' perpetual fragmentation within a disjointed political system, which is further complicated by the existence nested and overlapping subsystems, coalitions and policy actor.

The mapping the key beliefs and policies of government/SE not only identified the role and influence of technical information and beliefs on policy change, but also a degree of overlap and alignment within a UK sport policy subsystem that has arguably been constructed by government rather than by advocacy coalitions. Evidence suggests that a trio of advocacy coalitions for elite, community and school sport occupy the policy subsystem, having emerged from government intervention, and engineered by government to achieve its own objectives. While, the ACF's assumptions of shared 'policy-core' beliefs as the norm for coalition membership/activity is still highly applicable, evidence suggests that coalitions are not merely the product of shared 'policy-core' beliefs, but can also be constructed and maintained through compliance, shared-interests/objectives, financial incentives and sanctions. This is exemplified by the SE-led social/community sport coalition and membership's support to drive increased participation against a myriad of government objectives. The interaction between government/SE and policy actors (e.g. NGBs) also demonstrates a high degree of coordinated activity to meet shared goals, which arguably meets ACF assumptions regarding the structuring of advocacy coalitions through shared 'policy-core' beliefs, and significant engagement in coordinated activity over time. Yet, the requirement for NGBs to modernise and reform to become 'fit-for-purpose' to partner government, and the increasing dependency of NGBs on public funding arising from the greater access to opportunities and Lottery funds, demonstrates the power relationship between coalition members within the UK sport policy subsystem.

Evidence indicates that the UK sport policy subsystem has experienced a series of external shocks, which have shaped the trajectory of sports policy, thus highlighting the ACF's usefulness in the explanation of major policy change. Examples of which are the Prime Ministerial change from Thatcher to Major, and the latter's belief that sport matters to society; and the introduction of the Lottery which served to provide previously unimaginable financial resources for policy actors within the sport policy subsystem, the composition of which is complex, and influence predominantly follows the 'money-trail.' A further external shock was London's successful bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games, which provoked a major change in the way sport policy was funded and delivered, elevating NGBs to a front-line mechanism for delivering government aims and objectives. However, evidence shows that the transition of NGBs to a higher level of responsibility was not strategic but opportunistic, as no alternative delivery method existed. It is also argued that the change from a generally non-interventionist Conservative philosophy to New Labour's 'Third Way – Best Value' ideology, represented an external perturbation that explicitly changed the way government sport policy was funded and implemented, and again emphasises the usefulness of the ACF to explain policy change. The shift in government values for sport policy from a passive to contractual phase signalled an increased concern with compliance, shared-interests/objectives, and economic efficiency as conditions for participation within the sports policy subsystem and coalition membership.

Arguably, the HLSCOPL Report fashioned a major internal shock to the sport policy subsystem. In line with ACF assumptions, the perceived view of policy failure being placed in the public eye, which prompted a move away from 'sports for sport's sake' to 'sport for social good', as seen in *Sporting Future*. This resulted in a changed focus for the SE-led coalition towards the inactive, served by an *organisational-neutral* 'mixed model' approach to funding. Such evidence confirmed that the UK sport policy subsystem was not confined to shared 'policy-core' beliefs, but also embodied shared-interests/objectives, compliance processes, and financial inducements and sanctions, which are also determinants of entry to and exit from coalition membership.

Within the UK sport policy subsystem, evidence has also shown how Lukes' three dimensions of power have been operationalised. Lukes' first dimension of power can

be demonstrated by observable and tangible decision-making, for example, compliance with government requirements and contractual obligations to achieve government policy outcomes to secure public funding. The second dimension is associated with the defining the boundaries of agency-led coalitions, and limiting the scope of policy actors within the policy-making process. Furthermore, government indecision as to the location of sport within Whitehall, suggests a distortion of sports involvement within the policy process, restricting its capacity to set agendas and influence policy decisions, again highlighting Lukes' second dimension of power. The third dimension of power is evident through the shaping of NGB preferences and psychological control, which have produced a policy environment that espouses a fear of rejection linked to resource-dependency, a willingness to be controlled by way of compliance, and the potential for acceptance of policy rather than influencing policy.

Chapter Six

England Handball

6.1) Introduction

This chapter represents the empirical findings in relation to the case of England Handball (EH), the NGB of handball in England, in line with the research aims and objectives of this study, which have also guided the structure of this chapter. Following an introductory contextual profile of EH, a detailed analysis and discussion is provided on the development of EH's governmental relationships, and the operational impacts and approaches to changing sport policy, aligned to the specific themes identified within the methodology chapter as mechanisms for delivering desired sport policy outcomes and determinants relevant to policy shaping or taking. Threaded throughout this empirical chapter are relevant links and discussions that reflect the nature of power and the utility of the ACF. The concluding section summarises the key findings of this case study on EH, in particular, the pragmatic and flexible use of the sport policy environment to drive development, in unopposed acceptance of its contractual obligations, and its positioning as primarily a 'policy taker' on the basis of shared beliefs and self-preservation.

Handball was introduced to the UK in 1966 and formalised through the founding of the British Handball Association (BHA)[21] in 1968 (EH, 2012, p.9). The formation of EH to develop handball in England was prompted by the restructuring of the Sports Councils in 1997, and devolution to the Home Nations. Evidence suggests EH/handball has seen progressive growth in its development, particularly from the mid-2000s (EH, 2012), as noted by a former Chair of EH:

> 'When I was asked to return to the game in 2005 … We had no income, no courses, no Schools Association, no official tutors - in fact no organisation. [EH] is definitely on the move - growth in all areas is continuing at a pace, there is an increase in staff numbers, a huge increase in the number of players and clubs, and a very large increase in the number of qualified coaches' (EH, 2013b, p.6).

[21] BHA is the responsible governing body for elite performance in handball, both men and women GB teams having competed at an Olympic Games, for the first time, during the London 2012 Olympic Games (EH, 2012).

Growth and development can also be seen by increased SE funding from £98,000 (2009-13) to £1.3m (2013-17) (EH, 2013b, p.6), and significant improvements in EH's club competition structure, which currently boasts 237 teams across all leagues compared to 131 in 2014 (EHA, 2017g).

According to EH's Strategic Plan 2017-21 (2017g), the current landscape of handball in England, includes *inter alia*:

- Over 3,500 participants regularly playing handball;
- Club membership of 2,300;
- 14,000 school children play handball;
- 1,422 teams entered the 2017 Schools Competition;
- 65 University teams;
- Five under-16 Regional Academies operational;
- 8,000 people hold an EH qualification.

Handball was awarded elite funding from UKS to the value of £5.9m over the Beijing 2008 and London 2012 funding cycles[22], to at least compete 'credibly on home soil' (UKS, 2006, p.8). However, GB teams for both men and women were unable to progress past the preliminary rounds, the consequence of which was the withdrawal of elite funding in December 2012, under UKS's *No Compromise* principle (White, 2012).

[22] UKS's historical funding data is available online from: http://www.uksport.gov.uk/our-work/investing-in-sport/historical-funding-figures

6.2) Development of governmental relationships

It is evident that EH's formation in 2009 was largely constituted on the basis of a close and mutually beneficial relationship with government and SE, as a means to develop a sport that was 'under the radar in Britain' (Meli, CEO of EH, cited in HLSCOPL, 2013a, p.205), and as alluded to above, limited by a lack of resources to achieve independent growth. As clearly indicated within EH's 2013-17 WSP (2012, p.9), a crucial part of EH's designated role was to 'take advantage of the potential opportunities provided by SE', which not only signposts a willing intent to align with government and SE 'policy-core' beliefs, but also self-interest and shared interest as features of SE-led coalition membership.

According to Mcsteen (2013), in an online news article, handball was considered an 'influential voice in shaping sport, community and health policy at a [g]overnmental level' throughout the world, pointing towards the sport's potential within the UK policy environment. In particular, EH believed that handball offered young children the opportunity to improve their physical literacy, seen as a complementary alignment to 'policy-core' beliefs of government/SE (*Creating a Sporting Habit for Life*), whereby the four key skills of running, jumping, throwing and catching matched the principal components of handball (EH, 2013b, pp.7-8). Evidence also revealed EH's use of the above complementary alignment to policy priorities, as a potential political resource to raise the awareness and profile of handball, and arguably a strategic attempt to establish EH's credibility as a policy actor within the sport policy subsystem, and strengthen its membership of the SE-led coalition. As noted by the Parliamentary Sports Fellow[23] for handball (Clive Efford MP, Shadow Minister of Sport [2011-2016]), the sport was 'fantastic … for all ages, but especially young people who can benefit from the varied skills that are required in the game to help develop their physical literacy' (cited in EH, 2014a). According to interviewee SRADP, relationships with MPs, Ministers, and SE officials can provide a route to

[23] Parliamentary Sports Fellowship scheme of matching MPs and peers from all parties with sports organisations, offered the opportunity to build a better understanding of sport in Parliament. Available from: https://www.sportengland.org/news-and-features/news/2013/june/7/sport-england-parliamentary-sports-fellowship-scheme/

influence government, and arguably ‘a more effective’ means of channelling ‘insider influence.’

For SE (2010b), handball, was seen as a development sport and received no funding against SE’s *Grow, Sustain and Excel* outcomes for the 2009-13 funding cycle, the focus of SE’s intervention directly linked to the modernisation of EH (e.g. infrastructure, recruitment, workforce development), in line with *Game Plan*, with a specific and conditional requirement to appoint a CEO, thus demonstrating the compliance nature of the SE-led coalition, and EH’s willingness to comply as evidenced by the appointment of a CEO in 2013. Arguably though, EH’s decision to appoint as CEO the previous SE NGB Relationship Manager for handball (2009-13), could be viewed as the strategic use of compliance as an influential resource, particularly as the knowledge gained from working within a government-agency could provide EH with a clearer understanding of the policy environment and a potential capacity to influence policy at a governmental level, especially in consideration of the comments made by interviewee SESLR:

> ‘[SE] relationship managers that have gone into [NGBs], have been able to get a real breadth of understanding around sport policy, sport governance, a range of organisations and how they invest in participation and talent transfer, so they get a really good schooling, I would say, to take into a [NGB] role.’

An illustration of the connection between the CEO of EH and SE can be seen by the emphasis EH placed on the effective use SE investment, which would be used ‘wisely’ to show that EH was ‘deserving of the award’ (Meli, CEO of EH, cited in EH, 2013b, p.7), again signposting EH’s intent to align with government and SE policy and a willingness to accept the contractual-compliance obligations of the SE-led coalition. A clear demonstration of the synchronicity between EH’s strategic plans and those of SE, particularly in relation to the ‘policy-core’ beliefs of the *Playground to Podium* sporting continuum, can been seen from EH’s (2013c, p.2) mission statement:

> ‘[To create] a growing and sustainable national framework to promote the development of handball in the education sector and the community, that will increase participation, broaden competition and pathway, and produce competitive national teams.’

A position reinforced through EH's 2013-17 WSP (EH, 2012, p.15)[24], whereby the main priorities of SE 'align[ed] closely with [EH's] vision for moving forward.'

Evidence is also supportive of the significance of London's successful bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games, and the impact of the Lottery, as external shocks to the sport policy subsystem that not only changed the UK sporting landscape, but also elicited major policy change and greater responsibility to NGB/SMNGBs to deliver on government outcomes for sport:

> '[The winning London bid] was such a significant moment in time …, there was suddenly a move to see [Lottery funding] exponentially grow. It quickly became apparent that [NGBs] were going to be a group of the major recipients' (Interviewee: CEOEH)[25].

Further comments made by interviewee CEOEH revealed the relatively instantaneous onset of competition between NGBs that emerged from the greater access to Lottery funding, and their elevated role to the primary deliverers of government sport policy, there being 'a lot of scrambling and jockeying for position' to see who could get 'a big slice of the pie.' Moreover, evidence shows that competitiveness among NGBs overshadowed collective activity to meet shared government/SE-objectives, due to the emphasis placed on individually agreed APS targets, which largely elicited independent behaviour, as acknowledged by interviewee CEOEH, 'you [were] responsible for your numbers, so [you didn't] want to share that.' Arguably, this shows the degree to which the sport policy subsystem and operational environment was engineered to position NGB/SMNGBs as primarily 'policy takers', where acceptance of policy rather than opposition was preferable, particularly for those whose priority was to avoid a situation where it had to 'persuade people to open up the purse strings' (Interviewee: CEOEH), as in the case of EH.

[24] See SE's NGB National Priorities online data for 2013-17 WSPs for further information on handball's alignment with SE policy and objectives: Available online from: https://www.sportengland.org/media/10084/20130920-ngb-priorities-spreadsheet-final.xls

[25] References to 'interviewee CEOEH' relate to an interview dated 15th August 2018.

Further opportunities for EH/handball to develop as a sport, and meet its contractual obligations to government/SE, were presented by the Home Olympics in 2012. According to EH's Annual Report 2012-13 (2013b, pp.7-8), there had been a 'huge surge in interest after the London 2012 Olympics', a claim supported by the media particularly in regard to handball's apparent 'impact on the consciousness of the British Public' (Veal, 2012), and that since 2012 EH's primary focus has been the maximisation of any potential 'Olympic effect.' As noted by interviewee CEOEH, 'our work has really been to capture the swell of interest from 2012 and maintain it, which is a challenge for a small organisation with limited funding.'

Of significance here is EH's invitation in June 2013 to give evidence to the HLSCOPL (2013a), handball's inclusion of which, according to the CEO of EH (Meli, cited in McSteen, 2013), was 'not a token gesture … [but] a fantastic opportunity to give handball another push and to raise the profile a bit more and keep it in the spotlight.' Arguably, this provides a further example of EH's use of political resources, and the potential for 'insider influence' to promote the sport within the sport policy subsystem, although it is uncertain whether the ACF considers such a political platform as a resource, since it assumes political resources relate to coalitions rather than individual coalition members. However, evidence provided to the HLSCOPL gave an indication of the slow recognition among NGB/SMNGBs of the lessening of their autonomy and previously privileged position of equality, and their increasing dependency (on public funding) and vulnerability to diminishing levels of public funding when non-compliant with government/SE's policy requirements:

> '[A]ll sports were treated the same and went through the same process … [and] started to realise that [it] was not a divine right any more to get public funding. It had to be earned against good-quality plans that are going to deliver and, if they do not deliver, they are going to get money taken away. [SE] showed its teeth in the last four years when it did take money away. It was the first time it had been done' (Meli, cited in HLSCOPL, 2013a, p.219).

The shift away from the light touch of financial sanctions to a more decisive approach of diverting funds away from non-compliant NGBs, and government/SE's increasing interest in supporting a wider range of delivery organisations, prompted

the creation of the National Governing Body CEO Forum (NGBCEOF)[26], which was also in response to concerns over the lack of support from governmental agencies to NGB CEOs, especially CEOs of SMNGBs, where arguably their responsibilities necessitated substantial support. As explained by interviewee CEOEH:

> '[SE] delivered a programme for participation development directors … [UKS] did it for performance directors. Sport and Recreation Alliance did one for Chairs of governing bodies. No-one did anything for the Chief Execs, the people who were actually running the organisation. So, we actually ended up setting it up for ourselves.'

Interviewee CEOEH elaborated further by stating:

> '[W]e needed to have a voice; we needed to show that we were more than just about development, more than just about participation. It kept the profile of sport and therefore the profile of [NGBs] high, at a time when it was potentially on the wane … It provided a collective voice [with a] very clear focus on stuff we could do as a united force.'

Arguably, the NGBCEOF represents a 'professional fora', particularly for SMNGBs, a key characteristic of which is the use of data to defend and promote interests and beliefs (Sabatier and Weible, 2007), which clearly informed the NGBCEOF's 'The State of Play' (National Governing Body CEO Forum [NGBCEOF], 2015) impact document, as seen in Figure 6.1. Such collaboration among SMNGBs in the reaffirmation of shared-beliefs, values, and strategic importance of sport and salience to various governmental departments, signposts an increasing interest in influencing the policy environment at a governmental level in areas where sport can have an impact on policy outcomes, as clearly articulated by the stated intention of the NGBCEOF (2015, p.2), to be the 'go to group for policymakers who impact on sport, and to influence policy that impacts on sport.' According to EH Board minutes (EH, 2015b, p.5), the SMNGB's planned response to the changing relationship with government/SE was to 'present consistent points, with other [NGBs]', through its membership of the NGBCEOF, to ensure handball was 'not seen as a poor relation with a lack of money, yet was in a position to state the issues.'

[26] NGBCEOF represented 39 of the leading NGBs of sport in England leading up to the 2015 General election. According to interviewee CEOEH, the forum now represents less than 30 NGBs, consisting of predominantly SMNGBs, the major sports/NGBs (e.g. cricket, football, rugby and tennis) having pulled out as they have their own voice and are large enough to meet and influence government on their own.

Figure 6.1: ***NGBCEOF Impact in 2014***

Source: NGBCEOF (2015, p.10)

The above evidence not only highlights the concern to establish a coalition of SMNGBs, but also demonstrates the breadth of their interests. As claimed by interviewee CEOEH, 'there are very few policy areas that sport … in its widest possible context, physical activity, doesn't potentially … have an impact on.' However, the potential to influence policy is likely to be dependent on whether their collective voice is capable of engaging with government, or as pointed out by interviewee SRADP, 'whether government is prepared to listen to something which could be perceived as a bit colloquial.'

While there are indications of EH's aspirations to influence sport policy, evidence shows an increasing willingness to align with government and SE policy and maintain its membership of the SE-led coalition, as seen by EH's greater focus and achievement in community sport rather than elite sport (EH, 2014b; EH, 2015f; EH, 2015c; EH, 2015b). This has clearly supported handball's development as a sport and EH's relationship with government and SE, as evidenced by the improved four-year funding award to EH from SE for the 2017-21 funding cycle, whereby handball

was one of only a few sports to receive increased funding (EH, 2017b; SE, 2017b). Furthermore, the reduced centrality of NGBs arising from the government's 2015 policy document, *Sporting Future*, and SE's mixed economy approach for their 2016-21 *Active Nation* strategy, has not weakened EH's beliefs of the mutual benefits of complementary alignment to policy objectives. For example, EH claimed that its strengths matched SE's changed remit and targeted investment areas, such as young people down to 5-years old, under-represented groups, female participation, and those from lower socioeconomic and minority ethnic backgrounds (EH, 2016d, pp.2-3). In addition, and as noted within EH Board minutes, EH believe that not many other sports can provide 'the simplicity of access and the demographic make-up' of handball (EH, 2016d, p.4), or have 'more influence over those participating [regularly], despite [handball's] lower participation numbers, than, for example, football' (EH, 2016g, p.3).

The observable acceptance of policy change rather than opposition to the changing policy environment, identifies EH as primarily a 'policy taker', however, further evidence endorses a position of contentment to comply and align with the shared 'policy-core' beliefs of government and SE on the basis of self-preservation, as asserted by interviewee CEOEH:

> '[W]e have to recognise that if we're going to take [SE's] money, we're going to have to dance to whatever tune they want us to or whatever tune they are playing, and if that means we have to meet certain governance criteria to get the money, then we're going to do that' (Interviewee: CEOEH).

Undoubtedly, SE has played a significant role in shaping EH, as well as other SMNGBs, as interviewee CEOEH indicated, 'there's no doubt that the policies and the programmes and the approach and strategy, more [SE] and less so [UKS], has brought about the changing shape of [NGBs].' Yet, the vulnerability of NGBs, particularly SMNGBs, to shifts in government policy, and their observable passivity to policy change, does raise questions on sport/NGBs' continuity in or suitability for the sport policy environment and a role within government. A point made more significant by an emerging issue of organisational-identity for SE, resulting from government's shifting priorities towards the inactive and 'sport for social good', and the re-emergence of 'sport for sport's sake' on the periphery of political concern:

> ‘Sport England is a misnomer. It’s no longer Sport England, its Physical Activity England … [T]he focus is now on inactivity … [, which] took a lot of [NGBs] by surprise. There was a perception [by SE] that perhaps [the focus on NGBs] hadn’t seen as big a growth as they were expecting … [Policy] now sits within a wider context, [and] … sport is now but a small part of a broader look at health, wellbeing, and stuff like that. Arguably, there isn’t a government strategy for sport. There is a strategy in which sport sits, but it’s more a question of [sport is] still a poorer relation to other areas of delivery’ (Interviewee: CEOEH).

At an elite level, handball, together with other unfunded SMNGBs, have organised themselves into a collective through the ‘Every Sport Matters’ ([ESM], 2017) forum, calling for a change in the way Olympic and Paralympic sport is funded. Media criticism surrounding the withdrawal of elite funding from handball highlighted the challenges faced by team sports, in particular those emerging or developing, to construct their own Olympic Legacy, for example, the absence of athlete ‘role models’ (see Slater, 2012; White, 2012; Compton, 2013; Hawkins, 2013), the impact of ejection from the UKS-led coalition thwarting elite development, as evidenced by interviewee CEOEH’s comment that ‘[UKS] asked [handball] to go from nowhere to somewhere, and just sent us back to nowhere again.’ This points towards an emerging dichotomy between funded/established-elitist sports (the ‘haves’) and unfunded/developing-elitist-competitive sports (the ‘have nots’), also identifying the *No Compromise* principle as a notable restriction to coalition membership, illustrating characteristics of Lukes’ second dimension of power and the erection of barriers to access the policy agenda and limit debate on elite sport policy.

The evidence also supports emergence of a minority coalition of unfunded/developing-elitist-competitive sports (the ‘have nots’), nested within the UKS-led coalition, having coalesced around shared-beliefs that medal-return should not be the sole driver of elite investment, and that all Olympic and Paralympic athletes should have the ability to realise their potential (ESM, 2017). According to interviewee CEOEH:

> ‘[Handball] has worked with ten other sports on the Every Sport Matters programme. We knew we wouldn’t be able to do that on our own, but to work with a group, and that group has stayed together, which is good, the outcome would be an actual change.’

The argument being that all Olympic and Paralympic sports should be provided with a certain level of elite funding, and that in the case of team sports, consideration should be given to the number of medallists/athletes who can act as inspirational role models. Thus, pointing towards the exploitation of commonsensical 'deep-core' beliefs, as described by Grix and Carmichael (2012), in an attempt to develop 'policy-core' beliefs and influence policy change at an elite level, in line with ACF assumptions. As explained by interviewee CEOEH:

> 'What we're saying is spread the load … Recognise that, actually, and this is where team sports have suffered, what is it you want, medals … or … medallists.'

Evidence indicates an element of success here, government having introduced a new 'Aspirational Fund'[27] to support more Summer Olympic and Paralympic sports and help inspire local communities (DCMS, 2018; UKS, 2018). Arguably though, funding has been directed towards those with the potential for podium success, handball being one sport not to receive funding, suggesting that this has been a strategy of government/UKS to quieten the dissident voices of unfunded SMNGBs, thus providing an illustration of Lukes' second dimension of power – maintaining control over the policy agenda.

[27] UKS awards for the 'Aspirational Fund'. Available from: http://www.uksport.gov.uk/news/2018/12/07/new-sports-backed-by-aspiration-fund-to-support-ambitions-for-tokyo-2020-olympics-and-paralympics

6.3) Operational impacts and approaches to changing sport policy

6.3.1) Governance

Modernisation and reform was a key component of EH's 2013-17 WSP, particularly to establish 'a segregation between strategic and operational management … [and] …a new level of professionalism', and meet SE governance standards (EH, 2012, pp.16-17). According to EH's Annual Report 2014-15 (EH, 2015a), good governance was crucial for long-term success, as seen by EH's commitment to governance reform through the acceptance of the Voluntary Code of Good Governance (EH, 2014b), and positive feedback from SE in relation to the strengthening and continued improvements to EH's governance infrastructure (EH, 2013b; EHA, 2014c; EH, 2015a; EH, 2016b; EH, 2016e). This illustrates shared 'policy-core' beliefs with government/SE, and EH's willingness to comply with the regulatory nature of the SE-led coalition, adherence to government/SE governance protocols emphasising characteristics of Lukes' first and third dimensions of power.

The increased focus on governance, however, has had a significant impact on SMNGBs, both from an organisational and operational perspective, as evidenced by the comments of interviewee CEOEH:

> '[T]he governance stuff and the latter stages of that has undoubtedly changed the way that [NGBs] operate. The focus was on reducing the impact of the 'Blazer Brigade.' People who feel they've been in the sport for 50 years, and therefore know how to run it. Organisations now, even an organisation our size … we're a small business, and therefore we should be run and operated as a small business, not an old boys club.'

The conditional expectation for all NGBs in receipt of public funding to achieve excellence in governance within a new *Mandatory* Code of Governance for Sport, (EH, 2016b, p.14), led to heightened tensions within EH, not only among Board members, but also between the Board, the Executive, and the membership, as evidenced by EH's governance proposal to change the recruitment process for the position of Chair from an elected to an appointed process (a SE initiative), the main purpose of which was to highlight to SE 'how seriously [EH] focuse[d] on the importance of governance' (EH, 2016i p.6). From EH Board minutes (2016a, 2016d,

2016e), it is evident that much of the conflict at Board-level reflected the varying beliefs of Board members, particularly from those who held the belief that the position of Chair should be the domain of someone immersed in handball, in conflict with government/SE's efforts to reassert control over NGBs through the removal of the so-called 'Blazer Brigade.' The influence of which can be seen in EH, as evidenced by the comments of one Board member who noted that 'if the Chair addresses the AGM outlining his disagreement, the idea is unlikely to succeed' (EH, 2016e, p.2), which arguably reflects Lukes' third dimension of power to shape members' preferences. Further evidence also endorses the extent to which internal conflicts are a reflection of an observable dichotomy between those favouring compliance with SE's governance protocols to preserve the NGB's financial interests, and those firmly committed to the preservation of NGB autonomy and the protection of membership interests, as well as highlighting the potential implications for organisational-identity, as demonstrated by the comments of interviewee CEOEH:

> '[NGBs] will always be a membership organisation and that's one of the challenges in the new world, in that, those members are often always "die hards" of the sport, and therefore their only view; their only thought; their only concern is for the success of that sport, and the fact that the [NGB] is there to work for them. So, they get slightly peeved when they see the [NGB] going off and dealing with … all this governance stuff that they have to do.'

Arguably, the above evidence highlights the limitations in the ACF's concept of shared-beliefs, through its neglect of tensions among coalition members. The impact of the dichotomy of beliefs within EH is demonstrated further by the rejection of the resolution to have an appointed rather than elected Chair (9 votes for and 10 votes against) (EH, 2016h, p.4), despite an awareness among EH members that non-compliance with SE's regulatory requirements would likely result in financial sanctions (EH, 2017e; EH, 2016g), again illustrating the compliance and punitive nature of the SE-led coalition.

Notwithstanding the above, evidence suggests that governance reform within SMNGBs that are less established, emerging or developing, have a higher transformational capacity than their larger and longer established counterparts, in part due to the closeness of membership to the SMNGB administration:

> ‘[O]ur world was much smaller and so allowed voices in membership to be perhaps sometimes closer to the centre, than they would be in football or rugby, … We didn’t struggle to much with [governance], because we didn’t have to make too many changes to structure’ (Interviewee: CEOEH).

> ‘[T]he smallest [NGBs] are the most transformational, their Boards are very skills-based, independent, and looking to drive a transformational agenda’ (Interviewee: SESLR).

While EH has demonstrated a willingness to comply with SE governance criteria, it is evident that the potential risks for non-compliance have greater implications. For example, interviewee CEOEH remarked that by not having governance compliance in place within the specified time, ‘you risked your funding being turned off.’ Further evidence highlighted that compliance for some NGBs has simply been a necessity to secure funding, as interviewee SEC claimed, ‘there are some sports that are doing it because there told to do it.’ The acceptance of compliance illustrating how Lukes’ first dimension of power is operationalised, particularly as evidence shows that compliance with governance protocols has not been straightforward:

> ‘[SE] want directors to have skills, knowledge and experience … Married against that you’ve got to have this diversity in terms of gender and minority ethnic representation. The struggle comes when you’re at a point where you don’t quite meet the gender bit, but you want to find the most skills, knowledge and experience that you can, and if they all come along and don’t fit into the minority ethnic or gender that you require, how do you reconcile the two’ (Interviewee: CEOEH).

Even so, EH claimed within its Annual Report 2017-18 (EH, 2018a, p.14) that it was ‘one of the first mixed-gender [NGBs] to have a majority of female members on its board of directors’, and achieved full compliance within the specified timeframe. While this reflects EH’s resource-dependency and its commitment to maintain its membership of the SE-led coalition, it also represents EH’s notion of self-preservation, compliance having ‘put [EH] in a strong position to maintain its ability to access public funding’ (EH, 2018a, p.14).

6.3.2) Funding

According to EH's 2013-17 WSP (2012, pp.14-15), the funding received from SE for the 2009-13 funding cycle (£645,300), although weighted towards modernisation, positively impacted on EH's ability to: i) develop the organisation and grow in stature; ii) deliver on outcomes where resources had been targeted; iii) benefit from inclusion within a number of schemes that accelerated the growth of handball (e.g. Change4Life [C4L] and PremierLeague4Sport [PL4S]); and iv) establish initial benchmarks to test demand for handball in England. While the above evidence demonstrates EH's willingness to align with and commit to the 'policy-core' beliefs and objectives of government/SE, it also highlights the mutually beneficial interdependencies of membership of the SE-led coalition (e.g. EH's inclusion within SE initiatives).

The strategic relevance of EH's alliance to SE is demonstrated by EH's attempts to maximise SE funding to achieve its objective to 'establish handball as a major team sport for all' (EH, 2012, p.13), through over-ambitious WSP submissions to SE to achieve desired funding outcomes from negotiations. An illustration of which is provided in Table 6.1, which shows the funding resource required by EH to operate and implement its 2013-17 WSP amounted to just over £2.5m, thus exceeding EH's 2009-13 funding award by almost 300%. Subsequent negotiations with SE proved successful with increased funding awards of £1.3m for the 2013-17 funding cycle (EH, 2013b, pp.5-6), and £1.4m for the 2017-21 funding cycle (EH, 2017f, SE, 2017b), the latter also related to a funding application to SE for £2.5m (EH, 2016h, p.5).

Table 6.1: ***Funding resource requirements for England Handball's 2013-17 WSP***

Operational Costs	Sport England Funding (£)	NGB Funding (£)	Partner Funding (£)	Total Cost (£)
Clubs and community	230,780	-	-	230,780
Competition	80,661	-	-	80,661
Talent pathway and player development	447,157	-	-	447,157
Coaching and workforce development	53,577	-	-	53,577
Infrastructure	657,589	22,203	198,651	878,443
Projects	120,000			120,000
Core Costs	530,275	16,853	153,754	700,882
Totals	**2,120,039**	**39,056**	**352,405**	**2,511,500**

Source adapted from: EH (2012)

From Table 6.1, EH's financial contribution to its own 2013-17 WSP appeared negligible, adding to the debate on the ability or reluctance of NGBs to be self-sustainable, particularly as evidence indicates that EH's self-generated income has not matched the level of government/SE funding, which has led to a high dependency on public subsidies, as seen from EH's income/revenue financial data in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: ***England Handball income/revenue for the period 2014-15 to 2017-18***

Year	2014-15 (£)	2015-16 (£)	2016-17 (£)	2017-18 (£)
Self-generated Income	269,885	281,205	360,271	323,878
Other Income (Sport Councils Grants)	458,440	486,118	639,951	436,711
Total Revenue	728,325	767,323	1,000,222	760,589
Resource-Dependency %	**63%**	**63%**	**64%**	**57%**

Source: EH (2016c, 2017d, 2018a)

Despite a key objective to 'foster a commercially aware culture' (EH, 2016b, p.12), it is evident that EH's weakness as a sport in England has limited its ability to grow commercial revenues:

> ‘[O]ur ability is minimal. Minimal to the extent that we don’t have the media profile, we don’t have the numbers, the volume that would be attractive to a bigger investor’ (Interviewee: CEOEH).

However, evidence has revealed reluctance on the part of EH to enhance its financial self-reliance through what is arguably its most fluid of income streams, membership fees. While EH has seen an increase in player registrations and affiliations, there has been no desire to increase membership fees (EH, 2017a), the cost of membership having remained ‘unchanged’ since 2013 (EH, 2018a, p.15). This is related to a perceived paradox between increasing member numbers and increasing membership fees, whereby increased memberships fees are likely to reduce membership numbers, and that any increase in membership fees is also likely to increase the level of expectation among membership for improved services:

> ‘[W]hen someone comes along and says, “why don’t you increase your membership fees, put an extra £15-20 on membership fees and generate loads [of income]?” [I would say] “no, it might just bring me less members.” We’re already an expensive sport. If I suddenly say to people, you know your membership fees were £20 per year; they’re now £40 per year. Not only might they [leave], they’re also more likely to start [saying] what do I get for that, and there’s only so many times you can say to them, “well you get insurance”’ (Interviewee: CEOEH).

Funding for EH, has not only been the most challenging issue faced, it has been explicit in shaping the SMNGB through increased levels of resource-dependency on public funds, and a lessening of autonomy. As one Board member claimed, ‘the consequence of not allowing [EH] to grow actually makes the [NGB] less independent’ (EH, 2016h, p.6), which resonates with interviewee CEOEH’s remarks that SE retains influence over EH’s operational and financial activities, ‘no matter what level of resource-dependency’, again highlighting Lukes’ first dimension of power. Arguably, the comment regarding the limitations to growth is arguably connected to the extent to which EH is tied into the SE-led coalition, and not a reflection of EH’s development as an emerging sport and its evident progress since the formation of the SMNGB, particularly as a conditional part of EH’s 2017-21 funding agreement with SE is an obligation to regulate for self-sustainability, through the provision of information and analyses on income streams, back office costs,

business efficiency and scenario plans for dealing with changes in funding (EH, 2018b, p.7).

Evidence also suggests that EH has altered its beliefs and shifted away from the original emphasis placed on its relationship with SE, as a 'development partner', and now view SE as merely a 'financial partner' or stakeholder with reducing influence on the autonomy of EH, as clearly indicated by interviewee CEOEH:

> 'SE [is] a partner … who provides investment into [our] business … [We've] chosen to take their money, so they don't figuratively or literally have a seat at the table, but they have an interest.'

Moreover, SE's 2016-21 strategy for sport and the shift away from an NGB-focused approach to participation, in line *Sporting Future*, not only exposed the high levels of resource-dependency of many SMNGBs, but also the apparent lack of understanding of the expectations that came with access to public funds, particularly among SMNGBs, and the speed and size of funding allocations that, for SMNGBs such as EH, prompted a rapid and impromptu rags to riches scenario, with a potential caveat of back to rags again:

> '[T]he challenge was that [NGBs] hadn't realised that the increase [in public funds] for some of them was so great, some just weren't ready for it. Suddenly, you had all this money and didn't really know what to do with it apart from spend it. And that doesn't always work if you're not understanding where you need to spend and why you need to spend it, and it's not about the short-term but about the long-term. I think handball was guilty of that and one of those thrown a big bundle of cash, told to get on with it, … and then it all fell down like a house of cards' (Interviewee: CEOEH).

Interviewee CEOEH commented further that:

> 'with a move away from participation to inactivity, [NGBs] are suddenly saying, "hold on we're on the periphery now, the funding has suddenly almost halved, but we want to be the same size we were, as we weren't really set up correctly." So, I think that reliance on public funding was (*sic*) just exposed.'

For EH, the reliance on public funds has not just been exposed, it remains a critical mechanism to maintain operations at current levels, and to avoid a regressive organisational shift from 'boardroom' back to a 'kitchen table' organisation, as noted by interviewee CEOEH:

> 'There's always going to be a need for a certain level of [public] funding to deliver a certain level of operation. So, if that funding isn't there, we're going to have [to] … recognise we'll go back to where we were pre-2005.'

6.3.3) Capacity Building: workforce and facilities

A key part of EH's modernisation plan was the development of a suitably trained and professional workforce, designed to reduce the operational control from Board members (SE, 2010b; EH, 2012), in line with government/SE's governance reforms. Evidence suggests the adoption of a pragmatic approach to workforce development on the part of EH, through volunteers and partnerships to provide an acceptable level of organisational-sustainability against government/SE investment. An illustration of which, as noted in EH's 2012-13 Annual Report, was a workforce development design to provide 'a suitably trained and deployed workforce … able to deliver handball without draining resources from the organisation', to achieve 'the best possible return' against investment, rather than have 'a large centrally paid workforce that [was] ultimately unsustainable without public funding' (EH, 2013b, p.7). This demonstrates a willingness of EH to align with the 'policy-core' beliefs and 'secondary-aspects' of the SE-led coalition, while also emphasising the overlap of shared-beliefs, particularly in terms of capacity building, strengthening accountability, and increasing efficiency. Additionally, the use of EH's volunteer infrastructure and partnership-working to meet government and SE-objectives, clearly identifies resource-interdependencies as constituent part of the SE-led coalition.

Partnership-working was a key element of EH's commitment to workforce development (EH, 2012, pp.32-33; EH, 2015a, p.26), primarily aimed at sustainability and the utilisation of resources from others to deliver handball in hard to reach areas, which again demonstrates the significance of interdependencies within the SE-led coalition. As noted by CEOEH within EH Board minutes (2016e, p.4):

> ‘It is a waste of time, resources and money to repeat what partners are already successfully involved in. The aim is to have formal agreements in place with key strategic partners, to show that [EH] can deliver in all areas.’

When interviewed, CEOEH stated further that:

> ‘In our own sport and in many other sports, there will be people who are better placed to deliver our sport than us. We shouldn’t try and do it all. We don’t need to do it all, and that’s the whole point of trying to utilise the funding that we have, at whatever level, and as it decreases, even more importantly, not to try and double up.’

As an example, EH had increased its handball development officer capacity, primarily through investment from other coalition partners, including, County Sports Partnerships (CSPs), leisure trusts, Local Authorities (LAs), universities and StreetGames, particularly to build the profile of the handball in new areas (EH, 2015a, p.20). Here, the introduction and further development of handball activators was seen as critical and essential to (EH, 2012, pp.21-24): i) ‘support capacity building and hands-on delivery at local level’; ii) ‘develop initiatives stemming from relationships and demand within their respective areas’; and iii) use as ‘leverage to secure match funding.’

Coach education was also seen as essential to resolve issues of retention and ineffective deployment of resources within handball (EH, 2012), particularly in the educational sector. This suggests a shared-belief with government/SE at a ‘policy-core’ level, where ‘effective coaching’ was viewed as a serious policy issue and a key part of the *Playground to Podium* ideology for sport development (DCMS, 2002b, p.45). It is evident that the continued development and enhancement of EH’s coach education programmes was recognised by SE, resulting in additional public funds to provide EH with a dedicated coaching and leadership officer (EH, 2012).

However, further evidence indicates that the compliance-contractual obligations of the SE-led coalition, placed a strain on operational resources of EH, for example, capacity issues within the development of the schools competition had a detrimental effect on ‘key audiences’ (children and young people) (EH, 2014b, p.7). Interviewee CEOEH elaborated further on this point by stating:

> ‘[W]e ran the whole [school] competition from start to finish, at local level right through. We got to the point where we had about 250 teams in it, but it was killing us. We didn’t have the structure to organise a local level competition.’

Comments from interviewee CEOEH also illuminated the negative impact that changes in funding for LA leisure services have had on the provision and delivery of sport at community-grassroots levels, and the sporting landscape as a whole over the past 10 to 15 years:

> ‘[T]he growing changes to [LA] leisure funding, [impacted on the sporting landscape] both in terms of provision and delivery at a development level, but also in terms of facilities that so many [NGBs] are reliant on. Whether it’s playing fields, whether its sports centres, whatever it might be, a majority of those have either been shut down, [or] moved into private sector hands.’

It could be argued that the vast changes in LA contracts and provisions for sport acted as an external perturbation, where changes within a different policy subsystem has impacted on the ‘policy-core’ beliefs and ‘secondary-aspects’ of the sport policy subsystem, the extent of the shockwave determined by the degree of government intervention within subsystems external the sport policy domain. To illustrate, it is noted within EH Board minutes that the limited access to suitable facilities had been ‘a huge factor in hindering the expansion of [h]andball’ (EH, 2016i, p.2), and undoubtedly affected its ability to meet government policy outcomes. Evidence also suggests that the significance of changes in LA provisions and its impact on the sport policy subsystem, has not received a satisfactory level of attention within the policy environment. As claimed by interviewee SEC, the disconnect between local government and sport has been ‘overlooked’, and more so when reductions in LA funding (in England) from ‘£1.5bn to around £0.8bn’ since 2014 are taken into consideration.

According to EH (2013b, p.7), ‘the availability of suitably sized and accessible venues is a challenge … faced by many indoor sports, especially handball’, and continues to be the ‘biggest obstacle facing members, clubs, schools, and …the biggest influence on participation’ (EH, 2016g, p.7). A fundamental issue with facilities for handball is the size of the court, as explained by the CEO of EH when interviewed in July 2013:

> ‘We have this infrastructure problem with [SE], designating that halls are based around badminton courts. [T]he standard design is a four badminton court hall, which wall to wall gives you approximately 33m by maybe 19m. Bearing in mind a handball court is 40m by 20m, you can’t get the full width. The width is a problem, because if you don’t have the full width the wing play is severely curtailed.’

EH/handball do not have the resources or influence to control the availability or construction of facilities, thus reflecting their position as weaker sport in England, and in this case, a position of ‘policy taker.’ As noted by interviewee CEOEH:

> ‘[EH/handball are] not the football foundation, we don’t have the money to invest and influence you to build your hall bigger or to encourage you to put the lines down. We’ve got to ride on the coattails of others and hope that one of the outcomes will be that we get some access.’

Further evidence suggests additional facility issues, such as early closures of facilities, increased costs, the failure to open up educational sites, and competition between coalition partners, have also significantly impacted on handball as an indoor sport:

> ‘[It’s] a challenge to get hold of facilities, get access to facilities, and as an indoor sport, we’re fighting with several other sports all for the same space in the sports hall. But at the same time, [LAs] closing facilities, the rising cost of access … [and] education sites, whether that’s schools, colleges or universities. A lot of them will get locked at 3.00, 3.30 or 4.00. That’s it, won’t be open at the weekends, standing empty. Facilities that indoor sports could use’ (Interviewee: CEOEH).

These factors have limited the ability of EH to achieve government objectives and to develop their sport, thus demonstrating the impact of other policy subsystems, such as Education and Local Government on the sport policy subsystem. That said, evidence has shown an ability of EH to adapt to the operational challenges emanating from the lack of suitable facilities, through the introduction of various adaptations to the sport, including, mini-handball, street-handball, and beach-handball (EH, 2012), to make handball ‘accessible to more people’ (EH, 2015a, p.7).

6.3.4) Participation

The focus of EH's participative strategies has been to develop handball through the educational system, as clearly indicated by interviewee CEOEH:

> 'Our focus as an organisation has been on the education sector, growing it in schools. Getting young kids playing … is a far more important area for us than trying to get more adults to play.'

This demonstrates a shared-belief with government/SE, especially as sport in education has been a prominent feature of sport policy since *Raising the Game (1995)*. The close alignment between SE and EH objectives is clearly reflected in EH's WSP 2013-17 (2012), which emphasised: i) getting more young people into handball, through a focus on the educational sector; ii) facilitating a thriving and robust handball club infrastructure; and iii) providing increased opportunities for competition. Evidence also suggests that handball's offering of an inclusive, adaptable, and flexible sporting solution at every educational setting, aligned very closely with *Creating a Sporting Habit for Life (2012)* and the 'policy-core beliefs of the SE-led coalition. In particular, improving the physical literacy of children at primary level, the availability of competition and coaching opportunities at secondary and tertiary levels, flexible adaptations of the sport to meet a diverse range of facilities, and inclusivity in terms of diversity. This highlights a level of willingness to accept the compliance-contractual obligations of government and SE, largely based on complementary participation strategies.

The flexible nature of handball is demonstrated by its 'Try Handball' product, which was seen as a 'transportable … fun and engaging version of the sport, without the technicalities', with market appeal (EH, 2016d, p.2), although evidence suggests that the level of appeal was less than expected due in the most part to a lack of insight and understanding of market demand-led strategies (EH, 2018a), which highlights to some extent the difficulties experienced by SMNGBs to interpret sport policy expectations and outcomes. Other 'handball derivatives' utilised by EH to increase less formal participation, included: drop-in-handball; multi-sport activity; mixed-gender activity, and beach-, street- and park-handball, all of which were considered pragmatic and adaptable approaches to increasing participation within a limited facility infrastructure (EH, 2012, pp.24-25).

However, EH's adapted versions of handball, designed to meet government and SE stretching policy objectives, were met with criticism from membership, as evidenced by interviewee CEOEH's remarks:

> 'Creating a small-sized version of the game … fits into the environment of schools, who have very small facilities. So, when you say to [members] "we've got this version you can play on a smaller court", they say "that's not handball." [We say] "no, but it's a way in which we can introduce people to the sport that we couldn't otherwise do"' (Interviewee: CEOEH).

While this highlights the compliance/autonomy tensions internal to EH and the challenges of managing those different interests and expectations, it is possible to argue that the use of adapted versions of the sport to increase participation, resonates with a degree of enforced alignment with government/SE to meet government policy outcomes, since it is unlikely that such a strategy would be considered if EH's concerns were explicitly those of its members. In contrast, EH's club and community programmes underpinned its overall strategic plan for 2013-17, by 'providing and supporting an avenue for participation within the community game from initial engagement through to integration into a club environment and, ultimately, access to the talent pathway for handball in the England' (EH, 2012, p.24), demonstrating a clear and complementary alignment with the *Playground to Podium* 'policy-core' beliefs and objectives of government/SE.

Furthermore, although the predominant focus of EH is the development of community-grassroots sport, into which 'all [SE funding would] go' (Meli, CEO of EH, cited in HLSCOPL, 2013a, p.205), evidence suggests a growing tension between elite and community sport, and a disconnect along the pathway from talent development to elite performance, which has the potential to limit the development of the elite side of sports such as handball, and hamper any attempts to regain membership of the UKS-led coalition. This is best illustrated by EH's efforts to develop its talent pathway through involvement in the National School Games competition. Evidence shows a year on year growth for EH within the school competition, for example, 25 competing schools in 2010 compared to 1,422 competing in 2016 (EH, 2016b, 2017b), hence EH's claim that handball is considered a 'fast-growing sport in schools' (EH, 2016, p.7). However, the sport's absence from the National School Games is reflective of its status as a non-medal

winning sport, rather than its status as a participation sport within the School Games competition, which points towards a sport policy subsystem still dominated by elite sport and medal priorities, as evidenced by interviewee CEOEH's statement that:

> '[EH] made submissions to get into the National School Games, but [SE and UKS] are part of that decision-making, [and] suddenly the *No Compromise* perspective of [UKS] rears its head, and we didn't get in because we're not a medal potential sport. What the heck has that got to do with school games? That's my question. Why should that stop a sport like handball that has seen such a growth in schools be prevented from having a seat at the National School Games finals?'

Arguably, the lack EH/handball's influence in this regard is also a reflection of the means by which it was measured against SE agreed outcomes, where insufficient sample sizes for once a month participation figures prevented the use of APS, and satellite clubs were not considered formal community clubs, and were therefore not included within EH participation figures (EH, 2015d). Thus, signposting the ill-defined nature of WSP monitoring system and the means by which participation was measured, especially when evidence shows that EH had '10 times more clubs in education', yet these were excluded from its membership figures (EH, 2017a, p.4).

On the other hand, EH's expansion of its competition structure (see EH, 2016b, 2017b) aligned closely with the 'policy-core' beliefs and 'secondary-aspects' of the SE-led coalition, in the provision of accessible, modern, sports club structures to drive up participation (SE, 2008). However, evidence indicates that SE's criteria for club accreditation (EH, 2016h) impacted negatively on membership and club development, creating further tensions between EH and its membership, as interviewee CEOEH explained:

> '[H]aving to put on [clubs] things like safeguarding, governance, financial standing, and the governance code goes down to that level as well, they don't get it. We've had some people walk away, [and] there are some people within our membership who feel purely that the [NGB] should just be giving them money to function.'

Illustrating further the observable compliance versus autonomy dichotomy within EH, and the challenges associated with managing the differing needs of government/SE and members, particularly in the face of an enforced alignment with 'policy-core' beliefs, in this case the requirement for SE club accreditations.

6.3.5) Partnerships

The strategic approach of EH to increasing participation and sport development has been partnership-based, primarily with coalition partners, which demonstrates a shared-belief with the government/SE on the merits of collaboration as a tool for achieving policy outcomes on the basis of mutually beneficial interdependencies. Indeed, evidence suggests that partnership-working is of greater importance to smaller, less well-resourced NGBs, where partners are not just viewed as deliverers of the sport, but also advocates for the sport and a means of gaining a competitive advantage, as purported within EH Board minutes:

> '[a partnership approach is] more problematic [for other NGBs], especially those with a big inflexible infrastructure. This would be less of a challenge for [EH] … , [particularly as it had] started that transition, working with local partners, and developing more delivery arms with leisure providers, local authorities, … in comparison with many other [NGBs]' (EH, 2016d, p.2).

According to EH's Annual Report 2016-17 (EH, 2017b, p.2), partnership-working offered a myriad of opportunities for achieving more than they can could otherwise do in isolation, for example, building capacity to support handball 'delivery on the ground', individual club growth, and fostering and strengthening of local relationships to entice greater investment (EH, 2013b; EH, 2015a). It is also claimed within EH's 2017-21 Strategic Plan (2017g, p.2) that partnership-working is 'the most effective route to achieve success', and that collaboration with specialised partners has allowed EH to identify pockets of interest and demand, examples of which are StreetGames, Livewire (providing handball as extra-curriculum activity for after-school clubs) (EH, 2015d), and the Corporate Games (EH, 2015c; EH, 2015b). The idea, as explained by interviewee CEOEH, being to 'shoehorn yourself in' to new partners and niche markets by offering and delivering 'something simple.'

As illustrated above the key coalition partners of EH have been predominantly community-social-centric organisations, and also include CSPs, and educational establishments, largely based on the shared-belief on the power of sport for 'social good' (e.g. CSPs and StreetGames), thus demonstrating a fundamental assumption of the ACF that policy actors seek out other actors with matching beliefs[28]. While evidence suggests that CSPs have had less scope for influencing policy as their own activities have been 'constrained by the micro-management' of SE (Phillpots *et al*., 2011, p.279), StreetGames' capacity to influence has been strengthened through the proactive use of political resources to seize every opportunity to promote their belief of Doorstep Sport in the policy-making process (e.g. submission of papers to consultations, provision of written and spoken evidence to Parliamentary Inquires, and attendance on working parties or scrutiny committees within local authorities). Similar political resources have been utilised by EH (e.g. consultations, Parliamentary Inquiries, and working parties), although there has clearly been less impact, which arguably reflects their constrained capacity to influence policy resulting from the degree to which the SMNGB is tied to SE policy, similar to CSPs.

By contrast, StreetGames' advocacy is not limited to sports policy, as can be seen by its involvement in health policy initiatives, thus demonstrating the potential for sports organisations to cross the boundaries of different policy subsystems. StreetGames (n.d.) also consider NGBs to be 'important social institutions', a role that EH has some repertoire towards, but as a facilitator, rather than a deliverer:

> 'We are a social institution, but actually partners like StreetGames, provide our social institution, on our behalf. We're an education institution, but actually it's our working partnerships with schools, colleges and universities that make us an educational institution. Not solely us, but the partners that we work with provide that element' (Interviewee: CEOEH).

This does, however, draw attention to a potential issue for SMNGBs in terms of organisational-identity, particularly as they have clearly been shaped by government/SE to have far broader responsibilities than their traditionalist roots, yet as it evident with EH, the belief remains that they are and always will be a membership-body, whose purpose is to serve its members.

[28] See Appendix XII for examples of coalition partner beliefs, alignment and advocacy.

6.4) Conclusion

The case of EH/handball has provided a number of significant findings in relation to the aims and objectives of this research. Evidence suggests that the UK sport policy subsystem has experienced three significant external shocks, which have impacted on the sport policy domain, and shaped the sporting landscape over the past 20 years, namely: i) the increase and subsequent decrease in Lottery funding; ii) London's successful bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games, which acted as a catalyst for a NGB-focused approach to delivering government aims and objectives; and iii) changes to LA leisure services, particularly in terms of reduced availability of sports facilities and the limited capacity of LAs to provide delivery services at the developmental level, which have restricted the impact of NGBs as deliverers of sport.

It is evident that changes in sport policy have impacted on NGBs, such as EH, through high levels of resource-dependency, compliance requirements, performance regimes, and fear of financial sanctions. The result of which has been a loss of autonomy owing to the increasing level of governmental influence over operational and financial activities, and the emergence of an observable compliance versus autonomy tension. In short, EH has accepted compliance and financial rewards over membership interests, and resource-dependency over autonomy. The vulnerability of EH to resource-dependency has been exacerbated further by its limited ability to generate income, partly due to the concern that increasing membership fees would decrease membership and increase membership expectations, and partly due to the difficulty in attracting sponsors without an elite level national team.

Organisationally, EH has been progressive, arguably the result of its willingness to take advantage of opportunities provided by SE and its status as an evolving NGB. With no long established and national regional structure, the NGB has had fewer problems in adapting to change. Evidence suggests that EH's strategic alignment and compliance with government/SE policy is largely attributable to complementary 'core' beliefs, underpinned by a culture of opportunism, pragmatism, and facilitation through partnerships, to develop handball and meet government/SE aims and objectives. Indeed, partnership-working has greater significance to smaller, less-resourced NGBs, where partners are seen not just as deliverers, but also advocates of the sport, providing SMNGBs with a potential competitive advantage. Evidence

also suggests that EH has demonstrated a willingness to align itself with government/SE to maintain its membership of the SE-led coalition, which has arguably resulted from skillful leadership on the part of EH's CEO, formerly employed by SE, and willingness on the part of EH to accept the compliance-contractual nature of the SE-led coalition. The clearest example of this alignment is EH's focus on the community-grassroots sport in the educational sector, rather than the elite end of the sporting spectrum, where policy objectives overlap and are seen as complementary.

Evidence also shows that governmental relationships, more so with SE than UKS, have shaped the very nature of a modern NGBs, despite the fact that EH views SE as a financial partner and still regards itself as an autonomous membership organisation. However, this has created organisational-identity issues and less clarity of purpose. The shift away from a NGB-centric approach to increasing participation, has also exposed NGBs' reliance on public subsidies and a possible lack of understanding of the policy environment. Arguably, this has resulted not only from NGBs' concerns for development and self-preservation, but also from misguided sport policies that gave greater emphasis to inter-NGB competition than to collective action, as a means to achieve policy aims and objectives.

EH is identifiable as primarily a 'policy taker', there being no significant evidence of influencing sport policy, but rather an unopposed acceptance of policy change and willingness to adapt to change, to preserve its membership of the SE-led coalition. However, it is also argued that while SMNGBs operating within the sport policy domain are considered to be predominantly 'policy takers' rather than 'policy shapers', the absence of opposition to policy change or lobbying of government/SE to influence policy, is attributable to either: a) a high level of content with the trade-off between autonomy and funding, and a willingness among SMNGBs to accept compliance over autonomy in return for financial resources, to ensure self-preservation and support self-development; or b) the existence of complementary 'core' beliefs and objectives.

Evidence also highlighted EH's potential use of political resources to raise the awareness and profile of handball, as characterised by the ACF, which could arguably be considered a strategic attempt to influence the 'secondary-aspects' of

the sport policy subsystem, such as the allocation of funds (e.g. the Parliamentary Fellowship scheme, skillful leadership and lobbying via the HLSCOPL). Of potential significance is EH's membership of the NGBCEOF, which could arguably be described as a 'professional fora' in line with ACF assumptions, whose aim is to translate NGB shared-beliefs into authoritative policy decisions through collective action, thus highlighting the emergence of a coalition of SMNGBs. Equally, evidence suggests the emergence of a minority coalition of competitive but not elite NGBs (the 'have-nots'), nested within the UKS-led coalition, within which EH is a member, the aim being to influence sport policy at an elite level through collective action, by exploiting potential 'deep-core beliefs', such as the 'role model' effect, to influence changes in 'policy-core' beliefs of government/UKS-led coalition. However, at the time of writing both these initiatives offered potential rather than evidence of any meaningful external influence on policy.

With regard to the utility of the ACF, evidence shows that within the UK sport policy subsystem, agency-led coalitions are shaped, to a larger extent, by shared-beliefs, however, contract-compliance, financial incentives and sanctions, shared-interests, interdependencies, and symbiotic relationships, have also been identified as constituent parts of coalition membership. Evidence also highlights the potential for agency-led coalitions and coalition members to overlap with different coalitions and policy subsystems. In particular, evidence shows an increasing interest from NGBs to cross subsystem boundaries, since there are few policy areas in which sport would not have an impact. While evidence has shown that the ACF assumptions of external shocks provide a valid theoretical explanation of major policy change (e.g. the successful bid to host the 2012 Olympics and the Lottery), it is also argued that external perturbations can occur at the 'touch points' where policy subsystems overlap, for example, educational and LA policies. Evidence also demonstrates a fundamental assumption of the ACF that policy actors seek out other actors with shared-beliefs, as seen by the collaboration between EH and coalition partners, as well as highlighting the existence of differing beliefs within agency-led coalitions, and actionable policy consequences through shared-interests, particularly the financial incentives and sanctions linked to the contractual obligations of agency-led coalition membership and policy outcomes. The complexity and nature of coalitions is further characterised by internal conflicts, for example, the dichotomies that exist within

NGBs such as the compliance/autonomy and elite/community sport, which impact on the NGBs' overriding purpose to safeguard self-preservation, yet this appears to be overlooked by the ACF. Such evidence highlights a potential weakness in the ACF's concept of shared-beliefs, and also the potential for 'interior coalitions' (e.g. compliance coalitions and autonomy coalitions) to exist. This is illustrated by evidence of the presence of powerful groups within the sport of handball (the 'Blazer Brigade'), which is likely to be the case in other sports. This would suggest that not only do agency-led coalitions have many layers, but can also have coalitions nested within them, and as such illuminates the potential ambiguity of the concept of coalitions within the ACF.

The notion of power and its operationalisation within the sport policy subsystem has a strong association with Lukes' three dimensions of power. Adherence to government/SE governance protocols (Mandatory Code of Governance for Sport), where compliance is often contrary to beliefs, and the use of financial inducements and sanctions to ensure compliance illustrates the first dimension. The *No Compromise* principle as a notable restriction to membership of the UKS-led coalition, is illustrative of characteristics of the second dimension of power, particularly the erection of barriers to limit agency debate on elite sport policy. The provision of additional funding resources to some SMNGBs to develop their elite potential elite level divided the SMNGB group, and thus enabled UKS to retain control of the elite sport policy agenda and, as such, is an example of Lukes' second dimension of power. The shaping of preferences of NGBs by government/SE, reform and modernisation, a lessening of autonomy, and conflicting SMNGB interests are arguably characteristics of Lukes' third dimension. The use of self-assessments would also suggest power through self-disciplining, associated with Foucault's panoptical surveillance, and the automation of power through self-disciplining, as will be the case for all publicly funded NGBs.

Chapter Seven

Volleyball England

7.1) Introduction

This chapter represents the empirical findings in relation to the case of Volleyball England (VE), the NGB of volleyball in England, in line with the research aims and objectives of this study, which have also guided the structure of this chapter. Following an introductory contextual profile of VE, a detailed analysis and discussion is provided on the development of VE's governmental relationships, and the operational impacts and approaches to changing sport policy, aligned to the specific themes identified within the methodology chapter as mechanisms for delivering desired sport policy outcomes and determinants relevant to policy shaping or taking. Threaded throughout this empirical chapter are relevant links and discussions that reflect the nature of power and the utility of the ACF. The concluding section summarises the key findings of this case study on VE, in particular, VE's resistance to change, misplaced exuberance and confidence, and the prioritisation of elite over community-participation objectives, the use of sport policy largely to self-develop, enforced realignments with the 'core beliefs' of government and the resultant acceptance of its contractual obligations, and its positioning as primarily a 'policy taker', but due to imposition of policy rather than shared beliefs or complementary alignments.

VE was established as a result of the disbanding in 1968 of its predecessor, the Amateur Volleyball Association of Great Britain and Ireland, essentially a 'one-man, top-down creation' that had not resulted from a 'club-driven, bottom-up drive for unification' (Girginov and Hills, 2008, p.2104). It is evident that during the 1990s, VE had faced a number of difficult challenges, whereby the organisation was 'virtually insolvent, declared by [SE] as being not [fit-for-purpose], and riven with discord … misplaced exuberance …and … profligacy' (Ojasoo, outgoing CEO of VE, cited in Volleyball England [VE], 2008a, p.6). Evidence suggests that over the past decade, VE/volleyball has seen a steady decline in its development, arguably the result of a high level of inertia and conservatism. As noted by one Board member at the 2014 AGM (VE, 2014d):

> 'I've been in the game since 1966 and we still have the same structure. A club and a region, and a HQ national body. We haven't moved to make it work holistically. We've done the structure of the board, the structure of HQ, but we haven't done anything about the structure of the game.'

The lack of development can be seen by the decrease in SE funding from £5.1m (2013-17) to £421,520 (2017-21) (SE, 2017b; see Appendix IV), the significant decline in affiliated clubs from 1,366 in 2008 (Girginov and Hills, 2008, p.2104) to 449 in 2017 (VE, 2017a, p.9), and decreasing levels of participation as indicated by the reduction in APS participation figures from 68,500 in APS1 (2006) to 59,200 in APS10 (2016) (see Appendix V). The impact of the spiralling decline of volleyball precipitating a period of organisational chaos for VE, as seen from the comments made by interviewee CEOVE[29]:

> 'there was an implosion within volleyball, the senior management team all left en masse, … half the board left, [and] the whole business was days, weeks, months from being declared bankrupt and going into liquidation.'

According to VE's Annual Report 2017-18 (2018), the current landscape of volleyball in England, includes *inter alia*:

- 406 affiliated clubs, 583 coaches, 647 referees;
- 79 satellite clubs - 3632 young participants;
- 75 Higher Education Volleyball Officers (HEVOs);
- 60 Universities engaged in the HEVO Programme – over 6,000 student participants;
- PE curriculum delivery within multi-sports offerings to 15,000 primary schools;
- Regional structure incorporating 9 regions.

Volleyball was awarded elite funding from UKS to the value of £7.6m across the Beijing 2008 and London 2012 Olympic funding cycles[30], to perform credibly at the London 2012 Olympic Games, while specifically targeting a medal in beach volleyball (British Volleyball Federation[31] [BVF], 2009, p.2). However, UKS funding

[29] References to interviewee CEOVE relate to an interview dated 14th August 2018.
[30] UKS's historical funding data is available online from: http://www.uksport.gov.uk/our-work/investing-in-sport/historical-funding-figures
[31] British Volleyball Federation (BVF), established in 2008, is the responsible governing body for elite performance in volleyball.

was dramatically reduced to £400,000 following a less than credible performance at the Home Olympics (BBC Sport, 2012), and funding withdrawn in full in December 2013 (UKS, 2014), due to athlete retirements (VE, 2013d), the latter primarily due to the sports financial situation (BBC Sport, 2013).

7.2) Development of governmental relationships

It is evident that during the 1980s and early 1990s, SC viewed volleyball as an emerging sport, whose vision aligned with *Sport for All's* twin focus on mass participation and high performance, the result of which was volleyball's inclusion as one of the few sports within SC's 1988 strategy of a 'Concentration of Resources' to meet SC-led policy objectives (Sports Council, 1988). This indicates an early commitment from VE to collaborate with SC on the basis of shared-interests, and interdependencies in terms of resources.

Following the restructure of SC in 1997, volleyball/VE was seen as a developing sport/SMNGB (SE, 2004a), whose initial 2005-09 WSP, according to VE's Annual Report 2008-09 (2009a, p.vi), was considered by SE to be 'very robust, [and] evidence based.' VE shared the 'policy-core' beliefs of government and SE within the *Playing to Win (2008)* policy for sport, whereby sport should be the domain of sporting experts, and that policy objectives to increase participation should be embedded within a NGB-focused approach to achieving policy outcomes. As noted within VE's Annual Report 2007-08 (VE, 2008a, p.8), NGBs '[had taken] their rightful place as the major driving force for sport in England', and that VE could play a 'significant' supporting role in the delivery of SE's strategy for increasing participation, within an operational environment that offered 'greater autonomy' for NGBs (VE, 2008a, pp.7-8). While this suggests a continuation of the exuberance referred to above, and arguably an 'air of cockiness', considering VE/volleyball's development status, it also points towards a degree of naivety in the understanding of the potential implications for VE in partnering government/SE, which would inevitably be a lessening of their autonomy through a process of modernisation and reform, the latter having laid the foundations for VE's WSP for the 2005-09 SE funding cycle.

Modernisation for VE included the development of ‘a professional infrastructure, good corporate governance, [and] opportunities for new resources’, and the appointment of the former Head of Sport at SE (2006-2008) as CEO (from 2008-2016) (VE, 2008a, pp.14-16). Arguably, the appointed CEO could be considered a strategic decision on the part of VE to benefit from the knowledge, experience and potential influence of a previous authoritative member of a governmental agency, particularly to provide evidence of VE’s commitment to SE beliefs and policies. An illustration of the connection between the CEO of VE and SE can be seen by VE’s increased SE investment award of £5.6m for the 2009-13 funding cycle (an increase of 161%) (VE, 2009a, p.vi), and it’s prioritisation of the player pathway, and development and integration of infrastructure to maximise the potential of the ‘beginner’ to ‘Olympic representation’ (VE, 2009b, p.8). This indicates a clear and complementary alignment with government and SE’s *Playground to Podium* ‘policy-core’ belief, and the unopposed acceptance of the contractual-compliance obligations of the SE-led coalition, VE having acknowledged that, organisationally, it was ‘driven’ by its WSP and shared government’s ambition ‘to become a truly world leading sporting nation capitalising on the 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games’ (VE, 2008a, pp.4-5). Thus, signposting the significance of shared-beliefs, interests and objectives as instruments of coalition membership, as well as identifying VE as a ‘policy taker’, either on the basis of an unopposed willingness to accept policy change for the purpose of self-preservation and development, or the existence of overlapping ‘core’ beliefs and complementary objectives.

Further evidence also revealed that while London’s winning bid to host the 2012 Olympics acted as an external perturbation to stimulate policy change in 2008, the implications of policy change for NGBs were less understood, where enthusiasm outweighed any notion of what would be required of them, as observed by interviewee CEOVE:

> 'What engaged the government was 2012. I can remember that day when they announced that we'd got the London 2012. I was at Bisham Abbey, and the England rowing team were training, and a lot of champagne flowed on that day. But I don't think people understood the implications of that, and the resource that we'd need to be able to deliver on that.'

The exuberance and over-optimism of VE is further demonstrated within VE's Annual Report 2007-08 (2008a, p.8), the SMNGB having claimed that the focus, beliefs, products and resources of volleyball placed them in a 'position of strength' above those sports focused on the 'pursuit of high profile events and big money sponsorship.'

In contrast, however, VE's 2013-17 WSP was more realistic than over-optimistic, there being a greater focus towards more manageable key areas and specific target groups, such as women and girls, which was now considered a 'fundamental step' forward to increasing participation' (VE, 2013e, p.6), and thus provides an illustration of the impact of policy compliance to government's shifting priorities in 2012. However, while VE's 2013-17 investment strategy also targeted the early stages of the talent pathway within an intended 'bottom-up' approach (VE, 2013e, pp.4-5), and closely aligned to SE-objectives to increase 14-plus participation[32], which also mirrored VE's core market of 12 to 27 (Girginov and Hills, 2008), the SMNGB's ultimate aim was to build 'strong foundations on which to construct a World class system capable of delivering future World class players' (VE, 2013e, pp.4-5).

More significantly, VE had developed its own distinct vision for volleyball within its Strategy 2024 document (published in 2014), to run alongside its 2013-17 WSP for SE. Evidence has revealed that this resulted from VE's re-assessment of its relationship with government and SE, owing to the increasing 'loss of autonomy', and the inability to develop volleyball outside of the government/SE policy framework, the latter resonating with Lukes' third dimension of power by shaping preferences. As noted by one Board member at the 2014 AGM:

[32] See SE's NGB National Priorities online data for 2013-17 WSPs for further information on volleyball's alignment with SE policy and objectives: Available online from: https://www.sportengland.org/media/10084/20130920-ngb-priorities-spreadsheet-final.xls

> 'We are driven by [SE] and the [WSP], as we were in previous plans. It's understandable. They are paying. But if we were to have a free choice, with the same amount of money, "how would we spend it?" Probably not in that way' (VE, 2014d).

A key aim of Strategy 2024 (VE, 2014b, p.38) was 'less reliance on [SE] funding so that volleyball was 'more in control of its own destiny.' Furthermore, despite a request from SE to focus on the five outcomes of *Sporting Future*, the belief within VE was to 'stay true' to its own strategic plan (Wainwright, CEO of VE, cited in VE, 2016b, p.2), thus signalling a degree of tension between VE and SE, as well as drawing attention to the problematic management of differing interests within SMNGBs. The strain on relationships arguably stemmed from VE's greater focus on the talent pathway and elite performance, rather than on increasing participation, as noted by Nicholls (2017) in an online news article, '[i]n the past, [VE] has focused on the elite end of the volleyball market.' This suggests a greater alignment towards the UKS-led coalition, from which it had been ejected, rather than the SE-led coalition from whom it received its funding. It is therefore not surprising that VE's pursuit of its own vision for volleyball, its focus on the elite rather than community-grassroots sport, and by implication, VE's refusal to play by the rules of game as expected of SE-led coalition members, elicited a critical response from SE in the form of punitive financial sanctions against VE, and a huge reduction in funding for the 2017-21 funding cycle. In support of this claim, it is evident from VE Board minutes (VE, 2017d, p.5) that to maintain its relationship with SE and membership of the SE-led coalition, VE would need to put 'mechanisms in place to fulfil all [SE] requirements to become an organisation worth investing funding in', emphasising further the compliance-contractual and punitive nature of the SE-led coalition.

Given the beliefs of VE regarding greater independence from government/SE, VE's participation in the NGBCEOF to articulate 'a collective view of the value of NGBs of Sport to the Government' (VE, 2014c, p.3), while seemingly out of place, is arguably related to its peripheral status within the SE-led coalition, and its weakness as sport in gaining access to policy venues on its own. Although, VE's involvement in collective action to promote SMNGB shared-beliefs, supports the claim for the potential emergence of a coalition of SMNGBs, nested within the SE-led coalition. However, the level of collective influence will be dependent on whether their voices are strong enough to encourage policy change, as noted by interviewee CEOVE:

> ‘You have to be honest we’re bit players really, in the bigger picture. If you looked at us, lacrosse, badminton, individually, you’d go so what, but collectively there’s 18 sports. … We definitely make a difference. But whether [government/UKS/SE] care enough about us to do anything, I don’t know.’

Of significance here, however, is further evidence illustrating the extent of government control within the sport policy subsystem, and the impact of pressure to meet shifting government objectives (VE, 2018a), moving from government, to SE and on to the NGBs, down the spine of accountability, as explained by interviewee CEOVE:

> ‘I don’t think people realise [SE] have the same pressure on them as we have on us … [SE] are dictated to by the government, by DCMS, in that this is the direction of travel for you. … It’s about control; it’s about who does what and who has the authority to do what.’

This supports the claim that the UK sport policy subsystem and agency-led sporting coalitions have been constructed and substantially shaped by government to implement policy and deliver on shifting policy agendas, priorities and outcomes, predominantly through compliance, financial inducements and sanctions. Thus, highlighting power as visible and measured in line with Lukes’ first dimension.

Evidence also indicates that sport and physical activity has the potential to sit across a whole raft of political agendas, highlighting the potential for the sport policy subsystem and policy actors to cross the boundaries of different policy subsystems, the extent to which is predominantly government-driven:

> ‘The word active sits across all sorts of agendas. So, it’s about social isolation, it’s about obesity, all sorts of things … More and more that’s the direction sport’s taking. We’re being driven because of the funding; we’re being driven down that path’ (Interviewee: CEOVE).

This suggests that the resource-dependency of SMNGBs enforces policy acceptance and denies policy opposition, as evidenced by VE’s acceptance of policy change within *Sporting Future (2015)*, which validates VE’s position as primarily a ‘policy taker’, although for reasons of self-preservation rather than complementary ‘core’ beliefs or policy objectives:

> ‘Our funding is about our core market. [SE] want us to maintain our 22,000 people that we know are playing volleyball … We don’t have to get anymore, but we have to maintain what we’ve got … So, if that’s all they want us to do then that’s fine’ (Interviewee: CEOVE).

Arguably, resource-dependency also acts as a barrier to limit the scope for policy change, and the closer involvement of policy actors, such as SMNGBs, in policy decision-making, which is characteristic of Lukes’ second dimension of power.

As clearly demonstrated above, VE has consistently placed elite aspirations and development above those of participation, and unsurprisingly, volleyball has ‘collectively lobb[ied] the government promoting the importance of team sports for society’, under the banner of Every Sport Matters, in order to ‘influence their funding policy for the performance aspect of team sports’ (BVF, 2014, pp.2-3). This has drawn attention to the funding gap that exists between the talent pathway and elite performance within SMNGBs, which has the potential to not only undermine SMNGB development and progress onto the international stage, but also their very existence. As noted by Richard Callicot, Board member for both BVF and VE, within his evidence to the HLSCOPL in 2013 (cited in HLSCOPL, 2013a, p.57):

> ‘there is a major problem with the no-compromise approach … There is a disconnect between the home countries’ sports councils’ investment strategies of increasing participation and identifying talent, and [UKS] funding from this level. There is a gap …, because there is nowhere to go and there is nobody prepared to fund it, … [and] unless investment is put into that funding gap … a lot of sports will not exist.’

The above evidence supports the emergence of a coalition of unfunded/elitist-competitive sports (the ‘have nots’), nested within the UKS-led coalition, wherein there has been some progress towards the promotion of unfunded-SMNGB beliefs at a governmental level, to influence the ‘policy-core’ beliefs of the UKS-led coalition. Evidence indicates that government has recognised the concerns over the disconnect between the talent pathway and elite performance, which has prompted a minor change in the ‘secondary-aspects’ of elite sport policy by way of a new ‘Aspirational Fund’, aligned to the Tokyo 2020 funding cycle:

> ‘[T]here’s this new Aspirational Fund for sports to bid into for Tokyo 2020 cycle … that haven’t been able to access World Class programme funding … There is a recognition there that a number of sports have lost out …, and [although only] modest amounts of funding … [it] still allows them an opportunity to get something together’ (Interviewee: DCMSb).

Volleyball has subsequently been a beneficiary of the new ‘Aspirational Fund’, albeit a relatively small award of £68,750 for beach volleyball (UKS, 2018). Arguably though, funding is still weighted heavily towards those sports or sporting disciplines with medal potential, indoor volleyball having been excluded. This would suggest a continuation of the *No Compromise* principle and the use of the ‘Aspirational Fund’ as a means to remove the threat of a potential minority coalition from being formed and challenging the dominance of the UKS-led coalition.

7.3) Operational impacts and approaches to changing sport policy

7.3.1) Governance

According to VE's Annual Report 2010-11 (2011a), appropriate high standards of governance were essential, to meet the increasing levels of scrutiny and challenge upon those NGBs in receipt of public funding (VE, 2010), VE's initial compliance with governance reform reflected in its acceptance of the Voluntary Code of Good Governance (VE, 2011b). While this suggests a shared-belief with government/SE, VE's compliance with governance protocols points towards an enforced alignment, rather than a complementary alignment of 'policy-core' beliefs, signalling VE as a SMNGB accepting compliance with government/SE's modernising agenda out of necessity, as opposed to having a genuine regard for organisational development and improved professionalism.

Of particular note, is VE's assertion that its governance principles were 'solid and … ahead of many other sports' (VE, 2011b, p.5), which further illustrates VE's overly confident view of itself, particularly as there is clear evidence of conflict between VE's Board and Senior Management Team (SMT), which emanated from various internal issues, including the submission of VE's 2013-17 WSP by the SMT without prior Board approval (VE, 2012b). According to VE Board minutes (VE, 2012b, p.4), there was 'a lack of consultation and a feeling that the professional staff do not value the Directors.' To elaborate further on this point, interviewee CEOVE commented:

> 'It's always this kind of dilemma with people who are volunteers within structures, but [the Board] felt they knew the direction the sport should be going in, and from the Chief Exec and the [SMT], they felt they had the knowledge and the understanding of where the sport should be going, and it didn't quite run parallel.'

This highlights the difficulties experienced by SMNGBs to 'transition from volunteer-delivered amateur sport to professionally managed and delivered sport supported by volunteers', as described by Shilbury *et al*. (2013, p. 353). Evidence also revealed a growing tension between compliance/economic interests and autonomy/membership interests, illustrating the extent to which SMNGBs are pulled in different directions, and the challenges faced in managing the needs of VE's most prominent stakeholders, SE and members, which reflects the critique of the ACF's concept of shared-beliefs and its neglect of internal tensions within coalition members:

> ‘[it is difficult] to balance the requirements in NGBs of providing a professional approach to funding partners, in providing assurances on the use of public funds, whilst also balancing this with the requirements of members’ (Wainwright, CEO of VE, cited in VE, 2015d, p.3).

According to Clarkson (1995), organisations that fail to sufficiently satisfy the needs of those stakeholders whose continued participation is essential for survival, are unlikely to succeed in the long-term. In this respect, evidence suggests that VE’s approach to balancing the divergent and conflicting interests of government/SE and its members, was aspirational rather than attainable and added to, rather than lessened, the high level of discord and organisational chaos within VE. As noted by interviewee CEOVE:

> ‘What the previous administration [was] doing [was] pandering to people’s ideals rather than saying that’s not a reality, we can’t do that.’

Internal tension within VE is exemplified further by the issue of individual membership, and the proposed mandatory registration for regular regional and local league players. From VE Board minutes, evidence indicated that concerns were raised over reports that the SMT ‘had actively canvassed against the Individual Registration proposals when as a collective it had been agreed to support them’ (VE, 2014c, p.3), the resolution having been rejected by membership (53 votes for and 73 votes against) (VE, 2014d), as had been the case on two previous occasions (Interviewee: CEOVE). The above evidence provides a strong illustration of the tenuous relationship and disparity in beliefs between the SMT and VE membership, and the infighting and lack of collaboration between the Board and the SMT, influenced, in the most part, by VE’s inertia and ultimately its relationship with SE. As Nicholls (2017), Acting President of VE, asserted:

> ‘[The Board] allowed the [SMT] to dictate strategy and to frustrate [the Board’s] attempts to check and challenge the administration … When we parted company with the former SMT, [SE] put us in special measures. Urgent action needed to be taken by the Board to enable them to continue funding us.’

VE's weakened position was also the result of a less than transparent Executive administration, particularly in terms of its financial management of the SMNGB and the greater emphasis placed on elite sport, which elicited further trigger points for the organisational collapse and the removal of VE's Board and SMT, as evidenced by the candid remarks of interviewee CEOVE:

> 'The previous administration weren't open and transparent about what they did with the funding that we were getting. [It] wasn't listening to its membership … The direction it was heading in was about elite sport, … and what our members really wanted was more grassroots development, and support for clubs. [But] we were throwing money at our national teams … [even though] we'd never qualify for the Olympics. It just didn't make any sense, and I think that was the final part that caused the members to rally against the management and the Board.'

Arguably, the growing disconnect between VE and its members is reflective of VE's preference to be a central rather than devolved SMNGB, particularly as further evidence suggests that VE had lost sight of its purpose to serve and support the membership, as amply explained by the Acting President of VE within VE's Annual Report 2016-17:

> 'There is no doubt this has been a challenging time for [VE] … In recent times, it became clear to us that [VE] needed a new culture; one that could see it working in partnership with members rather than trying to control the sport from the centre … We lost touch with our members and became remote by centralising much of the decision-making and resources' (cited in VE, 2017a, p.2).

It is clear from the above discussions that organisationally, VE's progression has been limited by long periods of inertia and conservatism, which is further demonstrated by VE's self-proclamation to adopt 'long overdue reforms' to organisational governance (VE, 2017e), and that a 'considerable amount' of work was required to comply with the new *mandatory* code of sports governance (VE, 2016c, p.4). However, evidence also indicates the continuing existence of actors within VE coalescing around the belief that the future of volleyball was in the 'hands of the membership' (Nicholls, 2017), and those of the firm belief that 'if your governance doesn't meet the standards [SE] require, you shouldn't get funded' (Interviewee: CEOVE). Again, this emphasises the dichotomy that exists between those favouring compliance with SE's governance protocols to preserve the NGB's

economic interests, and those firmly committed to the preservation of NGB autonomy and the protection of membership interests, as well as highlighting the continued struggles within SMNGBs to manage such tensions.

However, evidence has shown that VE placed greater importance on SE funding and governance compliance, although clearly limited to self-preservation, VE having admitted to SE in 2016 that the organisation was experiencing significant problems, the result of which was enforced intervention from SE and a conditional directive to invoke immediate changes to the Board, as seen from interviewee CEOVE's open account of the problems:

> 'We whistle-blew on this organisation to [SE], which is why we're in this special measure position. For us to get into the position we were in, the Board weren't paying enough due diligence to what was going on in the organisation. It was the Board's fault that it all collapsed …The first thing [SE] said to me when I came in, was get rid of the Chairman. We're not going to fund you unless your Chairman's gone' (Interviewee: CEOVE).

On the one hand, the forceful intervention by SE and VE's willingness to comply is an example of Lukes' first dimension of power; while on the other hand, the regulatory nature of compliance with the mandatory code of governance is illustrative of Lukes' third dimension of power, particularly by redefining the parameters of debate. Indeed, evidence indicates that governance legislation has required VE (2018a, p.4) to 'totally redefine and reshape' how it operates as an organisation, and that while being 'so dependent on [SE] funding, [VE] will be in a cycle of change, depending on [SE] priorities and political direction of travel' (VE, 2018a, p.5). This statement illuminates the extent to which government and SE have shaped VE, minimised its manoeuvrability, and constructed its position as primarily a 'policy taker' to satisfy government preferences and delivery outcomes. Yet, evidence suggests that VE still aspires to become the master of its own destiny, but have acknowledged that this will only be achieved by being responsive to change:

> '[VE] is committed to listening to members and making sure that their priorities are delivered. It is the goal for volleyball to develop commercially and be more self-sustaining, but … [w]e need to understand that to build a sustainable organisation we must take control of our own destiny, we need to keep evolving' (CEOVE, cited in VE, 2018a, pp.6-7).

7.3.2) Funding

VE has been the recipient of government grant-aid since the 1980s, including funding awards of £1.4m between 1998 and 2005[33] (predominantly for development and elite performance), and a further £1.32m for the 2005-09[34] SE funding cycle, weighted towards modernisation and reform to ensure a 'fit-for-purpose' status to receive public funds. As noted by VE (2010, p.5), 'the comprehensive and robust procedures … implemented during the last few years, [has provided funding] partners with the added confidence of working with [VE] and seeing us [as fit-for-purpose] to continue to receive public funds.' Again, this illustrates the compliance nature of the SE-led coalition and a willingness of VE to comply.

According to a VE online news article (VE, 2008b), the successful delivery of VE's WSP 2005-09, alongside a strong, evidence-based strategic plan for volleyball, resulted in an increased award of £5.6m from SE for the 2009-13 funding cycle, and placed the sport in a 'much better position to finally prove to [SE] … that Volleyball is a sport for everyone' (VE, 2010, p.4). Evidence suggests that the significant financial backing from government acted as an 'enabler' for volleyball through resource provision, 'to deliver more quality opportunities for people to experience volleyball, and … contribute to [SE's] aim of creating a world leading community sport system' (Wainwright, CEO of VE, cited in VE, 2008b). This clearly demonstrates the prominence of contractual-compliance and shared-interests/objectives, reinforced by interdependencies and financial inducements that characterises the SE-led coalition membership. As acknowledged by VE (2012a, p.3), 'future funding will depend on achieving results in increasing the number of young people and adults actually playing volleyball', since VE was 'contractually obliged to achieve APS targets' (VE, 2014c, p.3). The above evidence illuminating the potential for government-constructed agency-led coalitions, to be effective implementers of government policy priorities.

[33] SE/UKS Annual Reports 1998 to 2005.
[34] NGB funding for the 2005-2009 funding cycle received from SE via personal communication.

Further evidence suggests that VE's alignment to government/SE-objectives was strategic, to maximise the level of funding from SE to achieve VE's own ambitions, for example, VE's 2013-17 WSP submission to SE requested £10m (VE, 2012b, p.4) for operational and implementation costs, while the agreed sum from SE represented slightly more than 50% of the requested sum with an award of £5.1m (VE, 2013a, p.31). This points towards the potential use of overstated WSP submissions as a pre-determined strategy to influence the 'secondary-aspects' of the policy subsystem and the allocation of funding, to achieve desired outcomes from negotiations. It could be also argued that skillful leadership led to an appropriate funding agreement from SE, particularly as VE claimed that the CEO had presented 'a robust, well-argued case for investment', and that VE's reduction was 'far less than other sports' (VE, 2013a, p.31).

Of greater significance, however, is the high level of VE's resource-dependency on public funds, as seen from the selected financial data on income/revenue in Table 7.1, covering the past two decades. The extent to which public funding has impacted on VE is clearly visible, with a six fold increase in income between 1999 and 2012 by virtue of greater levels of public subsidies, and consistent levels of resource-dependency in excess of 60% since 2010. This highlights the speed at which SMNGBs, such as VE, received vast sums of public funds that prompted a rapid and impromptu 'rags to riches' scenario, without there being a clear understanding of what was expected from them or how to effectively use the funding. As demonstrated by VE's operation of a less than cautious financial policy of matching income to expenditure, and acknowledgement of a 'lack of [financial] control … based on a lack of accurate reporting' (VE, 2017c, p.3).

Table 7.1: ***Volleyball England income/revenue for the period 1998-99 to 2017-18***

Year	1998-99 £'000	2009-10 £'000	2010-11 £'000	2011-12 £'000	2012-13 £'000	2013-14 £'000	2014-15 £'000	2015-16 £'000	2017-18 £'000
Turnover	483	1,981	2,442	2,695	2,339	2,221	2,061	2,167	1,252
Other Income (Sports Council Grants)	215	1,334	1,687	1,742	1,318	1,511	1,281	1,320	728
Resource-Dependency %	**47**	**67**	**69**	**65**	**56**	**68**	**62**	**62**	**58**

Source adapted from: VE Financial Statements (1999 to 2016); VE Annual Reports (2003 to 2018)

VE's lack of financial control clearly informed SE's decision-making to significantly reduce the level public funds awarded to VE, thus prompting VE's acceptance 'to maintain tighter control of the finance to ensure the organisation has a stronger future position' (VE, 2017b, p.7). While this emphasises the expectations of compliance and punitive sanctions to which VE had been subjected to as a member of the SE-led coalition, it also highlights VE's vulnerability to resource-dependency and changes to government policy, and its weaknesses as a financially self-sustaining SMNGB. As noted within a VE online news article (VE, 2017f), 'the budget reduction [of 34%] means that VE will now restructure its head office operations … to better align itself with [SE's] strategy.' This also supports VE's claim that SE funding was not only an 'enabler' for sport development, but also a 'disabler', when 'tied to the delivery of certain outcomes' (VE, 2015a), suggesting a less than content commitment to governmental policy requirements/compliance on the part of VE, rather acceptance was on the basis of self-preservation and the benefits from public subsidies, hence the muted response to policy change. A claim supported further by interviewee CEOVE's comments that VE was not 'a deliverer for [SE]', but an organisation that 'delivers to its membership and delivers to their needs', but 'it doesn't matter how much SE [fund] you, it controls all of the money coming through your system.' Again, this demonstrates the level of control by government and SE within the sport policy subsystem, and a less than arm's length approach to sport, particularly as VE has had little choice but to do government/SE's bidding in return for self-preservation, while under the constant threat of financial sanctions and reductions, which equally incites fears of regressing back to a 'kitchen table' organisation:

> '[F]ootball gets [SE] funding, so for them [it's] probably less than 1%. If they lost it, it would make no difference. For us its 60% funding, … [and] because the funding for sports for sports sake will be reduced and reduced and reduced, I can see volleyball, and some of the other minor sports being back where it was 25 years ago, when a volunteer ran it out of the back of their bedroom' (Interviewee: CEOVE).

The above discussions also raise questions on VE's capacity or desire to seek alternative sources of income, especially when evidence suggests VE's other sources of self-generated income (see Table 7.2) have seen no significant upward movement or matched the increasing levels of government/SE funding (see Table 7.1), which has inevitably led to VE's heightened dependency on public subsidies.

Table 7.2: ***Selected sources of Volleyball England self-generated income for the period 2014-15 to 2017-18***

Year	2014-15 £'000	2015-16 £'000	2017-18 £'000
Competitions & Events	203	184	201
Membership & Marketing	55	62	67
Workforce	149	108	51
Participation	83	106	3
Performance Income (Talent)	152	148	81
Commercial	32	101	89

Source adapted from: VE (2015c, 2016a, 2018).

However, VE's experience of reduced SE funding has illuminated the high degree of resilience of the SMNGB in the face of adversity, evidence suggesting that VE has emerged in a much stronger position, as noted by interviewee CEOVE, 'it was a rocky time, but it's left us with a stronger business … [We] are far more resilient and flexible.' Moreover, VE are intent on reducing their resource-dependency further, with a view to becoming financially self-sustaining through its membership, and more importantly, reducing government/SE's control over its operational activities:

> 'Our target is to get down to about 30% funded by [SE]. We're positioning ourselves not to be dependent on government funding, because whichever way they twist or turn, you have to twist and turn as well. Actually, what we want to be able to do is deliver a product to our membership. Not to be told by [SE] that it needs to be this or that … [T]he resource from government will decline, … so we have to find a way to build a sustainable organisation, … and the only way to do that is through membership' (Interviewee: CEOVE).

Of particular note, is evidence that SE considered VE/volleyball's impact on participation for the inactive to be negligible, and as NGBs overall are no longer the drivers of mass participation to meet government objectives, VE can expect to receive further reductions in funding, which might reduce the level of resource-dependency, but increases the need to drive financial self-sustainability. As noted within VE Board minutes (VE, 2018b, pp.7-8):

> 'As a sport, volleyball [is] seen by SE as having little impact on SE target numbers of encouraging inactive people and therefore the level of funding, as for all NGBs would be reduced in Years 3 and 4 of this current cycle. Going forward, the focus would be to make [VE] a long-term sustainable organisation, less dependent on grant funding from government. SE stated that NGBs were no longer the main conduit to drive mass participation in sport.'

7.3.3) Capacity Building: workforce and facilities

Evidence suggests that prior to 2009, VE's volunteer base was 'very limited' (Girginov and Hill, 2008, p.2104), which provides a strong indicator for the alignment of VE with government and SE-objectives in order to build capacity, with a particular focus on club and workforce development to establish links to schools and sports colleges, as this 'reflected the areas [SE] were driving forward' (VE, 2009a, p. vii). A key strategy of VE (2009b, p.4) was to reduce the back office bureaucracy and release more funding for frontline delivery, through 'a modernised and expanded staffing/key volunteer structure, aligned to the planned programmes.' The deployment of frontline expert coaches was also seen as critical to the successful delivery of government/SE policy outcomes, especially as it was VE's belief that '[p]articipation rates for volleyball were directly related to the deployment of coaches' (VE, 2009b, p.3). Furthermore, VE specifically focused on the development of HEVOs to 'drive more people, particularly young people and students, to volunteer in volleyball to ensure … sustainability for the sport' (VE, 2009b, p.3). This suggests a clear and content alignment with the 'policy-core' beliefs of government/SE in terms of the value of volunteers, coach education (DCMS, 2002b), and VE's delivery of shared government/SE priorities, thus emphasising the importance of overlapping shared-beliefs and resource-interdependencies within the SE-led coalition.

However, delivering on policy outcomes and the increasing regard given to modernisation and reform, challenged VE's workforce capacity, largely in terms of 'unmanageable workloads' for Executives (VE, 2011c, p.3), difficulties in 'nurturing and growing local volunteers in an increasingly professional system' (VE, 2013e, p.5); and the management of conflict, mistrust and miscommunication between the volunteering expertise and professional expertise at Board level, and with membership (VE, 2012b; VE, 2013b). These tensions illustrate the compliance/autonomy dichotomy debate within VE, as well as the challenges involved in the organisational transition from volunteerism to professionalism. To counter some of the above issues was the strategic appointment of full-time volleyball relationship managers, whose remit was to '[build] a sustainable local volleyball infrastructure (VE, 2013e, p.6). In addition, volleyball activators were recruited with clear objectives to get more people playing 'informal' volleyball, to work in clubs, schools, colleges, universities, satellite clubs and the wider community to develop the sport (VE, 2015c, p.22), again highlighting a close alignment to SE strategies and government priorities, where complementary policy objectives have invariably prompted a sufficient satisfaction with policy change, nullifying the need for opposition.

Despite a willingness of VE to comply with the policies of the government/SE-led coalition, and develop its workforce capacity to meet government objectives, further evidence indicates the negligible impact on participation levels:

> 'We had a programme five or six years ago, where we had community sports coaches working, and we had 28 working across the country. … The impact of that in clubs was nothing. Half a dozen people came from the school environment to the club environment' (Interviewee: CEOVE).

Arguably, the lack of impact resulted from the disconnect between VE and grassroots development, the isolation of its workforce, and a lack of understanding of how to deliver on government and SE outcomes, as evidenced by the comments from interviewee CEOVE:

> ‘There was no connectivity. The people we employed to do the delivery were people who worked in isolation, and they weren’t connected to a club locally. So, they would go in, deliver their six week sessions, and then go onto the next school. That’s all they were being paid to do. What they weren’t being paid to do was that out of that school, 30-50 children they saw, 10 of them went to the local club. That wasn’t a target for them. So, they didn’t push that agenda, and because there was no connectivity between the club and the coach, and the club and the sport, it never really worked.’

Interviewee CEOVE elaborated further by stating:

> ‘The problem we’ve got as a [NGB], and the problem that other [NGBs] have got, is that we are not local, and to get people to step onto that first stage of workforce development is about how you connect down at a local level, … because we’ve got some really good volunteers out there that have been ostracised from the sport’ (Interviewee: CEOVE).

Facilities have also been problematic for VE, as with other indoor sports, despite VE efforts to seek major revisions in the size and layout of sports halls, and encourage a move away from the *four-badminton-court* philosophy, although evidence suggests an absence of VE influence over government/SE’s facility investment plans (e.g. New Labour’s 2004 ‘Building Schools for the Future’ programme), further emphasising the weakness of VE/volleyball within the policy environment:

> ‘The challenge for volleyball has always been to take these four court badminton halls, which is what they built. You have to take the whole damn thing. We know that if they’d have built them 2 metres wider, we could have played across two badminton courts, and two courts of badminton could have been played, but nobody listened to us when we made our suggestion to them’ (Interviewee: CEOVE).

Furthermore, a lack of accessible school facilities[35] has impacted on volleyball/VE’s ability to develop and meet government targets, despite government interventions (e.g. ‘Chance to Share’ programme), to encourage head teachers to open their schools to communities. Evidently, issues surrounding accessibility are largely to do with inflated rental changes for facilities, and a lack of enthusiasm from schools to

[35] According to DCMSb, the number of educational facilities inaccessible, and effectively closed to the public, is in the region of 40%

provide access to facilities to avoid additional operational costs. As explained by interviewee CEOVE:

> 'What the document Chance to Share kind of says is that head teachers set their own rental amounts. So, I'm a head teacher, I've a brand new sports hall, but I'm going to set my rental income so high that no-one can afford it, because I don't want to be paying my caretaker to come in and open and close, and I don't want to be paying the cleaning team to come in after a group of people have messed it up. So, they weren't open to the public. The accessibility was just too difficult.'

Evidence has also highlighted particular challenges working with external partners, such as LAs, due in the most part to financial constraints and inability to deliver (VE, 2011b), the shift towards commercially-led operational strategies for leisure facilities; and the subsequent rationalisation of accessibility, the extent to which was clearly indicated by interviewee CEOVE:

> 'Leisure centres were owned by [LAs], they had sports development teams working out of those in local communities. All that's gone and sports halls are now owned by [LAs], but run by these one-life leisure connections. They have been given a remit to make sure that those facilities generate income … [T]he focus has gone from supporting people to be active and take part in sport, to being … business-led … GLL who manage most of the facilities in London, close them at 6pm on a Saturday night, and I've people saying to me "that's four hours we could've have played volleyball." But they won't open their facilities up and you cannot persuade them. I've written to them; other people have written to them. They will not change.'

This supports the argument that changes in LA contracts and provisions for sport acted as an external perturbation to the sport policy subsystem, where changes within a different policy subsystem has impacted on the sport policy domain, especially in relation to the ability of coalition members to deliver on government and SE objectives/outcomes.

7.3.4) Participation

It is evident that VE's participation strategies have demonstrated a willingness to align with government and SE 'policy-core' beliefs, particularly in connection with the *Playground to Podium* ideology, a modern club infrastructure, and modified games. As noted by VE (2009b, p.3), it aimed to provide a 'seamless pathway from school to community to elite' – including variations of volleyball such as mini-volleyball and the UK School Games, the latter directly linked to elite performance through the player development pathway. A modern network of sports clubs provided the centrepiece of the sporting experience, incorporating the Volley123 club accreditation scheme, seen as the 'linchpin to gel a complex network of local providers', all focused around sustainability. In addition, 'Let's Play Volleyball' and National PESSYP Volleyball programmes (VE, 2009b), and school-club links (VE, 2009a), were focused on increasing grassroots and mass participation to meet government and SE targets. Again, this demonstrates the significance of shared-beliefs with government and SE, and VE's willingness to align with 'policy-core' beliefs, particularly where alignment to policy is considered mutually beneficial.

Further evidence highlighted volleyball/VE's capacity to engage with policy outcomes for hard to reach groups, such as, girls, ethnic minorities and young people from urban areas. For example, VE's 2009-13 Strategic Plan (2009b, pp.3-17) reported that: 18% of volleyball participants were from ethnic minority communities, compared to an average of 9% for all sports participants; 43% of volleyball participants were aged 16-24, of which 30% were in the Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) sectors (above the average of 11% across all sports); and that volleyball provided a solution to an 'inevitable and unsolvable issue' of 'drop out' from major school sports, such as football, rugby and netball, where resources were limited to cater for continued mass participation, particularly within FE and HE Institutions. This undoubtedly led to VE's claim that it had a 'potential market reach that [was] the envy of many other sports' (VE, 2014a, p.1), which emphasises further the seemingly over-confident characteristic of a sport that has been at a declining developmental-level for over two decades. Arguably though, VE/volleyball's 'cockiness' as sport could be a representation of an ill-defined 'one-size-fits-all' NGB-centric policy design and flawed performance monitoring system, particularly as the conclusions drawn by VE regarding its contribution towards government and SE-

objectives came from government sources (e.g. APS), and thus exaggerated the extent of VE's success and market reach. A claim supported by previous evidence highlighting the inconsistencies of the APS (e.g. the exclusion of children play sport), and the limitations of VE's data in relation to its own levels of participants and members (VE, 2012c). For example, Girginov and Hills (2008, p.2104) noted that APS1 (2006) indicated 68,000 regular volleyball players, but according to VE the figure was around 17,000, such a significant discrepancy having serious implications for a sustainable legacy. Further support is provided by VE's (2010, p.5) reported decline in adult participation, with APS4 (2010) figures suggesting 37,500 adults (16-plus) playing volleyball regularly, which is a significant drop from APS1.

As discussed earlier, VE's strategic plans were seen as unrealistic, unattainable and skewed towards the elite talent pathway, the latter being the central aim of an 'overriding 4-8-12 year strategy designed to deliver future Olympic and Paralympic representation' (VE, 2013e, p.21). To a larger extent, this provides some insight for VE's strategic bias towards talent, and its potential misalignment with the participation priorities of the SE-led coalition, within whose membership VE was clearly positioned. Of further significance is the belief among VE's membership that school and community sport was more important than a focus on the talent pathway, insomuch as, 'activity in youth, schools, clubs and local competitions [were] the most critical to both increasing and sustaining participation in the sport going forward' (VE, 2009b, p.11). This would suggest not only a clear tension between community/elite sport within VE, but also the potential for similar tensions between different internal coalitions, within the SE-led coalition. To support this claim, it is evident that VE's competition delivery reflected a clear focus on the elite and HE/FE sectors. However, regional and sub-regional associations had responsibility for delivering club competition at all other levels, prompting the emergence of differentiated beliefs and alignments with VE strategies and those of the SE-led coalition. Evidence from VE/regional association reports between 2008 and 2013, identified a 'common ground' between VE and regional associations/clubs based on shared-beliefs such as: development plans guided by VE; encouragement of club accreditation; a commitment to diversity and reaching down to government priority areas; and an orientation towards the *Playground to Podium* policy. Further beliefs shared by the regional/sub-regional associations included: a lack of public funding at grassroot

levels; the undervaluing of the contributions made at the regional level; the bias of VE towards talent; and the lack of initiatives to promote participation. The above evidence supporting the existence of competing coalitions within volleyball founded on tensions between compliance/economic interests and autonomy/membership interests, where the impact and management of such tensions within SMNGBs should not be underestimated or undermined within the assumptions of the ACF.

Evidence has also shown that VE's focus on the outdoor element of the sport, particularly through its 'VolleyFest' and 'BeachFest' initiatives, conflicted with SE's measurable set of delivery outcomes against *Excel, Grow, and Sustain* priorities, despite their original acceptance by SE as key 2009-13 WSP programmes. According to VE Board minutes (VE, 2011e, p.4), the aforementioned programmes were withdrawn as they were deemed by SE to fall under the 'umbrella of Outdoor Activities.' It could be argued that this reflected a tactical move on behalf of SE to refocus VE, as the SMNGB was considered an organisation 'failing to increase adult participation' (VE, 2011e, p.3). An argument supported by the creation of VE's innovative 'Go Spike' campaign in response to SE concerns, aimed at inspiring and retaining participants (VE, 2011e). The lack of criticism from VE towards SE's decision-making and VE's willingness to redesign participation programmes to undertake SE's bidding, clearly identifies VE as a 'policy taker', but equally demonstrates that unopposed policy acceptance can be enforced through compulsory realignments to government and SE 'policy-core' beliefs, where compliance-dependency is on the basis of self-preservation and the protection of financial interests, as opposed to a complementary acceptance of policy, the former illustrating Luke's first dimension of power.

Arguably, VE's waning ability to increase levels of participation was hampered further by the setting of unrealistic and unattainable objectives, even within its own strategy for volleyball (Strategy 2024), as seen from the comments made by interviewee CEOVE:

> '[Strategy 2024] had things like 70% of primary schools would have volleyball in, 50% of secondary schools would have volleyball in, that we'd be the most highly recognised sport on TV. They just were totally unrealistic objectives' (Interviewee: CEOVE).

Evidence also shows that VE placed a greater emphasis on clubs to increase participation and attract new members, but equally acknowledged that volleyball clubs and members were 'actively engaged in steering their own destiny' (VE, 2013e, p.5), rather than be driven by government priorities. This supports Fahlén *et al.'s* (2015) argument that while NGBs have shown a willingness to align with and accept government's modernisation and pro-social agendas, responsibility for meeting government objectives is often driven downwards to sports clubs, a responsibility they have neither accepted nor understand. For VE, the ability to deliver on policy outcomes was been made more difficult due to a steadily declining club network, resulting not only in a challenging operational environment for VE's 'core market', but also substantially less investment from public funds:

> '[T]he club network is dying ... , but the task for [VE] is to maintain the club structure … We're not being funded to run Club Mark anymore, we're using Club Matters now, because it's a resource that we don't have to put anything into. All the things that [SE] used to do to support clubs have gone, so it's down to us to find the resource to do that' (Interviewee: CEOVE).

In addition, evidence suggests that a limiting factor for volleyball to achieve government/SE objectives, which could also be the case for most other SMNGB/sports, has been changes in the educational system, primarily from the pressure applied by government to achieve school academic targets, which has effectively altered the UK sporting landscape through declining levels of PE and school sport:

> 'The education system has changed in the last 10 years. We used to have a higher priority for sport and physical activity in schools, [but] … the amount of PE and sports being delivered is declining … It's the pressure government put on schools on league tables. Head teachers want more bums on seats, more money, so to do that they have to bump up their position in the league tables' (Interviewee: CEOVE).

Changes in the educational policy subsystem, thus provides a further illustration of the impact of external perturbations from other policy subsystems on the sport policy subsystem, which has limited the ability of SMNGBs to meet government and SE targets.

7.4.6) Partnerships

According to VE's 2007-08 Annual Report (VE, 2008a, p.8), collaboration with other organisations to develop volleyball was considered a key aspect to raise awareness of the sport and participation. However, while evidence shows engagement with SE-led initiatives (e.g. PL4S and C4L), it could be argued that VE's preference for self-development demonstrates a limited understanding of partnership-working to achieve government and SE-objectives, which has negatively impacted on the SMNGB. An illustration of which is VE's assertion that their partners were 'absolutely committed to contributing to [VE] ambitions of building a sustainable long-term future for volleyball in England' (VE, 2015b). This suggests a belief that it was not what VE could do for coalition partners, rather what coalition partners could do for VE.

A lack of engagement in partnership-working is highlighted further by the difficulties faced by VE in adapting to government/SE's increasing emphasis on a mixed economy model, and the changing tides of government priorities:

> '[T]his bit about mixed economy has been something that we're aspiring to, we just haven't had the band width to actually start to look at that' (Interviewee: CEOVE).

From VE's Strategy 2024 (2014b) and VE Annual Reports (2007-2017), it is evident that partnership engagement has largely involved CSPs and the YST[36], which would suggest an alignment with SE 'policy-core' beliefs and objectives, certainly in terms of increasing participation in young people. However, VE's partnering with StreetGames, has been positioned at the upper end of the age range, specifically men and women over the age of 18. This suggests a misalignment with SE participation strategies and demonstrates a tension in shared- beliefs, whereby VE was less committed to promoting sport as a 'social good', despite its proclamation to further it's 'contribution to an active and healthy society' (VE, 2014b, p.4). Rather, increasing participation has served to widen the talent pool for elite performance.

[36] See Appendix XII for examples of coalition partner beliefs, alignment and advocacy.

Further evidence of VE's focus on the elite pathway can be seen by its changing relationship with YST. Close working relations had existed between VE and YST since volleyball's inclusion within the UK School Games, for example, YST endorsed VE's early youth participation strategies, suggesting VE 'consistently demonstrated an innovative and robust approach to engaging young people' (VE, 2009a, p. iii), and showed a 'commitment and delivery in, and through, PE and school sport' (VE, 2010, p.3). However, it is evident that VE withdrew from the 2018 UK School Games to focus on an alternative event specifically for volleyball (VE, 2017b), thus demonstrating a clear bias towards elite volleyball, particularly as the changing face of the School Games exhibited a physical activity theme:

> '[The School Games is] more of a festival of activity rather than an elite programme … [and] it doesn't fit in with our player pathways' (Interviewee: CEOVE).

Evidence also suggests that the changing focus of the UK School Games is reflective of a lessening of YST influence on and funding from government, as well as the strengthening of government beliefs that school sport should remain within the domain of the DfE:

> 'Whereas before … everything to do with school sport was going through YST, I think that's changed. I think Sue Campbell has been part of why [YST was] so big and so influential, and her being Labour and it being a Conservative government didn't help. I hate this politics stuff, but I think the current government felt she had too much influence over what was going on in schools, whereas the government felt … the [DfE] should be [doing] that' (Interviewee: CEOVE).

Not only does this point towards continued political infighting within government and Whitehall on where the responsibility for school sport should be located, it also highlights differing beliefs within the sports policy subsystem, and the impact of internal shocks from government interference restricting the development of the sport policy subsystem, as well as external shocks from other policy subsystems.

Further evidence indicates that partnerships are more likely to be bound by symbiotic relationships, rather than shared-beliefs, where mutual benefits are of greater value, as purported by interviewee CEOVE:

> ‘Why would you do something if you didn’t get some sort of benefit from it? Partnership-working has got to be that there’s a symbiotic relationship between the two of you, there’s got to be benefit for both organisations.’

In this respect, it is evident that VE’s approach to collaborative partnerships has focused on commercial activities rather than social activities. For example, VE have developed commercial partnerships with the National Trust (VE, 2014a, p.16), the Forestry Commission, (VE, 2015c, pp.6-7), and the Ministry of Defence, to increase levels of volleyball participation and new recreational clubs (VE, 2016a, p.5). Arguably, VE’s partnership strategies aligned with system-wide ‘policy-core’ beliefs, such as self-sufficiency and reduced resource-dependency, but have misaligned with those linked to government/SE’s pro-social agenda.

7.4) Conclusion

The case of VE/volleyball has provided a number of significant findings in relation to the aims and objectives of this research. Evidence has indicated that the sport policy domain has been subject to a series of external and internal shocks over a decade or more, suggesting a less than stable policy subsystem. External perturbations have not only included the consequences of varying levels of Lottery funding and government engagement with the 2012 Home Olympics, but also changes within other policy subsystems, which have impacted on the ability of agency-led coalition members to deliver on government outcomes. As previously argued, changes to LA leisure services have negatively impacted on sport provision in terms development and facilities. In addition, changes to the educational system have also altered the sporting landscape and the reduced the opportunities at the school level, due to pressure by government to meet school academic targets, a lessening of YST influence, and a strengthening of government beliefs that school sport should continue to be the domain of the DfE. Indeed, the extent of government control and pressure within the sport policy subsystem is observable, suggesting a less than arm’s length approach and a rolling out of the state, as seen by government influence over the SE-led coalition. In addition, changing attitudes towards health has acted as an external perturbation, prompting major policy change and a greater focus on physical activity to address government’s social and health agendas,

through a more intensive mixed economy funding model to implement and deliver on policy outcomes. Furthermore, the inconsistencies of the APS mechanism prompted an internal shock to the subsystem, not only in response to its competitive rather than collective impact, but also its utilisation to exaggerate policy outcomes, as seen by the use of inflated WSP submissions as means to secure increased public subsidies. In this regard, evidence also suggests that SMNGBs neglected to recognise the full implications of delivering on policy outcomes, where misplaced exuberance outweighed an understanding of what would be required of them.

It is evident that, organisationally, VE has suffered from many years of turbulence, including high levels of internal discord, organisational inertia, conservatism, resistance to change, financial mismanagement and misguided policies, which have all contributed to VE/volleyball's steady decline. The impact of this history has been not only a conflict of beliefs between VE's Board, Executive and membership, but also between VE and SE.

VE's weakened position in relation to SE resulted from its inability to meet participation outcomes, an aspirational rather than pragmatic approach to development, and a skewed focus towards elite performance, resulting in heavy financial sanctions from SE. It is argued here that VE's strategies were aligned more strongly to the UKS-led coalition, from which it had been ejected, rather than to the SE-led coalition from whom it received its funding. That said, evidence has demonstrated the willingness of VE to align to with some extent at least with SE 'policy-core' beliefs, where acceptance of contractual-compliance obligations to achieve shared-objectives with government/SE against strategic priorities has been complementary where policy objectives have matched, but also largely enforced due to policy misalignments and VE's aspirations to limit government/SE's control over its operational and financial activities. This clearly identifies VE as a 'policy taker' rather than a 'policy shaper', which is further endorsed by VE's lack of open opposition to policy change, such muted response reflecting VE's continued reliance on public subsidies and self-preservation. However, there is some evidence to suggest VE's interest in lobbying government and especially SE more effectively, by joining the emerging coalition of SMNGBs, nested within the SE-led coalition, and its membership of a potential coalition of unfunded-elite/competitive SMNGBs, nested

within the UKS-led coalition. Both groups of SMNGBs appeared to be coalescing around shared-interests and possibly shared-beliefs focused on self-preservation.

The evidence from the analysis also suggests that VE was not wholly subservient to government/SE directives, as seen by VE's proclamation that they were delivering on the needs of their membership rather than those of SE, and the clear intent to utilise SE funding to develop the sport, as opposed to fulfilling the government's social agenda. In summary, VE has had a difficult relationship with government policy and with SE as the government's lead agency for participation. On the one hand, VE accepted governance reforms specified by SE largely because it needed SE funding. On the other hand, VE has found it difficult to align itself closely with SE's (shifting) objectives for four reasons. First, throughout recent years the tension between members/clubs and the NGB has remained an impediment to whole-hearted compliance with SE-objectives. Second, the SMNGB has not been able to resolve the tension between its elite performance operations with the community focus of SE policy. Third, the tension between VE and SE was exacerbated by SE's recent prioritisation of physical activity over 'sports for sports sake.' Fourth, VE's reliance on a network of parties (local authorities and schools in particular), has not helped the organisation achieve its participation targets due to policy changes in relation to LA funding and educational policy.

Evidence in relation to the utility of the ACF has endorsed the significance of shared-beliefs in shaping agency-led coalitions, but also the extent to which agency-led coalitions can also be constructed or substantially shaped by contract-compliance, financial incentives and sanctions, shared-interests, interdependencies, and symbiotic relationships. Evidence also signposts the potential for agency-led coalitions and coalition members to overlap with different coalitions and cross subsystem boundaries, a consequence of which can be external perturbations at the points of intersection between different policy subsystems. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that policy agendas, priorities and outcomes, can be supported, implemented, and delivered through the construction of government influenced agency-led coalitions, whereby such coalitions act as facilitators and deliverers of government policy and objectives, as an outsourcing mechanism in receipt of public funds to achieve desired government outcomes, rather than be solely framed by shared 'policy-core' beliefs. Evidence also supports the claim that the complexity and

ambiguity of agency-led coalitions and the existence of *interior* or *internal* coalitions, result from internal conflicts within and among coalition members, the prominence of which the ACF struggles to recognise. For example, emerging dichotomies within NGBs centred on community/elite sport, and compliance/autonomy, formed on the basis of differing beliefs among coalition actors within the SE-led coalition. This also highlights the extent to which SMNGBs, as coalition members, are pulled in different directions. Such evidence raises doubt over the strength of the ACF's concept of shared-beliefs as the only binding factor for coalitions, supporting the claim that the ACF finds difficulty in accounting for the many guises of subsystem actors owing to the 'height' of the lens through which the ACF is views policy change and policy subsystems. Yet, the observable disconnect in sport policy and policy subsystem could arguably be an effect of the heterogeneous nature of policy actors, the existence and emergence of multi-foci, overlapping advocacy coalitions within the sport policy subsystem, and the capacity of coalitions and policy actors to cross the boundaries of different coalitions and policy subsystems.

The operationalisation of power has a strong connection to Lukes' three dimensions of power. The first dimension is illustrated by tangible, visible and measurable decision-making, in terms of enforcing compliance with shifting policy agendas through financial inducements and sanctions. The second dimension arguably sits with resource-dependency, seen as a barrier to limit the scope of the political process, particularly in relation to agenda-setting. The appeasement of policy actors (unfunded elitist/competitive sports) through the allocation of modest funding resources to selected SMNGBs, also resonates with Lukes' second dimension, to undermine the potential threat of the formation of an effective minority coalition. Lukes' third dimension is illustrated by the increasing loss of autonomy, and the shaping of NGBs' beliefs to align with those of SE. However, the evidence from this case study shows that the degree of ideological manipulation by SE was only partially successful.

Chapter Eight

Table Tennis England

8.1) Introduction

This chapter represents the empirical findings in relation to the case of Table Tennis England (TTE), the NGB of table tennis in England, in line with the research aims and objectives of this study, which have also guided the structure of this chapter. Following an introductory contextual profile of TTE, a detailed analysis and discussion is provided on the development of TTE's governmental relationships, and the operational impacts and approaches to changing sport policy, aligned to the specific themes identified within the methodology chapter as mechanisms for delivering desired sport policy outcomes and determinants relevant to policy shaping or taking. Threaded throughout this empirical chapter are relevant links and discussions that reflect the nature of power and the utility of the ACF. The concluding section summarises the key findings of this case study on TTE, in particular, TTE's slower progress towards change, although its eventual acceptance of contractual obligations has strengthened its relationship with SE, especially the potential of the sport's broader pro-social capabilities, where opportunism, pragmatism, partnerships, and complementary alignments to the 'core beliefs' have benefitted TTE, and identified the SMNGB as primarily a 'policy taker', on the basis of shared beliefs and self-preservation, content to be subjected of policy and increased resource dependency rather than shape policy.

Founded in 1926, TTE (formerly the English Table Tennis Association [ETTA][37]), had almost 200,000 affiliated members by 1960 (Table Tennis News [TTN][38], 1960a, p.5); had produced three world champions, with England winning the World Team Championships in 1953, considered to be the greatest achievement in British table tennis history (Moore, 2011); and arguably had an 'active national organisation in county, league and club … envied as a model' (TTN, 1952, p.1). Yet, a series of

[37] For the avoidance of error, references to TTE will also include those of the ETTA

[38] Table Tennis News was the official magazine produced Table Tennis England from 1935-2010. When the magazine first started in November 1935 it was called 'Table Tennis' until it was renamed 'Table Tennis News' in November 1966. It was discontinued in July 2010. A comprehensive archive of all the magazines is available from: https://tabletennisengland.co.uk/our-sport/news/archives/table-tennis-news-archive/

exogenous and endogenous factors led to table tennis/TTE's gradual decline. According to Woodward (of the News Chronicle), exogenous factors that accounted for the decline included the impact of television, decreased attendance at sporting events, and the rise of the discriminating spectator (cited in TTN, 1955, p.8). While endogenous factors included, for example, sustained levels of turbulence within and between TTE and members (see TTN, 1964, p.3; TTN, 1965a, p.3; TTN, 1970, p.9; TTN, 1991, p3; TTN, 2003a, pp.7-8, 12-14). Other contributory factors for the decline in membership resulted from the cultural and economic changes within Thatcher's Britain (e.g. loss of playing facilities due to the closure of industrial premises, financial constraints of participants, and increasing sports facility costs) (Blunn, former Chair of TTE, cited in TTN, 1983, p.14). Affiliated team membership had reduced from 21,489 in 1978/79 to 9,281 in 1996/97, while club numbers fell from 8,119 to 3,117 over the same period (TTN, 1997b, p.11).

However, evidence indicates that TTE has shown resilience during this turbulent period from 1995, and by 2013 was employing 70 people with an annual turnover exceeding £5m (Table Tennis England [TTE], 2013, p.4). According to TTE's Annual Report 2017-18 (TTE, 2018), the current landscape of table tennis in England, includes *inter alia*:

- 181 Affiliated Premier Clubs;
- 185 Satellite Clubs (159 in 2017);
- Growth of Ping (24 partner locations) and Loop (596 venues) initiatives;
- 603 licensed and active coaches;
- 41,941 members, weighted heavily towards an older age demographic (veteran membership 74%) – a sizeable overall increase in membership since 2014 (28,250).

Table tennis[39] was awarded elite funding from UKS to the value of £3.7m across Beijing 2008 and London 2012 Olympic funding cycles[40], to deliver medals at the London 2012 Olympiad (TTE, 2006). The reduction of elite funding, and ultimately its full withdrawal, stemmed from UKS's belief that table tennis was incapable of

[39] The British Table Tennis Federation (BTTF), formed in 2006, is the responsible governing body for elite performance in table tennis

[40] UKS's historical funding data is available online from: http://www.uksport.gov.uk/our-work/investing-in-sport/historical-funding-figures

challenging China's dominance to secure a podium place (TTE, 2009a, p.5). Furthermore, despite table tennis' UKS-unfunded success at the Rio 2016 Olympiad (the men's team qualified but none progressed beyond the last 16), and recognition from UKS as having 'future Olympic medal potential', UKS funding did not stretch down to 'future potential' sports for the Tokyo 2020 Olympiad (TTE, 2017, p.4).

8.2) Development of governmental relationships

Evidence indicated an early recognition from TTE of the potential benefits from developing governmental relationships, which became more significant following the decline of table tennis in England during the 1970s, having been 'adversely affected by the nation's ills and beset with internal difficulties' (from a published letter to TTN, 1985a, p.53). For example, it is evident that TTE supported the findings of the Wolfenden Report (TTN, 1960b, p.3); was an active member of an emerging CCPR-led coalition; developed a *Plan for Table Tennis* that positioned the sport to benefit from any potential government investment, for which TTE received governmental approval 'as a model for other sports bodies to follow' (TTN, 1965b, p.3); and arguably actively sought a close and dependent relationship with government and governmental agencies, in the pursuit of public subsidies. Indeed, consistent grant-aid from SC made the Council the 'largest single supporter of table tennis' in England (Shipley and Prean, cited in TTN, 1987, p.8), TTE having viewed annual SC grants as 'a permanent form of income for the foreseeable future' (Blunn, former Treasurer of TTE, cited in TTN, 1974, p.28).

The extent of SC dependency becomes more evident towards the latter part of the 1980s, when grant-aid represented almost 50% of the TTE's total income (TTN, 1990, p.10), although arguably this reflected SC support of those NGBs, such as TTE, 'with little or no chance of obtaining major TV fees or corporate sponsorship' (Sports Council, 1988, p.7). However, this does point towards NGB resource-dependency being an intrinsic feature of the sporting landscape, long before the advent of the Lottery in 1995. Furthermore, TTE had progressively strengthened its regional structure along the same geographical boundaries as SC (TTN, 1994b, p.6), and were one of the few sports to fully commit to collaborating with SC to meet policy

objectives, through inclusion within the Concentration of Resources programme (Sports Council, 1982; Sports Council, 1988).

The restructuring of the SC in 1997 and the government's sport policy, *Raising the Game (1995)*, were seen as opportunities for TTE/table tennis to enjoy on-going benefits from its governmental relationships, from which it would take 'full advantage' (TTN, 1995, p.6). For example, in order to meet SE's (1997, p.15) strategic targets, SE recognised that table tennis required assistance with achieving excellence, thus raising TTE's expectations for greater access to Lottery funds (TTN, 1996, p.5). Moreover, according to an editorial in TTN (2000a, Editorial, p.13), TTE claimed to be 'entirely in accord' with the principles and objectives of equity and inclusion as advocated by SE and DCMS, whereby sport should be 'equally accessible to everyone' (SE, 1997, p.6). According to interviewee CEOTTE[41]:

> '[table tennis is] one of those very few sports where you get that genuine multi-generational mix, male and female, abled and disabled, and you really can put that whole mix together.'

Arguably, this illustrates shared 'policy-core' beliefs with government/SE, particularly as table tennis considered itself to be 'a truly classless, raceless, non-sectarian, active sport' (McDonnel, former Senior Manager, cited in TTN, 1985b, p.7). Yet, evidence also indicates a pragmatic approach by TTE to develop its sport through the utilisation of both the belief system of government/SE and specific government policies. For example, a TTN editorial (2001b, Editorial, p.1) showed TTE had encouraged clubs to focus on government concerns such as social inclusion, health and education issues related to sport, in the pursuit of political and financial support. Evidence suggests that table tennis was 'one of leading sports to take advantage of the [SE] Lottery Fund', with 330 successful applications for the 'Awards for All' programme valued at £1.12m (TTN, 2002a, p.5). An analysis of SE Lottery awards[42] also identified 265 successful table tennis applications between 2009 and 2018 valued at £2.65m, suggesting that TTE was either content to be a 'policy taker' rather than a 'policy shaper', or that the SMNGB's 'core' beliefs complemented those of government and SE. TTE acknowledged that it was 'influenced by decisions made

[41] References to interviewee CEOTTE relate to an interview dated 24th September 2018.
[42] SE Lottery Awards Apr 2009 – Sep 2018. Available online at: https://www.sportengland.org/our-work/open-data/

by the government in respect of their policies and direction' (Murdoch, former Chair of TTE, cited in TTN, 2006a, p.14), and that the intended outcome of the close working relationship with SE was to ensure table tennis was 'in tune with national trends', and that 'policy makers [were] aware of the priorities' of TTE/table tennis (TTE, 2006, p.17). However, TTE was aware of the level of competition between NGBs within SE-led coalition when it stated that it would be 'fighting for a share of the funding and opportunities' (Murdoch, former Chair of TTE, cited in TTN, 2006d, p.4).

TTE's willingness to closely align with government/SE[43] and accept its contractual-compliance obligation, is further evident from TTE's acknowledgement that 'in return for … unprecedented levels of investment … it is committed to delivering a range of agreed outcomes, in line with government policy' (TTE, 2011, p.4). For example, the synchronicity between TTE's strategic plans and that of government/SE can be seen though table tennis' inclusion within many of government/SE's initiatives (e.g. *Playground to Podium*, PL4S and PESSYP programmes) (TTE, 2009a, p.2), one consequence of which was increasing levels of government/SE influence over the NGB, and heightened tensions within TTE, particularly between the Executive and membership, as highlighted by interviewee CEOTTE:

> 'I've had people stand up at the AGM and accuse me of being a civil servant, and that we're just a division of [SE] … and that the Board allowed us to lose the heartbeat of the sport by following commands from above.'

It is also evident that government's shifting emphasis towards increasing adult participation within *Creating a Sporting Habit for Life*, together with SE's changed remit to include 14-plus participation, impacted on NGBs by shaping the way sport was delivered, and in doing so affected the relationship between the Board and the clubs and members:

[43] See SE's NGB National Priorities online data for 2013-17 WSPs for further information on table tennis' alignment with SE policy and objectives: Available online from: https://www.sportengland.org/media/10084/20130920-ngb-priorities-spreadsheet-final.xls

> ‘We had to change the way in which we delivered. If we were going to increase our overall participants from 150,000 to 180,000, then we couldn’t do that through our clubs, because they were not big enough to do that. So, the organisation had to make a decision to look at a different way of working, and that way was the mass [participation] side of things’ (Interviewee: SMTTE[44]).

However, the consequences of the contractual-compliance relationship between TTE and government/SE became apparent as a result of the failure to achieve agreed outcomes, when TTE faced clear financial sanctions (SE, 2014a). The imposition of sanctions highlighted the punitive element of SE-led coalition membership, and an example of Lukes’ first dimension of power. In this regard, TTE only received a one year award (£2.3m) for its WSP 2013-17, and was subjected to special conditions (SE, 2012g, p.6), primarily due to the non-achievement of participation targets (SE, 2015a, p.10). Conversely, in recognition of the ‘organisational transformation’ of TTE, the SMNGB was rewarded with a further conditional award of £4.2m, subject to continued and proactive collaboration with SE to enhance TTE’s participation strategy (SE, 2015a, p.10).

An important consideration in meeting changing government/SE policy objectives is evidence that draws attention to the relatively short window of opportunity available for NGBs, to implement policy change and meet policy objectives. As interviewee SMTTE noted:

> ‘[SE] funds and directs you to deliver changes every four years, you lose a minimum of 18 months of really strong delivery time, because you’ve got at least 6 to 12 months of developing all that new programme or new way of working, and … often lose 6 months at the back end as well, because you’re having to hold the fort as such. You can carry on delivering, but it probably affects the speed of your delivery, because there’s a bit of uncertainty. When you look at it across so many sports, it does have an impact.’

Interestingly, it is evident that the most significant change for TTE, which was part of the government’s switch from ‘sport for sport’s sake’ to a greater emphasis on inactivity within *Sporting Future* in 2015, has been the demise of the WSP:

[44] References to interviewee SMTTE relate to an interview dated 5th October 2018.

> ‘[T]he big change that’s happened was the death of the [WSP], and moving into where we are now. Table tennis was one of the few sports that could actually deal with the [WSP] a bit better, because we definitely have the breadth and variety, from young to old, abled, disabled, ethnic minorities. We could do the social bit [and] the regulator bit’ (Interviewee: CEOTTE).

This suggests that TTE were not only content to be a ‘policy taker’, but ‘core’ beliefs were also complementary. However, despite the CEO of TTE’s belief that WSPs gave the SMNGB a competitive advantage, she considered the move away from WSPs to be ‘a good thing’, as on the whole the system was flawed. The fostering of competition rather than collective working among NGBs to meet SE target driven policies, with a focus on numbers rather than creating a sporting habit for life, largely undermined NGBs in their attempts to increase participation. To add weight to this argument, interviewee CEOTTE provided further clarification:

> ‘I do think there were a lot of [NGBs] who did get distracted, and we probably did. [T]here was too much time and energy being put into growing participation numbers, purely for participation numbers, just to meet targets. Than necessarily working out how that created a sporting habit, or a lifestyle. It was very target driven. You needed numbers and it was driving the wrong behaviours.’

While the above evidence indicates an acceptance of the significant change in policy direction, rather than opposition, and TTE’s position as primarily a ‘policy taker’, TTE’s membership of the NGBCEOF demonstrates a concern to collectively lobby government/SE more effectively than in the past, although there is little evidence of impact on SE and government policy. Nevertheless, the CEO of TTE valued:

> ‘the fact the Minister does come to meet with us. CEOs of [SE] and [UKS] do come to meet with us … I think there is a genuine and general feeling that we are better and stronger together’ (Interviewee: CEOTTE).

The importance of effective lobbying was endorsed by John Major (2006), who argued that ‘sport should lobby harder, more frequently and use national icons to highlight their case. Governments respond to stimuli. Sport should provide that stimuli.’

However, the extent to which SE would welcome a more effective SMNGB lobby is unclear, especially when it is possible to argue that TTE/table tennis has less need

to lobby as its policies and strategic goals are so closely aligned to SE, and that TTE considers itself to be a social sport, school sport, participation sport and an elite sport, which highlights the willingness of the NGB to cross subsystem and coalition boundaries, and a willingness to accept the policy requirements of the SE-led coalition. It is also evident that TTE sees itself as more than just a membership organisation, rather a business involved in the promotion of sport, where membership is just part of its business model:

> 'We're in the business of promoting sport … Membership is a strand of it. Our vision is about everybody's talking about table tennis, that doesn't talk about membership, it doesn't talk about people playing it. Actually, it talks about more people involved in it, whether they're coaching, volunteering, parents taking their kids and helping run the local club, or playing it in their local park … It's much bigger than just being a membership organisation' (Interviewee: CEOTTE).

The perspective outlined by the CEO of TTE clearly meets with SE's approval, TTE having been awarded a substantial sum from SE (in excess of £8m) for the 2017-21 funding cycle (SE, 2017), strengthening TTE's integration into the SE-led coalition.

However, TTE is not uncritical of its relationship with SE. Differences have emerged partly centred around SE's changed remit to include sport and physical activity down to 5-year olds:

> '[SE] has a remit down to 5, but actually don't seem to be doing anything with that, and even then, it's only outside of school hours, it's extra-curricular. In-curricular sporting activity sits with the [DfE], but they have no connections with governing bodies. All the evidence tells you that if you embed a sporting or an active lifestyle in children from school, you've got a much better chance of making them active adults. Yet, we're blocking off school sport to the [DfE], [and] outside of school sport to somebody else' (Interviewee: CEOTTE).

Evidence has also highlighted a level ambiguity and confusion within TTE that results from the interpretation of policy shifts, which provides a possible explanation for NGBs' misunderstanding of policy requirements:

> ‘there’s still a bit of ambiguity in terms of that age group, because it is five-plus, but there’s still a bit of hang on from the 14-plus era, in that there’s still not a 100% shift from [SE] in that sense, which sometimes can be a bit confusing. Our [SE] funding can’t fund our activities in schools or activities connected to schools …, [and] we’re not allowed to bid for any funding to work in schools … In theory that’s the [DfE], and the [YST’s] domain’ (Interviewee: SMTTE).

Such evidence points towards a lack of coordination between DCMS, SE, and DfE, particularly as interviewee DCMSa commented that SE’s remit opening up to 5-year olds ‘must be heartening’ for NGBs, yet was unaware that NGBs had no route to market for that age group. Furthermore, evidence indicates that SE has yet to determine its level of interaction with NGBs in relation to its changed remit, which emphasises further the ambiguity and confusion stemming from another policy shift:

> ‘I think they are still going through a huge amount of understanding what their role should be, and how they interact with NGBs at that sort of level, because for years and years and years, they’ve been 16 plus. So, I think we’re in a weird sort of hinterland at the moment, where … [SE] is still upskilling itself, to understand the behaviours and attitudes of children’ (Interviewee: DCMSb).

At an elite level, TTE joined forces with other disenfranchised sports to challenge the *No Compromise* approach to elite funding, against a backdrop of media criticism that argued the UKS *No Compromise* principle was ‘divisive’, ‘self-defeating’, and ‘designed to create fear that there will be a total collapse of the UK medal tally should the current funding model be meddled with’ (MacInnes, 2018). TTE’s collaboration with other unfunded Olympic sports demonstrates a collective attempt by NGBs to influence or shape the ‘policy-core’ beliefs of the UKS-led coalition. The impact of this collective action was positive to a limited extent and benefitted from support from some funded sports who added their voices to the campaign for at least a level of baseline funding to be granted to unfunded sports, as can be seen from interviewee CEOTTE’s comments:

> ‘I do think there is enough noise out there, and even from funded [NGBs] as well, in support of the concept of baseline funding so that you can hold a programme together. I certainly know, just from personal conversations with, rowing, hockey, and gymnastics, there is a degree of sympathy. You only have to go back 10 years, and they were not in the right place, and without that ability to have some baseline

> funding to … allow them to build again from the bottom, they wouldn't be where they are now.'

Evidence also suggests a degree of success in this regard as table tennis have benefitted from government/UKS's new 'Aspirational Fund', with an award of the modest sum of £275,000 (UKS, 2018), which is more than some of TTE's counterparts, and is arguably attributable to table tennis' greater potential for podium success at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

8.3) Operational impacts and approaches to changing sport policy

8.3.1) Governance

Evidence suggests that TTE's initial efforts in the 1980s to modernise and adhere to governance requirements, were financially-driven and self-benefitting, for example, TTE's first CEO was 'almost entirely funded by the Sports Council' (Prean, former Chair of TTE cited in TTN, 1987, p.17). However, while modernisation was seen as essential for the development of TTE/table tennis (see TTN, 2004, p.5; TTN, 2005, p.5; TTN, 2007a, p.4), TTE's appetite for change has been slow to develop, having acknowledged that the SMNGB was still 'well behind the majority of other sports in terms of corporate governance' (Murdoch, former Chair of TTE, cited in TTN, 2007c, p.4). The inertia and conservatism within TTE evidently stemmed from political tensions, fashioned by an apparent 'Westminster Model' of organisational democracy:

> 'When I arrived here, you could feel that political tension – that chairman and his band of supporters, and that former chairman and his band of supporters. It was almost built on a Westminster Model of party affiliation, and one chairman would come in undo all [the] policies, then 8 years later would be defeated, and someone else would come in and spend the first few years undoing all [the] policies' (Interviewee: CEOTTE).

An example of the conflicts within the Board relates to the reoccurring issue of individual membership, and the perceived disparity between affiliation fees and benefits of membership (TTN, 2003b, p.6). The issue of individual membership was a priority due to changes to government policy and the operational environment of NGBs, particularly changes to SE funding policy and the increased requirement of evidenced-based monitoring (SE, 2003, p.2). As noted by TTE, '[individual membership] has become much more relevant in recent years as the way we have to report to our funding partners has changed' (Murdoch, former Chair of TTE, cited in TTN, 2007d, p.5), and necessitates a 'convincing argument' to funding partners for continued investment (TTE, 2006, p.7). While the evidence here shows a willingness of TTE to comply with SE, it also draws attention to the challenges of managing the tension between members' interests and the needs of SE. According to the Chair of TTE, as noted in the Chair's report within TTN (2007b, p.5), TTE's overall strategy

needed to ‘align … with the new funding strategies [of SE]’, but also ‘ensure the needs of our members … are fully encompassed.’ The implementation of individual membership as opposed to membership of clubs was clearly part of TTE’s conditional funding agreement with SE, in line with *Game Plan* (DCMS, 2002, p.122), to ‘drive reform’ in those who were slow or resisted modernisation, TTE having been ‘strongly urged to put this right or suffer potential reduced funding’ (Murdoch, former Chair of TTE, cited in TTN, 2006e, p.4), emphasising the compliance pressure within the SE-led coalition. Indeed, TTE acknowledged its weaknesses in governance and expressed a willingness to comply with SE governance requirements by accepting the need ‘to radically overhaul the organisation and create a world class governing body [fit-for-purpose]’ (TTE, 2009b, p.20), as recommended by Cunningham (2001, p.5; UKS, 2002; DCMS, 2002).

It is evident that by 2013, TTE had met many of the challenges of governance improvements, SE having acknowledged that TTE ‘appeared to be turning the organisation around, having appointed a new Chairman and Chief Executive. Governance was improving’ (SE, 2013, p.6). Interviewee CEOTTE elaborated further on this point:

> ‘[M]y predecessor retired, before he was probably required to retire. So, I came into an initial interim position. A lot of change management was needed. In the first nine months we had restructured, rebranded, relocated, new Board. [The previous] Chairman … was right person to make that step change initially, he was one of them, he was part of the National Council … But he would have struggled to take us into the next phase. So, we got another new Chair.’

Arguably, SE was influential in TTE’s decision to replace its existing management team, but it was also a strategic decision on the part of TTE to ensure continued financial support. The evidence also provides an illustration of tension between volunteers and professionals within NGBs, and the difficulty of the removal of the ‘Blazer Brigade’ from positions of authority, which was arguably necessary for government to exert greater control over the operational and financial activities of NGBs. This exercise of power resonates with Lukes’ first and third dimensions of power, particularly in respect of shaping preferences of NGBs, to downplay the interests of membership and give priority to those of government and SE. The significance of which can be seen by the new Board’s remit to undertake a ‘root and

branch reform of … governance', with particular emphasis on changing the form of the National Council from a policy-making body to an advisory and communications role (TTE, 2014, p.3).

The tensions between NGB administrations and members, and the difficulties for NGBs operating as both a membership and a contractor organisation (with SE as the client), is demonstrated further by repercussions of the new Code of Governance for Sport. For example, TTE's Annual Report 2016-17 (2017, p.6) reported to members that '[a]ny failure to comply with or meet the Code [would] result in a loss of funding', illustrating Lukes' first dimension of power. However, members rejected the proposals to meet UKS/SE's new rules on governance, prompted by the perceived view among some opponents that leadership within the sport could be handed to those 'with little table tennis experience or knowledge' (BBC Sport, 2017). To elaborate on this further, interviewee CEOTTE commented that:

> 'It was six people, who wouldn't normally even talk to each other at times, and it was sort of a marriage of convenience, and there were different motivations. One was motivated just by bitterness, because he got voted out, and he was part of the previous regime. Another one was … motivated by the thought of seeing himself as Chairman, and he's on an empire-build mission.'

The result of which was 'a suspended state of business [(a funding freeze on the TTE's award of £9m), with table tennis becoming 'the first sport to fail to deliver on the government's requirements for funding' (BBC Sport, 2017). The eventual acceptance by members of governance reforms (Morgan, 2017), demonstrated the conditional membership of the SE-led coalition, and TTE's willingness to modernise and accept compliance over autonomy, albeit enforced, on the basis of self-preservation.

Clearly, the governance code has resulted in increased levels of professionalism across the sporting sector, although arguably through enforced change for certain NGBs, if not most of them. However, evidence indicates that the increasing levels professionalism required of NGBs by government/SE, has nourished the underlying tensions between NGBs and their members. It could also be argued that such tensions exist along a fault-line where the machinery of government meets the traditional, voluntarist, organic nature of sport membership-only-bodies; in other

words, where the engineering of government meets society head on. As noted by interviewee CEOTTE:

> '[T]oo many governing bodies became too professionally-based [too quickly] … It has taken a sense of purpose away from the volunteer group, where … suddenly, they're being slightly pushed to the side, where there's no route to the Board anymore, and they're feeling slightly alienated, and it does create constant tension. With reduced funding [we] are having to go back into the volunteer structure, and finding that the volunteer structure either isn't there or isn't interested.'

8.3.2) Funding

Evidence suggests that in the 1980s, TTE's potential to meet *Sport for All* objectives, in return for financial support, outweighed any potential fractures within the organisation, having been adjudged by SC to be in a 'state of preparedness' to deliver on government priorities (Sports Council, 1982, p.35). It is also evident that further opportunities existed to obtain additional funds by those sports 'showing initiative and a desire to progress', such as table tennis (Blunn, former Chair of TTE, cited in TTN, 1981, p.15). This highlights the competition for limited financial resources, the potential for which was arguably more prevalent where cash injection from the SC was seen as a necessity, and often 'the only means of survival' (Gray, former Senior Manager, cited in TTN, 1990, p.10). This would appear to be the case for TTE, since a return to financial stability was undoubtedly secured by increasing levels of resource-dependency from the SC during the 1980s. The increasing levels of resource-dependence outweighed member interests, as evidenced by TTE Chair, Alan Ransome's intervention in urging members not to vote for a decrease in affiliation fees, as this countered SC's explicit requirements for member subscriptions to at least keep step with inflation (cited in TTN, 1993, p.5; also see Sports Council, 1988).

The introduction of the Lottery in 1994 provided TTE with more opportunities to harvest additional financial support, to the extent that it would be 'working very hard towards table tennis being at the front of the queue when funds are distributed' (Gray, former Senior Manager, cited in TTN, 1994a, p.25). Indeed, SE Annual Reports indicated that TTE Lottery and Exchequer awards amounted to £9.9m

between 1998 and 2005. Significant levels of public subsidies were granted to TTE for the 2009-13 (£9.8m) and 2013-17 (£11.7m) funding cycles (see Appendix IX), linked to WSPs, participation initiatives (PL4S, Ping), and NGB support (capacity building, governance, restructuring). From TTE's perspective the substantial awards reflected government/SE's belief that table tennis could meet government's social agenda, as noted by TTE (2009a, p.4), 'table tennis is … recognised as being able to support wider government agendas like health, crime reduction and social inclusion.' This highlights the level at which government/SE's 'policy-core' beliefs influenced TTE's policy direction, and that TTE's engagement at a policy-environmental level was contractual, and constituted not only on the basis of compliance, but also complementary core beliefs and mutually beneficial interdependencies. This is exemplified further by TTE's acknowledgement that many of its activities and programmes were 'driven and funded by money from the Exchequer and the Lottery', in return for which TTE 'agreed to deliver a range of outcomes and [KPIs]' (TTE, 2010, p.4), which had 'to be achieved in order for the funding to be continued' (TTE, 2015a, p.35).

Despite SE's concerns that NGBs should be more financially self-reliant, the levels of income generated by TTE have not matched the increasing levels of government/SE funding, which has inevitably led to greater resource-dependency. Table 8.1 provides financial data on TTE's income for the period 2006 to 2016.

Table 8.1: ***Table Tennis England income/revenue for the period 2005-06 to 2015-06***

Year	2005-06 £'000	2006-07 £'000	2007-08 £'000	2008-09 £'000	2009-10 £'000	2010-11 £'000	2011-12 £'000	2012-13 £'000	2013-14 £'000	2014-15 £'000	2015-16 £'000
Turnover	1,884	2,189	2,555	2,849	4,505	4,867	5,218	5,345	3,989	4,037	4,801
Other Income (Sports Council Grants)	1,361	1,739	2,167	2,161	3,516	4,084	3,978	4,107	3,212	2,933	3,719
Resource-Dependency %	**72**	**79**	**85**	**76**	**78**	**84**	**76**	**77**	**80**	**73**	**77**

Source adapted from: TTE Annual Reports (2006 to 2016)

The excessively high dependence on public funds clearly demonstrates TTE's vulnerability to volatile changes in government and agency support. For example, the 13% reduction in TTE's funding award for the 2017-21 funding cycle (TTE, 2017, p.4), necessitated immediate action to restructure and reduce costs (TTE, 2017). Previous reductions in funding required similar interventions, including relocation to alternative premises (TTE, 2014, p.26), albeit subsidised by SE (2014, p.6). Arguably, resource-dependency emphasises the weakness of TTE, and its limited capacity to challenge the overriding influence of government/SE. A position acknowledged and accepted by TTE, on the basis that '[SE] is a related party[45] as it has significant influence over [TTE's] financial and operating policies' (TTE, 2006, p.10). Evidence also signposts the concerns of TTE that without the substantial support from public subsidies the organisation is likely to revert back to a membership-only body:

> 'We're over 70% reliant on [SE] funding. If we lost it, there's a lot of people that would lose their jobs, and programmes that we would just have to stop. We wouldn't be able to deliver them. You'd go back to being basically a membership body. I don't know what you would do' (Interviewee: CEOTTE).

Interestingly, TTE (2018, p.28) stated within its 2017-18 Annual Report that SE continued to be the largest contributor representing 51% of total income, with affiliation fees at 8%. While this shows the minimal revenue generated from membership fees, it also raises some doubt over the exact level of resource-dependency, although this could be linked to the size and timing of SE funding awards or a different basis of calculation compared to Table 8.1.

It is also evident that the high levels of resource-dependency and reduced self-reliance, resulted from the speed at which substantial sums of government funding were obtained by NGBs, without there being any real understanding of the expectations that came with access to public funds, or how to use them effectively:

[45] Accounting standards - FRS 8 defines related parties as: a party related to an entity if:
(a) directly, or indirectly through one or more intermediaries, the party: i) controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with, the entity; ii) has an interest in the entity that gives it significant influence over the entity; or iii) has joint control over the entity. Significant influence is the power to participate in the operating and financial policy decisions of an entity. Available online from: http://www.accaglobal.com/uk/en/member/discover/cpd-articles/audit-ssurance/related-parties15.html

> ‘[T]oo much money came in too quickly [and] too many pots of money were thrown at [NGBs], and rightly they lapped them up, but didn’t quite know how to use it sustainably’ (Interviewee: CEOTTE).

For TTE, financial self-sufficiency is likely to be an illusion for the foreseeable future, due to the inadequacy of alternative sources of income, and evidence that suggests cost increases across the spectrum of sport services will inevitably impact on the sustainability of incrementally increased membership fees:

> ‘a lot the membership would say that table tennis is becoming more and more expensive and it never used to be that way. We’ve had to take membership fees from about £6 per year to £16 per year, over the last five years, and we’ve very openly said that this will continue and go to £20. [But] they’re paying their club fee, they’re buying new equipment, they’re paying their league fee, and we’ve become the straw that broke the camel’s back, as everything else is going up’ (Interviewee: CEOTTE).

However, further evidence indicates a willingness of TTE to accept greater resource-dependency by tapping into funding channels at points where different policy sectors overlap, which not only demonstrates the existence of intersecting policy domains and the potential for NGBs to engage across policy sectors, but also the financial pull of coalition membership and TTE’s content to be a ‘policy taker’:

> ‘[Sport/NGBs have] definitely got the potential to overlap with different policy sectors, and I think, actually, where there could be more flexibility within the [SE] funding system, policy system, is recognising a bit more of that … Where they have a mental health pot, or a youth volunteering pot, for example, which they open out to partners, … 95% of those pots were given to non-NGB partners … NGBs could potentially deal with those groups, where we have skills and where sports have got experience of and good case studies of doing it … We do have a strong recent history of working within the mental health sector’ (Interviewee: SMTTE).

8.4.3) Capacity Building: workforce and facilities

According to Ken Muhr, in a published letter to TTN, a lack of an effective workforce had stymied the development of table tennis during the 1990s, where for example, the influx of new participants had not been matched by appropriate levels of volunteers (cited in TTN, 1997c, p.5). TTE's inclusion within the SC's 1991 Focus Sport initiative provided an opportunity to introduce table tennis development officers (TTDOs) to deliver sport into the community (TTN, 1996, p.5), the success of which was seen as an important influencing factor in TTE's relationship with SE (Ransome, former Chair of TTE, cited in TTN, 2000a, p.6). Arguably, such influence was not exercised to change policy, but to maximise the financial benefits from available funding opportunities. For example, in recognition of the value, role and decline of volunteers in sport, government/SE introduced the 'Step into Sport' programme (valued at £7m), to encourage volunteering among young people (DCMS, 2002, p.166). Table tennis was one of eight sports included in the scheme, which was to be used to the 'maximum benefit' of table tennis (TTN, 2002b, p.5).

The restructure of SC in 1997 provided TTE with further opportunities to enhance its capacity building through strategic alignments with government/SE policies for sport. For example, TTE acknowledged that to develop its own coaching structure it would 'support and work with the government agencies for the longer term benefit of our sport' (TTE, 2006, p.2), particularly as coaching was seen as a key element for delivery of the government's *Playground to Podium* strategy (DNH, 1995; DCMS, 2002a, 2002b). Indeed, TTE's partnership with the United Kingdom Coaching Certificate was considered an essential part in 'driving [table tennis] forward via a national programme recognised by the government' (Murdoch, former Chair of TTE, cited in TTN, 2007a, p.4), thus signposting TTE's willingness to align with the 'policy-core' beliefs of government/SE on the basis of shared-interests, and importance of shared-beliefs within agency-led coalitions. This close relationship with SE beliefs and objectives is exemplified further by TTE's assertion that its volunteer workforce would focus on 'developing programmes and projects in line with … [TTE's WSP] and policy agreed with [SE]' (TTE, 2006, p.22). It is also evident that SE provided major financial support to fund TTE's professional development team (TTE, 2006), to 'drive development forward within the guidelines of set work programmes and specific targets that emanate from the [TTE's] policies (TTE, 2007, p.25), and

thereby help deliver SE's programmes and objectives. However, evidence suggests that TTDO's were less proactive at a local league level, and more focused at club level (particularly Premier Clubs) (TTE, 2007, p.25), owing to a 'stretched' 'volunteer infrastructure (TTE, 2008, p.25). On the one hand, this highlights a level of resource-interdependency through the use of TTE's volunteer infrastructure to meet government/SE-objectives. On the other hand, the evidence points towards a separation between TTE's administration and grassroots table tennis, with a stronger emphasis by the former on the elite end of the sporting spectrum.

Further evidence of TTE's centrality to the SE-led coalition was the involvement in a 'series of high level government ministerial meetings' between eight sports (table tennis, tennis, rugby union and league, swimming, athletics, cricket and football), chosen to help government 'reverse the decline in competitive sport' through a government-backed 'Competition Managers' initiative (TTE, 2008, p.13; DCMS, 2008, pp.10-11). According to the CEO of TTE, Richard Yule, table tennis' inclusion within large, government backed schemes in the early 2000s, meant the sport was 'taken seriously', particularly as TTE was working with influential partners, and 'sitting down at the table with representatives from the major sports' (cited in TTN, 2008, p.20). Such evidence draws attention to the potential of TTE/table tennis as a key policy actor within the SE-led coalition, and its strategic use political resources to raise the awareness and profile of table tennis.

However, the pattern of funding linked to initiatives that were of three to five year duration, impacted negatively upon workforce stability, resulting in persistent organisational re-structuring and re-shaping to meet changing government priorities and programmes:

> 'the challenge that policy change has on us, is that you get a specific group of people in to perhaps deliver against a programme for four years, the right type of people to deliver against that policy. But then when the policy changes, you need a different skillset to deliver what we need to deliver against. So, there's a lack of continuity in staff, because they know that policy change might mean we have to deliver in a different way, or worry that they're role doesn't fit with this new policy' (Interviewee: SMTTE).

It is evident that the introduction of the Lottery in 1994 provided TTE/table tennis with an opportunity to improve its facility infrastructure, for example, as part of SE's 'More Places' strategy (SE, 1999), funding of £11m for table tennis facilities was approved, of which £7.6m was contributed from the Lottery (TTN, 1997b, p.3). This success in attracting funding, challenged the beliefs held in parts of the table tennis community that the sport did 'not pull [its] numerical weight in obtaining Lottery Sports Fund capital support', or was 'generally too dispersed, fragmented, [and] played in too small units to have power' (TTN, 1999b, Editorial, p.1).

Evidence indicates a proactive TTE in securing of funds for facilities, whether directly through engagement with government/SE, or indirectly by endorsement and recommendation of individual projects to assist clubs. For example, the Foundation for the Sports and the Arts had issued grants in excess of £500,000 during the 1990s to upgrade table tennis facilities, based on applications submitted via the TTE development department, although the programme was primarily aimed at Premier Clubs (TTN, 2001c, p.5). The sources of funding indicated that TTE's facility strategy was clearly geared towards meeting government/SE participation objectives, particularly as TTE's Premier Club programme was 'totally in line' with that of government (TTN, 2003a, p.5), as evidenced by TTE/table tennis' inclusion within the DCMS 'Community Club Development Programme' (SE, 2004, p.15; TTE, 2006, p.17; 2008, p.2). Furthermore, TTE's 2009 revised national facilities strategy was developed in partnership with SE, and formed an 'integral element' of the Premier Club programme (TTE, 2009b, p.5) to support a key objective of SE to increase participation in NGB accredited clubs (SE, 2008, p.24). Again, this highlights a high level of shared interest between TTE and SE.

Part of the explanation for TTE's success in obtaining funding was its acknowledgement that innovation was necessary to 'meet [the] strategic outcomes … agreed with [SE] and the government' (TTE, 2010, p.27, 2011). Innovation is exemplified by TTE's 'Ping' initiative, aimed at introducing new participation opportunities through the location of permanent outdoor table tennis tables in parks and open spaces (Mackintosh, 2013; Mackintosh *et al*., 2014). 'Ping', not only provided TTE with 'recreational activity, raise[d] awareness and profile and … additional informal recruitment entry points into table tennis' (TTE, 2009b, p.5), but also assisted SE to meet its own participation targets (SE, 2012).

However, success in attracting SE funding needed to be set against changes in LA funding that impacted negatively on the provision and development of table tennis, as noted by interviewee CEOTTE:

> 'The demise of well-funded [LA] facilities [have impacted on clubs that are] having to move facilities because they can't afford to stay where they're staying, because the rent of their hall has gone up so much, [or] … because the half of the hall has been let out to Zumba at the same time, [and] everyone's noise is conflicting with each other, so everybody's experience is poor.'

Again, this supports the argument that changes in LA contracts and provision for sport has acted as an external perturbation, where other policy subsystems have impacted on the sport policy domain, at the point where subsystems overlap.

8.4.4) Participation

It is evident that community sport, club development and competition are important elements of TTE's participation strategies, focused on a competition structure that has remained unchanged for decades, albeit with a few alterations to revitalise ailing open tournaments and increase junior participation (TTN, 1999b, p.6). Rather than long term stability indicating conservatism within table tennis, TTE claimed that its competition structure was 'amongst the most comprehensive of any [NGB]' (TTE, 2007, p.4), and highly regarded by the National Competition Review Panel (TTE, 2010). However, there have been some innovations and the discussion in this section is centred on two key participation initiatives, namely, Premier Club, and 'Ping', which have had a major impact on TTE/table tennis.

TTE's Premier Club initiative, introduced in 1999, was considered a significant 'step change' for grassroots table tennis in England (Gray, former Senior Manager, cited in TTN, 1999a, Editorial, p.6), focused on a 'player-centred' approach that endorsed and recognised clubs' integration of a range of activities, from volunteering and coaching to tournament organisation and development work (TTN, 2000c, p.5). The aim of the programme was to create 'a strong sustainable club structure, at four levels, setting high national standards', which would provide table tennis with 'a solid platform enabling full participation in the government agenda' (TTE, 2006, p.14).

Indeed, the former Chair of TTE noted in his regular column within TTN that the initiative aligned with government/SE-objectives at all Premier Club levels (introductory, participation, advanced and excellence), and was 'totally in tune with Government and [SE] thinking on sports development and on increasing membership of sports organisations' (e.g. the introductory level included objectives for school-club links) (Ransome, cited in TTN, 2001a, p.5). Further alignment is evident between TTE's sport development agenda and government/SE's policy on health and fitness, and social inclusion. As noted by TTE, development programmes, including Premier Club, were 'absolutely in line with the policy of the government in tackling the fitness and health of children at school and with the Government's inclusion and community policies' (TTN, 2003a, p.5), and were driven by 'responding to the initiatives created through [SE], the [YST] and other national agencies', in order to contribute to SE's aim 'to make England the most active and successful sporting nation in the world' (TTE, 2006, pp.14-15; 2008, p.25; SE, 1997; SE, 2008). The above evidence illustrates an opportunistic approach towards contributing to government/SE's objectives, and increasing TTE's own membership, as well as highlighting the complementary nature of TTE's relationship with SE.

However, evidence suggests TTE had difficulty sustaining the contractual-compliance requirements of the SE-led coalition membership. For example, TTE observed a drop-off in Premier Clubs (TTE, 2007), and non-compliance with SE's Club Mark KPIs (TTE, 2006). It could be argued that this resulted from strained resources to meet stretching SE-objectives, and TTE's endeavours to seek out more opportunities to benefit table tennis, engaging with the ever-increasing initiatives from various government agencies to ultimately *chase the money*. As noted by TTE (2008, p.25), 'responding to and taking up an ever increasing number of initiatives is a challenge (albeit positive!) to the less well-resourced sports such as table tennis.' It is also evident that the downward pressure of SE's 'fit-for-purpose' criteria to club level, through Club Mark, heightened the compliance versus autonomy debate within TTE membership/clubs. For example, the value of accreditation for some clubs had 'stimulated development and been thoroughly worthwhile', while others believed it to be 'a chore', and conversely, didn't share TTE's ambitions and policy beliefs (TTE, 2008, p.26), or those of government/SE.

Despite the challenges in engaging with SE's changing initiatives, evidence suggests that TTE had met agreed participation outcomes for table tennis. For example, according to TTE (2010, p.10), APS figures for 2009 showed table tennis as being the 'only one of the 31 funded Olympic sports to show a statistically significant increase in young people taking part in sport', and was among only 'five other sports meeting their growth targets' (TTE, 2010, p.12). Evidence also shows that talent development had not been neglected in preparation for the 2012 London Olympiad. As noted by TTE (2006, p.27), '[w]ith the London Olympics 2012 in mind, talent identification and talent development have recently moved up the agenda for table tennis', although it is clear that the talent pathway required improvement, particularly as the talent pool was smaller than its major competitors, and the gap between performance levels too large (TTE, 2008). However, despite the importance of talent development to TTE, particularly to gain re-entry to the UKS-led coalition, it is evident that increasing participative opportunities across all platforms has been its primary purpose, as noted by TTE (2016, p.3):

> 'It was always part of our plan over the next 10 years to return to the top of the world game … [but it] is only one part of our remit as [a NGB]. Our primary purpose is to create an increasing number of … opportunities for everyone to enjoy and achieve in table tennis.'

The innovative 'Ping' strategy, introduced in 2010, provided both SE and TTE with new opportunities to encourage mass participation, via 'self-organised' social and competitive table tennis (TTE, 2010, p.13), and reflected SE aims to 'nurture genuine breakthroughs that will transform the way grassroots sport looks and feels' (SE, 2011, p.9). The aim of which was to place permanent outdoor table tennis tables in cities, parks and open spaces, to raise awareness of and improve access to table tennis, and 'stimulate new players to take up our sport whilst creating new playing opportunities' (TTE, 2010, p.28). According to Mackintosh *et al.* (2014, p.130), 'Ping' exemplified:

> 'a NGB attempting to work with … social change rather than against it, and understanding the success or failure, challenges and opportunities of the initiative may offer critical insights for other NGBs. [It exemplifies] the paradigm shift occurring in sports development delivery away from the traditional pathway from the club to

> elite participation, and towards more organic and "alternative" modes of sports delivery.'

However, evidence suggests 'Ping' was manufactured out of necessity to meet SE-objectives to increase participation numbers, and developed in line with policy shifts, which changed TTE's delivery methods from traditional club-driven based activity to mass participation product-based activity:

> '[to] hit big numbers, which our clubs just hadn't got the capacity to do, fundamentally changed the relationship that sport had in terms of how it delivered … because it had to deliver against [SE targets], [and] for most NGBs the biggest funder is [SE]' (Interviewee: SMTTE).

For Mackintosh *et al*. (2014, p.136), 'Ping' stood in juxtaposition to other NGBs/sports that experienced a declining or stable trend in participation leading up to London 2012 Olympics. In addition, Mackintosh (2013, pp.235-236) signposted Ping's potential impact on the sporting landscape, particularly in relation to the 'management, implementation and evaluation of self-organising formats of sporting and physical activity programmes.' It is also evident that 'Ping' enabled TTE to develop 'advocacy documents' (TTE, 2011, p.25), which were arguably utilised as an effective tool for influencing government/SE decision-making, particularly in the allocation of resources. As evidenced by SE's (2014c, p.6; TTE, 2017) decision to award TTE/table tennis a further £2m, inclusive of contributions towards the continuation of the 'Ping' and latterly the Loop initiatives (workplace and communities). Both programmes aimed at 'taking table tennis to where people are in their everyday lives such as workplaces and community centres' (TTE, 2017, p5). Furthermore, SE (2017b) awarded table tennis 'mass market' funding in 2017 to meet SE-objectives of increasing adult participation in outdoor exercise (SE, 2016e, p.25). According to interviewee CEOTTE, the 'Ping' initiative remains high on SE's agenda, as its relevance to mass market objectives is what SE 'want to talk about most', such innovation reinforcing TTE's position within the SE-led coalition, as a sport/NGB capable of supporting government/SE to achieve their own objectives/outcomes.

Interestingly, Mackintosh *et al*. (2014) expressed the idea of TTE as a social institution, and well placed to influence participation, particularly through versions of the sport that respond to social issues, as in the case of 'Ping'. Indeed, as a proviso to receiving further investment for 'Ping', SE directed TTE to integrate the programme into a social and recreational strategy for table tennis (SE, 2014c), as seen in TTE's Mission 2025 Strategy (2015b). TTE's acquiescence provided further evidence of not only the SE's influence over shaping TTE and TTE's willingness to accept compliance over autonomy, but also of the extent to which TTE's ambitions complemented those of SE. In addition, Mackintosh *et al*. (2014, p.136), highlighted the potential of table tennis to work 'across sports development boundaries in the public sector realm of physical activity and health promotion', a view firmly held by TTE, in the belief that table tennis is 'a powerful tool to get people involved in sport and active lifestyles' (TTE, 2009b, p.2; TTE, 2015a, p.4). TTE's inclusion within the All Party Parliamentary Group for Mental Health, and TTE's mental health action plan (TTE, 2016, p.11)[46], provided further evidence of the commitment of TTE to SE's physical activity and health policy objectives, and highlights the mobility of SMNGBs between policy subsystems, although inevitably this comes with the accompanying risk of directional conflict.

Senior officers within TTE were aware of the tensions that could arise from trying to fulfill ambitions of SE and protect the interest of members. According to interviewee SMTTE, this is 'probably the biggest debate' within the higher echelons of TTE, and balancing the needs between the social objectives and core aspects of operational activity, is often a source of friction. Evidence suggests that:

> 'in terms of the clubs [this] affected the relationship in a negative way. It enabled less interaction with those clubs, because [TTE] were having to focus on the bigger numbers around [APS], and then clubs felt they were less supported, and developed more frictions as a result …[There] was a danger that in 15 years' time, the club structure could become so far removed from the traditional sports sector, and that those relationships with NGBs might be so far removed that … [clubs] wouldn't be connected with their [NGBs]' (Interviewee: SMTTE).

[46] Linked to the Lottery funded project 'Get Set to Go', in partnership with Mind and SE, as noted in a TTE's online news article: Available from: https://tabletennisengland.co.uk/news/archived/were-backing-sports-mental-health-charter/

However, it was also clear that TTE senior staff recognised that clubs and volunteers, naturally engaged with many of the government's social and health priorities, yet this has not been fully acknowledged by TTE (or indeed other SMNGBs), thus putting at risk the sustainability and continued existence of the club structure:

> '[Sport] doesn't have a clear enough view of what it can do across the board at a tradition level, and what it does achieve. These hundreds of thousands of clubs up and down the country, and hundreds of thousands of people volunteering and giving their time, the mental health benefits, loneliness benefits of volunteering. Because it's always been there, you probably don't recognise that until it's taken away. It gets taken for granted that our sports clubs will always be there' (Interviewee: SMTTE).

It can be argued that conformity to government/SE-objectives has blurred the vision of what traditional NGB involvement looks like or what could be achieved through closer interaction with clubs/members.

8.4.5) Partnerships

It is evident that TTE's close alignment to government/SE policy prompted a high degree of partnership-working with various other coalition partners, not only to meet government objectives, but also as an opportunistic strategy in the development of table tennis. As stated by TTE (2006, p.20), '[w]orking in partnership with government agencies and organisations, it is essential to ensure that table tennis is able to gain access to the ever increasing range of opportunities available to sport.' For example, TTE worked in partnership with YST on a wide range of initiatives such as School Sport Co-ordinators, competition managers, Step into Sport (Young Leaders), and the UK School Games, not only to 'support the development of table tennis', but also to contribute to Sport England's aims (TTE, 2007, p.25). In addition, collaboration with YST helped 'to devise a competition matrix of traditional, modified and adapted formats of simple, attractive intra-school competitive games (TTE, 2009a, p.25). TTE also supported YST within a joint NGB response to the government's 'Sport Premium' funding for PE and School sport, stating that it would 'continue to work with the YST to help influence and encourage the inclusion of table

tennis in primary schools in targeted areas' (TTE, 2013, p.35). TTE's cooperation with influential policy actors did not position TTE/table tennis as a 'policy shaper', but although the sport remained a 'policy taker', it was able to use collaborations to maximise the benefits, especially financial support from the government.

Further evidence of collaborative engagement and close working relationships with key coalition partners can be seen with CSPs, StreetGames, and Greenhouse Sports. According to TTE 2009-13 WSP (2009b), CSPs provided support to TTE's operational activities, such as club development, facilities and adult participation. Partnership with StreetGames has been contractually formulated, not only to increase participation of young people in deprived areas, but also to support and influence the mainstream policies and practices of TTE that address disadvantage and excluded communities. Such engagement would suggest an alignment with SE 'policy-core' beliefs and objectives. It also highlights TTE's strategic use of knowledge transfer between coalition partners to strengthen its membership of the SE-led coalition.

Evidence suggests that TTE strategies became more partnership-driven, particularly as TTE acknowledged that 'partnerships are the key to the whole ethos of the organisation' (TTE, 2016, p.3). An example of which is TTE's close ties to Greenhouse Sports (TTE, 2014, p.4), a 'London-based charity committed to using sport to help young people living in the inner city to realise their full potential' (DCMS, 2015, p.17; also see Downward *et al.*, 2017). According to TTE, table tennis is an 'ideal tool' to assist Greenhouse Sports achieve its own ambitions (TTN, 2006, p.18), although the primary purpose of TTE partnerships is to 'create an increasing number of outstanding and exciting opportunities for everyone to enjoy and achieve in table tennis' (TTE, 2016, p.3). Such evidence indicates a pattern of mutually beneficial interdependencies within coalition partnerships, which ties TTE more securely into the SE-led coalition.

It is clear that Greenhouse Sports[47] have close alignment with both 'deep-core' and 'policy-core' beliefs, which have been endorsed by government/SE through the allocation of public funds (SE, 2008, p.17), again demonstrating the value of shared-

[47] See Appendix XII for examples of coalition partner beliefs, alignment and advocacy.

beliefs among coalition partners. ‘Deep-core’ beliefs include the belief that sport has the power to change lives (Greenhouse Sports, 2017), and ‘policy-core’ beliefs include the assumptions that the provision of ‘sports programmes … nurture social, thinking, emotional and physical skills that equip young people for life’ (DCMS, 2015, p.17; Greenhouse Sports, 2016, p.2). In addition, TTE’s close working with coalition partners has served to increase levels in participation, capacity, and targeted demographics (TTE, 2009b), as required by its contractual obligations to the SE-led coalition. This would suggest that partnership-working is a useful and mutually beneficial tool for achieving shared-interests and reinforces membership of the SE-led coalition.

According to interviewee SMTTE, the greater emphasis given to physical activity over sports for sports sake, has changed the dynamics of partnership-working, and fashioned a reversal of roles, where NGBs have potentially transitioned from supplicant to benefactor:

> ‘a little back it was NGBs trying to lead the work with partners, and trying to get them on board to introduce sporting activities … The difference in policy and the research and evidence around physical activity is a lot more prevalent now that those organisations want to come to governing bodies, and look at how they can tap into [our] bank of resources, as opposed to be the other way round.’

8.5) Conclusion

The case of TTE/table tennis has provided a number of significant findings in relation to the aims and objectives of this research. Evidence suggests that the Lottery was a game changer for the sport policy subsystem within the UK, and changes to LA leisure services have impacted on sport provision at a developmental level, restricting the delivery of sport. While it has been argued previously that ‘social actors’ prompted an internal shock to the sport policy subsystem, by increasing doubt in the ability of NGBs to meet policy objectives, it is also evident that flaws in government/SE’s WSP monitoring systems also delivered an internal shockwave within the system. The ethos of WSPs encouraged silo-working and competition rather than collective working among NGBs to meet SE target driven policies, which

resulted in behaviour in NGBs that was detrimental towards increasing participation, and prompted the major policy change incorporated within *Sporting Future*. Evidence also indicates that the rapid increase in public funding allocated to NGBs, was not always effectively used due to lack of management capacity, with the consequence that the targets set by SE were not always met.

Organisationally, evidence suggests that government, internal discord, organisational inertia, conservatism, and resistance to change, contributed to TTE/table tennis' decline from a position of strength to one of weakness and dependency between the 1970s and early 2000s. Indeed, it is evident that TTE's conservativism and it's less than nimble adaptation to change, have been the result of constant political tensions based on an almost 'Westminster Model' of confrontational democracy, where party affiliations and elections have stymied its development, the result of which has been an increasingly close and resource-dependent relationship with government and its agencies. Such reliance on public subsidies evidently a characteristic of the sporting landscape long before the advent of the Lottery.

However, TTE have adapted to the changing government/SE policy values through strategic alignment of priorities with those of government/SE, underpinned by a culture of opportunism and pragmatism. While it could be argued that not maximising opportunities and income to protect the autonomy of the sport could be considered a dereliction of the duty on the part of TTE, membership of the SE-led coalition has led to an often dynamic operational environment engineered on the basis of high resource-dependency, compliance, performance regimes, and financial sanctions. The result of the alignment with SE has been a loss of autonomy owing to the increasing level of governmental influence over TTE's operational and financial activities, and the emergence of observable tensions between compliance and autonomy. This is particularly evident with regard to modernisation and reform of TTE's governance arrangements, where changes to governance have been driven by governmental influence and compliance, and the fear of financial sanctions for non-compliance. This has highlighted the weakness of TTE/table tennis and verified its resource-dependency, and limited capacity for TTE to operate on a self-sufficient basis for the foreseeable future, since membership income is the only viable option and potentially unsustainable due to the overall increase participation costs.

While SE's influence over TTE is clear, there are indications that TTE has potential to exert a degree of influence within the government/SE policy-making process, but for the benefit (usually financial) of table tennis rather than to provoke policy change, confirming TTE as a 'policy taker' rather than a 'policy shaper.' However, there is some evidence of TTE's use of political resources to raise the awareness and profile within a an emerging coalition of SMNGBs, and its membership of the NGBCEOF; and equally, membership of a coalition of competitive but not elite NGBs, nested within the UKS-led coalition, both of which are intended to achieve positive outcomes at the 'policy-core' levels of the sport policy subsystem. However, to date there is no evidence that suggests any major impact on SE or government policy.

From a theoretical perspective, it is evident that there is a high degree of overlap between TTE and government/SE 'policy-core' beliefs, which accentuates further the utility of the ACF's assumptions of coalition boundedness through shared-beliefs. However, evidence also suggests that coalition membership moves beyond the boundaries of shared-beliefs, and that coalitions can be engineered by government on the basis of shared-interests, financial incentives, and sanctions. In addition, competition is not just between coalitions, but also within coalitions, whereby coalition partners within the SE-led coalition invariably compete for opportunities and funding for self-preservation. Coalition members also seek to serve their own interests through various levels of strategic interdependence, thus creating coalitions nested within the SE-led coalition rather through collective action to realise shared-beliefs, thus highlighting a weakness in the ACF's conceptualisation of belief-bounded coalitions. That said, it is evident that TTE have endorsed and operationalised a strategy of partnership-working aligned to government/SE policy, and has engaged with coalition partners, primarily to reaffirm its coalition membership and acceptance of SE's 'policy-core' beliefs and objectives, again demonstrating the omnipotence of shared-beliefs. Furthermore, the diversity of coalition partners reinforces the argument of the existence of overlapping advocacy coalitions within the sport policy subsystem, and the ability of coalition partners to cross coalition boundaries and policy subsystems, driven by shared preferences, self-interest and interdependencies. Evidence also supports the claim that external shocks can occur at 'touch points' where policy subsystems overlap, such as the retention of school sport within the DfE. It is also evident that internal conflicts added

a layer of complexity to the nature of coalitions, highlighting the potential for *interior* or *internal* coalitions and potential ambiguity regarding coalition membership. Again, evidence suggests that the ACF finds difficulty in accounting for the many guises of subsystem actors owing to the 'height' from which the ACF is purported to view policy change.

The operationalisation of power has a strong association with the first two of Lukes' three dimensions of power. The first dimension is representative of the contractual-compliance relationship between TTE and government/SE, where observable and measured decision-making are deployed, for example, financial sanctions for non-compliance. With regard to Lukes' second dimension, agenda control, it is clear that the resources available to SE have enabled a degree of domination of the policy agenda, which was more redolent of Lukes' first dimension of power. However, over time opposition to SE policy from NGBs became more muted, to the extent that challenges (e.g. regarding the marginalisation of members' interests), were confined to debate within NGBs rather than between NGBs, such as TTE, and SE.

Chapter Nine

Theoretical and Empirical Evaluations and Research Implications

9.1) Introduction

The emphasis for this chapter is the collation of data across all empirical chapters, drawing particular attention to the similarities and differences between the selected SMNGBs, to allow for theoretical and empirical evaluations of the research findings. The structure of this chapter is in line with the research objectives as outlined in Chapters 1 and 5. Included within this chapter are the implications of this study for UK sport policy, SMNGBs and the ACF.

9.2) Understanding the historical context of contemporary UK sport policy

Evidence suggests that a CCPR-led advocacy coalition, formed around the beliefs that sport had an important role to play in society and should receive greater political debate and government involvement, stimulated the emergence of a 'nascent' sport policy subsystem. Evidence also indicates that the sport policy subsystem remained in a 'nascent' state prior to 1995, due in the most part to: i) sport remaining on the periphery of political interest, as seen by government's limited involvement and resistance from Whitehall, emanating from disruptive ministerial changes and attitudinal fluctuations from individual PMs; ii) continued deference towards sport, as seen by the lack of involvement and unclear roles and responsibilities for sports' NGBs, despite the semi-autonomous nature of many of them; and iii) enduring conflicts among policy actors (e.g. between NGBs, CCPR, SC and the BOA), which weakened SC's influence.

However, evidence has shown that since 1995 a series of external and internal perturbations or shocks prompted changes in the trajectory of UK sport policy, altering the structure of the sport policy subsystem and the sporting landscape, as demonstrated by the key findings presented in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1: *External and Internal perturbations/shocks to the UK sport policy subsystem*

Sport Policy Documents	External perturbation or shock	Internal perturbation or shock	Changes in Policy
Raising the Game (1995)	Prime Ministerial change from Thatcher to Major in the early 1990s. Introduction of the Lottery in 1994. Public criticisms concerning failure at the Atlanta 1996 Olympiad.		Shift in government priorities from mass participation to twin track of elite performance and school sport - sport seen as an instrument of government. Restructure of the Sports Council – an advocacy role. Use of Lottery funds as a policy instrument to facilitate government intervention in sport policy and achieve policy outcomes by providing NGB/SMNGBs access to vast financial resources.
Sporting Future for All (2000) ***Game Plan (2002)***	Change in government: Conservative to New Labour (1997) – *Best Value* political ideology		From passive to contractual subsystem politics – sport seen as a 'social tool.' *Modernising Partnership* with NGB/SMNGBs as delivers of sport to achieve shared government objectives, e.g. increased participation through target-setting; improved co-ordination; and professionalism of sports' management.
Playing to Win (2008)	London's successful bid in 2005 to host the 2012 Olympic Games.		Sharper sense of direction and purpose for policy, through the construction of distinct advocacy coalitions for elite, community and school sport, substantially shaped by government. NGB/SMNGBs elevated to a frontline delivery mechanism capable of achieving government aims and objectives - focused on WSP outcomes, and a return to 'sport for sport's sake.'
Creating a sporting habit for Life (2012)	Change in government: New Labour to Conservative-led Coalition (2010).	Influential 'social actors' in sport (e.g. StreetGames) through more effective lobbying of government - increased doubt in the ability of NGB/SMNGBs to meet policy objectives.	More rigorous, targeted and results-orientated way of thinking about grassroots, youth sport (14-25) and community/social sport – Olympic Legacy from the Home Games. Active 'mixed economy' approach to funding and achieving policy objectives - significant shift in focus for NGB/SMNGBs to increase participation for young people under-16.
Sporting Future (2015)	Change in government: Coalition to Conservative (2015). Changes to LA leisure services, negatively impacting on sport provision in terms development and facilities. Changing attitudes towards health - a greater focus on physical activity to address government's social/health agendas.	HLSCOPL's criticism of government's Olympic legacy plans and policies. Government/SE's flawed WSP/APS monitoring systems (2005-2016) - encouraged silo-working and competition rather than collective working among NGBs to meet government/SE target driven policies.	Shift in priorities from 'sports for sport's sake' to 'sport for social good' - altered the structure of the policy subsystem by way of a clearer focus on physical activity for the inactive. NGB-centric approach to delivery replaced by organisational-neutrality to meet government policy outcomes. Change in emphasis for NGB/SMNGBs – now focused on 'core-market' (those who regularly play sport).

Evidence indicates the existence of three competing advocacy coalitions within the sport policy subsystem, two of which are led by state agencies, UKS and SE; the UKS-led coalition for elite sport, the SE-led coalition for community/social/grassroots sport, and the YST-led coalition for school sport, constructed by government on the basis of shared-beliefs, but also substantially shaped by shared-objectives, financial incentives and sanctions, which are also considered co-determinants of coalition membership. Interaction between government, agency-led coalitions and NGB/SMNGBs, as coalition members, demonstrates a high degree of coordinated activity to meet shared goals and points towards an alliance that benefits from resources, such as public funding. While Green and Houlihan (2004) alluded to the limited potential for a community sport advocacy coalition, evidence has clearly illuminated the presence of an SE-led community sport coalition, *endogenous*ly derived from a drive towards mass participation powerfully reinforced by SE (particularly for health benefits), on the one hand, and through the modernisation and increasing dependency of NGB/SMNGBs on public funding arising from the greater access to opportunities and Lottery funds on the other; and *exogenously* derived from government's pro-social agenda. Evidence indicates that agency-led coalitions can be bound together by shared-interests and interdependencies, rather than simply on the basis of shared values/beliefs, as seen within the case studies. Coalition members can also be subjected to enforced collective action, resulting from government intervention and policy subsystem design, as illustrated by the degree to which agency-led coalitions within the UK sport policy subsystem have been engineered by government, to act as a mechanism for realising government objectives, linked to changes in government priorities and political agendas. As noted by interviewee SESLR, '[SE's] strategy is completely embedded or consumed within the broader government strategy.'

The composition of the agency-led coalitions include a definable, yet complex, multiplicity of actors or coalition partners (see Figure 5.1), as seen in the SE-led coalition, and have the potential to overlap between different coalitions and policy subsystems, particularly as sport is an extremely malleable resource to help achieve the objectives of various government departments (e.g. health and education). However, the level of engagement and overlap among policy actors across different coalitions and policy subsystems is primarily government-led, which can lead to both

subsystem expansion or contraction primarily from external perturbations and varying degrees of resource allocation from the government purse, as seen by the impact of the educational policy subsystem on the sport policy subsystem, and the strengthening of government beliefs that school sport should continue to be the domain of the DfE. A key finding has been the degree to which changes in LA contracts for leisure services have also impacted on the sport policy subsystem and sporting landscape, the extent to which has not received a satisfactory level of attention within the policy environment. As seen from the case studies, not only has this hindered the development of sport, but also significantly affected sport/NGB/SMNGB's ability to meet government outcomes, which has arguably inhibited the progress of the sport policy subsystem to a new stage of maturity.

Arguably, policy subsystems advance through various stages of maturity, dependent on the levels of government intervention and public consciousness of particular subsystems, which can equally restrict subsystem development. Evidence suggests the UK sport policy subsystem has not reached the levels of maturity attained by long-standing policy subsystems (e.g. health and education), as a consequence of sports' perpetual fragmentation and a disjointed political system. For example, changes to the educational policy subsystem have been explicit in narrowing the sporting landscape through the demise of school sport, prompted by government influence and downward pressure to meet school academic targets, and continued departmental infighting on the location of school sport within the corridors of Whitehall. The extent of government control and downward pressure within the sport policy subsystem is also clearly observable, suggesting a less than arm's length approach and a rolling out of state, as seen by government's influence over the SE-led coalition, and the instability of community sport policy objectives over the past two decades, thus pointing towards a less than dominant SE-led coalition. By contrast, the extension of policy continuity for elite sport indicates a more dominant UKS-led coalition, particularly as UKS's targeted approach to elite performance as a 'policy-core' belief has proved difficult to change, along with government's reaffirmation of UKS's strategy and the decision not to merge UKS and SE.

Critically though, it could be argued that the sporting sector policy actors have demonstrated a reluctance to utilise their significant influence to shape policy, in contrast to the sports sector's size and strong economic and social value to government and society. Evidence suggests that sport policy actors' preferences have been framed by a fear of 'rocking the boat', a reluctance to promote their valuable contribution to society, an acceptance of sustained levels of conservatism and compliance, and a willingness to be subjected to policy rather than shape it, there being little evidence of sport proactively shaping policy at the government level. On the other hand, it is argued that sport has remained on the periphery of political agendas, seen as a 'bolt-on' mechanism for government to use as and when it sees fit, in disregard of the importance and benefits of sport and physical activity to society. A claim supported by SE and the case studies, where interviewee CEOTTE's comments provide a concise reference to the openness of the sport policy subsystem to policy shifts as a reflection of government's lack of a clear understanding of the benefits and importance of sport and physical activity, which is likely to have had a significant bearing across most if not all NGBs:

> 'I'm not sure [government] do know what quite to do [with sport and activity], and I don't think they give it as much importance as they should. The fact that sport continues to be tapped into a department of culture, media, digital and sport. The fact is that sport is not seen as being important enough to have its own directorate, where it can then influence education, health, society. It's a little bolt onto someone else's directorate, rather than being able to really influence all these other areas.'

9.3) Development of governmental relationships

NGBs' potential contribution to government policy on sport was acknowledged in *Raising the Game (1995)*, but there still existed a culture of deference towards them, although there was also a sense of uncertainty in their ability to partner government and the Sports Councils. NGBs had no clear role or responsibilities within the Sports Council's strategies for sport (pre-1995), despite the resource-dependency of some on government grant-aid, TTE/table tennis being a case in point. It is also evident that NGBs were generally passive in their early discussions with government/SE/UKS in determining their role, and the relationship with and expectations of government, despite being critical on a number of aspects of sport policy, such as: concern over the multiplicity of strategic documents and priorities, which lacked clarity and created confusion; the perceived inefficiencies in funding arrangements, operational costs, monitoring and evaluation; and use of rewards or sanctions (DCMS, 2002a, pp.163-166).

The creation of the Lottery elevated sport to a much more significant instrument of government, and signalled the emergence of a new relationship between NGBs, government and the Sports Councils, as seen in the sport policy documents *Sporting Future for All (2000), Game Plan (2002)* and *Playing to Win (2008).* However, the transition of NGBs to a higher level of involvement in the policy environment and greater responsibility and empowerment over the control of public funding, was less to do with their aggressive lobbying, as purported by Keech (2011), but an opportunistic strategy on the part of the government, as no alternative delivery mechanism existed to deliver on policy outcomes leading up to the 2012 Home Olympics. A claim supported by evidence from the case studies, SE and DCMS, and sufficiently illustrated by the comments of interviewee CEOEH:

> 'I don't think [NGBs] were organised enough to be influencing policy. I think they were the natural recipients once government decided we've got this pot of money, we're going to utilise our nominated outlets, [UKS and SE]. [NGBs] were an established group. They were already doing development stuff, should already have the links in place, oversaw the club structure, the competition structure, [and] dealt with all the elite side of things … It was a bit like where else could [the government] have gone.'

More importantly, NGBs' elevation and transition from a 'key delivery platform for high performance' (DCMS, 2002, p.138) to a 'front line' mechanism for enhancing both the elite and community levels of sport' (SE, 2009, p.10), required them to navigate through a number of difficult challenges, attributable to: i) changing political and operational environments resulting from a series of policy shifts over a decade or more, due to varying external and internal perturbations or shocks to the sport policy subsystem; ii) a shift from a traditional model of NGB autonomy to that of conditional *earned* autonomy, the evolution of which has been from a privileged position of equality to a position of dependence on government; and iii) an acceptance to comply and deliver on shifting government pro-social priorities and objectives, in return for public funding, through a 'fit-for-purpose' programme of reform and modernisation, complex performance regimes, and the threat of financial sanctions for non-compliance. The result of which has been heightened levels of resource-dependency for SMNGBs, and increasing tensions within SMNGBs between those favouring compliance with government/SE's governance protocols to preserve NGB financial interests, and those firmly committed to the preservation of NGB autonomy and the protection of membership interests, the latter concerned with the increasing influence of government and its agencies over NGB activities. Arguably though, the existence of 'competing factions' within NGBs, as noted by a UKS board member, were 'perversely, often a product of democratic systems of governance' (UKS, 2002b, p.16).

Indeed, the impact of increased dependency on public funding and NGBs' changing role, and relationship with government and governmental agencies, challenged the traditional model of NGB autonomy, particularly in regard to organisational operations and managerial capacity. A clear example of which was government's £7m investment into a NGB modernisation programme, designed 'to aid NGBs with differing capacities to become more efficient and effective in their operations, [and] mitigate the temptation of the Sports Councils to micro-manage NGBs' (DCMS, 2002a, p.138). Modernisation and reform was reinforced further by greater selectivity in the distribution of funding, as seen by UKS's changed programme of funding of Olympic sports to a more 'risk-based approach', and the implementation of the *No Compromise* principle (UKS, 2006b, p.32). The aim of which was to reinforce the best, support those developing, and provoke change in the under-performing (UKS,

2004, p.4), to meet government objectives for elite performance. According to interviewee SEC, the narrowing of elite policy focus towards winning medals impacted heavily on NGBs, where funding was removed from 'those sports … who weren't able to contribute to the medal targets.' It is also evident that the introduction of WSPs signified a major shift for NGBs from a traditional role to greater engagement within the wider social agenda of government. However, WSPs had progressively moved from being a 'tool' to engage partners (SE, 2004a, p.11), to a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating NGBs on the basis of earned autonomy, the level of which was dependent on NGBs' ability to meet government objectives, thus demonstrating performance management through WSPs as being central to the new modernised relationship between government and NGBs, whereby governance and performance were classified as co-determinants for both continued and increased conditional public funding (DCMS, 2008, p.13).

Consequently, SMNGBs have had to utilise a variety of strategies to develop governmental relationships, as illustrated in Table 9.2. Similarities in strategic approaches included: opportunistic and pragmatic alignments to government/SE policies; acceptance of policy change and contractual-compliance obligations of the SE-led coalition, as a means of self-preservation; the use of political resources and compliance as a means of increasing awareness and scope for influencing policymakers; and high levels of partnership engagement, as seen in the case of EH and TTE. In contrast, VE demonstrated a more defiant attitude towards government/SE directives, as seen by its preference for self-development and delivering on membership needs, as opposed to the development of sport through government/SE pro-social agendas, emphasising a resistance to adapt to change and a misalignment with SE-led coalition 'policy-core' beliefs and contractual obligations. This resulted in intervention from SE and an enforced realignment of VE in line with government priorities and lower levels resourcing by way of financial sanctions, thus illuminating the extent to which resource-dependency on public funding elicits futile resistance in the face of self-preservation. Indeed, the harsher performance regimes and SE's heightened punitive measures, especially financial sanctions, for those not delivering or failing to meet contracted obligations (DCMS, 2012), has elevated SE's authority from that of the policeman of sport (Houlihan, 1997) to that of *judge and jury*.

Table 9.2: ***Strategies utilised by SMNGBs in the development governmental relationships***

EH/handball	VE/volleyball	TTE/table tennis
Development through opportunities provided by SE. **Strategic use of parliamentarians, as a political resource to raise awareness of the sport, e.g. Parliamentary Sports Fellow; and HLSCOPL.** **Strategic use of compliance as a resource for sport development e.g. the appointed CEO of EH as a former senior manager of SE.** **Strategic alignment with government/SE policy and an acceptance of contractual-compliance obligations of the SE-led coalition membership, e.g. a greater focus on community/grassroots sport than at the elite level.** **Partnership-driven strategic approach to increasing participation (particularly coalition partners).** **Multi-institutional, but as a facilitator, rather than a deliverer e.g. social, educational.** **Policy Change - acceptance as opposed to opposition, although not uncritical.** **Member of the NGBCEOF.**	Strategic use of compliance as a resource for sport development, e.g. the appointed CEO of VE as a former senior manager of SE. Organisationally driven by SE's 'policy-core' beliefs, in particular, an alignment with government and SE's *Playground to Podium* ideology. Participative strategies skewed towards the talent pathway and elite performance, rather than on increasing participation. Preference for self-development - demonstrating limited understanding of policy environment and requirements of government and SE. Limited engagement in partnership-working to achieve government and SE-objectives. Policy Change – not fully subservient, e.g. critical of loss of autonomy and policy interventions to increase participation; elements of willing acceptance and enforced acceptance (e.g. governance and participative strategies). Member of the NGBCEOF.	Regional structure in parallel to geographical boundaries of SC - commitment to collaborating with SC to meet policy objectives, pre-1995. Pragmatic approach to development through the strategic utilisation of both the belief system of government/SE and specific government policies. Multi-institutional, as a promoter and deliverer of social sport, school sport, participation sport and elite sport, which highlights a willingness to cross subsystem and coalition boundaries. Close and strategic alignment with government/SE and an acceptance of contractual-compliance obligations of SE-led coalition membership – e.g. commitment to delivering a range of outcomes, in line with government policy. High degree of opportunistic partnership-working with various other coalition partners, to meet government objectives, and self-develop. Policy Change - acceptance as opposed to opposition, although not uncritical; elements of enforced acceptance (e.g. governance). Member of the NGBCEOF.

Evidence suggests that SE had begun to lessen the NGB-focused investment strategy, having significantly progressed from being 'interested in developing' (SE, 2013a, p.5) to 'actively developing' a mixed economy within the community sport sector (SE, 2014a, p.6). In support of this claim, evidence suggests that SE's heightened focus on a 'mixed economy' approach to increasing participation provoked huge concern among NGBs, and criticism of the way in which they were measured against government/SE objectives:

> 'Among [NGBs] there are fears that the baby could be thrown out with the bathwater. There is also long-standing frustration that their efforts [to deliver on the government's legacy ambitions] are being measured by a blunt instrument [the APS] ... You can't take [NGBs] out of the picture, because if you do the system will crumble' (Gibson, 2015).

However, evidence provided to the HLSCOPL illustrated the level of frustration with SE and NGB/SMNGBs, with criticisms including (HLSCOPL, 2013a); i) a tribal regime within NGBs preventing collective action in the best interests of the sport; ii) a lack of skill and capacity to drive participation upwards; iii) the limitations of the APS that excluded school sport from statistics, and therein potential funding requirements from early-specialisation sport; iv) a disconnect between school sport and SE, and talent development and elite programmes; v) resentment in terms of funding for elite sport/NGBs against the struggles of those at grassroots level; and vi) poor sporting infrastructures at community and grassroots levels. SE claimed that the adoption of a 'mixed economy' approach to investment and reduced dependency on NGBs in terms of delivery, was partly in recognition of NGBs' resource risks and skill gaps in relation to participation (SE, 2014a, p.49), and the challenges highlighted by poor APS participation figures (SE, 2014c, p.2). It is also evident that funding bids and strategies were 'often [made] in isolation', and many lacked a joined-up pathway from 'pupil to podium' (HLSCOPL, 2013a, p.58), suggesting NGBs had continued to work within artificial silos. It could be argued that this was also a reflection of SE's self-proclaimed departmental 'silo-working', accredited to their own organisation's cultural and structural problems (SE, 2016c, p.2). Further evidence confirms an elite/grassroots dichotomy among NGBs, and an apparent level of disdain and competition between UKS and SE. For example, SE believed it had not received the public acknowledgement it deserved (SE, 2014b, p.9), unlike UKS, and questioned whether it should financially support those sport/NGBs that had been subjected to UKS funding withdrawals. As noted by SE (2014d, pp.5-6), the organisation's contribution towards 'the support of a performance and international competition programme … would be above and beyond the talent pathway already funded by [SE].'

Contrasting evidence also suggests that NGBs did not consider themselves as 'deliverers of social outcomes', and SE funding was merely a means to 'deliver numbers of people playing [their] sport' (HLSCOPL, 2013a, p.213). On the other hand, SE believed that NGBs' exaggerated their significance in the sport market:

> ‘If you go back to 2008, certainly going forward to 2010, 2011, [NGBs] thought of SE as a bank, and it should just give them the money, do an audit making sure the money was spent properly, and that was it …That came from this belief that they controlled the market in sport, and actually as we know, they controlled very, very little of the market in sport’ (Interviewee: SEC).

However, criticisms of government’s ineffective 2012 Olympic legacy plans were directed, in the most part, towards NGBs, the consequence of which was the redistribution of critical political resources, particularly financial support, away from NGBs and ‘sports for sport’s sake’, to ‘sport for social good.’ This altered the structure of the sport policy subsystem by way of: i) a clearer focus on physical activity for the inactive; ii) the expansion of SE’s ‘mixed economy’ approach to public funding for grassroots sport; and iii) a lessening of responsibility for NGBs with a renewed focus on their own audience and ‘core activities’, with the caveat to at least maintain their current levels of participation.

The changed remit for NGBs has centred on their ‘core’ market, represented by those with ‘a strong and resilient relationship with sport and activity’, where NGBs are considered to be closest to their audience (SE, 2017a, p.20). While a narrower focus has lessened the pressure on NGBs to deliver participation increases, there is an expectation to ‘at least maintain the numbers of regular players or participants they influence’ (SE, 2017a, p.20). More importantly, the shift in focus for NGBs and the drive for greater sustainability, has significantly reduced NGB income from public funds to the extent that funding awards were valued 33% lower in the 2017-21 funding cycle than in 2013-17 (SE, 2017a, p.22). The ‘one size fits all’ approach to funding (SE, 2016, p.4) has been replaced by NGB-defined plans and targets in consideration of the role and influence of each NGB in their sport (SE, 2016, p.9), and their varying sizes and capabilities (SE, 2016b, p.4). While this indicates a continuance of shared interest and interdependencies within the SE-led coalition, evidence suggests that a substantial burden has been placed on NGBs to adapt to their new policy environment, and deal with the financial pressures of reduced public funding, and government’s drive for operational cost efficiency savings and income diversification (DCMS, 2015, p.53):

> ‘[T]he transition that [NGBs are] being asked to undertake is quite a challenging one, and again it’s not necessarily happening with an awful lot of help and support, and clarity from the centre’ (Interviewee: SRA).

Of further significance to NGBs has been the greater importance placed on governance, particularly to strengthen the sports sector’s resilience and reduce dependency on public funding (DCMS, 2015b, p.11), as reflected by the multiple references to governance in *Sporting Future*. Governance terminology has shifted from good governance to *excellent governance* and from a voluntary code to a *mandatory* code (DCMS, 2015b, p.11 – emphasis added), the aim being to provide a ‘transformative influence’ on those NGB/organisations that ‘rely on public funding for survival, and thus increasingly at risk and less able to plan and deliver over the longer term’ (DCMS, 2015b, p.52). For NGBs, this has included closer scrutiny and the disregard of previous improvements in governance (UKS, 2016a, pp.16-17; SE, 2016d, p.20). The manifestation of which has been agreed, bespoke, and timely compliance with the new Governance code for each NGB, to ensure continued receipt of government and Lottery funding (UKS, 2017, p.2), based on organisational size and the level of public investment (SE, 2017a, p.29).

Equally significant, is evidence that government/SE’s shifting priorities towards the inactive, prompted the implementation of *organisational-neutrality* (i.e. an end to the privileged status of NGBs within the sport subsystem) as the method of delivery to achieve agreed outcomes, and the requirement of NGBs to compete on a level playing field, as explained by Interviewee SLRDP:

> ‘[SE] can’t achieve all of those strategy requests, and broader strategy outcomes through [NGBs] alone. Our strategy was more about how are we going to reach this broader consumer group, how are we going to drive these broader outcomes … Essentially, we made the decision that we needed more of a partner-neutral approach, where it’s not about who you are, but what you can deliver, which again was a big shift for [NGBs].’

Critically though, it can be argued that NGBs' attempts to execute policy requirements were hampered by a number of issues, directly related to how governmental relationships, more so with SE than UKS, have shaped the very nature of modern NGBs, the key issues identified from the case studies relating to the:

i) swiftness of the significant levels of public funding allocated to NGBs, and requirements to professionalise through modernisation (e.g. internal tensions and discord at the point where the worlds of amateurism and professionalism collide);
ii) ill-defined and flawed policies giving greater emphasis to inter-NGB competition than to collective action, as a means to achieve policy aims and objectives, for example, the inconsistencies of the APS mechanism, which prompted unconstructive behaviours among NGB/SMNGBs (e.g. the use of inflated WSP submissions to ensure self-preservation through increased public subsidies);
iii) limited understanding and expertise of policy environments, despite its increasing significance and relevance to operational and financial sustainability (e.g. neglecting to recognise the full implications of delivering on policy outcomes, confusion and ambiguity stemming from policy shifts, and disregard of members natural engagement with government priorities);
iv) challenges of organisational-identity (e.g. tensions emanating from a dichotomy between observable compliance and autonomy); and
v) lack of support for CEOs of NGBs when arguably their responsibilities necessitated substantial support, which prompted the creation of the NGBCEO forum.

To elaborate further on some of the above points, it could be argued that there has been an existential misconception among NGBs, in respect of who they are and who and what they represent, which has impacted on their ability to interpret policy and deliver on government strategies. Evidence suggests NGBs are still rooted to the traditional beliefs of a membership organisation, despite being shaped by government and SE to undertake far greater responsibilities than their traditional roles, as exemplified by the comments below:

> ‘[SE] transitioned and transformed [NGBs] from that membership-led mind-set, to a broader participation mind-set’ (Interviewee: SESLR).

> ‘I think we have to examine what is a [NGB], and what is its role. Its core role is rules, standards, and membership services, because they are membership organisations. But where in there is the general, wider policy, about promoting the sport for others who don’t do the sport, and why are [NGBs] not doing that’ (Interviewee: SEC).

A further critique is that not only NGBs, but the sporting sector itself, invariably have little or no expertise in understanding the policy environment, despite its operational relevance, which has arguably limited the capacity for policy-oriented learning and policy influence:

> ‘[In] a sector that is very dependent on its relationship with government, and in many cases dependent on money from government, to invest so little time and money into nurturing and protecting those relationships, and understanding the policy environment, is remarkable. It’s a frustration that we spend quite a lot of time having to explain in fairly basic terms, certainly to the small to medium-sized [NGBs], why any of this stuff is important’ (Interviewee: SRADP).

The above statement is supported by key findings of this study, which has illuminated the unopposed acceptance of policy change from those SMNGBs selected as case studies, and overall willingness to adapt to change to preserve membership of the SE-led coalition and levels of resource-dependency, thus demonstrating an overriding weakness and vulnerability within SMNGBs, and clearly identifies them as primarily ‘policy takers’ rather than ‘policy shapers.’ An alternative argument is that the willingness of SMNGBs to align with government and SE policies and accept the contractual-compliance obligations of the SE-led coalition, is reflective of a combination of: i) shared ‘core’ beliefs; ii) complementary participative and development strategies; and iii) a general willingness to be a ‘policy taker’ rather than a ‘policy shaper,’ as acceptance is mutually beneficial and self-preserving, as is evident across the three case studies.

Arguably though, the inclusion of all three case studies as members of the NGBCEOF, which is best described as a ‘professional fora’, is an attempt by NGBs, in particular SMNGBs, to collaborate in reaffirming to government and its agencies the shared-beliefs/values/interests and strategic importance of NGB/SMNGBs to the

sport policy subsystem. This highlights the emergence of a less prominent advocacy coalition consisting of a cluster of SMNGB/sports, nested within the SE-led coalition and actively engaged in attempting to influence sport policy. However, the capacity to influence the policy environment will be dependent on whether their collective voice is strong enough to interact with government at a policy level, there being no current evidence to indicate any impact on SE or government policy. That said, evidence has shown that the conversation and relationship between government and NGB/SMNGBs has changed from a 'modernising partnership' to that of a 'critical friend', as described by interviewee DCMSa, whereas for SE there has been a 'maturing' of their mutual relationship with NGBs (SE, 2017a, p.22) that, according to interviewee SEC, is still 'evolving.'

Similarly, a cluster of competitive SMNGBs (the 'have-nots') has emerged as a minority coalition, nested within the UKS-led coalition, the aim being to actively engage in collective action to influence elite sport policy, by exploiting specific subsystem 'deep-core beliefs', such as the athlete inspirational 'role model' effect, to influence changes in 'policy-core' beliefs of government and the UKS-led coalition. Evidence indicates some impact in this regard by virtue of the government's new 'Aspirational Fund', although arguably funding has been directed towards those Olympic sports/NGBs with a potential for podium success. This suggests a strategic approach by government and UKS to quieten the dissident voices of unfunded SMNGBs, and remove the threat of an emerging minority coalition, as well as demonstrating the dominance of elite sport and medal priorities within the sport policy subsystem.

9.4) Operational impacts and approaches to changing sport policy

This section provides a cross-case analysis and evaluation of the key findings in relation to the analytical themes identified to achieve the research aims and objectives.

9.4.1) Governance

The key findings of the cross-case analysis on the analytical theme of governance are presented in Table 9.3.

Table 9.3: *Governance: key findings*

	EH/handball	VE/volleyball	TTE/table tennis
Beliefs	Good governance crucial for the long-term success of EH/handball; unproblematic acceptance to comply with government/SE.	High standards of governance essential to meet increasing levels of scrutiny and challenge as beneficiaries of public funding; pragmatic acceptance to comply with government/SE	Modernisation essential for self-development.
Impact of Policy	Significant - organisationally and operationally.		
Adaptation to Change	Willingness to comply with government and SE policy requirements. Progressive and transformational, though not uncritical.	Willingness to comply with government and SE policy requirements, but acceptance constrained by internal conflicts. Organisational inertia and conservatism; Enforced compliance from SE in 2016.	Willingness to comply with government and SE policy requirements, but acceptance constrained by internal conflicts. Organisational inertia and conservatism fashioned by an apparent 'Westminster Model' of organisational democracy; Enforced compliance from SE in 2017.
Internal Tensions	Heightened – observable conflict at Board, Executive and membership Levels - influence of the 'Blazer Brigade.'		
	Compliance vs autonomy dichotomy. Wedded to notion that it is an autonomous membership organisation.	Compliance vs autonomy and volunteerism vs professionalism tensions. Wedded to notion that it is a membership organisation	Compliance vs autonomy and volunteerism vs professionalism tensions. Membership as a strand of a potential multi-institutional business model.
Strategies Utilised	Compliance and self-preservation: commitment to maintain its membership of the SE-led coalition.	Aspirational and over-ambitious approach to balancing competing needs of SE and membership; central rather than devolved SMNGB. Whistle-blowing on previous VE administrative team to secure financial self-preservation and commit to the SE-led coalition.	Compliance and self-preservation: commitment to maintain its membership of the SE-led coalition.

Governance is clearly important to SMNGBs, however, adherence to government/SE governance protocols has significantly shaped SMNGBs both organisationally and operationally and lessened their autonomy, particularly through the removal of the 'Blazer Brigade' from positions of authority, arguably to enable government to exert greater control over operational and financial activities, certainly in respect of the SMNGBs within this study. Although not uncritical, the unopposed acceptance from SMNGBs of policy change from a governance perspective, and the willingness to accept compliance and self-preservation over autonomy and membership interests, through a commitment to maintain membership of the SE-led coalition and benefit from the allocation of public funding, clearly identifies SMNGBs as 'policy takers.'

However, compliance with SE governance criteria has not been straightforward, evidence clearly demonstrating the existence of heightened levels of tension and conflicts within SMNGBs, between those favouring compliance with preserve the SMNGB's financial interests and those committed to the preservation of SMNGB autonomy and the protection of membership interests. This reflects the extent to which SMNGBs are pulled in different directions and highlights the challenges faced by them in managing and balancing the needs of membership and those of government and the SE-led coalition. This has impacted on SMNGBs' progress from a privileged position of equality to dependence on government, as evidenced by varying levels of inertia and conservatism within VE and TTE, which affected their willingness to adapt to change, and the difficulties experienced in transitioning from a voluntarist to a professionally-managed organisation. In contrast, governance reform for EH has been less problematic, which suggests that emerging SMNGBs that are less hidebound by years of tradition have higher transformational capacities than larger, and longer established SMNGBs.

The findings also highlighted a potential challenge for SMNGBs in terms of organisational-identity, whereby the influence of government and SE has shaped modern NGBs to have a greater role and responsibility to society as a whole, yet some are still wedded to the notion that their purpose is to serve their membership only, thus indicating divergent and conflicting interests within SMNGBs, as endorsed by the remarks of interviewee SRADP, '[NGBs remain transfixed by the question] of what are they here to do? In an environment that is much more diverse in terms of the delivery of sport.'

9.4.2) Funding

The key findings of the cross-case analysis on the analytical theme of funding are presented in Table 9.4.

Table 9.4: *Funding: key findings*

	EH/handball	VE/volleyball	TTE/table tennis
Beliefs	SE viewed as financial partner – funding provides specific and mutual benefits.	SE funding viewed as an 'enabler' for self-development, and 'disabler' when tied policy outcomes.	SE funding reflects governmental belief in table tennis as a deliverer of government's social agenda objectives/priorities.
Impact of Policy	Resource-dependent; loss of autonomy; vulnerability to volatile changes in government and agency support. SE significant influence over financial and operating policies.		
		SE-enforced reduction in resource-dependency - evidence of resilience and flexibility.	
Adaptation to Change	Closely aligned to 'policy-core' beliefs and objectives of government/SE.	Partly aligned to 'policy-core' beliefs and objectives of government/SE.	Closely aligned to 'policy-core' beliefs and objectives of government/SE.
Internal Tensions	Not financially self-sustaining: self-generated income has not matched the level of government/SE funding. Limited ability to grow commercial revenues.		
	Reluctance to enhance financial self-reliance through membership fees – relating to a perceived paradox that an increase in fees will reduce membership numbers and increase expectations. Uncertainty - organisational shift from 'boardroom' back to 'kitchen table.'	Increasing need to drive financial self-sustainability through membership fees. Uncertainty - organisational shift from 'boardroom' back to 'kitchen table.'	Self-reliance through membership fees unsustainable due to inadequate alternative sources of income, and increasing costs across the spectrum of sport services. Uncertainty – revert back to a membership-only body.
Strategies Utilised	Pragmatism and self-preservation - alignment to government/SE.	Contractual self-preservation – alignment to government/SE on the basis of contractual obligations.	Opportunism and self-preservation – willingness to accept greater resource-dependency by tapping into funding channels at points where different policy sectors overlap.

The willingness of SMNGBs to align with the 'policy-core' beliefs of government and SE and undertake government/SE's bidding in return for self-preservation, by virtue of the receipt of public funds and constant threat of financial sanctions, and accept compliance and resource-dependency over autonomy and the interests of members, signifies the significant influence of SE over their financial and operational activities, and clearly identifies all three case studies as 'policy takers.' This provides a strong

indication that all SMNGBs in receipt of public funding are predominantly ‘policy takers’, content to accept rather than oppose policy change to maximise the flow of government subsidies on the basis of self-preservation.

However, evidence also highlighted the existence of differing beliefs, an example of which is VE’s inference that its relationship with SE is merely contractual and that SE funding can constrict sport development when linked to government agendas and policy outcomes, although arguably this is a reflection of a lack of understanding on the part of VE of the expectations and requirements that came with access to public funds. In contrast, TTE’s perception is one of a symmetrical relationship with SE, where ‘core’ beliefs and policies are considered complementary. The above observations provide some validation of SE criticism that certain NGBs reneged on their commitments as ‘deliverers’ of sport policy social outcomes, where the utility of SE funding was seen as a mechanism for self-development, rather than to meet the compliance-contractual obligations of government/SE, drawing attention to the apparent lack of understanding among NGB/SMNGBs of the policy environment.

Furthermore, SMNGBs have a significant vulnerability to volatile changes in government and agency support and resource-dependency (e.g. the punitive connotations of the SE-led coalition for non-compliance with government and SE policy requirements), as seen in the case of VE. The reliance on resource-dependency is exacerbated further not only by the limited ability of SMNGBs to generate alternative sources of self-sustaining income, but also a reluctance to utilise increases in their most fluid of income streams, membership fees, as a means to progress towards financial self-sustainability. The identifiable concerns of SMNGBs included: i) increasing membership fees has the potential to decrease membership numbers, and increase membership expectations; ii) increasing costs across the spectrum of sport services impact on the sustainability of incrementally increased membership fees; and iii) difficulties in attracting sponsors without an elite level national team. Houlihan and Zheng (2015) argued that a narrow resource base, limited domestic market or national participation levels, and the unavailability of elite resources are likely to be contributory factors to vulnerability rather than resilience. While the findings of this research are generally supportive of Houlihan and Zheng’s claims, evidence has shown that it is possible for SMNGBs to draw strength from

financial and organisational adversity, despite a position of vulnerability, and can demonstrate resilience and flexibility, as evidenced by the experiences of VE.

While the shift away from a NGB-centric approach to increasing participation to a greater focus on physical activity, and the inactive, has exposed the heavy reliance of SMNGBs on public subsidies and likelihood of reductions in funding and levels of resource-dependency; the latter remains a critical mechanism to maintain operations at current levels and avoid regressive organisational shifts, for example, from ‘boardroom’ back to ‘kitchen table’ organisations, the uncertainty of which is clearly displayed across all case studies. Yet, there is also a sense that greater levels of resource-dependency would be preferable to some SMNGBs, as seen within TTE, clearly demonstrating the strength of the gravitational pull of membership of the SE-led coalition.

9.4.3) Capacity Building: workforce and facilities

The key findings of the cross-case analysis on the analytical theme of capacity building are presented in Table 9.5.

Table 9.5: ***Capacity Building: workforce and facilities - key findings***

	EH/handball	VE/volleyball	TTE/table tennis
Beliefs	Partnership-based: utilisation of resources from others to deliver handball; coach education essential.	Volunteer-based; coaching critical to the successful delivery of government/SE policy outcomes;	Capacity building an important influencing factor in relationships with SE – partnership and volunteer- based.
Impact of Policy	Resource-interdependencies - use of volunteer infrastructure to meet government/SE-objectives.		
	Professional and suitably trained workforce.	Modernised and expanded workforce (staff/volunteers) aligned to SE/VE planned programmes.	Cyclical pattern of SE funding to meet compliance-contractual obligations of SE-led coalition membership – negatively impacted on workforce stability. Persistent organisational re-structuring and re-shaping to meet shifting policy priorities.
	Strained operational resources to meet the compliance-contractual obligations of SE-led coalition membership.		
Adaptation to Change	Willingness and acceptance to comply with government and SE policy requirements.		
Internal Tensions	Inaccessible and unsuitable facilities – lack of resources or influence to control the availability or construction of facilities.	Heightened – observable conflict at Board, Executive and membership Levels Volunteerism vs professionalism tensions. Inaccessible and unsuitable facilities – lack of resources or influence to control the availability or construction of facilities.	Disconnect between administration and grassroots.
Strategies Utilised	Pragmatic and opportunistic approach – partnership-based (predominantly coalition partners).	Self-development approach – limited partnership-working with coalition partners.	Opportunistic and innovative through strategic alignments with government and SE policies, and coalition partners.

In terms of capacity building, the continued willingness for all three SMNGBs to align with government and SE-objectives and the 'policy-core' beliefs of the SE-led coalition, endorses their position as 'policy takers' rather than 'policy shapers', and reflects an absence of resources or influence over the availability or construction of

facilities, contributing to a largely passive acceptance of policy change to preserve membership of the SE-led coalition.

The importance of resource-interdependencies as a constituent part of the SE-led coalition was clearly signposted by all case studies, through the use of SMNGB infrastructures to meet government and SE-objectives, in return for financial resources. However, adherence to the compliance-contractual obligations of the SE-led coalition created its own set of challenges for SMNGBs, particularly the strain placed on operational resources to meet agreed and stretching participation outcomes. A key issue being the negative impact on workforce stability caused by persistent organisational re-structuring and re-shaping to meet shifting government priorities and programmes.

Findings also identified the extent to which restrictive access to facilities, such as those provided by the educational and LA sectors, has limited the ability of SMNGBs to achieve government objectives, thus demonstrating the impact of external perturbations from other policy subsystems on the sport policy subsystem. Evidence indicates a clear divergence between sport policy goals and sport provision within other policy subsystems, which can attributed to a lack of understanding of the societal benefits of sport (e.g. the use of school sport as a means to an end in the educational sector), and an increasing disconnection between local government and sport, arguably resulting from the former's financial constraints, differing beliefs, and a lack of understanding of the utility of sport. As noted by interviewee SEC:

> '[LAs] don't understand the power of sport. For them, sport is all about what goes on in the four walls of the sports centre that they may own, or they may have outsourced to a trust.'

Further evidence highlighted a lack of understanding of how to deliver on government and SE outcomes, as seen by VE's self-development approach to increasing participation and resulting negligible impact on participation levels, despite the SMNGB's willingness to comply with the contractual obligations of SE-led coalition, and develop workforce capacity to meet government objectives. On the other hand, the pragmatic, opportunistic and innovative strategies utilised by EH and TTE achieved more success in terms of increasing participation. However, the provision of acceptable levels of organisational sustainability against government/SE

investment has proved challenging for SMNGBs, and heightened the levels of internal tensions and conflict in relation to both the compliance versus autonomy and volunteerism versus professionalism debates, exemplified by the disparity in beliefs within both VE and TTE and the disconnection from their volunteer infrastructure.

9.4.4) Participation

The key findings of the cross-case analysis on the analytical theme of participation are presented in Table 9.6.

Table 9.6: *Participation: key findings*

	EH/handball	VE/volleyball	TTE/table tennis
Beliefs	Prioritisation of the educational sector - primary purpose to increase participation levels and grassroots.	Focused on the *Playground to Podium* sporting continuum. Not a deliverer for SE, but an organisation that delivers to its membership and their needs.	Prioritisation of community sport, club development and competition - primary purpose to increase participative opportunities across all platforms.
Impact of Policy	Provision of inclusive, adaptable, and flexible sporting solutions, predominantly focused on increasing participation.	Development of SMNGB-defined strategy - systematic of increasing concerns with a declining autonomy, and growing political pressures to increase participation by interventions not equally shared.	WSPs complemented TTE's strategies.
	Inconsistencies and ambiguity within the APS system of measurement.		
Adaptation to Change	Closely aligned with government/SE-objectives and 'policy-core' beliefs.	Willingness to align with government/SE-objectives and 'policy-core' beliefs – but lacked coherence: misalignment with the participation priorities due to strategic bias towards talent. Enforced redesign of participation programmes to undertake SE's bidding.	Close and complementary alignment with government/SE-objectives and 'policy-core' beliefs.
Internal Tensions	Compliance vs autonomy tensions, e.g. criticism of adapted versions of handball, designed to meet government and SE policy objectives, and negative impact of SE's Club Mark on membership and club development. Community vs elite sport, e.g. sport's absence from National School Games reflective a non-medal winning status.	Community vs elite sport, and Compliance vs autonomy tensions Declining club network and substantially less investment from public funds.	Compliance vs autonomy tensions, e.g. close alignment to the SE-led coalition has led to the isolation of clubs.
Strategies Utilised	Pragmatic, opportunistic and adaptable approaches to increasing participation.	Aspirational approach focused on the elite talent pathway; Strategic realignment to government/SE 'policy-core' beliefs to ensure self-preservation.	Pragmatic, opportunistic, innovative and complementary approach to increasing participation.

As alluded to in the empirical chapters, the decision by government/SE to elevate NGBs to a front-line mechanism for delivering government aims and objectives was not strategic but opportunistic, as no alternative delivery method existed. However, robust evidence clearly shows the direction of policy for NGBs by government and SE was ill-defined and policy outcomes largely unachievable, due to SE's: i) disregard of the heterogeneity of NGBs by treating them all the same within a 'one-size-fits' all panacea; ii) endorsement of competitive over collective action as a means to deliver government outcomes; and iii) utilisation of a performance monitoring system (the APS) that was ambiguous and flawed. The extent of the problem was succinctly communicated by interviewee SEC:

> '[SE] treated all [NGBs] the same, and they're not … The mistake was to think that all [NGBs] could do the same job, and fund them in the same way. The other problem that then arose was we set [NGBs] to compete against each other. That was one of the problems with the policy …, because you were taking a person active in one sport and making them active in a different sport. But that is exactly what we, as a policy organisation, had been setting up NGBs to do.'

From a SMNGB perspective, the focus on increasing numbers of participants, either directly or through partnerships, was seen as counter-productive, since NGBs often competed for the same participant, where the action of one NGB potentially impacted on the other's abilities to achieve their own goals, as evidenced by interviewee SMTTE's comments:

> '[NGBs] were on a hunt for the same people, so table tennis, badminton and squash were all trying to make partnerships with the same groups potentially, and after the same people, just to try and … get their numbers up essentially.'

In support of the above claims, evidence shows a high degree of differentiation between participative strategies used by SMNGBs linked to the various stages of the *Playground to Podium* sporting continuum, which arguably resulted from diversity in 'core' beliefs and interpretations of government/SE policy requirements to meet policy outcomes. The shifting priorities of government and SE impacted further on SMNGBs by shaping the way sport was delivered, and in doing so heightened the level of internal conflict between Boards and memberships. Sufficient illustrations of which are table tennis' decision to focus on mass participation through its 'Ping'

strategy, and enforced rather than complementary alignment to ‘policy-core’ beliefs, such as adaptive versions of the sport, as seen in EH and VE. The above highlighting further the tensions within SMNGBs resulting from the pursuit of agreed policy objectives and targets with government, as opposed to meeting the differing and conflicting needs of members.

Nonetheless, the willingness of SMNGBs to align with the objectives and ‘policy-core’ beliefs of government and SE, an acceptance of the contractual obligations to increase participation in return for public funding, and willingness to realign participative strategies and ‘core beliefs’, to comply with government and SE requirements and shifting priorities to maintain membership of the SE-led coalition, without opposition, clearly characterising all case study SMNGBs as ‘policy takers’ rather than policy ‘shapers.’

9.4.5) Partnerships

The key findings of the cross-case analysis on the analytical theme of partnerships are presented in Table 9.7.

Table 9.7: *Partnerships: key findings*

	EH/handball	VE/volleyball	TTE/table tennis
Beliefs	Partnership-working - effective route to achieve success and gain a competitive advantage.	Collaboration a key aspect to increase awareness and participation.	Partnerships working - key to the whole ethos of the organisation.
Impact of Policy	Collaboration with specialised partners seen as an 'enabler' to identify pockets of interest and demand.	Partnership-working utilised as a tool for self-development rather than working to achieve government and SE-objectives.	Prominent partnership-working with various coalition partners seen as an 'enabler' to meet government objectives and self-development.
	Mutually beneficial interdependencies.		
Adaptation to Change	Partnership-driven, though seen as a natural fit.	Limited partnerships: aspirational only and limited understanding - misalignment with SE participation strategies.	Partnership-driven - aligned with SE 'policy-core' beliefs and objectives. Knowledge transference between coalition partners to strengthen membership of the SE-led coalition.
Internal Tensions	Organisational-identity – membership body vs multi-institutional (as a facilitator, rather than a deliverer).	Tensions in shared-beliefs - less committed to promoting sport as a 'social good', and more committed to widening the talent pool for elite performance.	Organisational-identity – membership body vs multi-institutional (as a promoter of sport).
Strategies Utilised	Opportunistic and partnership-based.	Self-development – focused on commercial activities rather than social activities.	Opportunistic and partnership-driven;

Arguably, partnership-working has been an aspirational 'policy-core' belief for government/SE, rather than a constituent part of the compliance-contractual obligations and membership of the SE-led coalition, particularly as interviewee CEOEH claimed that '[t]here is no government policy promoting partnerships directly, [but] there's … encouragement [to work in partnership].' Similarly, SE claimed that NGB 'joined-up working' was still in its 'infancy' (SE, 2012b, p.4), and cross-sport working was not as prevalent as anticipated (SE, 2012c, p.2). According to Mackintosh and Liddle (2015) a reliance on partnership-working has potential fragility and incongruence issues for delivering on policy outcomes. However, evidence suggests that for those SMNGBs with partnership-driven strategies, such as EH and TTE, collaboration with coalition partners acted as an 'enabler' to: i) meet

government objectives; ii) identify pockets of interest and demand; iii) target hard to reach groups in line with SE requirements; and iv) develop the sport. Partnership-working also has greater significance for smaller, less well-resourced NGBs, where partners are seen not just as deliverers, but also advocates for the sport, and providers of potential competitive advantages, as in the case of EH and TTE. In contrast, however, VE has not engaged fully in partnership-working and showed little understanding of the potentially mutually beneficial interdependencies available, which arguably results from VE's commitment to elitism rather than sport for social good, and self-development rather than joined-up working to achieve shared government/SE-objectives. The effective use of partnership-working within the SE-led coalition was succinctly explained by interviewee SESLR, which again provides an alternative argument to that of Mackintosh and Liddle (2015):

> 'Where the relationships work really well is where there is a clear strategic alignment. Both organisations are very clear on what [they're] working towards … [SE] isn't a delivery organisation, so we need partners to reach the particular audiences that we are prioritising. Whether that be handball meeting a particular part of the population, or other organisations reaching particular audiences, whether that be a low socio-economic group, disabled participants, or whatever focus or outcome [SE] are driving, we need those partners to reach those parts of the population.'

Furthermore, SMNGBs have utilised similar political resources to social actors (e.g. consultations, Parliamentary Inquiries, and working parties), although clearly there has been less impact, which arguably reflects a constrained capacity to influence policy resulting from the degree to which SMNGBs are tied to SE policy, again clarifying SMNGBs as primarily 'policy takers.'

9.5) Research implications for UK sport policy and SMNGBs

This study has demonstrated that community sport matters to society, to government and sports' governing bodies, and should neither be overlooked, under-estimated or under-valued. However, policy is something that happens to sport rather than something that's shaped by sport, and imposed and implemented by way of command and control from the centre within a policy environment, designed and engineered by government to act as a mechanism for realising sport policy outcomes linked to changes in priorities and political agendas, through agency-led coalitions that predominantly implement policy rather than serve to influence policy. Yet, it is also argued that policy shaping or policy taking occurs at opposite ends of a spectrum, whereby some policy outcomes are clearly allocated to each end and movement along the spectrum is somewhat blurred, for example, the *No Compromise* principle of UK sport-led elite sport policy is an observable policy outcome at the policy taking end of the spectrum, which if changed significantly would become policy making/shaping rather than policy taking. Whereas, the minor change in elite policy through the 'Aspirational Fund' is likely to have a blurred position towards the policy taking end of the spectrum, there being no hard or fast dividing line to differentiate between policy shaping or taking.

The UK sport-led elite sport policy encourages policy stability by offering a simplistic solution to achieving policy outcomes, by way of resources for medal contenders only, which requires less policy intervention, although this does have potential implications grassroots/school sport. Sport England-led community sport policy, on the other hand, is complex, multi-layered and suffers from perpetual instability, not helped by the level of engagement and overlap among policy actors across different coalitions and policy subsystems that is primarily government-led (e.g. education, health and local authorities). The openness of the sport policy subsystem to policy shifts in community sport, as seen by the pendulum swing between sports for sport's sake to sport for social good, being a reflection of government's apparent lack of a clear understanding of the benefits and importance of sport and physical activity to society, and a consequence of sports' perpetual fragmentation and multiplicity of policy actors within disunited political system, where sport itself is bounced around

the spaces between priority and peripheral political concerns, and viewed as a 'bolt-on' mechanism for government to use as and when it sees fit.

The research has shown the limited utility of NGBs to government and the increasing use of non-sport organisations to get people not just to play sport but also to be active, intimating that NGBs might have reached the limits of their usefulness. While NGBs have been good for doing a narrow range of policy objectives amid ever decreasing levels of public funding, and have had to dance to a variety of different tunes, orchestrated by government and its agencies, there being little in the way of negotiation or manoeuvrability, many have done so mainly to survive, as seen within the case studies and their positioning as primarily policy 'takers' rather than policy 'shapers.' The heightened levels of resource-dependency and its gravitational pull eliciting futile resistance in the face of self-preservation. Moreover, NGBs involved in community sport haven't done everything that government has wanted them to do or done it well enough, which has prompted government and Sport England to look elsewhere to achieve their policy objectives, pointing towards the beginning of a trend away from NGBs, in contrast to UK sport, where NGBs have been doing what their told and have received substantial funding to do so.

However, while this study has raised questions on sport/NGBs' continuity in or suitability for the sport policy environment and a role within government, government and its agencies have significantly shaped SMNGBs both organisationally and operationally and lessened their autonomy, particularly through the removal of the 'Blazer Brigade' from positions of authority, arguably to enable government to exert greater control over operational and financial activities, and have produced entities that are capable of having a greater role and responsibilities within the policy environment. This has important implications for SMNGBs, particularly the contribution they can make to society as a whole, whether they are sports that are emerging, developing or declining, they too matter and should not overlooked or under-valued. Indeed, this research has shown the emergence of a cluster of SMNGB/sports, actively engaged in attempts to influence community sport policy in areas where sport can have an impact. Equally, a cluster of competitive SMNGBs (the 'have-nots') has emerged, actively engaged in collective action to influence elite sport policy, the key being the degree and ability of NGBs to work collectively to bring about major change within the UK sport policy subsystem. The extent to which

this would be possible is sensitised further by the implications of this research in relation to SMNGBs' apparent limited understanding and expertise of policy environments, and their ability to manage the tripartite of dichotomies that exist within SMNGBs, relating to compliance versus autonomy, volunteerism versus professionalism, and elite versus community sport. The former suggesting that if there is logic for a triple hermeneutic by way of policymakers synthesising and acting upon research findings, then logic would infer the existence of a fourth hermeneutic by way of the interpretation and understanding of policy from those policy actors that implement policy or those upon which policy is imposed. The implications of managing the needs of the different stakeholders of SMNGBs, is strongly linked to challenges of organisational-identity among not only SMNGBs, but also Sport England, and the degree of resilience and flexibility of heavily resource-dependent SMNGBs to maintain operations at current levels and avoid regressive organisational shifts from 'boardroom' back to 'kitchen table' organisations.

9.6) Evaluating the utility of the ACF

Evidence from the empirical chapters has illuminated a number of key points relevant to the fundamental assumptions of the ACF, particularly in relation to the formation, composition, and delimiting boundaries of advocacy coalitions and policy subsystems, the ACF's hierarchical belief system, and the ACF's capacity to explain both policy change and stability.

Fundamental to the ACF is the assumption that policy actors seek out other actors with shared-beliefs or potential beneficial resources, and coalesce into discrete coalitions to influence the policy process around a particular policy issue, through coordinated and collective action and the utilisation of various strategies (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier, 1993a; Sabatier, 1999; Green and Houlihan, 2005; Sabatier and Weible, 2007; Pierce and Weible, 2016; Jenkins-Smith *et al.*, 2014). The ACF's explanation of coalition formation enabled the identification of a CCPR-led advocacy coalition, whereby policy actors coalesced around the belief that sport's societal value should be an important concern of government, from which sports' 'nascent' policy subsystem originates. Arguably though, coalition and subsystem formation as a stimulant to government interest, where none previously existed, is not explicitly theorised within the ACF, although there is an acknowledgment that government is the primary focus of coalition activity, and that policy subsystems could be the product of a sizeable specialist coalition forming its own subsystem (Sabatier, 1988), which resonates with the CCPR-led coalition whose knowledge and expertise would become relied upon by government (Houlihan, 1991).

ACF assumptions on coalition formation are supported by the identification of distinct agency-led advocacy coalitions for elite sport, community/social sport and school sport, as occupants of the UK sport policy subsystem. While Green and Houlihan (2004) previously identified advocacy in elite sport, for them the potential for an advocacy coalition in social and community sport was remote due to limited resources. However, evidence has demonstrated the presence of a SE-led community/social sport advocacy coalition, on the basis of an *endogenous* drive towards mass participation, powerfully reinforced by SE (particularly for health benefits), through modernisation, reform, and the engineered increasing dependency of NGBs on public funding, particularly Lottery funds; and *exogenously* driven by the

government's increasingly pro-social agenda. The interaction between government and SE, and policy actors (e.g. NGBs), demonstrates a high degree of engagement and coordinated activity over time to meet shared goals, which arguably meets ACF assumptions regarding the structuring of advocacy coalitions through shared 'policy-core' beliefs, and sets them apart from advocacy communities (Stritch, 2015) or coalitions of convenience (Fenger and Klok, 2001).

While the ACF has been useful in defining the formation of advocacy coalitions within the UK sport policy subsystem, the distinctiveness of the three sporting coalitions as agency-led coalitions, challenges the assumptions of the ACF particularly as the coalitions have been constructed or substantially shaped by government to act as a mechanism for realising government policy outcomes, that is, as 'implementation' coalitions rather than primarily policy-influencing coalitions. Furthermore, while agency-led coalitions are considered to be a product of shared 'policy-core' beliefs, evidence has shown that they can also be engineered on the basis of contractual-compliance, shared-interests, financial incentives and sanctions, and interdependencies, as seen by the relationship between government/SE and NGB/SMNGBs acting as policy actors and coalitions partners. This suggests that the ACF exaggerates the strength of shared 'policy-core' beliefs as a binding agent, particularly as the contractual-compliance element of agency-led coalition membership also acts as a co-determinant for inclusion and expulsion, an example of which is the *No Compromise* principle, seen as a notable restriction to membership of the UKS-led coalition.

Of particular significance is the contribution of interdependency within the SE and UKS agency-led coalitions, as an explanation for the behaviour of policy actors, where, according to Fenger and Klok (2001), interdependency is related to the role scarce resources play in enabling actors to perform their actions, and viewed as an important aspect of coalition formation and coordination. The ACF offers little insight into the concept of interdependency (symbiotic, independent or competitive) or its potential impact on behaviour among coalition actors, whereas evidence from this study has highlighted the impact of competitive interdependencies on the ability to achieve shared-objectives of 'policy-core' beliefs. For example, shifting policy priorities and external perturbations within the UK sport policy subsystem (e.g. the Lottery), intensified conflict within and among NGBs (e.g. internal tensions relating to

compliance/autonomy and elite/community dichotomies), and endorsed competitive over collective action as a means to deliver government outcomes.

According to critics of the ACF (Schlager, 1995; Schlager and Blomquist, 1996; Fenger and Klok, 2001), the framework finds difficulty in accounting for self-interest, shared-interests and interdependencies among policy actors, which points towards a degree of exaggeration on the 'glue' that binds coalitions together. The role of self-interest among policy actors and competing pressures (such as responsibilities of NGBs to their own membership), are seen as factors that mitigate against the establishment of strong coalitions (Schlager 1995; Schlager and Blomquist 1996). An argument endorsed further by Fenger and Klok's (2001) claim that the autonomous nature of many actors (i.e. self-interest), such as NGBs, would point towards the non-development of coalitions, according to ACF assumptions, since there would be no compelling reason for interaction or the coordination of activities among such actors. The ACF's assumption that policy actors work towards collective goals, arguably overrides the self-interest aspect of policy actors, otherwise, they would not be considered a collective group (Yilmaz, 2018[48]). Nonetheless, self-interest among policy actors has important implications for the ACF. As Schlager and Blomquist (1996, pp.661-664) argued, the ACF neglects the concerns of policy actors' and members' interests/conflicts within coalitions, when balancing organisational needs (self-preservation) with transforming the organisation's belief system into governmental policy, and the subsequent needs and objectives of government policy. As seen by internal conflicts within NGBs compounded by the existence of, for example, compliance/autonomy and elite/grassroots dichotomies. Furthermore, evidence suggests that policy actors within advocacy coalitions can be subject to enforced collective action, resulting from government intervention and subsystem design, drawing attention to the argument that coalitions are not simply bound together by shared values/beliefs, as noted by interviewee SRADP:

> '[O]rganisations [within the UK sports policy domain] work together because they have to, because they are in a system which has been designed in that way.'

[48] Personal email correspondence from Serhat Yilmaz dated 21/02/2018 following an internal review.

However, the ACF's underplay of also underplay self-interest, shared-interests and interdependencies, is arguably attributable to the 'height' from which the ACF views policy subsystems, where the closer the lens the greater the potential to see visible fault lines between coalition members, and the degree of separation and isolation rather than homogeneity among policy actors, as in the case of NGBs. While this points towards self-advocacy rather than collective advocacy, highlighting the potential for NGBs to be part of an 'advocacy community' rather than an 'advocacy coalition', as Stritch (2015, p.438) would claim, the interaction between government/SE/UKS and NGBs demonstrates a high degree of coordinated activity to meet shared goals, an alliance that benefits from resources, such as public funding. This arguably meets ACF assumptions of the composition of advocacy coalitions, that is, shared 'policy-core' beliefs and significant engagement in coordinated activity over time (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999).

The ACF purports that a policy subsystem is comprised of all relevant policy actors seeking to influence policy within a particular policy domain (Jenkins-Smith *et al*., 2014), the boundaries of which are based on the frequency of dialectical interplay and the transitivity of influence (Sabatier, 1988), the level of which also distinguishes subsystems between those that are 'nascent' from those that have matured (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Green and Houlihan, 2005). The assumptions of the ACF were particularly useful in identifying the origins of the 'nascent' UK sport policy subsystem during the 1960s, where the legitimacy of sport as a government concern emerged on the public agenda, having previously received limited little or no serious consideration in public decision-making forums, and where advocates had only recently become active through the emergence of a CCPR-led coalition. This supports Stritch's (2015) definition of a 'nascent' policy subsystem and ACF assumptions that 'nascent' policy subsystems can be the product of a sizeable specialist coalition forming its own subsystem (Sabatier, 1988). However, evidence also illuminated the emergence of the UK sport policy subsystem from a set of beliefs supportive of government intervention and involvement, the potential for which is not readily identifiable within the ACF.

According to Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999), ‘mature’ policy subsystems are characterised by a set of participants who regard themselves as a semi-autonomous community, share expertise in a policy domain, and have sought to influence public policy in that domain for an extended period of time (over a decade or more). However, the utility of ACF in determining the maturity for the UK sport policy subsystem proved less convincing, which draws attention to the potential vagueness of the ACF’s defining characteristics of a mature policy subsystem. In line with ACF assumptions, the sport policy subsystem consists of participants, such as the Sports Councils and NGBs, who are semi-autonomous through their resource-dependence on government, and through their shared expertise on sport participation within policy initiatives over an extended period of time, thus pointing towards a maturing of the subsystem rather than a fully mature subsystem. Paradoxically, however, the perpetual fragmentation of sport and varying levels of the salience of sport to government, suggests a policy subsystem that is, in theory, still ‘nascent.’ Arguably though, this is not the case, as evidence clearly indicates a maturing of the sport policy subsystem, as demonstrated by: i) government’s involvement in the policy subsystem since 1995; ii) the complexity and multiplicity of subsystem policy actors and agency-led coalition partners that potentially seek to influence sport policy, and iii) the existence of symbiotic interdependencies and transference of knowledge and expertise among coalition partners. What can be said is that the sport policy subsystem is at an earlier stage of maturity relative to the older established policy subsystems (e.g. health and education). This suggests that subsystems move through various phases of maturity consistent with the levels of government intervention in and public awareness of particular subsystems, the extent to which can also constrict transitions between stages of maturity, as seen by government’s indecision on the location of sport within Whitehall, and its eventual attachment to DCMS, itself regarded as a ‘bit player’ among the heavyweights such as health, education, and defence (Burrell, 2016). However, it is also possible to argue that some policy subsystems remain at an undeveloped stage because of the characteristics of components of the subsystem, such as rivalry between actors for resources, shallow belief systems, and a deliberate strategy by government to undermine subsystem cohesions, as is evidently the case in sport, and where disjointed government is the natural order of things, as in the UK. As noted by interviewee SRADP:

> ‘[Government is] not joined-up, is not coordinated, there’s rivalries between and in departments, [and] people … won’t talk to each other.’

Evidence also supports the ACF’s self-diagnosis that the delimitation of subsystem boundaries is complicated by the existence of overlapping subsystems and coalitions (policy actors as subsets of different subsystems and coalitions) (Zafonte and Sabatier, 1998; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Sabatier and Weible, 2007), although Stritch (2015, p.440) argued that there is ‘no single template for policy subsystems in terms of their size or scope, and an attempt to impose one would probably be too constricting.’ Within the UK sport policy subsystem there is a clear indication for the potential of overlapping policy subsystems dependent on the varying levels of sports relevance to the shifting priorities of government. For example, the increasing use of sport and physical activity as an instrument of government for ‘social good’ and its contribution across ten different government departments, as seen in *Sporting Future (*DCMS, 2015b*)*, and the involvement of NGBs across the different agency-led coalitions. Paradoxically, evidence suggests that overlap between subsystems and government intervention within policy subsystems, can also potentially impact on those subsystems that interact frequently, by restricting subsystem development to higher stages of maturity and the ability of government-constructed agency-led subsystems to deliver on policy outcomes (e.g. changes to educational and local government policy impacting on sport policy).

In terms of the hierarchical belief system of the ACF, evidence offered generally strong support for the role of shared-beliefs and technical information in policy change, and the extent to which ‘policy-core’ beliefs act as a binding agent for coalitions (Zafonte and Sabatier, 1998; Sabatier and Weible, 2007). As advocated by Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier (1994; Jenkins-Smith *et al.*, 2014), mapping the beliefs and policies on the same canvas, in this case government, SE and SMNGBs, identified a high degree of alignment and overlap at all levels of the ACF’s belief system. For example, the extent to which modernisation and reform through New Labour’s ‘Third Way’ ideology, the use of NGBs as a delivery mechanism to increase participation in sport, and the increased salience to government of health-related issues, have influenced policy change.

However, mapping beliefs and policies on the same canvas also highlighted a potential issue with the dividing lines between the three levels of ACF's belief system, and ACF assumptions concerning the location of beliefs, which is arguably a consequence of the 'height' from which the ACF views policy subsystems. Evidence suggests that within the UK sport policy subsystem, fundamental 'deep-core' beliefs are *philosophical* in terms of government's role in a civilised society to support sport and the arts, *commonsensical* in relation to sports' societal value, for example, a feel-good-factor, *cultural or societal* in respect of the historical importance of sport and the extent to which sport matters to all and has become woven into the very fabric of communities and society. Indeed, Grix and Carmichael (2012, p.73) argued that in relation to sport, the UK espouses 'commonsensical propositions' or beliefs, which are 'not always based on wide, existing research or evidence', for example, international prestige or 'a feel-good factor', which are identifiable as governmental 'deep-core' beliefs. The ACF appears to disregard such *cultural or societal* 'deep-core' beliefs, which maybe subsystem specific but equally span society as a whole, and by implication, all policy subsystems. While evidence identified empirically ascertained 'deep-core' beliefs, such as the health benefits of sport, empirical evidence within the UK sport policy subsystem appears to have greater prominence at the 'policy-core' and 'secondary-aspects' levels of the ACF, for example, evidenced-based monitoring as a key determinant for the allocation and distribution of public funding, particularly as policy is dictated by the Treasury and data and insight are seen as key factors for the distribution of resources. As interviewee DCMSa asserted, 'the Treasury insist nowadays much more than ever, on evidence that things work.' However, this could arguably be a function of subsystem design as a means to implement delivery and achievement of policy objectives and outcomes.

Of particular significance has been the use of the ACF to explain policy change and stability. In support of Houlihan's (2005, p.173) conjecture that the ACF 'offers valuable insights into policy stability, where stability is explained in terms of dominant coalitions and the persistence of deep core and policy core beliefs', evidence has shown the relative stability of both elite sports policy and the UKS-led coalition, with the UK sport policy subsystem. The extension of policy continuity for elite sport policy signposting the UKS-led coalition as the dominant coalition within the sport policy subsystem, where UKS's *No Compromise* approach to elite performance and

government's decision-making to maintain UKS as the lead-agency for elite sport have persisted as 'policy-core' beliefs, as has the power of elite sport to provide international prestige and inspirational effects, as 'deep-core' beliefs. Arguably, the 'policy-core' beliefs offer government a simple but effective means to achieve policy outcomes, thus constituting a lesser degree of policy intervention.

However, the use of the ACF to explain policy change and stability in community sport policy proved more challenging, although it offered some explanation in relation to policy change, where persistent external and internal perturbations or shocks to the policy subsystem have resulted in a community sport policy environment in constant flux, there being little evidence of policy stability over the medium term. According to Sabatier and Weible (2007) external perturbations or shocks to a policy subsystem, and internal shocks from within, have the potential to shift policy agendas, focus public attention, and attract the attention of key decision-makers, the effect of which is likely to be the redistribution of resources or opening and closing venues within the policy subsystem. As demonstrated in Table 9.1, evidence shows a series of external and internal perturbations or shocks that prompted changes in the trajectory of UK sport policy, and altered the structure of the sport policy subsystem, an example of which was the creation of the Lottery, which facilitated government intervention in sport policy by providing a policy instrument for government priorities, while opening a policy venue for the distribution of resources to sport/NGBs. Arguably though, there is an apparent disregard within the ACF of government-led initiatives, such as the Lottery, acting as external shocks to *stimulate* policy subsystem development and as an '*enabler'* for major policy change. It is also possible to argue that policy change resulted not only from external perturbations to the sport policy subsystem (e.g. change in government), but also from a change in the relatively stable parameters in terms of the 'deep-core' beliefs of political ideology. For example, the requirement for NGBs to *earn the right* to have a partnership with government, and the drive for NGB modernisation reinforced by KPIs and the threat of withdrawal of funding, in line with New Labour's *Best Value* ethos.

The ACF also associates major policy change with policy-oriented learning by way of new problem definitions, policy solutions, or strategies for influencing the policy decision-making process (e.g. professional ‘fora’) (Sabatier and Weible, 2007; Jenkins-Smith *et al*., 2014), for example, the identification of learning among or between coalitions, policy brokers or belief change (Pierce *et al.,* 2017). This is less convincing in relation to the UK sport policy subsystem, there being little evidence of policy-oriented learning, which could reflect the cyclical nature of funding and policy monitoring for government and agency-led coalitions. The effect of which has, for example, limited the time-specific learning of SMNGBs within policy and agency-led funding cycles to develop strategies to meet policy objectives, limited their scope to influence policy, and as such are considered primarily ‘policy takers’ rather than ‘policy shapers’, as opposed to other policy actors such as social actors, who have benefitted from a long tradition of political lobbying in the sports policy domain.

9.7) Research implications for the ACF

This study has demonstrated the usefulness of the ACF as the theoretical framework for analysing sport policy, in particular, coalition and subsystem formation with evidence supporting the existence of an agency-led (Sport England) advocacy coalitions in community sport which had not been previously identified, and the potential for nested and overlapping coalitions and subsystems, which is a phenomena that clearly exists within the UK sport policy subsystem. This research also strongly supports the role of shared-beliefs and technical information in policy change, whereby external and internal shocks to the policy subsystem have changed the direction of sport policy and altered the structure of policy subsystem. The ACF also offered valuable insights in the explanation of policy stability by way of the perseverance of a dominant coalitions and the persistence of 'deep-core' and 'policy-core beliefs', as seen in elite sport policy and the UKS-led coalition. However, the ACF has been less convincing for community sport policy, which is invariably linked to a fundamental issue with the 'height' from which the ACF views policy subsystems, and also reflective of the cyclical nature of funding and policy monitoring for government and agency-led coalitions. The effect of which has, for example, limited the time-specific policy-oriented learning of SMNGBs within policy and agency-led funding cycles to develop strategies to meet policy objectives, limited their scope to influence policy, and as such SMNGBs are considered primarily 'policy takers' rather than 'policy shapers', as opposed to other policy actors such as social actors, who have benefitted from a long tradition of political lobbying in the sports policy domain. That said, the value of the ACF can be found in providing some sense to the blurred concept of policy shaping and policy taking, by differentiating the position on policy shaping/taking spectrum through the use of its tripartite belief system, although still mindful of the extent to which the dividing lines between the three levels of the ACF's belief system are also blurred, and arguably a further consequence of the 'height' of the lens from which the ACF views policy.

The implications of the ‘height issue’ also resonate with the ACF’s neglect of self-interest, shared-interests, interdependencies, and heterogeneity among policy actors, where the closer the lens the greater the potential to see visible fault lines between coalition members, and the degree of separation and isolation rather than homogeneity among policy actors, as in the case of UK sport policy. This study has highlighted the potential impact of interdependency on behaviour among coalition actors, for example, the impact of competitive interdependencies on the ability to achieve shared-objectives of ‘policy-core’ beliefs. This research has also demonstrated that self-interest among policy actors has important implications for the ACF, where it is argued that internal tensions and concerns among policy actors and coalition members, particularly in relation to balancing organisational needs (self-preservation) with the belief system, and needs and objectives of government, adds a further layer of complexity to the composition of coalitions and highlights the potential for competing internal coalitions, resulting from the heterogeneous rather than homogenous nature of policy actors. Indeed, it is important not to assume a high degree of homogeneity among policy actors, as seen within this study on SMNGBs, and thus underemphasise what separates them from one another (e.g. elite versus grassroots, Olympic versus non-Olympic or even funded versus unfunded). This is clearly the case within the UK sport policy subsystem and agency-led coalitions, which draws attention to the implications of further research into the nature of agency-led coalitions and the ACF’s concept of coalition formation and shared-beliefs. The existence of agency-led coalitions challenges the assumptions of the ACF, particularly coalitions that have been constructed or substantially shaped by government to act as a mechanism for realising government policy outcomes, that is, as ‘implementation’ coalitions rather than primarily policy-influencing coalitions, which have been engineered on the basis of contractual-compliance, shared-interests, financial incentives and sanctions, and interdependencies, which suggests that the ACF exaggerates the strength of shared ‘policy-core’ beliefs as a binding agent. This emphasises further the extent to which agency-led coalitions have been overlooked within the assumptions of the ACF, particularly as this could provide potential contributions for the ACF to satisfy a critique that it should consider the process of implementation more accurately (Skille, 2008).

Similarly, this research has drawn attention to the potential vagueness of the ACF's defining characteristics of a mature policy subsystem, and argues that subsystems move through various phases of maturity consistent with the levels of government intervention in and public awareness of particular subsystems, the extent to which can also constrict transitions between stages of maturity. It is further argued that some policy subsystems remain at an undeveloped stage because of the characteristics of components of the subsystem, such as rivalry between actors for resources, shallow belief systems, and a deliberate strategy by government to undermine subsystem cohesions, as is evidently the case in sport, and where disjointed government is the natural order of things. Further implications of this research is the degree to which overlap between subsystems and government intervention within policy subsystems, potentially impacts on those subsystems that interact frequently, by restricting subsystem development to higher stages of maturity and the ability of government-constructed agency-led subsystems to deliver on policy outcomes. Again, this is a phenomenon that exists within the UK sport policy subsystem, where changes in the educational and local government policy subsystems have negatively impacted on contractual obligations of coalition members, such as SMNGBs, to meet government and agency-led coalition policy objectives and outcomes. The fragmentation and specialisation of the policy process resulting in subsystems of varying dimensions, and potentially the overlapping of policy subsystems, as is clearly evident within sport, are factors that need to be borne in mind when applying the ACF, although it could be argued that government-constructed subsystems have a greater susceptibility to the delimiting challenges and complications of weak subsystem boundaries, which requires further academic enquiry and greater acknowledgement within the ACF.

9.8) Conclusion

The evaluation of empirical data revealed a sport policy subsystem constructed or substantially shaped by government and agency-led coalitions, notably, the UKS-led elite sport coalition and the SE-led community sport coalition, engineered on the basis of shared-beliefs (which are partly common to SMNGBs and SE/UKS and partly imposed by SE/UKS), and a culture of contract-compliance, shared-interests, financial inducements/sanctions and organisational interdependencies, to deliver on the shifting priorities of government's pro-social agenda. Evidence has shown that both contemporary UK sport policy within which SMNGBs operate and policy change, can be explained by the occurrence of external and internal perturbations or shocks to the policy subsystem, where policy shifts are a dual reflection of government's lack of a clear understanding of the benefits and importance of sport and physical activity, and sports' reluctance to utilise their significant influence to shape policy. Government-led engagement and overlap among policy actors across different coalitions and policy subsystems also viewed as being significant contributor to the expansion and contraction of the sport policy subsystem, leavening its ability to reach higher stages of maturity.

In evaluating and analysing the development of governmental relationships, the empirical data from the case studies revealed the utilisation of various strategic approaches strengthen relationships, such as opportunistic and pragmatic alignments to government/SE policies; acceptance of policy change and contractual-compliance obligations of the SE-led coalition; the use of political resources and compliance as a means of increasing awareness and scope for influencing policymakers; and high levels of partnership engagement; as well as imposed interventions from SE. The changing relationship between SMNGBs and government/SE, and the trend away from NGB/SMNGBs as implementers of community sport policy, partly a reflection of: i) ill-defined community sport policies; ii) a limited understanding of the policy environment and issues of organisational identity among NGB/SMNGBs; and iii) the continued existence of a fragmented and policy-naïve sporting sector. The result of which has been the unopposed acceptance of policy change from those SMNGBs selected as case studies, and overall willingness to adapt to change to preserve membership of the SE-led coalition and levels of resource-dependency, and their clear identification as

primarily ‘policy takers’ rather than ‘policy shapers’, arguably on the basis self-preservation, although there is evidence to suggest a willingness among SMNGBs to influence policy as a collective, moving forward.

The evaluation and analysis of the themes clearly identified them as dimensions of operational activities linked to mechanisms for delivering desired policy outcomes, and determinants of policy ‘shaping’ or policy ‘taking.’ *Governance* is seen as imposed policy, which has significantly shaped SMNGBs both organisationally and operationally and lessened their autonomy, where compliance and self-preservation have been privileged over autonomy and membership interests, resulting in heightened levels of internal tensions and conflicts within SMNGBs, and illuminated issues with organisational-identity. *Funding* in respect of the allocation public funds and the threat of financial sanctions, has demonstrated significant influence of SE over the financial and operational activities of SMNGBs, and confirms their position as predominantly ‘policy takers’, content to accept rather than oppose policy change to maximise the flow of government subsidies on the basis of self-preservation. The exposure of SMNGBs to resource-dependency and their limited ability or reluctance to generate alternative sources of self-sustaining income, has not only emphasised their vulnerability and weaknesses as sport/NGBs, but also highlighted future challenges from reduced public funding and levels of resource-dependency.

While *capacity building (workforce and facilities)*, demonstrated further the importance of resource-interdependencies as a constituent part of the SE-led coalition and endorsed SMNGBs’ position as ‘policy takers’, evidence has shown the challenges faced by SMNGBs to meet to government and SE-objectives, in return for financial resources (e.g. workforce instability/overstretch and internal conflicts), as well as illuminating the impact of restricted access to LA and educational facilities, which has impacted on levels of organisational sustainability against government/SE investment and participation targets. The thematic analysis of participation also revealed a high degree of differentiation between participative strategies used by SMNGBs, largely resulting from: i) shifting priorities of government/SE and policy endorsement of competitive over collective action; and ii) differentiation in ‘core’ beliefs and interpretations of government/SE policy requirements. The willingness of SMNGBs to align and realign their strategies to those of government/SE and unopposed acceptance contractual obligations to increase participation in return for

public funding, adding further support to the characterisation of SMNGBs as primarily 'policy takers.' *Partnerships*, on the other hand, were viewed as an aspirational 'policy-core' belief for government/SE, rather than a constituent part of the compliance-contractual obligations, and as such resulted in varying degrees of partnership working among the selected SMNGBs, although those with partnership-driven strategies tended to have a stronger relationship with SE. However, evidence also illuminated that SMNGBs have had less impact on policy decision-making than their social actor partner counterparts, which arguably reflects a constrained capacity to influence policy resulting from the degree to which SMNGBs are tied to SE policy, again clarifying SMNGBs as primarily 'policy takers.'

The implications of this research for UK sport policy and SMNGBs points towards policy imposed on sport rather than shaped by it, and implemented through agency-led coalitions, although arguably policy shaping or policy taking occurs along a spectrum which is somewhat blurred, particularly within community sport, where complexity, openness, and the swinging pendulum of sport as a political concern, have fashioned a policy environment in constant flux, and a current trend towards the limited involvement of NGBs within the sport policy domain. Yet, the collective contribution that NGBs, in particular SMNGBs, can bring to community sport and society as whole should not be overlooked or underestimated, especially as SMNGBs have been shaped themselves to be more than just membership organisations, and evidence points towards a cluster of SMNGB/sports with the potential to be influential in shaping policy in areas where sport can have an impact. However, the capacity of SMNGBs to influence sport policy will also be determined by their ability to address the challenges of organisational identity, balancing the needs of critical stakeholders, acquiring expertise within the policy environment, and maintaining financial sustainability.

The application of the ACF illuminated a number of key points relevant to the fundamental assumptions of the framework, particularly in relation to the formation, composition, and boundaries of advocacy coalitions and policy subsystems, the ACF's hierarchical belief system, and the ACF's capacity to explain both policy change and stability, which contribute to debates on the utility of the ACF as an analytical framework. The evaluation of the ACF highlighted its usefulness as an analytical framework, but also potential weaknesses, particularly in regard to the

limited insight given to government-constructed agency-led coalitions, as primarily implementation coalitions, and the height from which the ACF views policy subsystems.

Chapter Ten
Conclusions

10.1) Introduction

The focus of this thesis has been an evaluation of three small to mid-sized national governing bodies of Olympic sports in England, to determine their position as 'policy shapers' or 'policy takers' within the UK sport policy subsystem. The purpose of this final chapter is to present a summary of the key findings and conclusions drawn from each chapter that directly address the aims and objectives of this study, which were to:

Research aims:

1) Evaluate the extent to which changes in sport policy have impacted on small to mid-sized NGBs, and the strategies utilised to adapt to changing policy and operational environments; and
2) Determine whether small to mid-sized NGBs are primarily 'policy shapers' or 'policy takers.'

Research objectives:

(a) Understand the historical context of contemporary sport policy within which SMNGBs operate;
(b) Examine the development of governmental relationships with SMNGBs;
(c) Investigate the impact of changing sport policy on SMNGBs, by means of a thematic analysis of operational activities;
(d) Ascertain the strategies utilised by SMNGBs to adapt to, and operate within, a changing policy and operational environment; and
(e) Evaluate the utility of the ACF.

The aims and objectives of this study were achieved, as demonstrated within the summary of chapters that follow, this research identifying small to mid-sized national governing bodies of Olympic sports in England, as primarily 'policy takers.'

10.2) Summary of Chapters

Chapter one of this thesis provided details of the above research aims and objectives that underpinned this study, and a rationale for investigating sport policy and NGBs, in particular SMNGBs, considered competitive-community-grassroots sports rather than elite, by virtue of their loss of elite funding from UK, where there has been limited academic interest in relation to the impact of changing sport policy and governmental relationships on SMNGBs, the mechanisms adopted to adapt to change, and their capacity to influence or at least shape sport policy. Similarly, this study aimed to contribute further towards debates on the analysis of UK sport policy, with particular regard given to community sport and the pendulum swing between from 'sports for sport's sake' back to 'sport for social good'; and the utility of the ACF as an analytical framework, where previous research had suggested the potential for a less prominent advocacy coalition consisting of a 'cluster of competitive, but not high performance sports', to actively engage in shaping sport policy, and the limited attention given by the ACF to state agency-led advocacy coalitions within policy subsystems.

Chapter two, *Sport Policy and NGBs*, focused on the historical context of UK sport policy. The chapter provided a chronological review and analysis of the development of sport policy within which NGB/SMNGBs have operated, and examined how changing policy since the early 1960s has altered governments' expectations of and relationships with NGBs, and affected the functional and operational environments within which they work. The review of literature showed the increasing prominence of professionalism as a constituent of community sport policy involvement; a directional shift away from a passive phase of governmental intervention to a complex contractual phase, the emergence of conditional funding in support of and delivery on government social objectives/outcomes, and the widening of an already complex web of deliverers of sport. The literature review highlighted the lack of academic research focused on NGB/SMNGBs and community sport, and identified five overarching themes that reflected the aims and objectives of this study, including: NGB/SMNGBs' changing relationship with government and its sporting agencies (SE and UKS); increased centrality to a range of government strategies; the requirement to reform and modernise; the complexity of the performance management regimes;

and increased willingness of SE to use alternative participation delivery partners unaffiliated to NGBs.

Chapter 3, *Theorising Policy at the Meso-level*, reviewed the theoretical literature that underpinned this study, in particular, an understanding and assessment of three analytical frameworks, namely, new institutionalism, the multiple streams framework (MSF), and the ACF, since the principal level of analysis in this research is at the meso-level. While the evaluation identified the ability of all three frameworks to cast some light, in different ways, on the analysis of sport policy, the ACF offered a richer, more complete and satisfying framework to use. The analysis of the ACF provided a balanced argument on strengths and weaknesses of the framework, its potential contribution to this study, and how it logically linked together with the aims/objectives and critical realist philosophical position adopted for this research. The consideration given to macro-level assumptions and the nature of power relations served to sensitise the researcher to particular relationships and different aspects of the policy process.

Chapter four, *Methodology and Research Design*, outlined the philosophical position, methodology and choice of instruments that informed and guided the research design of this study, and demonstrated how the constituent parts of the research strategy logically linked together. A detailed explanation and justification was provided for the critical realist research paradigm adopted for this study, together with discussions of how critical realism linked to the qualitative multiple case-study approach to this study and choice of document analysis, semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis as research instruments, for example, how the multiple case-study design utilised for this research linked to critical realism's notion of retroduction, and the use of theoretical propositions to make analytical generalisations. Rationales were provided for the selection of the case studies, namely, England Handball, Volleyball England, Table Tennis England, and the interview participants viewed as key informants. The themes of governance, funding, capacity building (workforce and facilities), participation, and partnerships, were identified as dimensions of operational activities linked to mechanisms for delivering desired policy outcomes, and determinants of policy 'shaping' or policy 'taking', and utilised to guide and inform the case-study research to achieve the research aims and objectives. Discussions on data triangulation and the precise documentation of

the data base and maintenance of a chain of evidence provided a demonstrable and attainable degree of validity and reliability for the reconstruction of the study from research question to conclusions.

Chapter 5, *The UK Sport Policy Subsystem*, provided a more in-depth theoretical conceptualisation of the UK sport policy using the ACF than had been undertaken in previous studies, and provided context for the case-study empirical chapters, particularly with regard to the identification and definition of sport policy subsystem and policy actors, advocacy coalitions, and factors that have influenced policy stability and change over a decade or more. The findings highlighted the usefulness of the ACF in terms of coalition and subsystem formation, the role of shared beliefs and technical information in policy change, and the determinants of policy change and stability, but also pointed towards potential issues with the ACF's characteristics of mature subsystems, the ACF's belief system, delimitation boundaries of coalitions and subsystem boundaries, and the height from which the ACF observes policy subsystems. Operational aspects of power were also embedded within discussions, which demonstrated strong linked to all three of Lukes' dimensions of power.

Chapter Six and *the case of England Handball*, showed handball to be an emerging Olympic sport in England, with a transformational SMNGB that has utilised the sport policy environment as an 'enabler' for development, particularly through the use of mutually beneficial interdependencies, and has displayed a less problematic recognition and an acceptance of compliance-dependency over autonomy-equality, which has strengthened its membership of the SE-led coalition. Adapting to policy change and shifting political priorities has been flexible through the use of pragmatic and partnership-driven strategies and complementary alignments to the 'core beliefs' of government and SE, in unopposed acceptance of its contractual obligations, despite the apparent ill-defined nature of the NGB-centric approach to increasing participation. This has led to the identification of EH as primarily a 'policy taker', on the basis of shared beliefs and self-preservation, content to be subjected to policy rather than shape policy, although there is an increasing interest in influencing policy across all areas where sport can have an impact on policy outcomes.

Chapter Seven and *the case of Volleyball England*, showed volleyball to be a developing Olympic sport in England, with a SMNGB characterised by a resistance to change, misplaced exuberance and confidence, and the prioritisation of elite over community-participation objectives. VE has utilised the sport policy environment largely as a means to self-develop, which has generally been to its own detriment, whereby its slow progress in recognition of the dominance of the compliance-dependency culture of the sport policy subsystem over autonomy-equality, and the enforced acceptance of the dominant 'policy-core' beliefs through SE intervention, has weakened its membership of the SE-led coalition. Adapting to policy change has been slow and strategies have predominantly focused on self-development and elite sport, or have been in response to enforced realignments with the 'core beliefs' of government, and the resultant acceptance of its contractual obligations, but on the basis of self-preservation. This has led to the identification of VE as primarily a 'policy taker', but due to imposition of policy rather than shared beliefs or complementary alignments.

Chapter Eight and *the case of Table Tennis England*, showed table tennis to be an historically popular Olympic sport in England that has emerged from years of decline, discord, and long periods of inertia to a position of strength, with a SMNGB that rapidly realised the benefits of the developing sport policy environment as an 'enabler' for development. TTE has displayed a more problematic and slower progress towards recognition and acceptance of the culture of compliance-dependency over autonomy-equality, but its eventual acceptance has strengthened its position within the SE-led coalition, as has the potential of the sport's broader pro-social capabilities. Adapting to policy change has been variable but generally effective, and strategies utilised have been underpinned by a culture of opportunism, pragmatism, partnerships, and complementary alignments to the 'core beliefs' of government and SE, in largely unopposed acceptance of its contractual obligations. This has led to the identification of TTE as primarily a 'policy taker', on the basis of shared beliefs and self-preservation, content to be subjected of policy and increased resource dependency rather than shape policy, although there is an increasing interest in influencing policy across all areas where sport can have an impact on policy outcomes.

Chapter Nine, *Theoretical and Empirical Evaluations and Research Implications*, collated the data across all empirical chapters, drawing particular attention to the similarities and differences between the selected SMNGBs to allow for theoretical and empirical evaluations of the research findings, in line with the research aims and objectives. In sum, the evaluation and analysis of empirical data identified SMNGBs as primarily 'policy takers', based on: i) a largely unopposed acceptance of policy change by SMNGBs; ii) a willingness to adapt to change and comply with contractual obligations; and iii) the utilisation of various opportunistic and pragmatic strategies to align with the 'core beliefs' of government and SE, achieve policy outcomes, and maintain membership of the SE-led coalition. The impact of which has significantly shaped SMNGBs, both organisationally and operationally, heightened levels of resource-dependency and tensions within SMNGBs, predominantly attributable to a compliance versus autonomy dichotomy, and exposed their weakness and vulnerability to policy change, as well as a lack of understanding of the policy environment. The implications of this research for UK sport policy and SMNGBs draws attention to imposition of UK sport policy on sport, a blurred concept of policy taking or shaping, the fluidity of community sport policy, and a trend away from SMNGBs, the latter having to navigate the future challenges of organisational identity, stakeholder needs, policy environment expertise, and financial sustainability. Application of the ACF illuminated a number of key points relevant to the fundamental assumptions of the framework, particularly in relation to the formation, composition, and boundaries of advocacy coalitions and policy subsystems, the ACF's hierarchical belief system, and the ACF's capacity to explain both policy change and stability, which contribute to debates on the utility of the ACF as an analytical framework. The evaluation of the ACF highlighted its usefulness as an analytical framework, but also potential weaknesses, particularly in regard to the limited insight given to government-constructed agency-led coalitions, as primarily implementation coalitions, and the height from which the ACF views policy subsystems.

10.3) Limitations and Future Research

The focus of this thesis was an evaluation of the extent to which changes in UK sport policy impacted on small to mid-sized national governing bodies of Olympic sports in England, considered competitive-community-grassroots sports rather than elite, and the strategies utilised by them to adapt to changing policy and operational environments, to determine their position as primarily 'policy shapers' or 'policy takers.' In this regard, there was an early recognition of the small number of potential case studies, as well as an awareness of the NGBCEOF. On reflection, greater consideration should have been given to engagement with the selected case studies at an earlier point within the research process, which would have benefitted the identification of themes and the involvement of additional key informants. Similarly, an introduction to the NGBCEOF via the selected case studies, could have provided a focus group among CEO's of various NGBs, not just Olympic sports, thus strengthening the methodological approach to this study and the accumulation of differentiated critical perspectives of UK sport policy and policy influence, and theme identification, which could have guided the research along a different path, for example, including an elite Olympic sport/SMNGB and a non-Olympic sport/SMNGB as case studies, which may have provided a different perspectives, although arguably, the findings of this study are likely to be generalisable across all SMNGBs in receipt of public funding for community sport.

In addition, no account of European trends has been provided within this study, for example, whether policy change in the UK differs from or follows that of Western Europe, particularly in respect of identifying policy-oriented learning as a major attribute of policy change within ACF assumptions. While, this can be seen at the elite level of sport, for example, policy change at the elite level linked to elite sport in East Germany and Australia, this study uncovered no significant evidence to suggest policy-oriented learning from European trends at the community sport-level, particularly as community sport reflects local conditions, so there is potentially less scope for European influence.

However, this study has highlighted some areas of interest that would significantly benefit from further academic enquiry, including: i) the Implications of agency-led coalitions or implementation coalitions for the ACF, particularly in terms of the policy process, coalition composition and the ACF's belief system; ii) the disconnect between local government and sport, and its impact on sport provision; iii) school sport and the impact of overlapping government responsibilities on sport provision and sport development; iv) the shaping of modern NGBs and issues of organisational-identity; v) sports' future role and position within government; and vi) SMNGBs as a collective to actively collaborate as a means to enhance sustainability and change the shape of community sport policy.

10.4) Reflections of the research process

The qualitative and multiple case study approach to this study provided a rich set of data from which cross-case conclusions were drawn that identified both similarities, and distinct variations between the selected cases, as advocated by (Yin, 1994). The selection of cases were centred on their relevance to the research aims and objectives (Mason, 1996), having received prior screening through pre-selection criteria (Yin, 2003b). The choice of research methods and sources were deemed most appropriate for this study, and included document analysis and semi-structured interviews. The collection of data from interviews provided a greater understanding and explanation of SMNGBs' position as primarily 'policy takers' rather than 'policy shapers', which would have been difficult to measure through the use of quantitative methods of data collection. That said, quantitative data was a useful source of secondary data to support the research process, particularly financial data used to select case studies, and analyse levels of resource-dependency, operational costs and alternative sources of income.

Within this study, documents investigated and analysed derived from the state and government agencies (e.g. DCMS/SE/UKS policy-related/strategic documents, and Board meeting minutes), private sources (e.g. SMNGB annual reports, strategic documents, WSPs, and Board meeting minutes), and virtual documents (e.g. SMNGB official magazines). Official SMNGB magazines were a potent source of information, the extent to which is clearly demonstrated within the chapter on

TTE/table tennis, the SMNGB providing online availability of all copies of its official magazine from 1935 until its final edition in 2010. There were no significant problems with the document analysis process, and no access problems to relevant documents published within the past decade, many of which were available online, thus endorsing the internet as a means of accessing published documents from within the public domain. In this regard, online access to the minutes of Board meetings across all case studies provided an extremely rich source of data.

The use of semi-structured interviews within this study allowed for a thick and rich (Smith and Caddick, 2012) understanding of the complex and contextual nature (Veal, 1997) of the policy and operational environment of SMNGBs, and the impact of policy across the analytical themes that guided this research. In support of Green and Houlihan (2005), interviews with senior officials across the case studies, and with SE, DCMS and the Sport and Recreation Alliance, allowed: i) a more (actor-agent) informed understanding of historically-developed processes and developments relating to sport policy and SMNGBs; ii) distinctions to be made between the 'rhetoric' in public policy and case study documents, and the 'realism' from SMNGBs, government and government-agency insights into their perspectives on particular issues or policy; and iii) the normative values and belief systems underlying SMNGBs, government and government-agency perspectives, as well as their perceptions of the constraining/facilitating structural context within which they operate. There were no issues in gaining access to the selected interview participants, each having been contacted by email in the first instance, followed by an agreement on interview dates and then completion of the actual interviews. Moreover, all interviewees provided candid responses to interview questions, with no restrictions caused by time constraints, despite the elite and authoritative nature of their positions within their respective organisations, which suggested a genuine interest in the aims and objectives of this research.

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Appendices

Appendix I: *Sports Council-led Political Strategies for Sport 1972-1993*

	Sport for All (1972)	Sport in the Community – The Next Ten Years (1982)	Sport in the Community – Into the 90s. A strategy for sport 1988-1993 (1988)
Government	Labour – Wilson/Callaghan.	Conservative – Thatcher.	Conservative – Thatcher/Major.
Government Priorities	Greater specificity towards general welfare provision (e.g. socialisation, ameliorating juvenile delinquency, violence and vandalism).	General provision across-the-board to help areas of special needs (e.g. deprived inner urban areas, youth sports, and older retired generation).	Two broad objectives: i) improve the nation's health; and ii) alleviate social deprivation.
Government Provision / Commitment	Arm's length funding. Suspicious Whitehall.	Arm's length funding; Limited, partly due to financial restrictions, and Thatcher's political ideology and distaste for sport.	No Change.
Primary Policy Theme	Promoting Mass Participation.	Promoting Mass Participation – in particular age groups 13-24 and 45-59, and deprived areas (inner cities).	Reinforced SC philosophy of *Sport for All* – promotion of mass participation, in particular young people (13-24) and women.
Secondary Policy Theme	Encouraging elite sport development.	Encouraging excellence in elite sport.	Promoting performance and excellence in elite sport.
Implications for NGBs	Grant-aid to NGBs for administration, development, coaching, and international competition. Significant increase from £3.6m to £15.2m (1972-79) for elite sport. Increased participation and facility building.	Grant-aid weighted toward elitism. Focus on quality sport experience/specific services required for participation/elite success. Selective priority setting – effective resource concentration for greatest social/economic return. SC increasingly directed by government to account for NGB funding, and demonstrate how NGB support impacted on sports' social role.	More selective in allocation of funds to NGBs based on criteria, e.g. ability to self-generate income, administrative efficiency, popularity of sport, and chances of success. Greater funding allocated to target group projects. Progressive switching of resources towards activities at the elite end of the sporting spectrum.
Role of NGBs	Limited involvement from NGBs – largely passive recipients of government policy/funding. Vague, but encouraged to assist with increased participation; strategic/coordinating role between government/SC and NGBs/voluntary organisations.	Limited involvement from NGBs – largely passive recipients of government policy/funding. Still vague, but SC/NGB discussions on potential role to increase participation and resources available (advice, publicity, sponsorship and financial aid).	Limited involvement from NGBs – largely passive recipients of government policy/funding. Encouraged to promote increased participation. Primary responsibility - developing performance and excellence.

Source adapted from: Sports Council (1982); Sports Council (1988), McIntosh and Charlton's (1985); Coghlan and Webb (1990); Houlihan (1991, 1997); Pickup (1996); Oakley and Green (2001); Houlihan and White (2002); Jeffreys (2012)

Appendix II: *Triennial Review: key recommendations for UK Sport, Sport England and NGBs*

Theme	Recommendation
Participation	SE's new tool for measuring participation (Active Lives) should address previous weaknesses and incentivise overall increases in participation; and channel resources in support of those most likely to increase sport participation.
Governance of NGBs	UKS and SE should publish a joint set of governance guidelines for the next funding cycle, and provide joint support to improve NGB governance and set targets for NGB board representation.
Improving effectiveness and efficiency of grant recipients	UKS and SE should develop a shared vision with and encouragement of NGBs for future efficiencies, including, where desirable, the creation of clusters and 'hub locations' across the country to enable co-location and shared services.
Communications	UKS and SE should improve their transparency in terms of operations.
Moving closer to government	UKS and SE should remain politically impartial and decentralised, to avoid conflict within the sports sector and a detrimental impact to Lottery sales, in terms of potential impartiality in grant-making, and the principle of additionality in relation to Lottery funding.

Source adapted from: DCMS (2015a)

Appendix III: *Selected macro-level theories: key dimensions*

Dimension	Neo-pluralism	Public Choice (Market Liberalism)	Governance
Unit of analysis	Interest Groups	Markets and individuals	Policy networks and subsystems
Key features	Focused on power of groups in policymaking – competition between groups create change. Acknowledges the unequal distribution of power and the generally privileged position of business. Dependent on resources (institutional and historical).	Small government favouring privatisation. Prioritisation of economy, tax cuts, deregulation, and contracting-out.	Decentralised power - control is constrained. Variegated levels of horizontal rather than hierarchical power within networks of groups. Groups can be insiders with positions of influence or outsiders.
Criticisms	Disregards power of individuals.	Non-sustainable during economic uncertainty when greater government intervention is preferential	Implies an absence of democratic legitimacy as decision-making is devolved - blurs the boundaries between the state, the economy, and civil society.
Role of the state	Active participant in making policy - mediates between rival groups, protecting and promoting own interests (especially in relation to problem definition and preferred solutions). Bias towards business interests.	An 'enabler' for markets to operate effectively (limited regulations) - markets maximise social welfare and individuals are rational utility maximisers. Deep suspicion of the state, which should be limited to basic functions e.g. defence, property rights and basic infrastructure and services.	Governments seek to act in partnership with civil society organisations, due to increasing complexity of social issues. Seen as either a hollowing out (Rhodes, 1994) or rolling out of the state (Rose, 1999).
Dynamic for policy-making	Interaction between groups of unequal influence.	Market competition and the pursuit, by individuals, of personal interest.	Accumulation of evidence and/or external events (e.g. financial crisis).
Association to selected meso-level frameworks	ACF, MSF, and new institutionalism (in part)	New institutionalism (in part)	New institutionalism, the MSF and ACF (in part).
Primary focus for the study of sport policy	Existence and influence of advocacy coalitions for interests such as elite, youth and community sport. Policy-making influenced by the capitalist system, with business holding a privileged position. Groups form networks of interest to gain power.	Policies serve the interests of business. The regulatory role of the state. The relationship between the state, the market and the not-for-profit sector. Performance management systems influenced by new public management (NPM) principles.	Sport policy networks/community and their membership, values and decision processes. Many groups (e.g. NGBs, BOA, YST), lack features of democratic responsibility involved in policymaking.

Source adapted from: Friedman and Friedman (1962), Niskanen (1971), Lindblom (1977), Houlihan (1991), Parsons (1995), Rhodes (1994,1996), Rose (1999), Pierre and Peters (2000), Green and Houlihan (2004), Van den Berg and Janoski (2005), Dryzek and Dunleavy (2009), Houlihan and Groeneveld (2011), Houlihan and Lindsey (2013).

Appendix IV: *Sport England: Olympic sport investment 2013-17*

	2013-17 funding decisions			2009-13 funding
	Total £m	Participation £m	Talent £m	Total £m
Cycling	32.0	25.6	6.4	24.7
Football	30.0	25.0	5.0	25.6
Athletics	22.0	17.0	5.0	20.4
Rugby Union	20.0	15.2	4.8	28.8
Badminton	18.0	15.0	3.0	20.3
Golf	13.0	9.7	3.3	12.5
Hockey	12.0	9.9	2.1	11.2
Gymnastics	11.8	10.8	1.0	11.0
Canoeing	10.2	7.0	3.2	8.6
Swimming - 1 year award	9.5	3.5	6.0	20.9
Sailing	**9.3**	**5.8**	**3.5**	**9.6**
Rowing	8.2	6.3	1.9	8.8
Triathlon	7.5	5.3	2.2	4.7
Tennis - 1 year award for participation	7.1	3.3	3.8	24.5
Judo	6.1	4.6	1.5	9.9
Equestrian	6.0	4.9	1.1	4.1
Volleyball	5.1	4.3	0.8	5.5
Boxing	5.8	4.6	1.2	4.5
Basketball	3.6	2.1	1.5	7.3
Table Tennis - 1 year award	2.5	2.2	0.3	9.2
Archery	2.0	1.2	0.8	0.9
Fencing - 1 year award	0.5	0.4	0.1	1.0
Taekwondo	1.2	-	1.2	0.8
Handball	1.2	1.1	0.1	0.6
Shooting	1.1	0.9	0.2	0.8
Weightlifting	1.0	0.8	0.2	0.6
Modern Pentathlon	0.9	0.3	0.6	0.9
Wrestling	0.9	0.7	0.2	0.4
Total of awards funding for Olympic Sports (excludes ring-fenced funding)	248.5	187.5	61.0	278.1
Average funding across 27 Olympic Sports	**9.2**			

Source: SE (2013c); also available from: https://www.funding4sport.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Sport-England-NGB-fundin-2013-17.pdf

Appendix V: *Active People Survey Statistical Data 2006-16*

Once a month participation	APS1 (Oct 2005-Oct 2006)		APS10 (Oct 2015 - Sep 2016)			
Sport England NGB 13-17 Funded sports	**%**	**n**	**Unweighted counts**	**%**	**n**	**Statistically significant change from APS 1**
Angling[1]	*	*	2,384	1.69%	751,300	*
Archery[2]	0.11%	44,600	190	0.12%	54,700	No change
Athletics	5.05%	2,054,000	7,811	7.07%	3,125,300	Increase
Badminton	2.21%	900,300	2,043	1.63%	715,700	Decrease
Baseball and softball	0.05%	21,900	*	*	*	*
Basketball	0.68%	275,000	318	0.54%	231,200	Decrease
Boccia*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Bowls	1.04%	423,800	1,830	0.63%	278,400	Decrease
Boxing	0.37%	148,600	404	0.48%	209,700	Increase
Canoeing and kayaking[3]	0.26%	106,400	390	0.33%	145,800	Increase
Cricket	0.93%	380,300	525	0.64%	278,600	Decrease
Cycling	8.73%	3,554,800	11,193	8.30%	3,675,000	Decrease
Equestrian	0.99%	401,900	1,245	0.77%	339,800	Decrease
Exercise, Movement and Dance[10]	*	*	2,190	1.30%	578,200	*
Fencing	0.05%	21,800	*	*	*	*
Football	7.15%	2,910,500	3,873	5.91%	2,591,200	Decrease
Goalball*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Golf	3.58%	1,457,300	4,496	2.54%	1,131,500	Decrease
Gymnastics and trampolining	0.31%	126,500	263	0.26%	113,400	Decrease
Handball*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Hockey	0.35%	141,300	293	0.33%	142,600	No change
Judo	0.05%	20,300	53	0.07%	28,600	Increase
Lacrosse*	0.02%	6,400	*	*	*	*
Modern Pentathlon*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Mountaineering[4]	0.42%	171,300	600	0.65%	287,800	Increase
Netball	0.40%	163,500	486	0.51%	220,800	Increase
Orienteering	0.02%	8,300	31	0.02%	9,800	No change
Rounders	0.14%	56,800	97	0.11%	46,600	Decrease
Rowing[5]	*	*	623	0.49%	214,500	Increase
Rugby League	0.27%	110,500	83	0.16%	67,300	Decrease
Rugby Union	0.66%	267,800	431	0.67%	290,200	No change
Sailing	0.34%	137,200	382	0.21%	93,400	Decrease
Shooting	0.27%	109,900	377	0.23%	100,300	Decrease
Snowsport	0.45%	184,800	431	0.32%	142,400	Decrease
Squash and racketball	1.23%	500,600	741	0.70%	312,800	Decrease
Swimming	13.84%	5,633,600	14,320	9.53%	4,228,300	Decrease
Table Tennis[6]	0.40%	162,900	757	0.50%	221,800	Increase
Taekwondo	0.05%	21,500	65	0.06%	26,100	No change
Tennis[7]	2.15%	874,000	2,296	1.64%	721,100	Decrease
Triathlon[8]	0.01%	4,800	31	0.03%	11,700	Increase
Volleyball	0.17%	68,500	114	0.14%	59,200	Decrease
Waterskiing[9]	0.05%	20,700	*	*	*	*
Weightlifting	*	*	224	0.26%	114,900	*
Wheelchair basketball*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Wheelchair rugby*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Wrestling*	0.01%	4,600	*	*	*	*

1 Figures for moderate intensity angling are not available for Active People Surveys 1 & 2. Since publication of the APS3 results in December 2009, angling figures have been recalculated to include wheelchair sports - fishing. The Active People Survey 5 result for angling includes respondents who reported angling participation in response to the fishing check questions that were added to the survey. APS 1-4 data is not consistent with subsequent data points.
2 Since publication of the APS3 results in December 2009, archery figures have been recalculated to include wheelchair sports - archery.
3 Since publication of the January 2010 - January 2011 results in March 2011, canoeing figures have been recalculated to include rafting.
4 Since publication of the APS3 results in December 2009, mountaineering figures have been recalculated to exclude ice climbing but include bouldering and mountain walking.
5 Since the third quarter of APS4 indoor rowing has been included in overall rowing figures. Data is only published from APS5 onwards for comparability.
6 Since publication of the APS3 results in December 2009, table tennis figures have been recalculated to include wheelchair sports - table tennis.
7 Since publication of the APS3 results in December 2009, tennis figures have been recalculated to include wheelchair sports - tennis.
8 Triathlon participants are unlikely to compete every week, however, built up from the three disciplines of running, swimming and cycling, triathlon contributes to the participation numbers for each of these activities.
9 Since publication of the APS4 Q1 results in March 2010, waterskiing figures have been recalculated to include wakeboarding.
10 Exercise, Movement and Dance was introduced in 2014.

*insufficient sample size for once a month participation

Base sizes (number of respondents) are as follows:
APS1 (Oct 2005-Oct 2006): 363,722
APS2 (Oct 2007-Oct 2008): 191,324
APS3 (Oct 2008-Oct 2009): 193,947
APS4 (Oct 2009-Oct 2010): 188,354
APS5 (Oct 2010-Oct 2011): 166,805
APS6 (Oct 2011-Oct 2012): 163,420
APS7 (Oct 2012-Oct 2013): 163,099
APS8 (Oct 2013-Oct 2014): 164,096
APS9Q2 (Apr 2014-Mar 2015): 163,213
APS9 (Oct 2014-Sep 2015): 169,010
APS10Q2 (Apr 2015 - Mar 2016): 168,808
APS10 (Oct 2015 - Sep 2016): 163,108

Source: Sport England's Active People Survey

Available from: https://www.sportengland.org/research/about-our-research/active-people-survey/

Appendix VI: *List of interview participants and short biographies*

Interview Code	Interview Date	Role/Position	Organisation	Short Biography
CEOEH	15/08/2018	CEO	SMNGB – England Handball (EH)	LA Sports Services; SE Relationship manager on the NGB relationship manager team (four years) looking after investment into NGBs for 2009-13 funding cycle; CEO of EH since 2013.
CEOVE	14/08/2018	CEO	SMNGB – Volleyball England (VE)	PE teacher (over 25 years); Chair of Lincoln Volleyball (over 21 years); CEO of CSP Lincolnshire Sport (seven years); CEO of VE since 2016.
CEOTTE	24/09/2018	CEO	SMNGB – Table Tennis England (TTE)	In-house lawyer for BOA and Director of HR and Legal, involved in London 2012 Olympic bid (12 Years); CEO of TTE since 2013.
SMTTE	05/10/2018	Senior Management	SMNGB - Table Tennis England (TTE)	Regional Officer for ETTA (three years); CSP Northamptonshire Sport, involved in volunteering, schools and clubs (five years); Literacy-based charity, Beanstalk, focused on schools and volunteers (two years); Head of workforce at TTE and member of Senior Management Team since 2016.
SEC	04/09/2018	Chair	Sport England (SE)	Sports Lawyer, clients including Wimbledon, UEFA, and the RFU, the ECB, the Ryder Cup, and the PGA; CEO of London Marathon since 1995 (ongoing); UKS Independent Board member (six years from 2003); SE Independent Board member since 2010 – Chair since 2013.
SESLR	17/08/2018	Strategic Lead NGBs	Sport England (SE)	Sport England (14 years), initially as regional development manager, then Relationship manager on the NGB relationship manager team (2009-13) funding cycle, Strategic Lead for NGB relations since 2013.
DCMSa	11/10/2018	Senior Management	DCMS	Sport Participation Team focused on grassroots sport and relationships with Sport England.
DCMSb	11/10/2018	Policy Advisor	DCMS	Sport Participation Team focused on grassroots sport and relationships with Sport England.
SRADP	26/09/2018	Director of Policy	Sport and Recreation Alliance (SRA)	Labour Party and private sector as public affairs officer; Trade Union policy role; NCVO as head of policy initially and then public services, involved in government contracting of the charity sector; Sport & Recreation Alliance as Head of Policy since 2013, and Director of Policy since 2016.

Source: Transcribed interviews.

Appendix VII: *Interview Guide and Questions*

Initial Discussion: interviewees background, role, involvement with handball
Understanding the historical context of contemporary sport policy within which NGBs operate
Primary Question (same question to non-NGB interviewees but specific to them)
1. What have been the key changes in the sporting landscape over the past 10-15 years
a) What has influenced change? Why?
b) Who have been the key influencers of change? Who are the main policy actors?
c) Do you consider sport to sit in one policy domain or to cross multiple policy domains (e.g. health and education)? Why?
Evaluating the impact of changing policy on operational activities of NGBs
Primary Question
2. What has been impact of sport policy on NGBs?
a) How has policy impacted on the operational activities of England Handball, in particular on: i. Governance ii. Funding/Financial Resources iii. Capacity Building – workforce development, facilities iv. Participation – community/recreation/grassroots v. Elite performance – talent development and player pathway vi. Partnership-working vii. Any others?
b) To what extent have UKS and SE shaped or modernised England Handball (organisationally, operationally, financially and strategically)?
c) What have been the key challenges and or benefits - e.g. Performance regimes, finances, WSPs? Why?
d) How has this affected the relationship with members?
Ascertaining the strategies utilised to adapt to a changing operational environment
Primary Question
3. What strategies have been used to adapt to changeability within UK sport policy?
a) How has England Handball strategically developed to adapt to changes in sport policy (themes)? What strategies have been put in place as coping mechanisms? – in relation to i. Governance ii. Funding/Financial Resources iii. Capacity Building – workforce development, facilities iv. Participation – community/recreation/grassroots v. Elite performance – talent development and player pathway vi. Partnership-working vii. Any others?
b) How has this affected the relationship members?
c) What is the England Handball's view of the current government strategy for sport?
d) How is England Handball meeting the challenges posed by SE's mixed-investment approach - what are the key factors that determine NGB partnership-working?
e) What room to manoeuvre do you have? – autonomy vs government
Exploring the interplay between NGBs, the government and governmental agencies (SE and UKS)
Primary Question (same questions to non-NGB interviewees but specific to them in relation to NGBs) - ***ALSO UTILISE AS PROMPTS FOR Q.3***

4. How has the relationship between government, UKS and SE, and NGBs changed?
a) How and why has England Handball's relationship with government, UKS and SE changed?
b) How important are these relationships to England Handball? Why?
c) How do you see the current relationship with government and its agencies?
d) What are the key factors that bind the relationships together, e.g. shared values/beliefs, shared-interests, interdependencies or a combination of all? And Why?
Determining the strength or weakness of the NGB to influence the direction of sport policy
Primary Question (same questions to non-NGB interviewees)
5. Do you consider the NGB to be a 'policymaker' or 'policy taker'
a) To what extent do you consider England Handball to have the capacity to influence sport policy, and in what areas e.g. elite, grassroots, and societal value?
b) What evidence is there of England Handball previously influencing sports policy?
c) What means are available for NGBs to influence sport policy?
d) What sort of organisation do you consider England Handball to be - membership/social/non-government contractual agency/an extension of government/ or something else?
6. Where do you see the future of sport policy over the next 5-10 years?
7. Do you have any documents that would be useful for this research? **8. Who else within the organisation would be able to provide additional information? Could you provide an introduction?**

Appendix VIII: *Example Interview Transcript*

Interview #2

Interviewee Code: CEOEH

Date: 13/08/2018

Time: 10.00am

Location: Sheffield – Premier Inn

Interview Transcript:

TH: *If we could have an initial discussion on your background, your role, and your involvement with handball.*

DM: I've been chief executive for handball now for just over five and a half years, having joined them from Sport England, where I'd been relationship manager, on the national governing body relationship manager team for four years looking after investment into governing bodies. So that obviously gave me a wide perspective over 46 governing bodies through that 09-13 period. Day job here, chief cook and bottle washer is the obvious phrase to use. In a governing body our size, 15 staff, my role is everything from dealing with strategy, day to day operations, finance, governance liaison with the Board, liaison with members and key partners. Some of the commercial development side, but obviously then looking after the staff that we have in terms of each of the key areas which really sort of cover delivery, development, performance, competitions, events, coaching and workforce development, as well as administration and office department. So, as I say, small governing body, we've evolved over the five and a half years I've been there. Handball's been around for a long period of time in this country, but not particularly on the radar of a lot of people up until probably 2012 and the London Olympics. The first round of funding that England Handball got was in 2009. Previous to that it was pretty much a voluntary organisation, not really any staff to talk of, but a sport that had a lot of potential. My involvement with the sport starting when I was at Sport England. It was one of the sports that I managed over that four year period between 2009 and 2013. The sport itself is massive in Europe, probably the third or fourth international federation worldwide in terms of member nations. But the likes of the near continent in terms of Europe, Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, it's a huge sport, and we're right down below with the small fish. Even Europe, ranked 36th in Europe, men and women, but as a sport we've seen tremendous growth over this five, six year period since 2012. Our focus as an organisation has been really on the education sector, growing it in schools, getting young kids playing it, is a far more important area for us than trying to get more adults to play. But I think given its background we're a very diverse organisation, 60 different nationalities within our membership, which has its plus points, has its challenges because a lot of those come from bigger handball playing nations, and therefore have higher expectations or previous

experience of the sport, and sometimes can't quite reconcile with the fact that it is so amateur. And by that, I mean voluntary in its level here, and perhaps they come with an expectation that its going to be a professional league, played in every part of the country, and that's simply not the case. So, our work has really been to capture the swell of interest from 2012 and maintain it, which is a challenge for a small organisation with limited funding routes to keep capturing the opportunities and delivering on them.

TH: *Thanks for that David. The questions then are split into five different sections. The first questions we're just going to about getting an understanding of the historical context of contemporary sport policy in which NGBs have operated, and obviously you're experience there is going to be really important. Working for Sport England, as you said last time, having worn both hats you can see both sides. Then I want to talk about how changing sport policy over the last 10 to 15 years, again because that's sort of within your remit, how that has impacted on the operational activities of NGBs, but obviously with the focus being on England Handball. I them want to get some insight into what strategies you've used to adapt to this changing operational environment. Then I want to look at the relationship you have with government, Sport England and UK Sport, which obviously you don't get any funding from at the moment, but it would be good to get some feedback there. And then, because what we're trying to do is also build on the level of contribution, because bearing in mind of what we spoke about in the car about the extra funding that you've got, whereas other governing bodies have perhaps received less funding, so we talked about there being a contribution there. So, it's looking at where perhaps you might have influenced those decisions and whether or not you are looking towards influencing sport policy in some way. Is that alright.*

DM: Yes, that's alright. I'll just put that in the context of the different sides of the equation, so I will talk England when its Sport England and funding, and British when its UK Sport funding.

TH: *That's fine. So, first of all, what do you think have been the key changes in the sporting landscape over the last 10 to 15 years?*

DM: I think obviously key for governing bodies, quite predominantly, has been the impact of Lottery funding. Twofold really, the increase and then the start of a bit of a decrease. Lottery funding first starting in the mid-late 90s, but more so over the last 10 to 15 years at a Sport England level through 2005 onwards, the focus on Lottery funding into governing bodies centric strategy from Sport England, to grow participation. Certainly from 2009-2013 that funding cycle, and 13-17, eight years of governing bodies really being at the heart of Sport England's participation strategy. £450-460m for each of those two four-year cycles, so nearly a billion pounds of funding. I think in some respects perhaps inflated governing bodies, certainly bloated a few of them resource-wise. Getting an awful lot of funding in, maybe not in the right way to deliver what the outcomes were meant to be, because I think that's where the change in this current cycle with a move away from participation to inactivity, governing bodies are suddenly saying, hold on we're on the periphery now, the funding has suddenly

almost halved, but we still want to be the same size we were, as we weren't really set up correctly. So, I think that reliance on public funding was just exposed in that respect. So, certainly the Lottery funding impact has been one. Another area I think has probably been the growing changes to local authority leisure funding, both in terms of provision and delivery, at a development level, but also in terms of facilities that so many governing bodies are reliant on. Whether its playing fields, whether its sports centres, whatever it might be, a majority of those have either been shut down, moved into private sector hands, so the vast changes in contracts of local LA services again has had positive and negative impacts. Negative, cost increase, perhaps more of a challenge to get hold of facilities, get access to facilities, and as an indoor sport, for us we're fighting with several other sports all for the same space in the sports hall. But, also, I think the changes in the structure of the contracts mean that it's just not all about profit, a lot of those organisations are now looking at development and are looking to work with governing bodies, so they do provide an alternative delivery arm if you like. I think the third area has also probably been, not so much 10 to 15 years, but the spotlight's been on it for a while, but certainly in the last three or four years has been the increase in changing governance, and the increased focus on more appropriate governance, especially for governing bodies. The focus on reducing the impact of the 'Blazer Brigade', for want of a better phrase. People who feel they've been in the sport 50 years and therefore know how to run it. Organisations now, even an organisation our size, you know 15 staff, turnover of £800-900k per year, we're a small business, and therefore we should be run and operated as a small business, not an old boys club. So, I think certainly the changes within the new governance code that governing bodies have to adhere to, again has highlighted that as a key part for governing bodies to address, a challenge for many, not just the small ones but the bigger ones as well. Again, has its positives and negatives, but I think roll that all together we've seen some tremendous changes over the last 10 to 15 years. A lot of them positive, I think figures can be spun any which way you want. There was certainly an increase in participation since 2012, which was the goal of that 2009 starting point, after the award of the 2012 Games. There certainly have been more people playing. Is it all down to governing bodies? Probably not, but I think the key bit now is to get governing bodies to work more in partnership with organisations. So, I think those areas, funding, facilities in local authority leisure operations and governance have probably been the three biggest impacts that we've seen.

TH: *What about health?*

DM: Well that's probably been the biggest change now. I think there's always been that in the background, but governing bodies have been so focused on developing their sports and growing their sports that looking at the health context side of thing has been a bit of a side issue. Don't get me wrong, some governing bodies have been focused on that, but its just not been on their radar, then all of a sudden 2016 when we started the process for the 2017-21 cycle, the government through Sport England has said, actually the focus is now on inactivity.

Getting people who are doing nothing to do something, rather than those who are doing a bit or quite a bit to do even more, and therefore that took a lot of governing bodies by surprise! A little bit. But certainly, out of their comfort zone in terms of their ability to target inactive people, and I think they have to take a look at themselves and be realistic and honest enough to go, and we did that from a handball point of view. People aren't going get up off their sofa and suddenly start playing handball. The first thing they're likely to do is go outside the front door and go for a walk, or get on a bike maybe, or go for a swim at a push. So there are only probably half a dozen governing bodies that can have a real good focus and impact on health at its very basic level of redeeming inactive people. I think there's a lot of stuff governing bodies can do as you start to move through the health stuff. We've also tried to find ways we can focus on the fitness side of our sport, not just sports for sports sake. But it is a big change for governing bodies to have to deal with and recognise that they may not be best placed to deal with that.

TH: *What do you think, over the last 10 to 15 years, you have mentioned it, but just to elaborate a little bit more, has influenced the change? And who do you think have been the key influencers of change within the sporting landscape – the main policy actors in change?*

DM: First and foremost, go back 13-14 years to the award of the Games. That was a big public announcement not just for people in sport suddenly opened their eyes to. And that at an elite level opened the door to sports like handball that hadn't previously been in the Olympics that knew all of a sudden that seven years down the line they're guaranteed a place in an Olympic Games. At a grassroots level, Sport England quickly jumped on that band wagon through the government's Department of Culture, Media and Sport. So, sports ministers at the time, Richard Caborn, people like that, were big influencers in getting more funding into sport to grasp the expected increase in interest, demand, focus on sport as a whole. Not just the Olympic sports, but all sport was going to benefit from that. So that was such a significant moment in time and with it government and influence at that level, and I think from the likes of Sport England, from some of the bigger governing bodies who had already been benefiting from Lottery funding, there was suddenly a move to see that budget exponentially grow, and it quickly became apparent that governing bodies were going to be a group of the major recipients of that. And that led to a lot of scrambling and jockeying for position to who could get a big slice of the pie. In the right way, it wasn't necessarily a bun fight. Organisations like Sport England, like UK Sport, suddenly saw their coffers swell, but they were simply the funders, the distributors of the Lottery money. I think what we found was it was a bit haphazard in the first cycle, just get in out there and see what happens.

TH: *2005 to 2009?*

DM: Yeah, and then I think the development of a more contracting basis, governing bodies being held to account for their funding.

TH: *What influenced the decision to go for a NGB-centric strategy?*

DM: I think the feeling probably that governing bodies were an established group, established in the since of being around for a long time. They were already doing development stuff, should already have the links in place, oversaw the club structure, they oversaw the competition structure, they dealt with all the elite side of things, so it was a natural fit. It was a bit like where else could they have gone. Local authorities weren't going to do it directly themselves, clubs as individual elements, some could some couldn't, county sports partnerships was an evolving beast at that particular point in time, governing bodies I wouldn't say were the only horse in the race, but were certainly at the forefront of saying we can do this, we've already been doing it, we can simply expand on what we are currently delivering. So, it was a natural fit.

TH: *And do you think the link is also following winning the bid for London 2012?*

DM: Yeah, because I think a big part of winning that bid, its word that obviously brings a variety of different thoughts to bear when people talk of legacy. The whole promise of the London 2012 bid wasn't necessarily just on those two sets of Games over a couple of months period, with a bit in between. It would be the lasting legacy, increases in people playing more sport, access for juniors and youngsters to more sport, and I think they had to deliver on that. So, they wanted something that was not going to take an age to set up and test and run, but could hit the ground at a very quick place. And governing bodies just fit that bill, certainly at a development level. They were going to be the obvious recipients of the elite level funding. I think the challenge perhaps was that people hadn't realised was that the increase for some of them was so great, some of just weren't ready for it. You know, and suddenly you had all this money and didn't really know what to do with it, apart from spend it. And that doesn't always work if you're not understanding where you need to spend and why you need to spend it, and its not about the short-term but about the long-term, and I think handball was guilty of that and one of those thrown a big bundle of cash, told to get on with it, and had a great time for two and a bit years, and then it all fell down like a house of cards. And I think that's one of the downsides of it. So, I think there's a whole host of people that played an important part in influencing that policy, but it was certainly at a government level, and that's very helpful because when its coming from that level you've not got to persuade people to open up the purse strings, they're just looking for someone to give it to.

TH: *When you say a host of people, could you give me some examples who were perhaps more influential than others?*

DM: Jennie Price is just coming to the end of 11 years at Sport England. She came in at the back end of 2007 and has been extremely influential, and has had a huge impact on that policy. Liz Nicholl as well, and her predecessors at UK Sport.

TH: *Did NGBs have any influence at that time, in terms of this NGB-centric focus or strategy, or was it just a case of Sport England, UK Sport saying we've got NGBs in place we're going to go with them? Or at the time were NGBs saying we can help you out here?*

DM: I don't know. Personally, I don't think governing bodies were organised in that way. Knowing back then they were still very insular, inasmuch as they just focused on their sport. And I won't necessarily say it was a dog fight with other governing bodies …

TH: *So, were they still working in artificial silos?*

DM: To an extent, because it's like we'll keep hold of our members, and things like the Active People Survey perhaps almost encourage that, you know you're responsible for your numbers, so I don't want to share that. So, I don't think they were organised enough to be influencing policy. I think they were the natural recipients once government decided we've got this pot of money, we're going to utilise our nominated outlets, which for them was UK Sport and Sport England, over to you guys to decide how you're going to best distribute that, so I think that's when governing bodies thought ok there's an opportunity but were still very much, I'm just on my sport. There wasn't a lot of cross-fertilisation, so I wouldn't necessarily say there was any one governing body that was championing the opportunity at that point in time. But very quickly, once they saw the money was there, they were all knocking down Sport England's door. Sport England already had those partnerships and relationships in place, bearing in mind they obviously increased that with the award because there were a number of governing bodies, and handball was one of them, that they'd never worked with before. But they obviously wanted to focus on all the sports that were going to be covered by the Olympics, as well as non-Olympic sports. Let's not forget that Sport England funded 46 governing bodies, through 2009-13 cycle over that 2012 period, and more than half of those aren't Olympic sports.

TH: *So, the move then away from the NGB focus to a more intense mixed economy – what influenced that decision? Was it to do with, as you mentioned loosely, has legacy been achieved or is it because it wasn't happening quick enough, or have government just completely changed tact, and if so for what reason?*

DM: Probably all of the above. I think there does come a point where, and this is always perhaps, I personally and I know others don't like the word legacy, because there are two ways of looking at it. If you took a definition from a dictionary, it's sort of what's left behind, you know we could be accused of being left behind. And from a practical point of view we had it as a strapline, delivering on the Olympic legacy. When I arrived it 2013, there was still the hum and the buzz, but as time went on, I always thought that someone's going to tap me the should soon and go haven't you done that yet. How long does it last? So, I think that there's probably that natural move on from 2012. And we still talk about it, it's still such an important point in time, but its six years ago and times change, and once you then got past Rio in 2016, you

could be talking about it as the last Olympic Games and we're not far off Tokyo now, and so it'll be two Olympic Games ago. So, I think there was a point when people went enough, enough about looking back, and basking in that glow and let's move on. I think there was a perception that perhaps it hadn't been as big a growth as they were expecting, and therefore they were flogging a horse that simply isn't going to run that much further. But I think also, the changing face of public life, and the increased focus on obesity, health of the nation, whether that's childhood obesity, adult obesity, diabetes or all those other health-related issues that started to gather a bit of pace. I think a certain amount of apathy, but quizzical looks from the public about governing bodies, you know I never benefitted from them, and you see all this culture issue etc. So again, I just think it was that natural point again that you've had eight years doing it, we need to go somewhere else, we need to address another issue that is affecting us as a nation, and that's the whole country, not just perhaps the smaller but relatively important size of the population that are doing sport. So, I think those things coupled together, as soon as government decided that we need to be doing something about the inactive area of work, there was going to be a natural flow through to Sport England. And that's where I think, unfortunately now, my words would be that Sport England is a misnomer. It's no longer Sport England, its Physical Activity England.

TH: *That's really interesting, and why it's interesting is when we come to the next point. So, in all are you suggesting really that sport policy from day one has been government-driven.*

DM: I think at the onset, yes. I think what's interesting is that as we went through that first cycle governing bodies started to get themselves a bit more organised, they were having to deal with contracts, they were having to deal with meeting targets, they were having to deal with the potential loss of funding if they didn't hit those targets. It became more like okay I'm not just moving along the trough to the next hand-out, and someone puts a load of money in my hand and says right we'll see you in four years. They were being monitored, they were being checked and challenged, they were being asked to show what return they were providing for that investment, and I think that changed the way in which governing bodies felt they needed to be perceived. That, it was less about look at all our competitions, look at all out leagues, look at all of our members, there was a wider view as to look at all the stuff we can deliver, and more and more the governing bodies started to get themselves organised. Certainly, at senior level, I think again one of the changes that was relatively recently, Sport England delivered a programme for participation development directors, people in that sphere who were doing that, UK Sport did it for performance directors, Sport and Recreation Alliance did one for Chairs of governing bodies. No-one did anything for the chief execs, the people who were actually running the organisation. No-one was really providing a forum where the senior executives dealing with the day to day operations of each of these governing bodies, could come together. So, we actually ended up setting it up for ourselves, the NGB CEO forum. So that, when you're talking about influencing sports policy came about in terms of the Election in 2015. Again, the feeling at that time was the comprehensive spending review was coming

along, a change in government policy and stuff like that, we needed to have a voice, we needed to show that we were more than just about development, more than just about participation. There was so much more that we did, you know, volunteering, and the vast number of people involved in volunteering in sport, which we know a lot of sport wouldn't exist without volunteers. We actually had a bigger workforce in terms of man hours than the NHS. We had a bigger workforce in terms of people than the NHS. The membership of governing bodies was bigger than most or pretty much all of the political parties put together. So, we were quite a big entity, and the changes that we'd made in governance and operations and things like that, so we created the state of the nation, and developed that as a bit of a flag to wave, but also a document we could out in front of government and say look we do know what we're doing.

TH: *Has that had any impact do you think?*

DM: I'd to think that it raised – it kept the profile of sport and therefore the profile of governing bodies high, at a time when it was potentially on the wane. Has it influenced it to the point where we were before, arguably not. We're not front and centre anymore. Has it ensured that we've at least maintained a seat at the table, yes, I think it probably has. We got Tracy Crouch to come to several of those meetings, we got Liz Nicholl to come those meetings. We got Jennie price to come to those meetings. Because they knew they could talk to two thirds of the governing bodies CEOs that they were funding in one room at one time. They'd never done that before, we did it ourselves.

TH: *The binding affect of the NGB CEO forum, what would you say that is? Do you have a particular shared-belief, shared values on what sport can do?*

DM: I think it provided a forum for us as chief execs to come together and work with our peers, share best practice, identify potential partnerships. So out of that came things like netball, cricket, and hockey working together. I wouldn't say purely out of that, but I think it helped suddenly to get away from that previous we're all working in silos to go, actually, we're all trying to do the same thing so let's pull together.

TH: *So, a sort of collective action then?*

DM: Yeah, collective action, pooling resources, and recognising that when governance changes or anything comes around, someone somewhere has done some really good work, can we all benefit from it rather than all trying to do the same thing to reinvent the wheel, because there is only so many times you can do that. But I also think it provided a collective voice. Its held on since then, we've probably dropped back to around about 20-23 governing bodies.

TH: *There were 39?*

DM: There were, yeah. There are still a lot that involved. You get a call to come to meetings. Some of the big ones we know were in it for that short period of time around the Election. But I think it was always going to fall back to a smaller group.

TH: *So, most of the larger NGBs are the ones that have pulled out?*

DM: Yeah, I mean football, rugby, cricket, tennis.

TH: *Did they provide any reason?*

DM: I think they're just big enough to have their own voice. They're big enough to influence government. You know, people talk about the big five, and they would meet the government on their own.

TH: *I suppose those 20 that are left, you have this collective voice. Does that have the potential to go to government and say, look as a collective with all these different sports, we can make a huge contribution?*

DM: And we have, and we continue to do that, because when government was looking at its own strategy, came and presented that in its draft format to the CEO forum, to allow us to feedback back on it. It's always a challenge to try a provide a collective response across 20-25-28 governing bodies, but we were very clear to focus on stuff we could do as a united force and that was our place in the structure, if you like.

TH: *So, thinking about that contribution, thinking about sport policy, my question is that you have sport policy, you have education policy, you have health policy, you have crime policy and so on and so forth. Do you think sport purely sits within sport policy, or do you think that it is involved within a number of different policy domains?*

DM: I think it has the potential to sit across a variety of areas. I think the challenge is sometimes the public's perception that sport is about competing. Sport means being part of a club, playing in a league or competition, you know that's what sport is, because it's what they see on the TV. Once you start putting it into how could it help health, then that's physical activity. Somebody still may be doing a sport, but do they recognise themselves as doing sport or just actually getting out of breath? But there's no doubt that it feeds into that, and I think a lot of some of those other agencies, when you talk about things like crime policy. Police recognise that if they want to engage with a load of disenfranchised youths, one of the best ways to do it is through sport. You know, that might be what they're doing in an anti-social environment in an anti-social way, but put it into a more sociable context and actually you might be able to engage with them. In a similar, but slightly unconnected way in terms of social policy and dealing with certainly the increase in minority ethnic groups. Again, what might float their boat might could well be sport. Again, in our context, as a sport its huge in Europe. We know if you've got a Polish community, for example, and you want to try and engage with them, or get them doing something active, handball might be up there, because they would've come from

a nation that plays a lot of handball. They won't play cricket. They won't play rugby league. They'll play football, of course. They'll play netball. But actually, both the men and women will play handball. So, it's got a chance to impact there within local communities. Education, it's a key driver. At the end of the day you've got premium funding into primary schools, and the fact that its ring-fenced money now to deliver sport. It never has been in the past. An increase in the sugar tax. Again, what role can governing bodies play in that and link with schools, colleges, universities? So, I think there's very few policy areas that sport, and you've got to put that in its widest possible context, physical activity, doesn't potentially have the opportunity to have an impact on. But I think the key is recognising, and this is the key thing for governing bodies, and it's certainly the way that we've operated and worked. That doesn't always necessarily mean it's going to be the governing body that does it. I've always stated that, undoubtedly, in our own sport and in many other sports, there will be people who are better placed to deliver our sport than us. We shouldn't try and do it all. We don't need to do it all, and that's the whole point of trying to utilise funding that we have, at whatever level, and as it decreases, even more importantly, not to try and double up. A classic example would be a sport that's got some big clubs. Let's take a sport like basketball, they've got some big clubs across the country, certainly in terms of the BBL, who have fantastic community programmes. I would always say to the governing body, and did say to the governing body, why would you put a county officer with more money into an area where a club is already doing a huge programme. Why not take a smaller investment, and invest it in the club? They could them be part of your delivery network and do it for you. You'll get a bigger return and you won't confuse the market place, and that's sometimes a challenge and has been a challenge in the past for governing bodies not to necessarily recognise but to feel like I'm almost ready to let go. So, I think that's where we can be the drivers of the bus, we don't have to provide all the passengers as well. We can help to work with all these different people, and say right well look here's some training for your staff or here's a product that you can use, or actually you're already going into that environment for us and would you like to take handball, from our point of view, with you. Because I'd rather somebody at the end receives the opportunity to play handball, than worry about it having to be delivered by us. If one of our partners is delivering it then somebody somewhere is playing handball, then I'm happy.

TH: *With that thought, that sport, so let's take handball. Handball has the potential to cross the boundaries of different policy domains. Also, with regard to the compliance nature, contractual nature of working with Sport England and government. What sort of institution do you think England Handball is, as an example, is the perception now maybe among those small to mid-sized NGBs, to consider themselves as a membership organisation, a social institution, a contractor to government. Where do you see yourself now?*

DM: Governing bodies will always be a membership organisation, and that's one of the challenges in the new world, in that those members are often always die hards of that sport, and therefore their only view, their only thought, their only concern is for the success of that sport,

and the fact that the governing body is there to work for them. So, they get slightly peeved when they see the governing body going off and dealing with health or dealing in other areas, or all this governance stuff that they have to do. What's that got to do with my sport? Because rightly or wrongly, they don't see that as the point of a governing body. We on the other hand have to be adaptable, we have to recognise that if we're going to take Sport England's money, we're going to have to dance to whatever tune they want us to or whatever tune they are playing, and it that means we have to meet certain governance criteria to get the money, then we're going to do that. The key bit for governing bodies is explaining that to them. So, we will always be membership, we'll always be there to govern the sport, and that's what we see in the CEO forum. We are the ombudsman of our sports individually, but also collectively. So, we govern the rules and regulations, we provide the competition frameworks, we always see that as being the central role of governing bodies. But actually, if we want to develop and we want to grow, and therefore we need other sources of revenue, in a world where the commercial side of things is locked up by maybe half a dozen of the big governing bodies, certainly at that top end, then if there are opportunities to get other sources of funding from health routes, through social enterprise routes, wherever else it might be. Education, then we've got to try and see how we can make use of those to ensure that we can maintain the overall service to our members. So, I think that's also changed the nature of the personnel that work within governing bodies, and the personnel that work in organisations like Sport England and UK Sport. It's become a bit more of a broader, okay we need to look for people not just from a sports background, but from a commercial background, from a finance background, from a governance background that can bring skills from other sectors, so that we can continue to develop.

TH: *How has this affected relationships with members, as you've moved the governing body forward?*

DM: I think for us, it's been a lot easier for us than some of our other counterpart governing bodies, because I always describe us as a bit of a snotty nosed teenager, compared to a grandfather time that is the FA or the ECB, you know organisations that have been around for a long time. Very, very strong structures, well-established structures. Structures that arguably have struggled in the governance world, because they've been so embedded. We don't and didn't have county structures, or regional structures. Our board wasn't bloated, we had a mix already of independent and elected members. So, all be it as a small organisation, our world was much smaller and so allowed voices in membership to be perhaps sometimes closer to the centre, than they would be in a football or a rugby, where the dissenting voices and agitations as in all sports, some of those would be sept up my county organisations. Actually, when it comes to the decision-making side of things, and that's my things always been on the governance side, governing bodies have paid, it's the wrong word to use but I'll use it anyway, have paid for the sins of two. The focus back in the late-90s, early-2000s certainly gathered pace in the FA and the way that was governed, and the RFU and the way that was governed.

Big high profile reviews of both sports led, undoubtedly, to the sport governance policy that was brought in, and then suddenly everybody had to meet it. And the thing there I think, and the biggest thing that we've had to demonstrate to our members, is just because we bring four or five people onto the board who it might be perceived don't have a handball background, doesn't mean they haven't got something to offer. The fact that you've got this diverse mix of skills, knowledge and experience, and you've got the handball knowledge, and we can call on the handball knowledge from our members. But if we've got people on there that have got a legal background, finance background, performance sports background, again not just in handball, commercial background, marketing. It means we've got a mix of people around the table that can add to what we do. So, I think it's just trying to get over that hurdle with members where they feel that the sport is being taken away from them. They're losing control, because the people governing the sport don't bleed handball. If you cut them open, they won't bleed handball, that sort of feeling.

TH: *Do you think that Sport England, UK Sport, have shaped the NGB to a larger extent?*

DM: There's no doubt that the work that they've done over this last 8-10 year period, and the governance stuff and the latter stages of that, has undoubtedly changed the way that governing bodies operate. The use of data and insight, for governing bodies you sign up as a member, you sign up as a member! They didn't need to know your background, your interests, what you wanted. You were a member, because you loved the sport and that's all we needed to know. Now we want to know how do you want the sport, where do you want it, your preferences for competitive sport or informal sport. So even in areas like data and insight, which were alien words to governing bodies. If like eight years ago you said to a governing body, in six or seven years' time you'll have a head of insight or a data analyst, they would look at you and laugh. But more and more governing bodies have got that, certainly the bigger governing bodies, because they recognise that they're in a competitive market vying for people's time and social money if you like. After paying all the bills, do I go to the cinema, do I go out for me, or do I play a sport. Which is going to give me the best value on my investment? So now all of a sudden governing bodies have to recognise that, so there's no doubt that the policies and the programmes and the approach and strategy, more Sport England and less so UK Sport, they have done to a degree, has brought about the changing shape of governing bodies.

TH: *In that respect though, in terms of, as you mentioned insight and data analysis, what membership structure do you have?*

DM: We don't have individual members, clubs join and then they will register their players. So, players don't register as individuals, they register through the club, but the club does it so that our focus is on each of the individual clubs, but they might have a number of teams, a number of members. Some clubs might have 150-160 members, all of which are registered with us, but the club registers them through our portal.

TH: *So, the club registers them individually, so you still have an idea of individual details?*

DM: Yep, and we have the growing focus on that, again a policy that's just come in the last four months with GDPR, the management and holding of that data and what we use it for. We're also very careful now about what we ask for within privacy policies. We can give you a list of all of our members, but most of those members haven't paid us direct, it would be the clubs that have made a payment. With the last count have about just over 3,500 members. We know that's not the entire number that play handball. There are a whole host of people that play handball that don't register. Recreationally, whether that's within the clubs, we have emerging clubs that aren't playing in our leagues and competitions, but you know, the biggest growth area we've seen has been in our schools competition. Schools don't rush to deal with us yet, that's an area we're looking at, but our national schools competition that we run every year for year 8 and year 10, so under 13 and under 15 had 25 teams in it two years before the Olympics in 2012. This year, just gone, we had over 1500, so tremendous growth over that period of time, but we don't know the names of all those kids playing at that level.

TH: *Has there been any discussion with YST about getting into the UK School Games?*

DM: Yep, yep, and there's two different levels, there's the school games and then there's the national school games. So, up till about four years ago, we ran the whole competition from start to finish, at local level right through. We got to the point where we had about 250 teams in it, but it was killing us. We didn't have the structure to organise a local level competition or local rounds like that, have all the contacts from a central, national point of view. So, I looked around at the time and thought, again, what structure exists that we could link in with, school games organisers. So, they went through the whole change when Gove took the money out from under their feet, but essentially that infrastructure and those relationships were already there, we simply gave them the model we wanted them to deliver, and overnight, and overnight for us being one year, we went from 250 teams to over 900, just by giving it to the School games organisers. It actually took less resource out of us as an organisation than it did had done previously, so we've benefited from that and that's really helped that growth. We pick it up now at a regional level, so we have eight regions, so once we get to the county winners, then we want to know who they are, and we run it at that point. We've made submissions to get into the national schools games, but funnily enough, the decisions then are, you have the likes of Sport England and UK Sport in that decision-making, suddenly the no compromise perspective of UK Sport rears its head, and we didn't get in because we're not a medal potential sport. What the heck as that got to do with school games? That's my question. Why should that stop a sport like handball that has seen such a growth in schools be prevented from having a seat at the national school games finals. Lovely presentation, lovely ideas you've got, but you're not a medal sport.

TH: *I know you've already spoken about this a little, but I want to look at how sport policy has impacted on England Handball and the strategies that you've used to adapt to those changes.*

Does that make sense? Within the research having gone through all the policies, I've come through with six themes that I'm focusing on. One is governance, one is funding, capacity building, participation, so community/grassroots level, elite performance but at the talent development and pathway level, and partnership-working. I know it might be a little repetitive, but if just start with governance. So, as we've gone through policy, we know that governance has had an impact on NGBs. So, what has the impact been and what strategies have you used adapt to those changes?

DM: I think governance is, I want to say a relatively simple one. The fact that we've got a code of governance that you can look at and read, and perfectly understand, at least gives you the framework, the context, and expectations of what you will have to put in place. It helps when it comes to deciding, well identify what we need to do and then what you have to do about it. As a governing body, we didn't struggle to much with that, because we didn't have to make too many changes to structure, as it were. We needed to change our articles in certain ways, but not massively. We had to put together discussion papers with members to explain to them why we were having to do it, and why the changes were being put in place. We didn't have to suddenly kick out a load of elected directors to make way for independently appointed directors. All we did need to do was to find a way of encouraging people to come forward. So, broadening our horizons in terms of where we sought those people from, and where we advertised, highlighting the benefits of being part of a smaller governing body, perhaps being able to make more of an impact than you could in a bigger governing body. But there we were very much led by, unless you've got things in place by this date, you risked your funding being turned off. So that allowed us to put an action plan in place, every governing body had to put an action plan in place, that allowed us to put an operational plan, so okay how are we going to deliver that, some of that was the practical, so right we need to change our articles in these areas, it's got to be done by this date, which would mean an AGM, because it's got to be voted on by members. Easy, let's work that out within that timeline. Right, we've now got to look at ways of increasing our skills, knowledge and experience of our directors. Okay, where do we go for that, we don't just advertise through our membership, we've got to go further afield. I'm broadly comfortable with a lot of the stuff that governance code for sport has brought. There's just a couple of areas that have always struck me as being slightly in conflict with each other. One is they want us to be skills and knowledge based, experienced based, so they want directors to have, you know, what skills, knowledge and experience are you bringing to the table, whether that's sport or other. Married against you've got to have this diversity in terms of gender and minority ethnic representation, which I get don't get me wrong. The struggle comes when you're at a point where you don't quite meet the gender bit, but you want to find the most skills, knowledge and experience that you can, and if they all come along and don't fit into the minority ethnic or gender that you require, how do you reconcile the two. If I've got a Board that's got 10 people on it, and I need to get three of those to be female, and there's only two, and a space becomes available and I put it out there, and the most skilled, knowledgeable and experienced are all male, what do I do? We're very

fortunate that we go to women on boards, we go to sporting equals, and opportunities that allow us to reach into those areas, and have been very vocal in doing that, to the extent that I think we are one of the first mixed gender sports where our board has more female directors than male. 10 members on our board and six of them are female, and we've not done that through anything else other than trying to find the best people for the job. Governing bodies have still got to maintain that broader outlook, and our strategy to governance has been in finding ways and ensuring that we are reaching the widest possible audience, and recruiting in a smart way.

TH: *So, in terms of funding and your financial resources?*

DM: Undoubtedly, the biggest challenge that governing bodies have faced, but all governing bodies, even the big ones. But, certainly more so medium size and downwards. And this is one of the things I struggled with from a Sport England perspective, not when I was there, but when it sort of came to the 2017-21 bit. They sort of put all 46 governing bodies in the same box, and said right, you lot will all become more commercial, more commercially sensitive, more cost effective, more efficiently in the way you run the business, look for other sources of revenue. Almost finger wagging, and you've everybody in that box from the football association to boccia, and it doesn't work like that. The FA, arguably, doesn't need Sport England's money. If it came down to it and Sport England took their money away, yeah, they'd look a little bit different, but they wouldn't fall over at the first hurdle, and their ability to generate other sources of revenue is huge. Boccia, but the let's say ourselves, that ability is minimal. Minimal to the extent that we don't have the media profile, we don't have the numbers, the volume, that would be attractive to a bigger investor, and also the fact that the sports sponsorship landscape has changed. Suddenly, there aren't all these people saying I've got all this money to give away, here you are here's £100k, do what you like with it. So, our ability to generate other sources of income, is minimal. So, we have to be very careful about how we utilise the funding that we've got, and Sport England's been very clear that it wants to be investing less in back office. We need to make representations to say that's fine, but if you still want us to be the governors of the sport, the overseers of the rules and regulation, the deliverers of a certain element of the core market stuff, which is where we see ourselves, we need to have an office structure to do that. We all have our membership fees that we can generate, we have our coaching course income we can generate, but again when someone just comes along and says why don't you just increase your membership fees, put an extra £15-20 on membership fees, and generate loads. No, it might just bring me less members. We're already an expensive sport. If I suddenly say to people, you know your membership fees were £20 per year, there now £40 per year, not only might they go stuff that, they're also more likely to start going what do I get for that, and there's only so many times you can say to them well you get insurance. So, I think again, that's where we've had to look for what other funding can we bring in, what other areas, it might still be public-related funding, we'll come onto this on the elite side things, but what other sources of revenue are

there. We get grants from the European Federation, we get grants from the International Federation, but also how, if we got some of our Sport England money, how could we invest that with a partner that's prepared to invest some as well, and double that investment. So, if we put £2-3k into a programme, and somebody else put the same in, then suddenly you've got a £4-6K programme. How can we make that work harder? I made a conscious decision that as we came into this funding cycle, and again we haven't shouted overly loudly about it, even if we got more money, I would make us a smaller organisation. Because most governing bodies will have a level of development staff, the big ones will have county offices in every single county. I knew we weren't going to get the funding for that, that was fairly obvious. Sport England was pulling away from that, so I needed people who were going to deliver partnerships, they were going to help us to work with other people. Find those who were already delivering on the ground and saying right can you take handball around for us. So, I had the unenviable decision, even as small as we were, of getting our award announced on a Friday, February last year, and four days later putting 10 out of 19 staff at risk of redundancy. They already knew about it, they knew the change was coming, we'd been very clear upfront, regardless of what we got. Less was obviously going to be an interesting conversation, but even if we got more, because I wanted more full time staff. So, our head count went down and that then meant we had to work in partnership with other people. We had to work more with our clubs and stuff like that. How can we help them, the clubs, to identify more local pots of funding that they can get hold of better than we can, we simply provide the kudos, the recommendation if you like, the validation of what they're doing. So, Sport England come to us and say how can you run more efficiently as a business – I said well you tell me, because at the moment my back office costs me £7k per year. I outsource IT, I outsource HR, I outsource finance, I outsource payroll, I've got one printer in the office, so bulk procuring paper is not going to bring me a huge saving every year. Where I think they were looking for people to be able to say, you know, we've saved tens of thousands in their back office function, which meant they didn't have to ask for it from Sport England. If I saved £1k in that regard, I'm doing well. Its not going to be earth shattering, so I don't think I can be any leaner. So, the whole sort of shared services bit, I'm yet to see the benefit of that, not because I don't think there will be benefits, simply because there's not a lot it can give me at the moment.

TH: *So, are you saying then that, irrespective of the amount of funding that you get from Sport England, as you said there is a lot of reliance on Sport England funding at the moment. What's that ratio at the moment?*

DM: Ours is just, just over 50%, which is not bad.

TH: *What sort of level are you hoping to get down to?*

DM: I think if we can get down to between 40 and 50. I think for governing bodies our size and structure, there's always going to be a need for a certain level of funding to deliver a certain

level of operation, So, if that funding isn't there, we're going to have to cut accordingly, but recognise we'll go back to where we were pre-2005.

TH: *Even if it was 30% of your funding, you're still being shaped by Sport England; in terms of you need to make more efficiencies, even just to get 30%.*

DM: Without a doubt. Some of us had to do financial sustainability plans, initially they were all predicated on how much sponsorship you get, but you can't build a financial sustainability plan on sponsorship. It's just an unknown quantity that could go at any point in time.

TH: *So, they still have a huge influence over you then.*

DM: Without a doubt.

TH: *Its really interesting that in table tennis, as an example, just from their annual accounts, Sport England as a significant party who influence not only their financial but operational activities. So, in effect their sort of like an extension to Sport England. Is that how you see yourself at all.*

DM: Yes, to a degree. They are a partner. I guess it's how you view them – do you view them as a silent partner, do you view them as an aggressive partner, do you view them as a partner who provides investment into your business, and therefore you've got to satisfy their particular needs and wishes.

TH: *Which one of those do you view them as?*

DM: I'll probably choose the latter. At the end of the day if they didn't invest in our organisation, we would look different as an organisation, but I wouldn't have to satisfy their needs. I've chosen, we've chosen to take their money, so they don't figuratively or literally have a seat at the table, but they have an interest and therefore, the fact that they are putting that money in they want to know what they are getting back. And if they don't feel they're getting back what they think they should be, then like any investor, whether its public sector or private sector, it would happen in the private sector certainly, they would withdraw that investment. So, I have to meet their requirements, I have to answer their questions, I have to provide the information that enables me to show them that, yes, we are doing what we said we would do, and we've put our plan together and our bid to you for that funding, then we're actually doing it. That takes a bit of time, and arguably time that's taken away from the day to day stuff on the sport. That's the world we live in.

TH: *OK, so capacity building, particularly workforce development and facilities.*

DM: I mean workforce, again key for us has not been growing our own workforce, our own directly employed workforce, its been about how can we facilitate the development of others, who can they feel comfortable and competent to then deliver the sport on our behalf. Certainly, where

you are talking about grassroots development. So, are there agencies out there that are already delivering sport in schools, for example, that by training their workforce we can give them the tools to be able to go and deliver handball, as part of that offer. It's not the only thing that as part of that offer. Creating a small-sized version of the game, this crosses over into the facilities bit, a small-sided version that you could play on a netball court, with pop-up goals, because it fits into the environment of schools, who have very small facilities, at primary level most of it will be outdoors, but a lot of those primary schools will have a netball court marked out on their playground. So, our focus very much has been on the two strategies I produced over my time with bidding and handball, partnerships … the second …Within that how can we train the workforce in those partners to understand, be competent, confident and deliver the sport the way we're asking them to do.

Facilities is a huge challenge, issue for us, because we need the biggest indoor court of any indoor sport, we're similar to futsal and indoor hockey, but we don't match Sport England's off the shelf four badminton court sports hall. I always say I never knew when badminton courts became a unit of measurement. It's a historical thing, to the extent that their own active places website, where you can put in your requirements in terms of metres, length and width, and it will throughout badminton courts. So, we need a sports hall that's 40m long by 24 wide, as a minimum really, to put a 20 by 40 court in and have 2m run off. So, I put that in and out comes all these facilities that have 10 badminton courts, 12 badminton courts, or in the case of Wycombe's badminton centre, 15 badminton courts. Fantastic, until you realise that Wycombe's badminton courts are all in one long line, and you could never put a handball court in there. But at the same time, with all the things we've talked about with local authorities closing facilities, the rising cost of access, Sport England's pushed to try and unlock more of the educational sites, because I'm pretty certain the figure we always used to trumpet was that 75% of sports halls in this country, are on education sites, whether that's schools, colleges or universities. A lot of them will get locked at 3.00, 3.30 or 4.00. That's it, won't be open at the weekends, standing empty. Facilities that indoor sports could use.

TH: *Has there been any impact in that direction?*

DM: I've seen a growth of small businesses working on school sport lettings. They've actually gone to schools and said right, we'll manage your facilities outside of school hours, not just for sport but for other lettings. So, you as a school can make more money from it, but you're not having to deal with the operation of it. I think there is a company called school sport lettings, and they've got a number of schools on their books that if you want to place a booking, and go through them outside of school time and use it.

TH: *Have you had any discussions with them?*

DM Yeah, we have, we have. Our challenge is still the size. Ours is unfortunately, where size does matter. So, we could have taken two routes. We could have just sat around and be moaning

that we're not in France or Holland or Spain, where on most street corners there's a full-size handball court. Where the structure of community sport is more through the sports club, than it is through the school. Or we can say that nobody's going to build us 40 halls overnight, let's try and unlock the ones that do exist and see if we can put handball lines down. Let's cut our cloth accordingly and say okay we might have to bring the width or the length that we're prepared to play on down. We can usually find the width, but we can't match it with the length. We won't scrimp on the width, but we can bring the length down a bit to a slightly smaller court, 34m in our top league. Let's adapt, let's do a different version, because if we were to say to people you've got to deliver this wherever you are on a 40 by 20 court, it would never go anywhere at all. But we can do the jumpers for goalposts like football can do, so we create a small-sided version, 5-a-side that you can play on a netball court. Mixed gender so you can take the contact out, so it's our version of tag rugby. So, for schools, especially, a great version to do. We even got a partnership with a company that makes pop up goals. And what we've tried to do, through Sport England and others, is when new developments or refurbishments take place, can you bear us in mind. We're not the football foundation, we don't have the money to invest and influence you to build your hall bigger or to encourage you to put the lines down. We've got to ride on the coattails of others and hope that one of the outcomes will be that we get some access.

TH: *I'm assuming the glue is still a problem.*

DM: Always. Again, because it's a historical thing within the sport. If it was predominantly a British based sport, and you said there's no glue, we wouldn't know anything different, but a lot of people that play it have grown up with using glue. Facility operators over here hate it because they're forever cleaning the floors. I get it, and also when people are moaning about the cost of hiring halls, more often than not they're not only having to pay for the hire cost for the actual game, but have to pay a little bit extra higher cost for the cleaning that has to take place after the game, as the facility then can't use the hall.

TH: *You've spoken quite a bit there about participation anyway. But I suppose one of the questions would be, you've got your traditional sport, and having spoken to Janet the other day, she mentioned a similar thing to you about changing the format, different formats, but the impact or discussions on having 6 people on a court playing a game, handball 7 people on a court playing the game, and your changing that sport.*

DM: It's not handball anymore.

TH: *So, it's not handball anymore. Has that created tensions with members?*

DM: Oh, without a doubt, and I think again how focused is the core market, that's what we are funded for now in Sport England speak, and by that core market is the people that play the sport regularly, and maintaining their involvement. So, as I said, where a very cosmopolitan sport, 60 different nationalities, more than 60 different nationalities play our sport in this

country and are members of our organisation. So, when you say to them, we've got this version you can play on a smaller court, they say that's not handball. No, but it's a way in which we can introduce people to the sport that we couldn't otherwise do. The clubs are our key focus, so we're trying to work with them, to make them more sustainable. And I present this picture. We have clubs and we have teams. A team can be just a group of guys or girls that happen to be very good at handball, but are not in the least bit worried about having a committee, having a development programme, having juniors, having a male team if they're female or a female if they male. They just want to play their sport, and when it comes to delivery or development - no, as long as I can play my game on Saturday or Sunday, that's it. And if half a dozen of those leave the team folds. So that's a team. Then you have a club, that club might still only be one team, but its perhaps got a bigger outlook, or more often than not you are getting those that are starting to become … if you spoke to a British national and asked what a club looks like, he'll say it's got male and female teams, juniors, age ranges, it might even have a disability team, or you'll have recreational members as well real ones, it'll have a committee. We're starting to see more of those come. And again, there is that push and pull as we're trying to encourage our clubs to become more sustainable, because if they become more sustainable, then they can deliver more on our behalf. They can be the ones that going into schools, they can be the ones that provide the outlet for people that might be playing in those environments to come and play more formally. But you having to put on them things like safeguarding, governance, financial standing, and the governance code goes down to that level as well, and they don't get it. If you want to access Sport England funding, you've got to be set up in a certain way. Safeguarding, it's a terrible thing to say, but there are obviously still some countries where safeguarding and the welfare of kids in sport is not as high on the agenda as it is over here. So, when we saying people have got to go and do a safeguarding qualification, … [not clear] …, they say I know how to coach kids. Even if their way of coaching kids is not the way we expect kids to be coached. So, encouraging them to do so is a challenge, and the only way is to say you do what you do but you can't do it with us. You won't be able to access any funding. We've had some people walk away … There are some people within our membership who feel purely that the governing body should just be giving them money to function, literally to the extent of giving them money so that they can put petrol in the van, so they can take the team to the game. That's the governing body's role, and we just have to say no that's not what we're there for, and if you think that it is then you're in the wrong sport and you're in the wrong environment, because they may have been used to state handouts in the past.

TH: *Talent development and the player pathway then?*

DM: We've seen, and again I think this is a result of the work that we've done on the development side enticing schools and encouraging clubs to develop junior sections. In our Premier league they have to have junior teams competing in our junior league. Consequently, there are more youngsters playing. Therefore, we are identifying more talent, or potentially talented

youngsters. Our regional academy structure has grown over the five years I've been here. We started with two regional academies, we now have five. We have 16 boys and 16 girls in each of those, so 160 players. Very early on in our life, and I mean that in the short lifespan that we've been here and got involved in the AASE programme, the Advanced Apprenticeship for Sporting of Excellence, to give us and AASE more funding, would be another level, because its above the regional academies to keep that group together, and we have 80 young players on that programme. So, 40 new ones coming in each year out of the regional academy structure. So, we've been able to see that talent pathway grow, and we have squads going away not as England teams, we call them futures, but in competitions, they're not sanctioned, they're not EHF competitions. They might be the generations cup, so a handball event in Denmark. Another group went to the Paris world games, so they get an opportunity to play at a higher level in their age groups. So, we've seen that grow and what we've also maintained, and had to maintain even though we've seen an increase in our talent pathway funding from Sport England in this funding cycle. We've maintained and are looking to grow the AASE programme, which is changing now and looking to become a diploma in sporting excellence from September. We have still maintained a high level of self-funding, so even within our regional academy structures, the parents are paying an amount of money each year for their children to be part of that programme. We have to, there's no other way of doing it, because they're going to have to get use to that when they go into the British pathway, where it's all self-funded because there is no funding from an outside agency. As a challenge there then when we talk about maintaining that talent pathway development, is the fact that because we are now running at a British level, 5 squads, men's and women's seniors and three aged squads, under 18, under 20 and under 21. But fairly recently there was nothing happening, and when you're in primary schools talking to the kids and saying you have a chance to play in the England set-up, to them that's fantastic because to them under 16 is ancient, but for 16 year olds they go so where's the outlet, why am I bothering doing this if I don't get the chance to play for Great Britain or I might not the chance to go to an Olympics. So, very very difficult to maintain that pathway development solution, because some of them can't see an outlet, can't see a route through to possibly representing their country.

TH: *Ok, so partnership-working. Again, the impact that policy, the emphasis on partnership-working, and those strategies?*

DM: I think it's a natural evolution. I've always been a partnership person. There is no government policy promoting partnerships directly, there's an encouragement on it, but you know actually it's just a natural way of working.

TH: *But most of the, if not all of the policy documents have strongly emphasised the need for working in partnerships.*

DM: But there's nothing in there that says that you must ,and different to a governance policy, where the governance policy says you've got to meet, but I'm saying that on the basis that if a

governing body wants to survive long-term, it has to be prepared to open its doors, open its eyes, and open its arms to working with other people, because you can't do it all. We've always said, we can't do it all because of the size that we are, we don't need to do it all, we actually don't want to do it all. Ours has not been forced by government policy, it's actually been supported by government policy. We've welcomed it. The strategies documents that I've produced have always been written on the basis of being able to give to other people a way in which they can very quickly understand what it is we do, and then identify how that might be able to work with us. I'm not saying this is everything that we do, but this is what we would like to do, how can you help us. Again, we're not saying to you as a partner you have to do it all. That are certain elements you can do, whether its delivering help to our talent pathway, or delivering the schools competition, or work in a certain area for us for the development stuff, we want to hear from you, and we want to work with you.

TH: *I understand exactly what you're saying, but in terms of the partners that you work with, is that purely based on what you can do for each other, or is there a higher element to that, for example, I know you do a lot of work with StreetGames. Do you work with StreetGames within a symbiotic relationship?*

DM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, without a doubt.

TH: *But also do you work with them because you also believe in what they are doing? What makes that good fit?*

DM: I don't think we would work with anybody that we didn't feel represented what would want to see within sport at various different levels. Yes, we have a long-term relationship with StreetGames. With the fantastic work they do, what do we add, another string to their bow, another sport they can offer that might be attracted to a particular demographic of youngsters they're working with, within their areas of focus. What do they offer to us, and outlet, they offer the reach that we can't, because they're already out there delivering it. Why would we want to try and replicate that, there's no point. So, they offer us an extension to our delivery arm. But fundamentally, sitting above that we believe in the power of sport. We talked a while ago about sports ability to do more than just be about sport, and that element of engaging with hard to reach groups, disenfranchised youths, people that maybe don't get access to sport because they can't afford to travel, they get it on their doorstep. Why would we not want to be part of that.

TH: *Do you think that's what binds everything together, Sport England, government, NGBs, StreetGames?*

DM: People would love to think that's in there. Am I naïve or old-school enough to think its in there somewhere. There are always those bits where they say I'm going to work with you because you'll make me more money, I want to work with you because you can raise my profile. But I'll still like to think there are enough principles within it that people would feel, right I'm going to

work with you because you represent how we want to be represented. I want to work with you because I agree with your objectives, I agree with your aims. But also the audience that you are working with are the audience that we want to work with. So, if you've already got traction there and are getting support and getting recognition, and are obviously doing something right, and therefore should be an organisation that we would want to partner with.

TH: *But are you seeing that in terms of partnerships that you're working with?*

DM: Yes, I am, because I think that people still, fundamentally, people still want to work with people like them, want to work with people that represent how they want to be represented. There is that, as you say, symbiotic relationship. Just that fact that we're similar entities that each can offer the other a real benefit from being in partnership.

TH: *So, there are a number of synergies between each other.*

DM: Yeah, but also, I think its recognising, let's take StreetGames for instance, they have a wish to deliver more sport to young people in disadvantaged areas, fundamentally, with little access to sport. That's what they want to do. So, they need a variety of offers, and therefore a variety of sports, to make that offer attractive. We want to see more people playing handball, fundamentally, and as a next bit if we're seeing more people being active, great. More people active in handball, superb. They've already got the delivery arms, they've already got the people on the ground in those areas, delivering their sport offer. I don't have that. Won't they don't have is the training, the knowledge and the experience of handball. We have. If we can give them that, they can give us the access. They get more strings to they're bow, they can attract more people into their programmes, makes them more attractive to funding pots, keeps them going. We benefit because they've got a bigger delivery capacity. Fantastic. But also, the fact that central to their core is this more young people playing sport, sits with our focus, with our strategy of more young people playing handball.

TH: *The interesting thing there is that StreetGames consider themselves a social institution, but also consider NGBs to be a social institution.*

DM: As I said before, the fact is that they may well be and are more likely going to be engaging with youngsters, for who sport is a means to an end, it's a means to meet with his mates. But also, there are a lot of kids who through StreetGames programmes, get into elite pathways. So, yes, we're a social institution, and so are they, because sport is a naturally sociable activity, and so has a variety of strings.

TH: *So, you could argue that as England Handball wear many hats, in terms of working with the educational sector, working within the health sector, working in the sport policy sector, or the sports sector, equally it could be considered a membership organisation, a social organisation*

DM: Yep, educational organisation.

TH: *Educational organisation, and so on and so forth. I wonder if that's where all the challenges are?*

DM: We are so many things

TH: *You are so many things, and no-one quite knows where you should be?*

DM: What I would say is that's where the partnership bit comes the fore,

TH: *Because you have that flexibility?*

DM: Yeah, because I could say, yes, we are a social institution, but actually partners like StreetGames, provide our social institution, on our behalf. We're an education institution, but actually it's our working partnerships with schools, colleges and universities that makes us an educational institution. Not solely us, but the partners that we work with provide that element.

TH: *That's really interesting, but it certainly makes it very complex.*

DM: Without a doubt, and that's why for most if not all governing bodies, *no* is a dirty word. They don't like saying no. Especially when it comes to having people coming to play your sport or wanting to play your sport. You don't like turning them down. But sometimes you've got to say no, we don't have the capacity to deal with that, we don't the ability to deliver that. But that's where a lot of self-organising is, table tennis for example, and the whole Ping thing, and also the pop-up nets. When I worked with table tennis, when I was at Sport England, I said that's your soft way of saying no. He looked at me sideways and said what do you mean that's the soft way of saying no, I said you can go to someone and say no we can't help you out at the moment, but actually, look here's a product – stretch a net across a table and play table tennis now. There's an opportunity for you that's not going to take any resource out of me, but you can still play. And if you get set up and start to run, we can plug you into the local council. So that self-organising environment, great thing for us. Again, companies organising corporate sport, going mammoth down in London organising corporate leagues, in different sports – great. Why not deliver handball, why not deliver volleyball.

TH: *Have you spoken to them?*

DM: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Handball's in one of the big corporate games down in Essex.

TH: *So, its finding those niche markets, those crevasses where you can …*

DM: Shoehorn yourself in.

TH: *… shoehorn yourself in, and move yourself forward.*

DM: The key to that is giving somebody something simple to deliver. If you get in there and you go, you've got to do all of this, they'll go forget it, it's too much effort. So, we developed Try Handball, and even we're starting to think now that could be the model that people just use to

play the sport, they don't want to play full contact, they want to play mixed, they want to throw a ball around, they want to do a touch and tag version, and they want to do it on a smaller court. So that's no longer trying it, its playing it. So, we might have to think of a different name for it.

TH: *So, what's your view of the current government strategy?*

DM: It now sits within a wider context, and Sport England should probably be named Physical Activity England, because its dealing with stuff wider than sport. I think sport is now but a small part of a broader look at health, wellbeing, and stuff like that. Arguably, there isn't a government strategy for sport. There is a strategy in which sport sits, but is there a strategy for sport? Other people might say otherwise, but I think Sport England has extracted their element from the broader government policy on sport and physical activity.

TH: *Is that suggesting that government still doesn't know what to do with sport?*

DM: I used to say when I worked in local authority leisure services, and I think it's still true today. Because leisure services is not a statutory requirement of local government, like education, health, roads, it's always struggled because, its struggled in the sense that, it often presents the best opportunity to engage with people, but when it comes to Election time, you often see the politicians out on the sports pitches or in the sports schemes, and stuff like that, having their photos taken. You don't often see them sat behind council tax desks, and stuff like that, but it's the easiest thing to cut, when it comes to, we're struggling for funding, what are we going to cut, it's the only area, and we've seen with the likes of Northampton in their £70m deficit in their budget, there are a lot of things that are going to suffer. But it's a very easy thing to pull, and say we don't have to provide it. If they pulled all that funding from education, there would be uproar. Well they couldn't do it. So, I think in that respect, does government know what to do with it, I wouldn't necessarily say that, I think it's more a question of its still a poorer relation to other areas of delivery. And the same, whilst we've seen the benefit of the primary premium funding for PE in primary schools, and the sugar tax, arguably, you're losing an outlet in secondary schools, less people doing PE, less time on the curriculum, because again it's not deemed as a core activity. Yet, you see all these studies that say that kids who are being physically active, so again you're looking at that wider context, because you use the word sport to some kids and it will turn them off, but being physically active, that helps them in their study. I always think there's more that could be done, but then I'm bias because its what I've always worked in, so I know the benefit of it for me as an individual, my family, other people that I work with, other people that I played with, and people that I played against, all that sort of stuff, so I always argue more can be done.

TH: *How do you see you your current relationship with Sport England, government, and I suppose more importantly for you, UK Sport?*

DM: With Sport England, we are a funded partner, I think that's about it. We will meet their requirements, we will tick the boxes that they want ticked from us, we will deliver want they want us to deliver, and that's about it, that's about it. The fact that they have taken away, they've had to I think through their own changes in structure, there is no longer the relationship management team, so I don't have a dedicated relationship manager with Sport England. So, there are people that look after governing bodies, but it's not style and structure, certainly when I worked there. There is no function for an NGB relationship manager at Sport England.

TH: *Has that happened since …*

DM: 2017. The change in focus, it's gone.

TH: *What does that tell you?*

DM: I think its recognising that we're not front and centre anymore. However, they've always said we want to go off and work with other organisations, work with other agencies, there's going to come a point when, they might not be able to work with other agencies because they're not set up in the right way. Because the thing we've always said is all the hoops that we've had to jump through as governing bodies, especially things like governance, in order to be able to access funding. So, you go off and work with an organisation that's not set up in the same way, then you're really casting us out. Then you're really saying we can work with those and we can give them up, and I'm not sure how many of those around to be able to work in the same way.

TH: *Is that suggesting Sport England might be creating their own demise, in that respect?*

DM: It's going to be a very interesting time for them, over the next four to six years, arguably with Jennie stepping down in November, and a new CEO coming in, comprehensive spending review coming up, reducing Lottery ticket sales.

TH: *Thinking about England handball influencing the direction of sports policy, to what extent do you think you have the capacity to influence sport policy, and in particular what areas?*

DM: Its very tricky as an individual organisation, and the size that we are. Can I go and demand a meeting with the Minister of Sport, and talk to her about sport policy on my own, probably not. Can I do it as a collective with other governing bodies, yes. What can we do then, I think we can continue to do what we do and showcase what we do, and continue to deliver our stuff to show to Sport England that we are a viable option for delivering to our core market, our key audience. The opportunity for us to, as an individual organisation, to directly influence government policy, is very limited. Not at our level, and not on our own. As I said before, with the CEO forum, and creating the state of the nation, as a collective, yes. That's about leaving your governing body hat, that's my England Handball hat, at the door, and going in as a representative of governing bodies as a whole, so I think it has the ability to do that.

TH: *Do you think that's the only means available to NGBs? Or medium size NGBs?*

DM: It's one of them, I think if you take the UK Sport consultation coming up. There's a public consultation that we can try to help, working with British Handball, to try and promote and encourage people to complete the survey. Again, at British Handball level, we've worked with ten other sports on the Every Sport Matters programme. We knew we wouldn't be able to do that on our own, but to work with a group, and that group has stayed together, which is good, the outcome would be an actual change. It's very difficult on the one hand to argue with the No compromise approach, but there's also a point at which you go, look how well we did at our Home Games, the first nation ever in the Games following hosting to exceed what they did as a host nation. There are many that would say, quit while you're ahead, because the only way is down, and therefore if you maintain that that is your focus, and the results don't keep coming, then people will view you as a failure. Whether that's UK Sport, whether that's the governing bodies, people will view you as a failure. However, you could argue if you say, right guys we've done that where we've come from since 1996, after Atlanta, to where we are now, we've shown what we can do, but we're going to change that tact slightly. We're not going all out to be 2nd, 3rd in the medals table, we still want to win medals. Nobody in the forum has said we don't want to win medals anymore, what we're saying is spread the load, spread it out a bit more. Recognise that actually, this is where team sports have suffered, what is you want, do you talk medals, or do you talk medallists. Because hockey won a gold, won a gold medal, or did they win 20 medals, or are there 20 medallists going around encouraging others. Charlotte du Jardin, who could argue about the medals she's won, one lady on one horse in a relatively elite sport, and all those arguments have been had, and you've got the whole basketball scenario. But because front and centre the focus is on, if you're not going to qualify for the Olympics and win medals, you're getting nothing, what do we do. As handball, what do we do? I've always maintained if that is your or was you primary focus and premise, why did you change that tact purely because you had the opportunity in the Home Games to have host nation status. If that was merely your principle, then you should have said, but you wouldn't have qualified for these Games had we not been hosting it, and you won't qualify for the next one, because you won't be getting any money, so were not giving you any money. But they let the genie out of the bottle, the gave basketball £11.5m, they gave us £3.5m, knowing full well, knowing full well, as we did, and I wasn't even there then, knowing full well that once London had finished, there would be no more money, because they would instantly go but Rio, you're not qualify so you don't get any money. Yeah, but hold on, you've asked us to go from nowhere to somewhere, and just sent us back to nowhere again, even to the extent of saying, you need to go now and look at what gymnastics or hockey did, when they weren't getting so much funding, and now they're qualifying for medals. Go away, and when you're in a position to qualify for the Olympics come back to talk to us about funding. You go, how the hell are we going to qualify for the Olympics with nothing, nothing. We're not saying we want millions, but we're saying in order to allow our teams, and players therefore, to compete, we need a small amount of funding. But if you say,

actually, the focus is not now the Olympics, is at a slightly lower level, arguably, in a sport like handball, it's harder to win the European Championships, than it is to win the Olympics. That's where the power base is.

TH: *Thank you very much David for your time.*

Appendix IX: '*Deep-Core' Beliefs of government and Sport England*

Policy Document	Government	SE
Raising the Game (1995)	Conservative National heritage-pride, enriches life quality, teaches valuable lifelong lessons. 'Arm's length' ideology. Elite athletes as role models (linked to participation).	'The benefits of sport are well rehearsed – national identity and prestige, community development, personal challenge, as well as economic and health benefits. Sport is a central element in the English way of life.' (SE, 1997, p.3) - a vital national asset. Evidence of elite athletes as role models (linked to participation)
A Sport Future for All (2000-2012) incorporating Game Plan (2002) and Playing to Win (2008)	New Labour Sport matters to all, national identity, feelgood factor, inspirational, health benefits. Best Value ethos.	Sport - essential part of the social, economic and environmental fabric of England.
Creating a Sporting habit for Life (2012)	Conservative-led Coalition 'Arm's length' ideology. Value for money ethos.	Strong scientific evidence – regular physically activity leads to healthier lives, reduces the risk of many chronic health conditions.
Sporting Future (2015)	Conservative Social, economic, health benefits. Government duty to ensure everyone benefits from power of sport. Arm's length principle across government agencies, especially sport, where specialist expertise is needed.	Sport - people business, can have an impact on almost every aspect of everyone's life; a force for social good.

Appendix X: '*Policy-Core' Beliefs of government and Sport England*

Policy Document	Government	SE
Raising the Game (1995)	Re-establish sport as one of the great pillars of education. Grassroots/Community/Elite sport not separate themes – represent a sporting continuum (school sport the most important element). **Playground to Podium:** (supporting sport from primary schools to elite level). **NGBs: Important in forging strong links with schools – a 'gap-bridging' role**	Sporting continuum is dynamic and flexible – not clear cut – requires the right sporting structures and opportunities. Sport does not exist in a vacuum - affected by wider social, economic and political context; impact is wide-ranging. Foster a healthier, more successful nation through increased investment in sport and active recreation. **Playground to the Podium: MORE people, MORE places and MORE medals** Synergy exists between government and SE sports policy - prioritising social exclusion, increasing participation, and achieving excellence, particularly in young people. **SE** - **Advocacy role** to place sport at the heart of government's agenda and foster relations with key players in the sector. **NGBs: Well-managed, are the right organisations to deliver many of the initiatives.**
A Sport Future for All (2000-2012) incorporating Game Plan (2002) and Playing to Win (2008)	Re-establish the UK as a world leading sporting nation. Mass participation/elite performance part of the same package. **Playground to Podium.** Clearer delineation of responsibilities - separation between the development of sport and physical activity: **PE and school sport (YST);** **Community sport (SE);** **Elite sport (UKS)** **NGBs:** '**Modernising Partnership' – central role as delivers of sport to achieve shared government objectives - to increase participation, and improve co-ordination and professionalism of sports' management.**	Increased government funding for sport recognises the value of sport at the highest levels. **SE** - the only national agency with a clear government mandate to champion of community sport. Aligned and joined-up delivery, nationally agreed shared priorities to meet government social, economic and health objectives. Establish England as the best sporting nation in the world. **Playground to the Podium: Start, Stay, Succeed (2002); Excel, Sustain, Grow (2008)** Reform and modernisation to achieve government's ambitious goals. Clarity of roles for the key bodies within the sporting landscape. **SE, UKS** – investors in sport rather than developers of sport. **NGBs: New working relationship focused on WSP 'outcomes' and delivering on objectives for their sports effectively and efficiently.**
Creating a Sporting habit for Life (2012)	Inspire a generation of young people to take up sport as a habit for life - Olympic Legacy from the Home Games. Sharper sense of direction and purpose across the entire sporting family. Active 'mixed economy' approach to funding and achieving objectives.	Taking sport out of its traditional structures and environments and into young people's lives. Active 'mixed economy' approach to funding and achieving objectives. Home Olympic Games - unique opportunity to convert inspiration into participation to create a tangible and transformative mass

	A new youth sport strategy - focused on reaching out to young people more effectively. Collective discipline of building on what works, and discarding what doesn't - successful organisations rewarded - financial sanctions for non-delivery of objectives. **UKS/SE/YST - unchanged** **NGBs: significant shift in focus - tasked with delivery of increased participation for young people under-16.**	participation legacy. **New Youth & Community Strategy –** focused on **h**elping more people acquire a sporting habit for life; create more opportunities for young people to play sport; nurture and develop talent, particularly the 14-25 age group. **UKS/SE/YST/NGBs - unchanged**
Sporting Future (2015)	Redefinition of sporting success - reflective of the broader value of engagement in sport and physical activity. Sustainable mixed funding model. Unity towards achieving clear, widely shared outcomes and a common set of goals. Largest gains and best value for public investment is a focus on the least active. **A new strategy for an active nation -** Cross-Whitehall shared commitment to delivery; Multiple roles within and across subsystems; **SE** - changed remit: measuring and supporting both sport and certain kinds of physical activity - responsible for young people from aged five to enable a greater impact across the whole sporting life. **NGBs: role reversion back to 'core market' and retention rather than increase in numbers.**	Alignment with government policy - focused on tackling inactivity where the gains for the individual and for society are greatest. An organisationally-neutral approach - not who you are but what you can do mind-set. Wider partnership-working and collaboration where there is genuine common purpose to deliver on desired outcomes. Tackling inactivity requires a **coalition** of partners. **Strategy for an Active Nation –** focused on more people from every background regularly and meaningfully engaging in sport and physical activity (from the age of 5) **SE** – an active role in brokering arrangements to help the sector become more productive and sustainable. **NGBs: change in emphasis for NGBs focused on their 'core-market' – those who regularly play sport.**

Appendix XI: '*Secondary-Aspects' of government and Sport England's belief system*

Policy Document	Government	SE
Raising the Game (1995)	Lottery/Exchequer grant funding conditional. Self-generated, time specific performance measurements/targets.	Funding directed towards two key objectives, fundamentally interrelated: more champions and more participation; Effective and realistic target setting on a sport by sport basis – NGB-led. 'Fit for purpose' assessments to receive public funds.
A Sport Future for All (2000-2012)	Closer focus on target setting - funding decisions/distribution linked to progress of sports/NGBs against delivery of government aims. Adoption of inclusive policies (social inclusion-deprivation). Monitoring and evaluation on the basis of earned autonomy - determined by compliance and contribution to contracted objectives.	Setting of targets based on hard evidence and rigorous measurement of progress against targets. 'Fit for purpose' assessments to receive public funds. NGBs monitored and evaluated via a mixture of self-assessment and independent analysis.
Creating a Sporting habit for Life (2012)	High standards of governance and financial control. Tougher performance management regime - strict payment-by-results system. Funding awarded on a competitive basis. Non-compliance with contracted objectives - funding made accessible to those offering strong business cases for increasing participation.	Strong leadership and good governance are the foundations of success for NGBs. Important principle in relationship with NGBs - investment of public money is a privilege not an entitlement. Funding awarded on a competitive basis to NGBs with strongest WSPs and a good record on delivery. Strong performance management through a payment-by-results system approach - rewarding success and penalising failure. Use of alternative open market options for fund re-distribution/allocation.
Sporting Future (2015)	More productive, sustainable and responsible sport sector - to reduce the over-reliance/resource-dependency on public subsidies. Government funding for sport and physical activity to go to organisations demonstrating ability to deliver on strategic outcomes - collaborative organisations best placed to access funding. Mandatory governance Code for all sports bodies seeking public funds – non-compliance resulting in financial sanctions.	Strongly agreed principle that funding decisions should be customer demand-led – evidence on customer need to be rigorously tested in all of investments. SE Board shared-belief for promoting the positive impact of sport and activity, and a commitment to overcome barriers to physical activity. Greater diversity at board level essential to represent society as a whole. Compliance with new Governance Code for Sport in the UK required for all funding agreements from 2017.

Appendix XII: *Examples of coalition partner beliefs, alignment and advocacy*

StreetGames	Beliefs, Alignment and Advocacy
Context	StreetGames promotes Doorstep Sport in disadvantaged communities - helps over 900 community organisations across the UK to take sport to the doorstep in disadvantaged communities.
Vision	To make doorstep sport the accepted way to change lives, sport and communities.
Mission	To deliver Doorstep Sport initiatives throughout the country, working together to change sport, change lives, and change communities; to see more disadvantaged young people taking part in sport and strengthen the sporting infrastructure of the UK.
Advocacy	Sport as an instrument of social change in disadvantaged communities; advocates doorstep sport: helping national and local policymakers to see the potential doorstep sport has to change lives and change communities.

Source: StreetGames available online from: http://www.streetgames.org/

Greenhouse Sport	Beliefs, Alignment and Advocacy
Context	A London-based charity that uses sport to engage young people and improve their life chances.
Vision	Every child has a fair chance to succeed.
Mission	To deliver intensive sports coaching and mentoring to help develop the Social, Thinking, Emotional and Physical (STEP) abilities of young people from disadvantaged communities.
Advocacy	Belief in the power of sport to: • Inspire young people to fulfil their true potential • Develop the Social, Thinking, Emotional and Physical (STEP) skills they will need to thrive in later life • Break down the barriers that are often associated with growing up in disadvantaged or vulnerable communities; Evidenced-based: • Reduces the risk of many chronic physical conditions (such as coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer, and obesity); • Combats mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety, and improves self-esteem; • A growing body of evidence to suggest a connection between being physically active and being more attentive in the classroom, leading to improved Developed Social, academic attainment.

Source: Greenhouse Sports, available online from: https://www.greenhousesports.org/

Youth Sports Trust	Beliefs, Alignment and Advocacy
Context	An independent UK charity devoted to changing young people's lives through sport.
Vision	To provide every young person with the opportunity to transform their lives through high quality PE and sport, and have a positive impact on their wellbeing, leadership and achievement.
Mission	To create a brighter future for all children and young people through the power of sport.
Advocacy	Every child has a right to access high quality physical education (PE), school sport and physical activity; Overwhelming evidence to demonstrate the power that PE and school sport has to change young people's lives; unlocking their potential, helping them to be healthy and happy, ultimately going on to lead successful lives and positively contribute to society.

Source: YST, available from: https://www.youthsporttrust.org/

County Sports Partnerships	Beliefs, Alignment and Advocacy
Context	A nationwide network of 44 CSPs - committed to improving Lives by Growing Grassroots Sport and Physical Activity.
Vision	An active lifestyle is the social norm for everyone.
Mission	Transforming lives through sport and physical activity.
Advocacy	Using the power of sport & physical activity for social good; Raising the profile of sport & physical activity through innovative local and national promotional campaigns.

Source: CSP Network, available online from: http://www.cspnetwork.org/