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The organisational change of the Taiwan Go association in response to the Sportization of Go

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Abstract

This study attempted to identify the organizational change of the Taiwan Go Association in response to the Sportization of Go. The causes, obstacles, circumstance and future direction of the Go Association under such context are discussed. The data were collected through document analysis, field observation and interviews. The Sportization of the Go Association was motivated by the stress of competitive achievement, Go being listed in the events of Asian Games and included in the higher education recommendation for elite athlete, but it also encountered external and internal obstacles. The Sportization of the Go Association would have a positive effect on realizing the current organizational goals while the substantial outcomes of the Go Association as a sport organization depend on whether or not the future goals could be achieved.

Keywords: Organizational behaviour, organizational change, qualitative research

1. Introduction

The 'Sportization of Go' indicates the dynamic progress of the Go transforming into a sporting event. After being officially listed in the 2010 Asian Games, Go has attracted more attention within Taiwan. As a board games, Go is emphasized at a time when mind sport activities are prominent (Ministry of Education, 2008) [23]. However, whether Go can be called a sport remains unclear. Hsu (2006) [11] considered board games as merely games but not sports. Wang & Sun (2007) [27] proposed the idea of purifying sport to exclude Go from the sporting domain. Nonetheless, Wang (2002) [28] and Yih (1998) [33] argued that the definition of sport is so diverse that Go should be included as a sporting event. In fact, even in China, where Go was first advocated to become a sport, there were arguments regarding the classification of Go for decades, and such arguments were present in Korea as well.

The examination on the current situation of Go may have helped to further understand the attitude and trend on its classification while the issue remained controversial. China started to view Go as a sport and listed it in the official events of the National Games. However, China did not propose the inclusion of Go into international competitive sports arena until 1990 (Dai, 2007) [5]. After a decade of intense efforts, Go was finally officially listed as an event in the 2010 Asian Games. Additionally, Go is viewed as a sport in Russia, Ukraine, Czech Republic and Korea. The Korean Go Association became a member of the Korea Sports Council (Ho, 2007; Jakovic, 2001; Park, 2006; Song, 2004; Xiang & Sun, 2004) [24, 26, 32]. The International Go Federation (IGF) became an official member of the international sports federation, Sport Accord. Go is expected to be the next sporting event recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) after Chess. There were 69 countries that participated in the 2008 World Amateur Go Tournament held by the IGF. There were also 62 countries that participated in Go events in the first World Intelligence Competition, which suggested that the concept of Go as a sport is gradually being accepted. In Taiwan, the Ministry of Education (MOE) adopted Go as a sport, so elite Go players could apply for the Special Admission for Athletes (Ministry of Education, 2008) [23]. Recently, the Sport Affair Council (SAC) in Taiwan also identified Go as a sporting event. Clearly, the current development of Go in Taiwan is sports-orientated and the Go Association would also encounter the organizational change accordingly.

Any organizational change is the transition of the organization for its survival or development in which the outcome would directly influence the development of the organization (Cummings & Worley, 2005; Robbins, 2001) [4].

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Wu and Lin (1997) argued that the organizational change would inevitably lead to adaptation of the changing environment towards development. The Go Association would have to face an organizational change in order to connect with international Go organizations for future development with the Sportization of Go. Lewin (1951) proposed the force field theory of change, which states that the organizational change resulting from the interaction between resistances and motivations would only occur when the motivational force is stronger than the resistance force. Gresov, Haveman and Oliva (1993) considered the motivation of organizational change to be a result of the effects of external environment and major incidents while the resistance is thought to be a result of organizational inertia. Chang (2004) analyzed the transitions of sports associations in Taiwan and suggested that policy changes would have a direct impact on the existing organizational inertia causing the transition. Similarly, with the impact of Sportization, the organizational change of the Go Association will occur even though the existing inertia of the Go Association plays a negative role. Robbins (2001) considered the major challenge of organizational change to be the resistance of certain members in the organization. Leavitt and Bahrami (1988) [17] also pointed out that the most difficult yet crucial factor is the change in members. Additionally, the obstacles surrounding organizational change could also come from outside of the organization. Malone (2001) [20] and Miller (1998) [22] suggested that the external personnel and other organizations that might be influenced by the change of organization would also be obstacles of change. Therefore, other than the internal resistance within the Go Association, the players, general participants or the sports organizations could all be obstacles to organizational change due to their vulnerability.

In the theory of organizational change, the essence, obstacle and motives are the core concerns (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Dent & Goldberg, 1999) [6, 1]. Lewin's (1951) definitions of *defrost*, *proceed* and *re-defrost* in the force field theory of change covered the discussions on cause, obstacle, circumstance and direction of organizational change. Therefore, the current study will adopt this paradigm to explore the organizational change of the Go Association. There are few studies on individual sports associations.

1.1 Purpose of Research

Identifying the organizational change of the Go Association through discussion of the causes, obstacles, circumstance and its future under such context. The results could also be used as a reference for other associations that encountered similar issues, such as Chinese Chess, Bridge and E-sports. Moreover, Go is relatively unfamiliar to the sports domain; the Sportization and organizational change would be a breakthrough of the existing concepts.

2. Methods

The organizational change of the Go Association cannot be reflected simply by a quantitative study. Qualitative research is not limited and can make integral descriptions, therefore furthering the understanding and phenomena studied. It would also connect the researcher with the objects in a meaningful way (Wu, 1999) [30]. Hence, the study adopted qualitative research methods, which included field observation, interviews and document analysis.

2.1 Instrument

2.1.1 Researchers

The first author was responsible for interviews, data

collection and analysis. The first author studied the 'qualitative studies' courses in both master and doctoral programs and was familiar with qualitative research theories. Also, the first author had a fondness for Go and observed its domestic and international development with an in-depth understanding of the systems and dynamics of the Go organizations in Taiwan. Furthermore, the other authors had experience in 'qualitative studies' through lectures and courses in master as well as doctoral programs. The authors were therefore well versed in the methodologies of qualitative analysis.

2.1.2 Pens, paper and recorder

The first author documented meaningful information with a pen and paper while conducting the field observations. The reflections on these observations were then documented afterwards. The author wrote down meaningful information during the interview and documented feedback thereafter. Furthermore, the interviews were recorded with the interviewees' consent.

2.2 Procedures

The field observations were performed 7 times. The interviewees were 11 practitioners who engaged in or had in-depth understanding of sports organizations. After preliminary data collected from literature, documents, field observations and interviews, the second interview focused on the contradictive or ambiguous parts. Interviewees were guaranteed anonymity in accordance to research ethics in order to avoid any problems that may arise.

2.3 Participants

The field observation made in this study included council members of Go competitions and Go related conferences. The observations emphasized the implemental measures of the Go Association, the interactions among and feedback from the Go Association, Go coaches and players as well as the discussions made during assemblies and conferences. The interviewees included insightful scholars on sports organizations, members of the Go Association, Go players as well as official sports administrators. The documents collected included literature regarding the issues of Sportization of Go, such as international and domestic Go circumstances, organizational development, Go games and the counselling for advancing to higher education.

Data analysis and Reliability

The sources of data were the interview records, field observation notes and documented literature. The authors combined the arguments by Bryman and Burgess (1999) [2] and Flick (2002) [7]. The process of data analysis was as follows. First, all the information was reviewed to form the preliminary concepts. Meaningful paragraphs were highlighted and the main concept was decomposed based on the phrases or behaviours related to the topic. The paragraphs were divided and coded into sub-units. Codes with identical characters would form certain catalogues to be clearly defined, while the core concepts emerged from different catalogues used to describe the context of the organizational change of the Go Association. In order to enhance the reliabilities of the methods and data, triangulation was adopted. The authors coded and generalized the information, performed round robin tests and discussed any inconsistencies. Re-coding or re-generalizing was conducted after obtaining a consensus. For those still unclear after the discussion, a second round of interviews is conducted to ensure reliability.

3. Results

The results were presented in four parts: causes, obstacles,

circumstance and future direction of the organizational change (Figure 1).

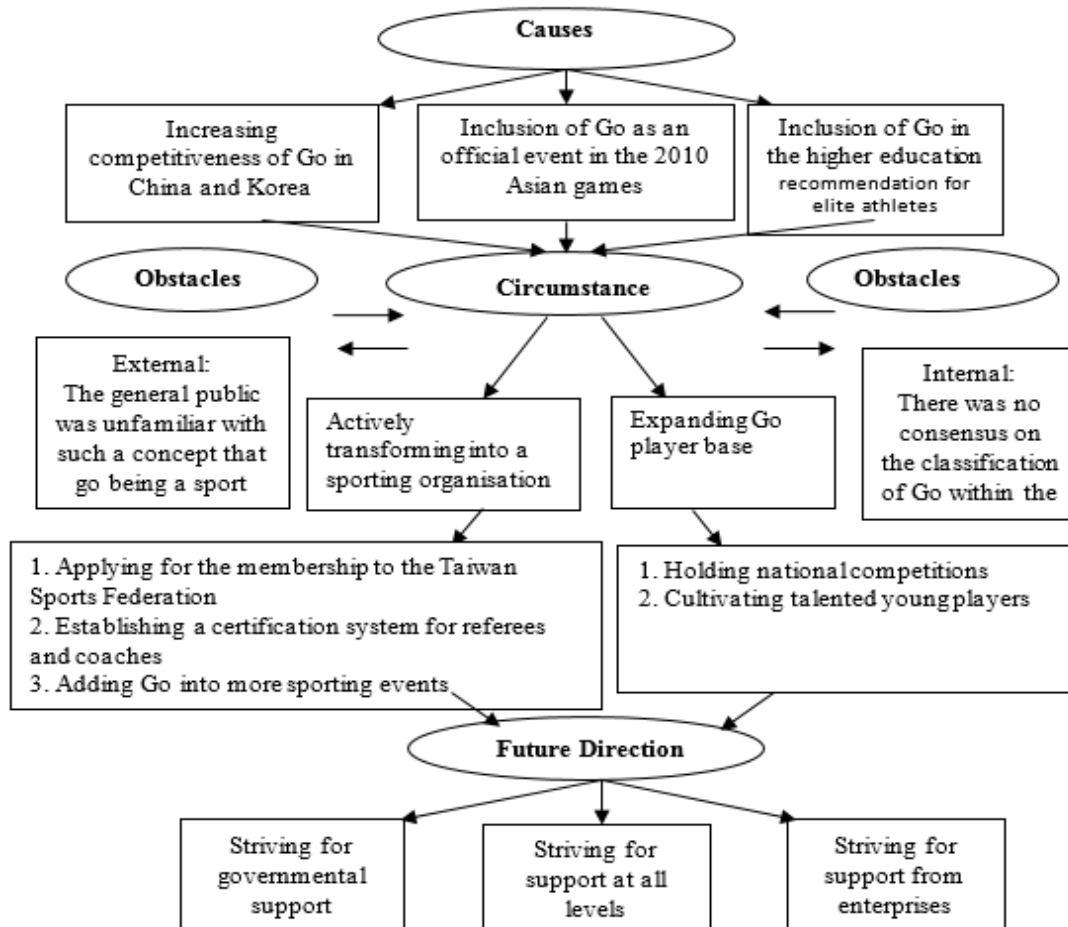


Fig 1: The organizational change of Go Association

3.1 The causes of organizational change within the Go Association

3.1.1 Increasing competitiveness of Go in China and Korea

Go originated from China but gained popularity in Japan. Japan viewed Go as a competitive cultural activity, deeply affecting its development in Taiwan. Therefore, the Go Association was inclined to reorient itself as a cultural organization in Taiwan. The international achievements of Go players from China and Korea surpasses those of Japanese Go players. The key is that both China and Korea view Go as a sport where training and cultivation of Go players are conducted as rigorously as those of athletes.

3.1.2 Inclusion of Go as an official event in the 2010 Asian games

China attempted to include Go an official event in the 2006 Asian Games. However, Go was only popular in Northeast Asian countries; therefore, the proposal did not pass with the objections from the host country, Qatar. In mid-2007, China again proposed to include Go as an official event in the 2010 Asian Games, with the support of other Asian countries such as Japan and Korea. Therefore, Go had a chance to be entered into the Asian Games. The interviewee considered the Sportization of Go to be an international trend. The association of individual sporting events in the Asian Games tended to receive more attention from the government. The shift from Council for Cultural Affairs to Sports Affairs Council would provide a better chance for the Go Association

to compete for resources, which could also enhance the Sportization of organization. One interviewee mentioned, *'The support from Council of Cultural Affairs was not much, and the chance for getting the annual subsidy would be higher after switching to the Council of Sports Affairs.'*

3.1.3 Inclusion of Go in the higher education recommendation for elite athletes

The Taiwan MOE hosted the first Go Championship for students in 2008. The top 8 senior high school players were qualified to apply for the recommendation for higher education as elite athletes according to the 'Higher Education Counselling for Elite Athletes'. The young Go players and their parents supported the Sportization of Go since it would give players a chance to enter top universities through Go achievement. One interviewee said, *'I am fully supporting it! It is a great chance, no one would say no to that.'*

3.2 Obstacles for the organizational change of the Go Association

3.2.1 External obstacles

The general public was unfamiliar with such a concept that Go being a sport. The interviewees from the Go Association suggested that not all sports practitioners would identify Go as sport because of the disagreement on the classification of Go and the concerns on resource reallocation. As such, the impression of the public on the classification of Go and the doubts of sports practitioners were both external obstacles for the organizational changes of the Go Association.

3.2.2 Internal obstacles

From the observations of assemblies and Go games, it is clear that there was no consensus on the classification of Go within the members. The older generation was influenced by the Japanese concept and disagreed with its transformation into a sporting organization. The observations were as follows: *'A participant believed that Go was a kind of cultural activity and so did Japan.'* Moreover, parents of some Go players considered Go as a noble, cultural or artistic activity, comparable to glorious music rather than a lowly sport.

3.3 Circumstance of the organizational change of the Go Association

3.3.1 Actively transforming into a sporting organization - Applying for the membership to the Taiwan Sports Federation

One of the most crucial indicators of the Go Association's transformation into a sporting organization was its application to join the Taiwan Sports Federation. According to the regulation, there needed to be Go Committees in more than half of the cities in Taiwan before the Go Association could be included in the Taiwan Sports Federation. The Go Association is currently qualified to join the Taiwan Sports Federation. One interviewee said: *'We have all the prerequisites now, so it shouldn't be a problem for us to join the Taiwan Sports Federation.'*

3.3.2 Actively transforming into a sporting organization - Establishing a certification system for referees and coaches

There was an existing certification system for referees and coaches adopted by the Go Association. However, the issuing standard of the certification system was inconsistent with the regulations of the Taiwan Sports Federation. For this reason, the Go Association planned to revoke the current certificates and adopt the Taiwan Sports Federation standards. Nonetheless, regarding issues such as the assembly, conference and competition scene, there were two standpoints. The objectors reasoned that some members were not familiar with the new qualification and the potential damage to the existing rights. The observations were as follows: *'Two coaches disagreed with current means and thought it as a contempt for the general public.'*; *'one player directly indicated that the Go Association was just meddling.'*

3.3.3 Actively transforming into a sporting organization- Adding Go into more sporting events

The Go Association eagerly strived for the addition of Go into other large sporting events, for instance, the National Games, University Games and Middle School Games. Yet each large game now tended to be simplified which made it more difficult for Go to be listed as one of the events. Therefore, the Go Association's primary target was less difficult local sporting games, which would gradually promote Go's inclusion into larger sporting events such as the National Games.

3.3.4 Expanding Go player base - Holding national competitions

Go games have less field and equipment limitations. They also have a low financial and human resource cost and no age restriction. The difficulty for holding large Go games was relatively lower than other sports. According to the records, there had been 78 Go games a year held by the Go Association in Taiwan. Participation ranged from 500 to 3000

for each game. The Go Association had surpassed the original objective of promoting 'games on every week'.

3.3.5 Expanding Go player base - Cultivating talented young players

Go players worked with Go coaches, creating a vertical master-apprentice relationship. Recently, there had been more diverse training programs through the advocacy of the Go Association, such as the Go-specialized classes in junior and senior high schools. Interviewees considered the most distinct differences to be the training style shift into long-hours and intense professional training. Additionally, the Go Association arranged for players to participate in overseas Go training. For players who could not take a leave of absence from school, the Go Association established a long distance teaching model led by top professional players over the Internet.

3.4 Future direction of the organizational change of the Go Association

3.4.1 Striving for governmental support

The Taiwan MOE initiated programs under the context of Sportization of Go with an enormous budget for promotion. The programs included hosting Go Championships on campuses, arranging training workshops for Go coaches, awarding Go clubs on campus and creating Go websites. The Go Association expected consistent support from MOR during its development and future. An interviewee mentioned, *'the most important direction for the Go Association was facilitating the continuous support and policies of the government.'*

3.4.2 Striving for school support at all levels

There were 16 universities in Taiwan offering admission and scholarships to go players. However, the number of universities was less than expected. The Go Association recruited more universities by hosting inter-campus Go championships once a sufficient number of schools participated. Furthermore, the Go Association also planned to work with school administrations at all levels to establish Go clubs, provide after-school Go programs and encourage teachers to participate in Go instruction workshops. In conclusion, the go Association sought support from primary schools, junior high schools, senior high schools and universities in Taiwan.

3.4.3 Striving for support from enterprises

The current funds of the Go Association came from member donations. Recently, activities of the association consistently increased in response to the Sportization of Go. However, the funds remained limited and often insufficient. The Go Association turned to businesses for support. An interviewee suggested that the association needed to develop more effective means of attracting private sponsors and involvement within the industry for substantial supports. Increasing funds would enhance participation among relevant businesses and further improve the organizational strength and prospects of the Go Association.

4. Discussion

The causes of organizational change of the Go Association were 'increase in the competitiveness on Go in China and Korea', 'inclusion of Go as an official event of 2010 Asian games', and 'inclusion of Go in the higher education recommendation for elite athletes'. Indeed, the successful

Sportization of Go in China and Korea were highly influential. For instance, Go players in Hong Kong and North Korea now trained as athletes (Park, 2006; Lam & Chang, 2005) ^[24, 16]. There were also calls for change in Japan due to their declining achievements in international Go games (Lai & Lee, 2007) ^[14]. The Go Association in Taiwan should follow the athletic training patterns to catch up with the international scene. The Sports Affairs Council handled the regulations and player selections within the Asian Games. The Go Association could strive for more potential resources as an individual sport association (e.g. benefits from sports lottery after it was recognized by the Sports Affairs Council). Furthermore, education was a concern for many young players and their parents. The MOE was responsible for recognition of higher education recommendations for athletes, which would directly influence Go's development. Consequently, the Go Association would stimulate the organizational change indirectly under the context of Sportization of Go.

The external obstacles to the Sportization of Go were conflicts with the existing perception of Go, and concern of some sport practitioners about Go can be recognized as a sport and resource reallocation. Such a perception also emerged in China and Korea. Wang and Sun (2007) ^[27] considered the appeal of Go was not in line with other sports. The application of Korean Go Association to be member of the Korea Sports Council was also rejected on the basis of such attributive and resource distribution reasons (Kwon, Hwang, Lee, & Yun, 2005; Park, 2002) ^[25, 13]. This created some counter ideas within the Go circle, which was also negatively influenced the organizational change of the Go Association. Such internal obstacles differed among countries. Players in Eastern European countries received better compensation and therefore tended to support change within their countries (Jankovic, 2001) ^[12]. US players were mostly amateurs and Go was considered a recreational activity hence the lack of motivation to change from the U.S. Go Association (Laird, 2001) ^[15]. As Go is viewed as a cultural activity in Japan, the trend towards sportising is relatively difficult to identify (Lai & Lee, 2007) ^[14]. These results indicated that the impression of Go within Taiwan is deeply affected by Japan. Some members of the Go Association still considered Go to be a cultural activity while some parents of the younger players had both positive and negative notions on the direction of the Go Association's transformation into a sporting organization.

The Go Association in Taiwan was previously recognized as a cultural organization. However, while Go related organizations in China and Korea received support from their government (Ho, 2007; Kwon, Hwang, Lee, and Yun, 2005) ^[13], there was no significant assistance from the Taiwan Council of Cultural Affairs. Lai and Lee (2007) ^[14] directly indicated that the ignorance of Go by the Taiwan Council of Cultural Affairs negatively affected the motivations of talented young players. The results of the present study stated that the circumstances of the organizational change of the Go Association were 'actively transforming to a sport organization' as well as 'expanding Go player base'. After becoming an individual sporting organization, the Go Association would have the opportunity to receive assistance from sports-related governmental agencies. As a result, the Go Association believed that the current circumstances of the organizational change would have positive effects.

The future direction, 'Striving for support from the government support, from schools at all levels, and from

enterprises', of the association is key as to whether or not there would be substantial changes after the organizational transformation. Many sports have seized developmental opportunities and have grown tremendously; for example, after Taiwan won the gold medal in Taekwondo in 2004 Olympic Games, the Taiwan government initiated many Taekwondo related policies, thereby promoting Taekwondo (Lin, Tsai, & Lai, 2008) ^[19]; The reason why Tchoukball was so successful and maintained steady development in Taiwan was because of support from all school levels at the early stage (Huang, 2002) ^[10]. Golf also received substantial support from businesses leading to the advancement of player competitiveness, participation and popularization (Wu & Yang, 2005; Ma, 2003) ^[31]. To sum it up, government, schools and businesses were integral in the development of other sports. Therefore, the Go Association would be even better developed after receiving such support. In other words, the outcomes of organizational changes within the association would be determined by whether the future goals are achievable.

5. Recommendations

The greatest obstacle for the organizational change of Go Association was the disagreement on its classification. The association tended to handle this issue passively. Therefore, this study suggests that the Go Association form a consensus among its members through rational analysis and discussions with reference to the success of the Go Association in Korea. The ideas and expected outcomes of organizational change should be presented to the public through media, magazines and conferences in order to eliminate doubt. Furthermore, influential Go related international organizations (e.g. International GO Federation, IGF; International Mind Sports Association, IMSA) are dominated by Japan, Korea and China. The competitiveness of Go in Taiwan is at an all-time high though the Go Association is still unable to receive proportional representation among the international organizations mentioned above. Thus, the Go Association also needs to aim for important positions within international Go related organizations.

As for future studies, this study provided a brief description on the Sportization of Go, though the focus of the study was not the classification of Go. Sportization of Go has become a trend yet further discussion on the connection between Go and sports should be made. Future studies could emphasize the classification of Go. How the international authorities, such as the IOC and Sport Accord define a sporting event and grant membership should be explored. Future studies could also identify the Sportization of Go or the change of Go organizations in other countries, or even the Sportization of similar activities such as Chinese chess, Chess, Bridge and E-sports.

6. Conclusions

The organizational change of the Go Association was affected by competitive pressure, the Asian Games and higher education admission. Furthermore, the organizational change faced both external obstacles formed by social perception and sport practitioner doubts as well as internal obstacles from the parents of the young players. Currently, the Sportization of the association would attract more resources; however, the substantial outcome of the organizational change will be determined by achievement of the three major goals in the future.

7. Authors' Contributions

I-Wei Shang designed the study and coded the ***. Wei-Ting Hsu conducted the analysis. I-Wei Shang drafted the manuscript and approved the final submission. Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree with the order of presentation of the authors.

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