

PRESSURE AND HINDRANCES TO THE EMPLOYMENT OF PAID MANAGERS IN VOLUNTARY SPORT CLUBS AND FEDERATIONS IN GERMANY

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Context

How great is the need for professionalization of management in voluntary sport associations in Germany, and how can it be explained? Within the context of voluntary associations, we hold it to be meaningful, that the expression 'professionalization' first of all be understood in the very broad sense of 'occupationalization'. It is about the basic question, how far voluntary unpaid work is replaced or supplemented by paid work. The discussion has been confronted with a puzzle for a long time, i.e. the contradiction between the theoretical probability on the one hand and the empirical unimportance of paid work on the other. It was formulated thus by Heinemann and Schubert (1994:22) in the theoretical part of their study of German sport clubs in 1991: *"particularly in large clubs, the tasks grow to a scope, that can no longer be coped with through voluntary work alone ... specialist qualifications are required and a time consuming engagement is necessary to an increasing degree, which cannot easily be obtained from the circle of club members."* Then they summarized their empirical results as: *"less important, in contrast, is the employment of permanent staff, whereby it is hardly to be expected that the number of clubs who employ permanent staff and are able to pay them will increase"* (1994:256). The most completely developed and empirically checked contribution to the explanation of professionalization in sport clubs in Germany is represented by the pressure and hindrances approach, which Heinemann developed (Heinemann & Schubert, 1992, 1994) in taking patterns from Weber (1972) and Michels (1989). Everyday understanding indicates that the need for paid managers depends on whether those responsible want to, must, or are able to professionalize or whether they will not, must not, or are unable to do so. We drew on three theories: economic theory, contingency theory and organizational institutional theory, and therefore have addressed not only the usual structural variables (such as type of organization, number of members or size of the budget), but directly the causes for professionalization, by measuring pressure and hindrances.

Methods

A survey was carried out during 1996 (Horch, Niessen & Schütte, 2003). The organizations and the positions studied were not chosen at random, but purposefully in order to include as many different organizations as possible, so as to study their similarities and differences. The sample included 931 positions in 342 organizations. In detail, we included organizations which were: large (more than 1000 members), multi-sports clubs that had paid managers (50), or which did not (50); high performance sport clubs (51, Olympic sports); professional sport clubs playing in the first divisions of football, handball or ice hockey (50); and prestige sport clubs offering golf, tennis or field hockey (50); sport federations representing single Olympic sports (30 out of 55 sports federations from the federal and 30 from the state level), and regional multi-sports federations at federal, state and municipal levels (31). In addition to salaried managers (Chief Executive and other positions), voluntary managers (Presidents and other members of the Board) and paid trainers from the same organizations were interviewed. The response rate was 57%, corresponding to 531 questionnaires. Two points have to be considered when interpreting the results: (1) In the end – because of the number of different positions included and of differing response rates – half of the organizations examined were federations and (2) half the people interviewed held salaried positions. In this respect, the descriptive results are not truly representative, but the relationships found may be typical for voluntary sports associations that employ paid managers.

Results

Surprisingly only some the interviewees agreed with the statement "We need more paid managers" (medium, 3.1 on a scale from 1 to 5). One important result was, that the need to professionalize does not decline proportionally to the degree of professionalization reached, but even increases (Kendalls tau b: .24). In the opinion of interviewees, there are several reasons for substantiating the need for paid managers, with only one decisive hindrance, i.e. the lack of funds. In order to check the relative

explanatory power of the different theories and variables simultaneously, a stepwise multiple regression analysis was carried out including variables, that correlated relatively well bi-variably and represented all the theoretical perspectives addressed. Of 13 variables, 7 remained in the equation, i.e. benefits and costs of occupationalization, the desired tasks/authority of paid managing directors as a cultural indicator, co-operation with business and government, as well as the increased requirements of the work, and whether a salaried or volunteering person was interviewed. Collectively they explained 30% of the variance (see Table 1).

Table 1: Multiple regression analysis of the need to professionalize

<i>Multiple regression analysis</i>		<i>Dependent variable:</i>
		<i>Need to professionalize</i>
		<i>Beta</i>
<i>Independent Variable</i>	Index benefits	.27
	Cost: "It is no worth it"	-.23
	Culture: Authority of a managing director in relation to the volunteer board	.21
	Co-operation with business, media and marketing agencies	.14
	"Tasks to date have become more demanding "	.12
	"Co-operation with government requires paid employees"	.11
	Type of position (paid versus volunteer)	-(!).11
Corrected r ²		.30

Discussion/Implications

In the broad areas of sport associations, to date there seems to be no pressure to professionalize, in the sense of an acute threat to the organization, but only an opportunity the organization can take or leave. Professionalization is less hindered – as often assumed - through the presence of a traditional culture of volunteering, than through the absence of a culture of paid employment. Professionalization is nevertheless a success story. Once started, it stimulates a need for continuation. The practical implications of these results are obvious: if one wish to promote professionalization in the management of sport associations and with it create jobs, this can be done very promisingly through governmental start-up subsidies in those associations, which wish this - always assuming that these jobs finance themselves long-term, an assumption which is backed-up by experience. Pointedly formulated: it requires only a seed of 'paid management', to practically and also theoretically resolve the contradiction between theoretical probability and empirical irrelevance of professionalization of sport associations.

References

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