

SPORT ORGANIZATIONS WITH YOUTH SOCCER TEAMS

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Abstract

Traditionally individuals are involved in sport through sport organizations, as the case of the clubs. The organization culture has the potential to influence the way athletes perceive their participation in sport. Due the specific contexts of the clubs it's necessary to obtain data about how they organize and act.

Organizational analysis of three soccer clubs was performed, through the observation method, documental analysis and semistructured interviews to club managers. The data collected through the interviews were transcribed and content analysis was made. Different organizations were compared in the emerging categories.

The professional club differs of the amateur clubs because it has a bigger size and capacity to involve professional and voluntary collaborators, showing more complexity, specialization and decentralization. The amateur clubs are more similar between them, characterized by a lower complexity and specialization, and based on volunteer work.

The professional club managers perceive their intervention as oriented to optimize efficiency and performance. The amateur clubs managers see themselves as community based volunteers with a social and educational mission.

Key words: club, soccer, voluntary, professional.

Introduction

The sport gained a new dimension in modern society due to the social concerns about health, economy, pro-social values, and the personal and community development (Atherley, 2006; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006; Seippel, 2006; European Commission on Sport, 2007; Institute for Volunteering Research, 2007; Gaskin, 2008).

The individuals' involvement in sport is mainly made through sport organizations, which could be classified in three types, according to their finality – sport governing bodies, sport spectacle organizations and sport providing entities (Gómez, Opazo, & Martí, 2007).

The sport governing bodies usually have the following functions – regulation, organization and coordination of the respective modalities (Enjolras, 2002; Thibault, Slack, & Hinings, 1991; Amis & Slack, 1996). The sport spectacle organizations are oriented to the production on sport spectacles (e.g. championships and tournaments).

The sport clubs are considered sport providing entities, since they have the capacity to offer sport practice, but they also promote other kind of individuals' involvement in sport, as the case of coaches and managers (Papadimitriou, 2002; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2003; Seippel, 2004).

Soccer is the most popular sport on majority of the European countries (Papadimitriou, 2002; Seippel, 2004). There is a relation between the levels of sport participation and the volunteer participation on clubs (Cuskelly, 2004). The majority of the clubs are nonprofit entities and rely on volunteer work (Skille, 2008; Nichols & James, 2008; England, 2008).

Volunteers have some common characteristics: most of them are males (Taylor et al., 2003; Cuskelly, 2004; Low, Butt, Paine, & Smith, 2007), their children are athletes (Doherty, 2006; Chalip & Scott, 2005), they have interest in personal curriculum development or in giving something back to

the organization (Taylor et al., 2003). The possibility of organization collapse or the inexistence of another person to exert that kind of function on the organization are considered negative factors of motivation and pressure for volunteering (Sport England, 2003).

It has been observed an integration of specialized and professional personal in amateur clubs, which affects the organizational structure and form of operation, promoting specialization and formalization (Gómez, Opazo, & Martí, 2007; Papadimitriou, 2002; Nichols & James, 2008; Thibault, Slack, & Hinings, 1991), together with more participants and more members (Papadimitriou, 2002). It is plausible then, that clubs with a bigger dimension show a more complex structure, formalization and specialization than a smaller club.

The clubs interact with their environment and can suffer influences from factors as the population density, sociocultural characteristics, politics and economy (Slack, 1997; Skille, 2008). The specificities of clubs organizational culture and their environment make difficult to implement policies and programmes for sport, making necessary a more accurate information about the topic (European Commission of Sport, 2007). From the available data and literature we hypothesize that: a) there are organizational differences between amateur and professional clubs; b) there are organizational differences between amateur clubs from different demographic contexts. The purpose of this study is to perform a comparative analysis of clubs with youth soccer teams belonging to different contexts (professional; rural/urban amateur).

Methods

Participants

Three sport organizations with youth soccer team were selected, belonging to the same district. The rural context it's characterized by a demographic density inferior to 100 habitants per km², and the urban through a superior value. The clubs will be referred in this study as Professional Club (PC), Rural Amateur Club (RAC) and Urban Amateur Club (UAC).

Instruments

From a organizational theory perspective the clubs diagnosis was made using an analytical model, according to Ferreira and Martinez (2008), recurring to observation method (infrastructures, organizational model, speech), documental analysis (statutes, regiments, communicates) and semistructured interviews with club managers (with at least 2 years in charge).

Procedures

The semistructured interviews were recorded and field observations registered, followed by text transcription for posterior speech analysis.

Data analysis

The collected data was submitted to a content analysis recurring to two categories: internal and external influences. The first has the following sub-categories: management and planning, human relationship, organizational efficacy, leadership, organizational culture. Resistance and influences are external sub-categories.

Results

The PC has declared socio-cultural, educational and performance ends, being the latest the more referred on the interview. This organization presents professional and volunteer collaborators. The volunteer collaborators are involved on the organization by instrumental (curriculum development) and extrinsic factors (monetary rewards that aren't consider salary).

There is a preference to integrate collaborators with specialized formation, principally in sport sciences area. The existence of athletes' development reports and manuals for coaches and athletes shows a medium level of formalization. But the organizational goals and objectives are defined through informal and decentralized forms, but they are essential performance oriented. It can be observed a horizontal and vertical decentralization, with the youth department manager detaining a key role between the organization top and the basis of that department (coaches, athletes and parents). This organization only offers one sport (soccer), but has the senior squad and several youth teams. The external influences are related to culture (connection to local image), economy (market laws, services and products) and politics (legislation, use of sport spaces).

The amateur clubs have a formal definition, but in their functioning there are very informal, showing a primary structure and being based on volunteering. The collaborators inclusion is mainly made through friendship bounds. The UAC established priorities for youth coaches' recruitment (education in sport sciences or pedagogical areas).

The RAC refer only the sport participation goal, emphasizing the social and educational values. The UAC also refers the sport participation but also sport performance as important.

In RAC, the president is involved in all the decisional process, except in training context. On the UAC there is a vertical and horizontal decentralization, but in practice the president's decision is much solicited. Both amateur clubs offer soccer, having a senior squad and youth formation teams. But the UAC also provide swimming, *kempo*, *kajukenbo* and fitness classes. The organization communication and definition of goals and objectives are informal. The amateur clubs make references of suffering from social, cultural, political and economical influences. On the UAC managers feel that the involvement with the club is diminishing in management and other collaboration functions, but perceive an increment of the sport practitioners. The RAC perceives a reduction of both types of involvement. On the political level the amateur clubs have a dependency of the local authorities, due to the need of construction and utilization of sport infrastructures and monetary support. Another difficulty referred by the amateur clubs was the financial support by local companies, which in time of crises retract.

Discussion

The amateur clubs shows a simple structure according to Mintzberg's organizational theory, which is according to the principal characteristic of local sport organizations (Slack, 1997; Papadimitriou, 2002; Pitter, 1990). The centralization on the amateur clubs eases the decision making and can attract collaborators that like of non bureaucratic environments, but can make difficult clubs' development because it centers the decision on one person (Slack, 1997; Pitter, 1990). It's easier for the different actors to interact in organized clubs that show structures like ACs, which are able to promote social and economical capital (Gaskin, 2008). Contrary, the PC presents a more complex structure similar to professional bureaucracy (Mintzberg, 1995), which can be a result of factors as growth in size, inclusion of specialized professionals (Gómez, Opazo, & Martí, 2007; Thibault, Slack, & Hinings, 1991). With professionalization level augment there are more work autonomy and standardization (Slack, 1997), but could frustrate the volunteers which prefer informal environments (Gaskin, 2008). According to Worsley's (1983) the PC can be consider an work organization, since it gives more emphasis on sport performance, and the ACs can be considered mutual benefit organizations due to the reference of sport potentiality for youth education. The orientation for performance could lead a change in organizational culture and in the members development and functions (Abbott, White, & Charles, 2005; Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009), with possible negative consequences, such as promoting anti-social values and attitudes (Rocha & Turner, 2008), coaching

stressing factors (e.g. conflict, pressure) (Olusoga, Butt, Hays, & Maynard; 2009; Chalip & Scott, 2005), parents pressure on athletes (Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2009). According to the sport services criteria used by Papadimitriou (2002) the PC and RAC have a poor performance, since they only provide opportunity to participate in soccer. This could make difficult to attract more collaborators, members, financial resources and partnerships. The RAC has a great dependency of local authorities, principally in financial resources, which are usually irregular, which meet the discoveries of Papadimitriou (2002), suggesting a necessity of improve the relationship and function between local authorities and clubs. Contrary to this clubs, the UAC adapted to environment demands of more specialized sport practice, getting more money and sport practitioners to the organization, through more sport services and partnerships, especially with local authorities. The clubs' contextual differences provide singular experiences that influence the athletes developmental process (Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2009). Therefore, it's important to continue researching about sport organizations and local contexts and the influences of their specific characteristics on individuals, especially on the youngsters.

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