

NEW REQUIREMENTS IN SPANISH SPORTS MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

In Spain, the numbers of sport and recreation facilities have grown significantly in recent years through increased interest in both sporting activities and physical activity. (García-Ferrando, 2006). The same trend is occurring internationally (Bayle, 2005; Mahony & Howard, 2001). Therefore, effective management of these sporting facilities is a particularly important challenge within the sport and physical activity sector in the coming years.

Given the above information, it is hardly surprising that interest in professional management of sport and recreation facilities is growing rapidly, with increasing demands for training and technological support at various levels. New professionals within this field are now confronted with a job that requires knowledge and understanding of numerous areas, including sports legislation, economics, human resources, facility maintenance, and equipment and installation management, etc.

Sporting organizations are not immune from environmental influences (Doherty, 1999) and have had to adjust to a more demanding consumer environment (Dorado, 2006). Municipal sports services, for example, have had to adapt to ensure that they offer the quality of service that is now expected (De Martelaer et al., 2002). Many of the problems encountered by sport managers exist due to a lack of understanding of the specific requirements, specifications and characteristics that apply to management of sporting installations.

The issue is complicated further by the fact that the task includes management of not only sporting areas, but also non sport-related auxiliary areas and elements such as equipment, facility maintenance, food services, emergency response, contractor services, the employee force and users. In addition, the employee force is a particularly important resource to manage effectively as they are the depository of most of the knowledge that a business handles and they are difficult to substitute or imitate (Barney, 1991, 1995; Lado & Wilson, 1994).

Organizations which aspire to improve their internal management procedures must have the capacity to specifically address the needs, motivations and interests of both clients and employees. Improvements in service quality will increase customer loyalty and satisfaction resulting in greater use of the service (Ahire & Dreyfus, 2000; Choi & Eboch, 1998; Handfield et al., 1998; Hendricks & Singhal, 1997) and a more competitive position within the sports and physical activity market (Aaker & Jacobson, 1994; Fornell et al., 1996).

METHODS

This was a descriptive study designed to ascertain the needs and requirements for sports management in Spain. The objectives were tested with an analysis by a panel of Spanish experts in the field of sports management. The results were obtained using the technique of group discussion. The specific objectives were as follows:

1. Identify the needs and requirements for sports management, in particular in the area of material resources, human resources and users/external clients.
2. To identify the criteria for the definition and development of key support tools for management of sports facilities.

The most frequently recurring ideas, opinions and sentiments were used as the central axis of the analysis. After the sessions, the group discussions were transcribed into text, the data was coded and an analysis was performed using AQUAD 5 for Windows.

RESULTS

The information gathered from the group discussion sections is structured as follows:

Problems and needs related to management of material resources.

Problems and needs related to management of users/clients.

Problems and needs related to management of human resources.

DISCUSSION

In summary, it is worth noting that principal conclusions of this study were found. A wide range of needs in the sports management field were identified in the group discussions. These largely fall into three broad categories, namely: human resources, material resources and relationships with users/clients.

In the Material Resources category the most important needs are for installation maintenance protocols, the standards and criteria for safety evaluation of facilities, and identification of quality parameters for sports facilities, to establish sound quality control plans.

In relation to Human Resources, the most important needs are the availability of specifications/norms for each type of job description and the development of the protocols necessary for successful work performance, and in addition the establishing of protocols for the contracting of personnel involved in different sports activities together with development of questionnaires to evaluate worker satisfaction.

Finally, in relation to Users/Clients, the most important needs identified were the control of suggestions and complaints, the use of technological tools for reservations, the development of satisfaction questionnaires specific to activities and to sport facilities, and the control of user access in the sporting installations.

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