

TOWN HALLS AND SPORT IN CATALONIA

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

The Catalan Sports Observatory, conceived as a tool generating knowledge for all the people and institutions involved in the world of sport, has promoted the research project "Town halls and sport in Catalonia". The objective of this study is to obtain statistical data which reflect the real situation in the local management of sport. The information obtained is of great value for the planning of public sports policies, since the study supplies information on current advantages and failures in the municipal sports systems.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is based on theoretical foundations which were developed by means of two questions. The first was: How are town halls organised and what relationships do they establish with other organisations in developing their sports offer? There are earlier studies in relation to this theme, regarding both the public offer (Burriel, 1991; García Ferrando, 2000 and 2001) and the associative offer (General Secretariat of Sport, 2010; Gambau, 2002; Heinemann et al., 1997). Today, management cannot be analysed simply in terms of what happens within the organisation; we also need to see how that organisation is positioned with respect to others which, although not having "proprietary rights" over it, can substantially influence its way of doing things. To reflect this change of perspective, we no longer speak of "government" of the organisation but of "governance" (Camy & Robinson, 2008; Heinemann, 2003). Stakeholder theory has been used in studying these relationships (Mitchell et al., 1997), and has been applied to the sports case, among others, by Chappellet and Bayle (2005), Heinemann (2003) and Slack (2000).

With regard to the second question: Which structural

characteristics do they have and what are their advantages and failures? Institutional Choice Theory has been used, applied in the sports ambit by Heinemann (1998:67-90). According to this theory, the three main types of organisations (public, commercial and associative) have intrinsic structural characteristics from which, according to cases, advantages and failures can be deduced.

METHODOLOGY

The method used for the research was based on verbal interviews (face to face) with a questionnaire. From the objective of the study the ten dimensions of the project were defined.

- I. Background in relation to creating the service
- II. Relations of the service with other organisations
- III. Management of the service
- IV. Financial resources
- V. Human resources
- VI. Sports facilities
- VII. Offer of municipal activities
- VIII. Management of information and communication
- IX. Sport and sustainability
- X. The organisational culture of the Sports Service

The sample was taken from 102 municipalities (universe 221) in the province of Girona and 120 (universe 311) in that of Barcelona. In dealing with a universe of less than 100,000 cases the relevant statistical formula was applied, to guarantee a 95% level of confidence and a margin of error below 7%. The procedure used was stratified multi-stage random sampling, where the strata were bands of numbers of inhabitants in each municipality.

RESULTS

The legal figures most adopted in the organisation of the Sports Service are the department and the independent body, the latter being better valued because it speeds up the management of the service. However, more than 55% of the town halls have no legal figure, only a post on the local council. Also, in half (52.8%) the municipalities the post dealing with Sport also has other functions, among which are, in order of importance: Youth and/or Children, Festivals, Culture and Education.

The profile of the person occupying the post for Sports is usually that of a man aged around 43 years. Nearly half have university studies, a feature which has considerably increased with respect to the last study (Burriel, 1991: 45). The number of women holding the Sports post is lower, at around 20% in Girona and 30% in Barcelona. With regard to the presence of women in decision-making posts there is considerable imbalance: only 27% of the managers of Sports Services are women.

Most of the municipal sports facilities are managed directly. In the case of facilities which can generate income, there is a tendency to adopt indirect forms of management by means of an administrative concession. The services which tend to be outsourced more are, in order of importance, first-aid, monitoring, sports fields and cleaning.

The sports budget represents 6.8% on the total municipal budget, which means an increase of 2% with respect to 1989 (Burriel, 1991). In relation to the offer of activities in municipalities, this is centred mainly on the differentiation of groups according to age, without segmenting them into specific groups according to their needs, for example, the

disabled or people with a risk of social exclusion.

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