

# (SP) SPORT ORGANIZATIONS STRUCTURE: TREND AND EVOLUTION IN THE RESEARCH FIELD

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## **Introduction**

There is a plenty of literature on organizational structure, such as Mintzberg (1979), Child (1972) and Miles (2003) works among other authors, but about organizational structure in sport organizations a dearth of literature is a characterising feature. The present article studies the state of scholarly knowledge on organizational structure in sport organizations by reviewing the existing literature on this issue. The purpose of this paper is to characterize the trend and evolution experienced by the literature on structure in sport organizations during the last thirty years, as well as the most relevant authors in the field.

The relation between organizational studies and sports has already been studied by several authors (Wolfe, Weick et al. 2005), who sought to explain organizational phenomenon using sports to illustrate topics like: organizational loyalty, organizational performance, organizational reward system, managerial succession, motivation, organizational objectives, interorganizational networks, organizational strategy, among many others. In our research, we aim to examine those researches which explore the particular nature of organizational phenomenon in sports, in particular, the phenomena of organizational structuring.

The increasing interest in the academic world in developing researches in the area of sports is also – and particularly from the organizational studies – on studying sports can also be explained due to the relative less difficulty in data collecting on this field and relative simplicity of their organizations. This suggests a need for reflection in the sport field and search for explanations and guidance, in order to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in outcomes and operations, even more nowadays, when sport organizations have become or are becoming professionalized institutions (Slack, T. and Hinings, C.R, 1994). Some questions arise like, what are the central issues underlying the research on sport organizations structuring? Who are the main exponents on the field? And, what are the main contributions and future challenges for the research in this area?

## **Research methodology**

An in-depth review of the literature related to sport, leisure, management, organization, sociology and economy has been undertaken, searching for those articles discussing about structure in sport organizations, using this two concepts as selection criteria. The sample included over 60 relevant articles published in the last thirty years<sup>4</sup> found in publishers and journal databases throughout the internet<sup>5</sup>. We used primary and secondary channels of information (Cooper 1989)<sup>6</sup> in order to gain a well-versed understanding of the scholarly knowledge on sport organizations structuring through academic publications.

<sup>4</sup> We chose the years between 1975 and 2005 because “until the mid 1970s, sport management textbooks focussed on administrative principles in physical education and athletics, they essentially “ignored management analysis and organization theory”

<sup>5</sup> Several information resources have been used, like Taylor & Francis, Sage Publications, PubMed, Scopus, Blackwell Synergy and Journal Storage (JSTOR) as well as EBSCO*Host* Research Database and other sources in the web like Google Scholar.

<sup>6</sup> We only considered articles in English.

## Findings on research streams

Reviewed literature allowed us to classify the researches, illustrate the trend followed during the last thirty years and identify the major exponents on structure in sport organizations, being Slack, T (with 21 articles), Hinings, C.R. (with 19 articles) and Kikulis, L.M (with 10 articles) the ones that more have written about it. This literature can also be classified in three major topics, (1) organizational change (e.g., Slack, Hinings, Kikulis, O'Brien), (2) organizational effectiveness (e.g., Papadimitriou, Thibault, Frisby, Kikulis) and (3) structural configuration of organizations (e.g., Kikulis, Slack, Hinings, Cunningham, Ashley) all of them related to organizational structure. The three belong to general theory of organizations and reflect the intention of academics to search for some organizational concepts inside sport organizations.

Also interesting was the fact that almost half of the articles were published after the year 2000, revealing an increasing interest on sport organizations and, most probably, on sports in general during the last five years.

## Discussion

Organizational change is the leading topic in literature of structure in sport organizations, specially associated to sport organizations movement from amateurism to professionalism, and how structural configuration differs between the two different states. Therefore, a space for future research can be found here, leaving behind the amateur stage of sport organizations and studying their organizational structure now that they have even higher levels of professionalism.

It is also interesting to see that almost all articles focus in environment-structure relationship emphasising the relevance of environment as an economic source provider and responsible for the sport organization survival. But if today sport is considered an industry (Rottenberg 1956; Noll and Zimbalist 1997; Szymanski 2001; Chadwick and Beech 2004; Foster, Greyser et al. 2005) the relationship between sport organizations and environment might have become more complex and not only based on economic survival, but also to value creation for all of the actors in the field or industry (Foster, Greyser et al. 2005).

The fact that these topics – organizational change and environment-structure relationship – were the leading ones can be associated to the influence of two significant processes experienced by sports since mid XX century: professionalization and commercialization of sport. The following literature review is part of a wider research project at IESE Business School CSBM (Center of Sport Business Management) in relation to sport organizations structure.

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