

OPERATIVE MANAGEMENT OF SPORTS TEAMS

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ABSTRACT: *The managerial activities in sport, also known under the name of management in sports or sports management, are similar to those applied by companies, especially in terms of strategic management. However, the operational/operative management is better known for its implementation in sports organizations but the problems raised by this type of management were less addressed when it came to put it in practice within the sports teams. In this paper are presented and analyzed the problems specific for the operative management of professional sports teams in the sport sector and a new typological model of organizations active in sport was elaborated on the basis of these analyzes. There are also presented four styles of operational management applicable to professional sports teams, emphasizing the team-coach relationship and the possible effects of applying these management styles on the teams' performance.*

KEYWORDS: *management sports teams, sport, sports management, sports teams, typology of sports teams.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: Z200, Z290.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Sport is a profession with direct or indirect socio-cultural, economic and political implications that has evolved constantly since antiquity, when it represented a means to show off the force of a fortress, to the present form of professional sport due to the gradual improvement over time of sports performance.

Professionalization in sports led to the enhanced media coverage of major sporting events, which was facilitated by television thanks to the possibilities offered by modern means of satellite transmission.

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The media coverage determined the rapid growth in popularity of sports so that nowadays millions of people have made sports a "modus vivendi" with the purpose to preserve health and improve.

The growing popularity of sports has generated significant changes in this sector of activity, evidenced by the improvement of sports equipment due to the emergence of sport-related business enterprises and development of support services for the activities of sports organizations.

In this framework, the business side began to be felt more active in sports since "*a world-wide economy and international sports merchandising*" was recorded statistically and sports became a revenue generator.

According to statistics in 2013 were generated by sports incomes worth 71.6 billion dollars and provisions are made that, by 2019, they are going to reach 90.9 billion dollars. The top 10 enterprises specialized in sports equipment brought incomes of 73 billion dollars in 2013-2014, of which 27.8 billion dollars were generated by the famous Nike (www.wiki.livois.com).

Over time, year by year, increasingly more material, financial and human resources (Simion, 2009) have been allocated in the sports sector, so that was acutely felt the need for specialized personnel able to handle their management; this led to the creation of a new profession 25-30 years ago, specifically that of sports manager, and the development in education system of a new specialization: *Sports Management*.

As a result new disciplines were developed in the '80 such as: *sports marketing, sports sociology, philosophy sports, talent management and law in sports* etc., based on the knowledge gained in the process of research on sports management made by different institutes of higher education and / or research institutes.

The importance of sports management is confirmed by the fact that was felt the need of creating specialized associations and publications.

Thus, three organizations were created at continental level:

- *North American Society for Sport Management* in 1986;
- the *European Association for Sport Management* in 1993;
- *Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand* in 1995.

There were also created associations specialized in sports management at national level, for example:

- *Japanese Sports Management Association*;
- *South African Society for Sports Management*.

There have been published journals specialized in sports management such as *Journal of Sport Management* in 1990 and *European Sport Management Quarterly* in 1999.

Most studies published in the field of sports management focused on the management of sports organizations, so that became obvious there was a niche in terms of the operational/operative management applied within a team of sport games; consequently, the coaches of France's handball and rugby teams have adopted new management systems such as participatory management that has proven beneficial for teams, since they won the World and European Championships in the last few years.

2. PECULIARITIES OF SPORT MANAGEMENT

Sports manager is a relatively new profession designed to ensure the optimum management of the various bodies, organizations, institutions or enterprises related to the sports domain, taking into account both risks and opportunities.

Sports is a complex phenomenon and sports science is multidisciplinary, including subjects in the sociological, cultural, psychological, economic, legal, medical fields etc.

Sports management involves diversified knowledge, for which reason is difficult to define this science and it is often considered incomplete.

Wikipedia says: "Sports Management is a field of education concerning the business aspects of sport and recreation. Some examples of managers in sports include the front office system in professional sports, college sports managers, sports marketing, event management, facility management, sports economics, sport finance and sports information".

This definition is incomplete because it focuses primarily on the commercial activities specific for the sports sector and approaches the human resource management in terms of education.

The researchers' efforts to define sport management are numerous and the definitions resulting are more or less complete.

DeSensi, Kelley, Blanton and Beitel (1990, p.33) point out that: "sport management involves any combination of skills related to planning, organizing directing, controlling, budgeting, leading and evaluating within the context of an organization or department whose primary product or services is related to sport and/or physical activity" (DeSensi, et al., 1990).

Chelladurai (1994, p.15) defines Sports Management to be: "a field concerned with the coordination of limited human and material resources, relevant technologies, and exchange of sport services" (Chelladurai, 1994).

Nenad Zec (2011, p. 329) considers that: "management in sports organizations provides sports development through general planning activities in the field, organizes all relevant resources, processes and functions, exercises a policy of human resources development in organized sport and the business functions, provides communication and coordination, deciding on the implementation of the most appropriate solutions, processes and controls and eliminates destructive conflicts" (www.etnoka.fr).

These definitions include the specific activities of strategic management, the notion of sports being the one that includes the management in sports sector. In order to determine the particularities of sports management in relation to those of companies in other sectors, it is necessary to clarify the following issues:

- a. *Management of sporting competition versus organizational management.* In the literature on sports management, the management functions are that primarily attributable to strategic management, a fact that can be ascertained from the analysis of flowcharts in figure 1.

Sports organizations which have as object of activity professional sports (clubs or sports associations affiliated to sports federations and

professional leagues) are particularly concerned to ensure all conditions for winning sports competitions, namely achieving high performance.

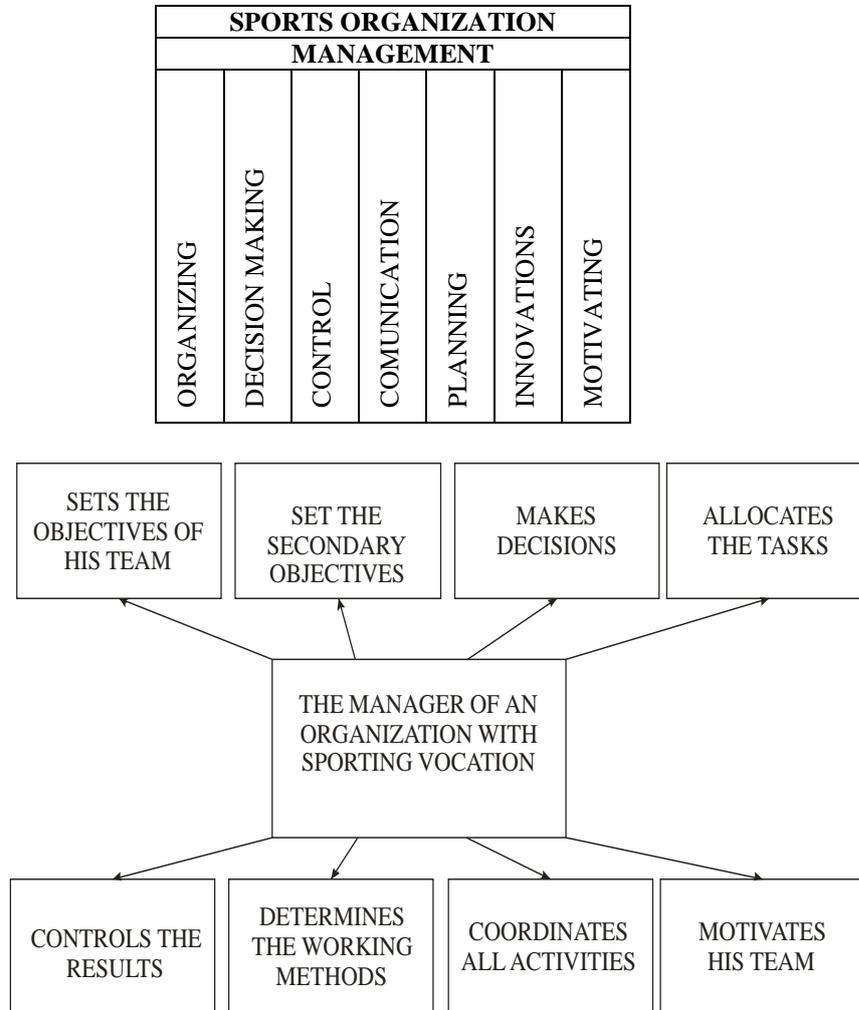


Figure 1. Management activities of sports organizations

(Aćimović, et al., 2013; www.statista.com)

To achieve this objective, the management within these organizations should be focused on sports team management which means players, coaches and specialists in sport, in other words, should focus on the human factor that decides the outcome of sports competitions. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure an efficient management of human resources at the club or sports team level.

It can be asserted that a peculiarity in professional sports management is the need to ensure a human resources management adapted to the particularities of sports competition besides the classical organizational

strategic management. Basically, performance cannot be achieved without the players, coaches and specialists who are able to adopt management styles appropriate to team building.

- b. *Types of sports organizations.* The sports sector organizations is not heterogeneous in terms of the organizations' objectives, their legal classification and their economic activities and therefore cannot be established a comprehensive criterion for classifying them.

For this reason, researchers in the field of sports management took into consideration various criteria for determining the typology of sports organizations, such as: legal (sports associations / companies), economic (merchand / nonmerchand) or sociological, in some cases they have even taken into account the legal aspects and classification criteria from their respective countries.

Emmanuel Blaye (2007, p. 65) classifies sports organizations on four levels:

- *level 1* includes sports organizations active in high performance sports (sports federations and associations affiliated to federations, leagues and professional sports clubs);
- *level 2* includes organizations that are active in sports sector (organizations and businesses offering services in the sport domain, organizers of sporting events, sports associations that are not affiliated to sports federations);
- *level 3* is assigned to the sport sector related organizations (ministries of education, youth and sport, counseling agencies in sport, sports media companies, communications agencies specialized in sport) and
- in *level 4* are classified organizations without direct connections to sport that are using sports as management support (through sponsorships used for media promotion, providing sports activities for employees, recreational sports) (Bayle, 2007).

Given the analysis of the two issues under discussion, we find that, on one hand, in sports management an important place is held by managerial procedures that are able to ensure and improve the performance in competitions and, on the other hand, it is beneficial to consider the place of management in sport from the perspective of the role it plays in terms of athletic performance when establishing the typology of sports organizations.

The relationship between sports management and the typology of organizations determines their classification on three levels, namely:

- Level 1 which includes organizations with implications in the professional sports;
 - Level 2 includes organizations active in sports and non-affiliated to sports federations or leagues;
 - Level 3 includes associated organizations supporting sports organizations.
- Typology of organizations in the sport sector is shown in figure 2.

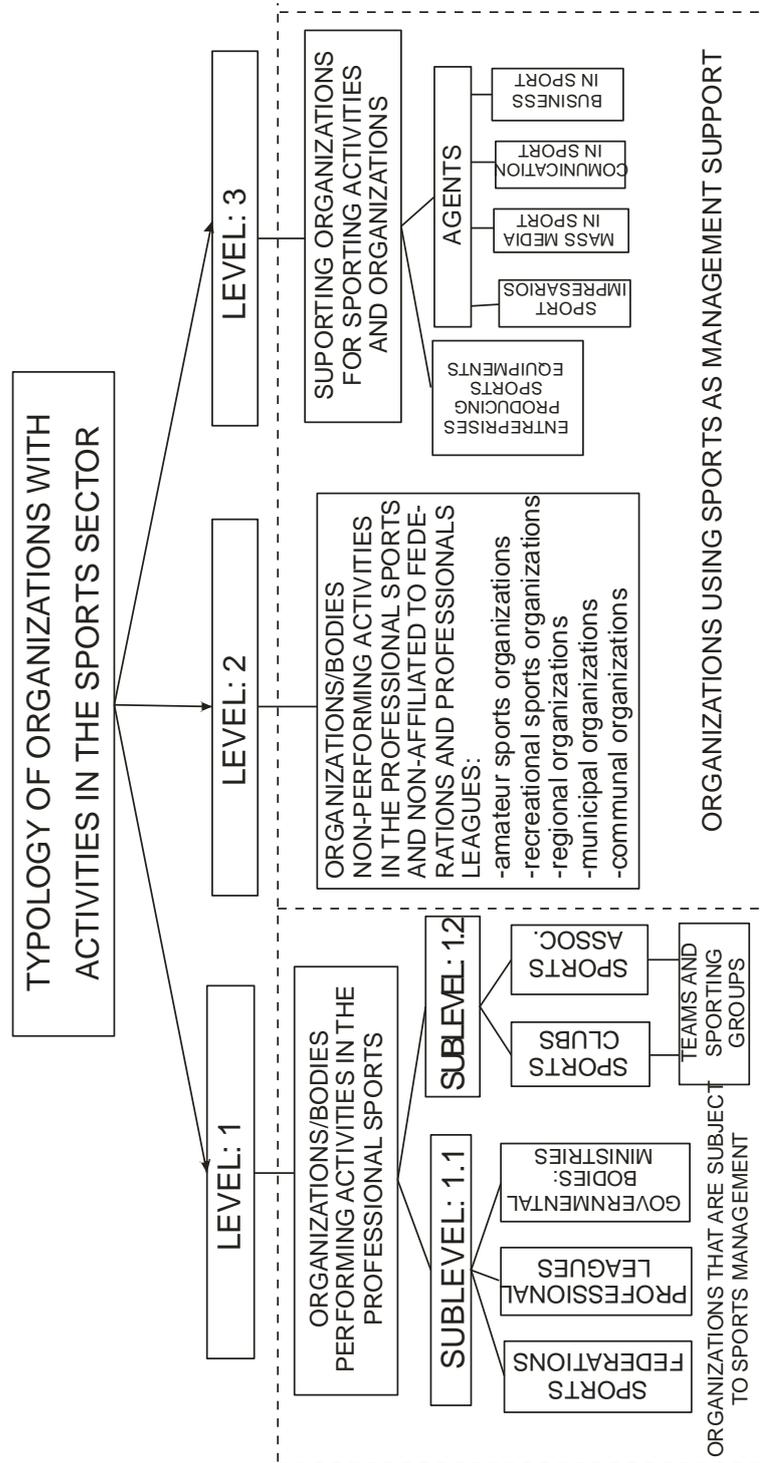


Figure 2. Typology of organizations in the sport sector.

Organizational chart highlights that sports management is applied to organizations and bodies belonging to level 1 and has the largest share of implementation in the organizations from sublevel 1.1.

This does not prevent organizations belonging to level 2 and 3 to put in practice the appropriate procedures of sports management like, for example, sports marketing.

Given the peculiarities of sports management mentioned above, it can be defined as the assembly of managerial procedures practiced in order to increase the sporting performance and enhance the revenue of sports organizations through the application of appropriate policies in the management of human and material resources, respectively the efficient capitalization of the sporting products generated by these organizations (Zec, 2011).

3. OPERATIVE MANAGEMENT OF PERFORMANCE SPORTS TEAMS

The sports use the generic term "*team*" for any type of group participating in sporting competitions. In management the term of team, respectively group, has different meanings:

- The group is consisting of "n" people using a resource in order to meet their individual needs;
- The team is an entity consisting of "m" people who want to combine their skills in order to achieve a common goal.

The term "*team*" does not raise concern, being assigned to teams of sporting games: football, handball, volleyball, basketball etc. where all members, namely players, share their skills to achieve the ultimate goal, namely winning the competition.

Regarding the *group*, in terms of sports, it refers to practitioners of certain sports such as athletics, table tennis, tennis, boxing, wrestling etc. where athletes seek to overcome their individual opponents and become champions; in athletics for example, athletes competing in various tests (running, the javelin, the hammer, jumping etc.) form a group.

Even in these sports, the term "*team*" truly corresponds to reality in the case of relay in athletics or tennis played by doubles.

Therefore, strictly in terms of sports management, this difference must be made.

For example, an athlete or a tennis player who is part of the "*team*" (actually the group) of club X or national team Y in the single competition, in reality pursues his individual performance, namely winning a medal or tournament and the participatory management style is suitable for such cases. In the case of a team of sport games other management styles can be applied as well (www.cimi.fr).

In the management of sports teams can be applied four management styles based on the beliefs and attitudes of the coach, the skills and mental and psychological characteristics of players and the level of cohesion within the team. The characteristics of these four styles are specified in figure 3.

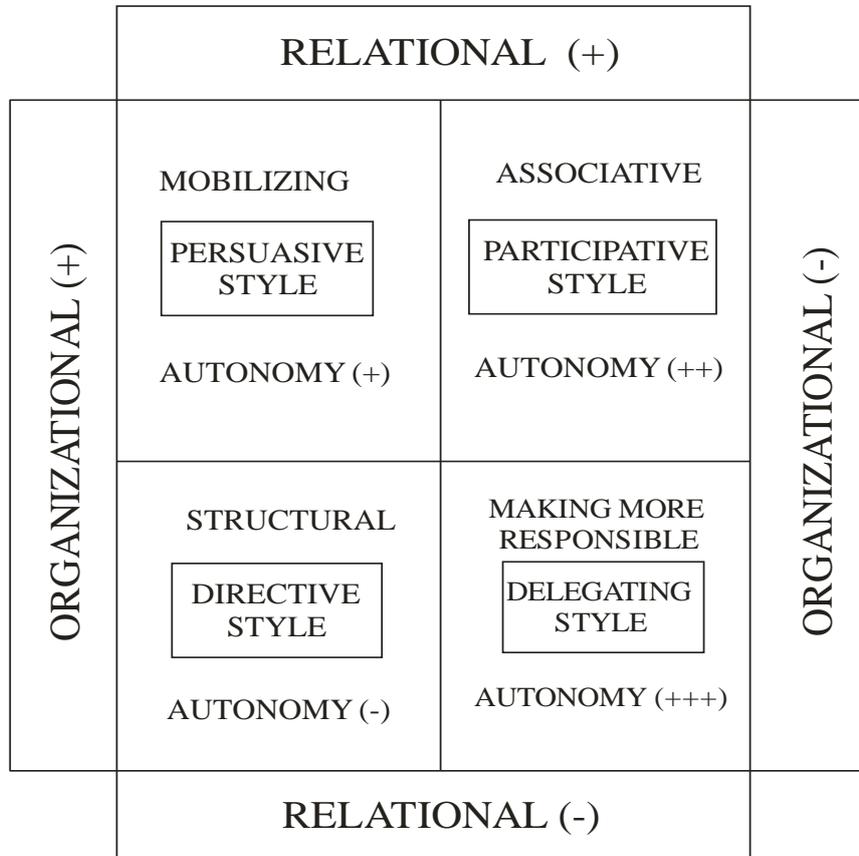


Figure 3. Management styles applicable to sports teams.

The directive style means structural organization and is most often applied due to firmness and inflexibility of the coaches, leading to the cancellation or reduction of team's autonomy.

Team evolves based on procedures with effects on reducing or canceling the interconnection (manager-trainer-team). The effects of applying this style of management consist of achieving effectiveness for a short moment.

Persuasive style involves mobilization and is specific for coaches with persuasion capacity and humanistic attitudes, who are close to players.

The effects are evidenced by a close-knit team, each player having a desire for self-improvement. Coach-team relationship is strong and there is certain autonomy of the players.

Participative style is characterized by the association coach-team and the players enjoy a high degree of autonomy, being seriously involved in the analysis and planning of the game, respectively in making the decisions on the pitch.

The role of coach is to arbitrate team and the results achieved are the consensus, motivation and quality.

Delegating style signifies making the players more responsible based on in-depth situational analysis, which means a minimum of organization and decision-making without intervention of the coach so that players have the maximum autonomy. In adopting this style of management, the coach should be indulgent, intuitive and creative and the result of applying this style brings initiative, spontaneity, innovation and a family atmosphere to the team.

The three styles of management that provide autonomy to the teams are practiced in a lesser extent compared to the directive style. There are however examples showing that the adoption of a management style that gives autonomy in performing tasks to the team's players, may lead to significant results.

The coach of French national handball team, Claude Onesta, who is known in the literature as a reference for sports management and is in fact a professor of gymnastics, has applied the participatory management style achieving significant results, namely:

- the national handball team of France won the World Cup in 2009, 2011, and 2015;
- the European Cup in 2006, 2010 and 2014 and was the Olympic champion in 2008 and 2012.

From what we described above it appears that it is not compulsory to be specialized in a certain area of sports for being a good manager (coach) of a professional team but one should have solid skills and knowledge in sports management. On the other hand, adopting a management style that offers autonomy confers effectiveness when teams have a high degree of professionalism.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Operative management of sports teams is an important part of sports management which has direct implication on the product materialized in the results of a sports team in professional competitions.

The typology of sports organizations is strongly correlated with sports management and within this framework these organizations were classified on three levels; those belonging to level 1 are coordinated on the basis of sports management while for organizations included in levels 2 and 3 the sport represents only a managerial support.

Given the possibilities offered by the different operative management styles of sports teams for the improvement of their performance, it is necessary to consider the introduction of this chapter in the educational programs aimed at sports management because, besides presenting new styles of management, it is necessary the deepening of other aspects such as evaluation models of the personality, vision and cohesion of players in their teams, as for example the Circumplex model.

These models are useful for understanding the profile of both the team and its opponents.

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