



This PhD study originated from three issues concerning sport policy factors leading to international sporting success. A theoretical issue appeared because of a lack of an empirically grounded, coherent theory on the factors determining international sporting success. A methodological issue was perceived because of the complexity of international comparative research and the lack of an appropriate methodology to compare nations. A third issue addresses policy makers as sport authorities worldwide spend large sums of money in the quest for superior sport performance, although relatively little is known of the reason why some nations excel in specific sporting events. Therefore it is difficult to make rational allocations and long-term planning decisions about the sport delivery system.

To bridge this identified gap, this dissertation first developed a theory on sport policy factors leading to international sporting success. A comprehensive literature review and results of two preliminary researchers resulted in the introduction and inclusion of a range of success indicators under nine key sport policy dimensions or “pillars”.

This theoretical model was tested in an empirical environment, in order to operationalise critical success indicators into measurable criteria, to achieve insight into the definition of standards for evaluation and to develop a scoring system. Furthermore a methodology was developed to measure both absolute and relative (i.e. controlling for macro-variables) success. This study presents the results of an international comparison of elite sports policies and the elite sport climate in six nations: Belgium (separated by Flanders and Wallony), Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, United Kingdom . Over 100 criteria have been measured, resulting in a traffic light for each pillar and involving over 1,400 athletes, coaches and performance directors in the different nations.

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