

The Accumulation of Positions and Group Interests in the Decision Making of Nonprofit Sport Organisations

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Abstract

The positions and functions that voluntary directors and sports managers hold and carry out within sports organisations may be analysed in the light of how the personal interests of these actors influence decision-making. In accordance with the political model of organisations, interests and internal alliances may constitute veritable sources of power within the boards and management of sports organisations (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2003, Mintzberg, 1989). The aim of this study was to verify the occurrence of the accumulation of positions of sports directors and managers who participate in the decision-making of the boards of modality sports associations (MSAs) and thus seek to uncover the logic of group interests which are at the basis of these accumulations.

To this end, a quantitative research methodology was developed via the triangulation of data sources (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in a three-step procedure: the analysis of specific documents (statutes and internal regulations) which made it possible to identify the actors and their respective competences (structure and formal authority), participating observation during board meetings, over a seven month period, which made it possible to collect data on the type of interventions made during meetings, the actors of the decision-making process and the accumulation of managerial positions, and, finally, the qualitative interview applied to the presidents of the boards of the MSAs, which complemented, justified and corroborated the data produced in the preceding phases.

Of the total nineteen MSAs of the Autonomous Region of Madeira, Portugal, data was collected from six associations: Athletics, Basketball, Canoeing, Gymnastics, Table Tennis and Volleyball, which corresponds to 32% of the total universe.

For the reduction and organization of data, an adequate software programme for research of qualitative nature was used - NUDIST N6 (Non-numerical unstructured data indexing searching and theorizing, version 6, by Qualitative Solutions and Research Pty Ld) and the thematic content analysis technique of the logic-semantic type (Bardin, 1995).

Findings showed that the accumulation of positions of members of the board was common practice in all MSAs, the same occurring at the level of sports technical directors, though in four of the six organisations. In a universe of thirty-six members of boards of the six organisations (presidents, vice-presidents, and directors), twenty-one (58,33%) held another position within the same modality. The most recurring position was that of judge/referee with fifteen members accumulating this position. Findings unequivocally reveal the importance given to arbitration issues, enhanced and corroborated by the fact that the boards of the MSAs showed an interest in having

representatives of their trust in the arbitration council (body of the MSA with autonomy in choosing and coordinating referees). Three reasons may explain these findings: firstly, the difficulty that voluntary directors and organisations evidence in managing to recruit new directors and referees, secondly, the importance that Madeira's sports policy gives to sports competition at the national level and its respective arbitration, consistent with the subsidies given in support of the associative movement, and lastly, the interests that the position of a referee may enclose as it is one of the few associative positions that is financially gratified, in opposition to that of a voluntary director. In addition, one should equally mention that the statutes and regulations of the MSAs do not foresee any incompatibility of managerial or technical positions and, at a same time, carrying out the role of a referee. This situation deserves some thought and reflection in terms of regulating and giving credibility to the position of sports director. Findings recommend the adoption of an ethical code or the regulating of the incompatibility of management positions within nonprofit sport organisations.

References

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