

Ethical Issues Creating Moral Dilemmas in Sports Management

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to generate discourse for rational application of the principles of ethics to the moral programs affecting sports business and provides suggestions to such issues that fall well below accepted levels but which can be of significant benefit to all businesses and can also be applied systematically or with varying consistencies in matters of critical moral uncertainties. At the onset it has been stressed that sports managers are subjected to pressure that force them to take decisions that influence the moral reasoning of sports participants. Three ethical issues were presented and examined concerning situations of moral dilemma, followed by approaches in business ethics based on some theories. A conclusion was finally drawn with some recommendations to the effect that mans personal code of behaviour should be that of sincerity and honesty as the ethical standard of the organisation. It must be adorned with good policy governing the relationship with all their stake holders. By this the diminishing image of coaches and sports managers can be recovered.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years the business ethics literature has exploded in both volume and importance, Because of sheer volume and diversity of this literature, the need to provide focus and clarity to the area has become imperative. Developing a foundation for ethical analysis. First requires an understanding of the concepts of morality and ethics. Morality has been defined as the special set of values that frame the absolute limitations on behaviour. It may include such basic rules such as " don't steal" (normal norms) as well as the more generalised system of duties and obligations (moral principles)

Solomon and Hansdon (1983) defined morality as an enduring belief that guides personal behaviour and shapes personal goals, and characterised, two types of values. Instrumental values such as ambition, courage and honesty which are seen as the means to terminal values like freedom, happiness and security. Beauchamp and Bowie (1988) place emphasis on morality as concerned with "good or bad" or "right or wrong" character actions within the context of social customs and morals of any particular culture. They also stress the idea that morality is based on impartial considerations and that individuals cannot

legitimately create their own moral codes. According to Hornby, (2010) in the Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary of International Standard Edition, morality is a principle concerned with right and wrong or good and bad behaviour.

Beauchamp and Bowie, (1988) posited that ethics is the study of morality; it involves the justification and application of moral standards and principles. Jordan, et al (2004) contended that in society today there is a great concern about the moral and ethical conduct of those in leadership, particularly rules violation. Managers are challenged to have more imagination and the courage to do the right thing. We must understand that ethical and unethical conduct is the product of a complex combination of influences. Based on unique personality characteristics, values and moral principles that brings about leaning towards or away from ethical behaviour. Critical issues confront the sport manager; such issues as argued are not applied systematically or with any consistency in matters of moral certainty. Others observe that the current ethical climate in organisations falls well below acceptable levels, leaving the public with serious doubts about how much trust can be placed in basic social institutions. Ethical conduct is expected from management and businesses of all kinds. Society demands managers to act in the best interest of society in general, i.e. doing what is just and right and obeying the spirit as well letters of the rules, regulations and laws.

Tsalikis and Frizesche, (1989) contended that the ethical sensitivity of all professionals' lawyers, physicians, educators and business executives has come under close scrutiny. Post-water gate morality has detected that the past level of ethics exhibited by professionals is no longer adequate and perhaps never was.

This renewed ethical concern represents the reoccurrence of an established issue. Femi, (2016) contended that, since 1999 corruption became endemic, pervasive and systematic in virtually all areas of the country's (Nigeria) public and cooperate existence. He termed the era as (criminal racket). Also, another case of concern is attitude of coaches towards winning by all means such as performance boosters used by players. Conte's (Chelsea Coach) supporting of his player imbibing alcohol or beer immediately after play for the purpose of rehydration, calls for questioning as well. Questions are being raised about the value of sports involvement and developing a sense of sportsmanship. The situation whereby the Nigerian Super Falcons that won the African Female Cup of Nations for the eight consecutive times, were not paid match bonuses before or after the winning which led to their protest to the National Assembly, appears questionable. Sports managers are often subject to pressure that has tremendous influence on the moral reasoning of sports participants and are constantly making decisions that affect financial success of sport operations. Decisions taken by managers may be related to on the field success or box-office success or both. The temptation to use any means to achieve those goals can produce ethically questionable choices at times. For examples, Ojo-Oba (2016) asserted that there

is bribery in Nigeria football. Stressing that club administrators and coaches' bribe referees to win domestic league matches. This is counterproductive as it lowers standard and kills the spirit of sports.

Ethical Issues for Discourse

Ethical issues can be understood as difficult issues requiring moral solutions. The concept of ethical dilemma as used here refers to circumstances when choice has to be made between two equally unsatisfactorily alternatives. The following issues outlined below cause ethical quagmire in sport management, these are; serving as a social conscience, inordinate actions of the people and employee and customer safety.

1. **The difference between servings as social conscience is sometimes difficult to determine.** Several examples involving health and fitness club may serve to amplify this issue. Should they have cigarette machines? Should health clubs serve alcoholic beverages in their lounge area? Should they provide tanning beds for those who wish to use them? From a business stand point each of these may be profitable service. From a health stand point; there are various levels of concern about each of these services. What ethical considerations come into play in making the decision about the provision of such services? By not providing such services, are you playing the role of social conscience and limiting people's freedom to make their own choices?
2. **Inordinate Actions of the People;** in many circumstances, it may be actions of others that pose a personal ethical quandary. In such situations the question of how you tolerate or deal with such behaviour becomes the ethical dilemma. Do you report a fellow employee who is skimming small amount of money from cash registry? Do you accept an outstanding prospective athlete's transcript that you know have been altered; do you report a supervisor who is providing inside information to a favoured supplier about competitor's bid on athletic equipment? What circumstances in which you tolerate these situations? Under which circumstance do you take action?

Employee and Customer's Safety

Employee and customer's safety are often cited as ethical problems that arise as organisations attempt to balance economic and safety concerns. There are many considerations that go in the decisions on what type of playing surface to install. Are there ethical dimensions to this decision? Should artificial turf be used if the incidence of injury or severity of injuries is higher than on natural surfaces? How much more dangerous would the surface have to be before the risk out weight the benefits? The situations presented above are but few examples of ethical issues that can arise in sports management.

To examine how each situation can be dealt with at stages 4, 5 and 6 of Kohlberg's model of moral development calls foremost, for a brief review of these stages as follows: Kohlberg's theory of moral development holds that, moral reasoning, the basis for behaviour has six identifiable developmental stages; each more adequate to responding to moral dilemmas than its predecessor. He relied on the stories such as the Heinz dilemmas and linked them to how individuals would justify their actions if placed in similar dilemmas. He then analysed the form of moral reasoning displayed rather than its conclusion and classified it as belonging to one of 6 distinct stages. He posited that, moral behaviour is more responsible, consistent and predictable from people at higher levels.

Stage four (4) of Kohlberg's stages of moral development is about authority and social order obedience driven. It emphasizes the importance to obey laws, dictums and social conventions because these are the essence of society. (Help in maintaining a functioning society). Society must learn to transcend individual needs. A central ideal (s) here often prescribe what is right or wrong, such as in the case of fundamentalism. I.e., if one person violates a law, perhaps everyone else would. Thus, there's an obligation and a duty to uphold laws and rules. When someone violates a law; it is morally wrong, culpability is thus a significant factor in this stage as it separates the bad domains from good ones. Morality at this stage is detected by an outward force.

The (3rd) third level called the post conventional level is also known as the principal level and consist of stages five (5) and six (6) of moral development. The stage 5 specifically is social contract driven. It views the world as holding different opinions, right and values. Such perspectives should be mutually respected as unique to each person or community. Here laws are viewed from social contract perspective rather than rigid edicts; those that do not promote the general well-being should be changed when necessary to meet the greatest good for greatest number of people. This is achieved through majority decision and inevitable compromise. The stage six(6) is concerned with universal ethical principles based on abstract reasoning, ie, laws are valued in so far as they are grounded in justice; commitment to justice carries with it an obligation to disobey unjust laws. The individual acts because it is right and not because it is instrumental, expected, legal or previously agreed. The theory understands values as critical components of right. Whatever the right is, it must be universally valid across societies (moral universalism).

A critical examination of situations of stage 1 to 3 earlier highlighted points to the fact that the managers need to be alert, sensitive to morally charged situations, look behind the technical requirements of the job to see the moral dimensions. In situation 1, i.e., the difference between serving the public well and serving as the social conscience, though difficult to determine as exemplified by health and fitness clubs serving alcohol, cigarette and tanning beds may be in line with Kohlberg's social obligation and justice operations concept, because in this

particular situation, the right view of ethics which is concerned with respecting and protecting individual liberties and privileges, such as the right to privacy, free speech; life and safety and due process.

The positive side of the right perspective is that, it protects individual's basic rights, but has a negative side for organisations. The services are a social contract; the social universe differs from the view of persons in that it involves an appreciation of social norms. The stage six (6) is essentially socio-centric. The analysis of authors who have developed theories for the ethical actions and decisions of managers are mostly based on either teleological, deontological or a combination of both theories. Theories based on teleology assesses the morality of actions on the bases of the results or consequences of actions, the basic idea relies on utilitarianism theory which uses a quantitative method of making ethical decisions by looking at how to provide the greatest good for the greatest number.

Following the utilitarian view, the manager might consider an optimal balance of benefits versus harms on those affected by the action. For instance, it could be concluded that providing the services in situation 1 above or by not providing such services by playing the role of social conscience and limiting peoples freedom to make their own choices, the percentage of those affected by it and who enjoy the services, failure to provide such services can result in biased decision which might be seen as unethical. Equally, the question of how you tolerate behaviour of reporting a fellow employee who is skimming small amount of money from the cash registry, accepting athlete's transcript that has been altered, etc if an option requires the sacrifice of any ethical principle, one must evaluate facts and assumptions carefully. Consider the benefits, burdens, and risk to each stakeholder. Rightly or wrongly, private activities can be in conflict with organisational duty, even if not yielding monetary advantages, as potential cause of public embarrassment or diminishing faith in the integrity of the individual or organisation. For instance conflict of social and business contract, lifestyle "idiosyncrasies", behavioural predilections (sexual) activities of partners, use of substance (alcohol, drugs), or personal financial arrangements.

The major focus of our concern here should be to consider what extent are private lives relevant to individual life. Our ethical responsibility is to ensure our private interest does not interfere with the proper accomplishment of our organisational duties. Theories based on teleology assess the morality of actions on the bases of consequences of those actions. The theories converge on utilitarianism which prediction is creating the greatest good for greatest number". Theories based on deontology on the other hand deals with what makes action right; actions must conform to some absolute rules of moral behaviour. Questions about legitimacy of business decisions are about the justification for exercise of co-operate power and appropriate forms and effects or business decision making. The evaluation of these decisions as ethical or

unethical by the decision maker (s) of those affected by the decision is better informed by its value. Three elements are common to the said contract theories. Consent of the individual agreement among moral agents and a method by which an agreement is obtained.

Donaldson (1982) constructed a social contract for business that provides for cooperate legitimacy on the consent of those affected by the business. He considers corporations as productive organisation if they exist to enhance the welfare of society through the satisfaction of consumer and worker's interest in a way which relies on exploiting corporation's special advantages and minimising disadvantages. Though, this must not violate certain minimum standards of justice. Thus, the minimum productive organisation must avoid deception or fraud, show respect for their workers as human beings and avoid any practise that systematically worsens the situation of a given group in the society.

The ability to predict outcomes may vary as some questions like the following are asked- Does the proposed actions leave another person or group less well off? Is this person or group already a member of relatively under privileged class? There must be a justice test. An affirmative answer to any of this test is assumed to indicate that the marketer's decision is probably unethical and should be reconsidered. The answer to certain questions as yes is likely to produce a no in another context. For example, a duty of justice that contemplates some reasonable equivalent distribution of benefits may consistently conflict with stake holders property rights. Therefore these theories are less satisfactory in providing definitive ethical analysis of specific practises. Approaches in business ethics based on these theories; particularly those on Kantian and utilitarianism are too abstract and general to provide adequate guidance for managers.

In many cases, utilitarian analysis requires fore casting of unknowable future events. Also comparing different types of utilities is notoriously difficult, e.g. should the joy and excitement of providing health and fitness exercise alongside alcohol or tanning beds may conflict with limiting people's freedom to make choices. Consider making harmful situations in offering all these services. The benefits, it is surely fair to ask whether a trade off of lives or physical well - being versus social satisfaction is fully consistent with common sense morality. It has been observed that the inherent complexity of modern business and professional life vastly complicates its uses as a realistic guide.

Duty-based (deontological) approaches have established clear duties often based on rational criteria or assumptions regarding the nature of humanity. It could be suggested that, pre-social discord may be solved by individuals placing themselves under the direction of a general will." Ethical/ unethical decisions are moderated by individual factors, significant others within the organisational setting, and opportunities for action. According to Ferrell and Greshman (1985) normally, ethical decision rules take the form of simple maxims such as the followings postulated by Iacznack and Morphy (1985);

1. **The Golden Rule:** which is to act towards others the way you would want them to act towards you.
2. **The Utilitarian Principle:** i.e., acting in a way that will result in the greatest good for the greatest number.
3. **Kants Categorical Imperatives:-** this deals with acting in such a way that the action taken under the circumstances could be a universal law or rule of behaviour.
4. **The Professional Ethic:** concerns taking action that would be viewed as proper by an impartial set of professionals colleagues.
5. **The TV Test:** Act in such a way that the actions could be defended comfortably in front of a national Television audience.

Using one of these maxims, the utilitarian principle, assesses the appropriation in each of the situations, will involve application of the principle. Most people agree that, a set of moral principles or values should govern the actions of marketing decision makers, and most marketers would that their decisions makers, and most marketers would that their decisions should be made in accordance with acceptable principles of right and wrong. However, consensus regarding what constitutes proper ethical behaviour in marketing decision situations diminishes as the level of analysis proceeds from general to specific. For example, most people will agree that to serve alcoholic beverages, cigarettes and tanning beds in health and fitness club is wrong, or reporting a fellow employee who is skimming small amount of money from the cash registry, providing inside information to a favoured supplier, among other unethical behaviour.

Because of the lack of agreement concerning ethical standards, it is difficult to find incidents of deviant behaviour which marketers would agree are unethical. For example, Gallup poll found that 74% of business executives surveyed had behaved unethically, 31% of the said study had ethical reservation in accepting an expensive dinner from a supplier; most of responded as indicated that bribes, bid rigging and price cohesion had become more common in recent years.

CONCLUSION

The challenges in the work place, the diverse background of employees, the impact of globalisation and technology have all contributed to making the practice of business ethics very difficult. Managers are increasingly finding out that in making business decisions, they select from alternatives that are neither wholly right, nor wrong. There is no clear moral compass to guide leaders through the complex dilemma of what is right or wrong.

This write up has suggested some parameters of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Which are managerially illegal or questionable practices of individual managers or organisations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the factors that determine ethical conduct, it is hereby recommended that, man's personal code of behaviour should be that of sincerity and honesty as the ethical standard of the organisation is dependent upon the ethical standards of the members.

Managers should set ethical behaviour pattern to be emulated by the executive. If they resent and firmly condemn unethical practices in the company, their subordinates will toe the line. Management should provide good company policies governing the relationship with their customers, competitors and the general public.

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