

LEADERSHIP IN SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS

Juan Carlos Fernández-Calvo, María José García-Calvo and José Manuel Medina-Morales

Colombia Universidad Industrial de Santande

Abstract: The transition of leadership in sports institutions is a complex process that is influenced by a variety of factors, including the current economic crisis, the changing needs of athletes and participants, and the increasing demands of stakeholders. This study explored the factors that contribute to successful leadership transitions in sports institutions. The findings suggest that effective leadership transitions are characterized by strong communication, clear planning, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Keywords: leadership transition, sports institutions, economic crisis, stakeholders, communication, planning

Introduction

During the past decade, various researchers have analyzed sports management in Spain. The changes that have taken place in our society have pushed sports centers towards more organized and efficient management. This was achieved through adequate planning and programming of activities and a constant effort to optimize all resources: material, human and economic (Moreno & Gutiérrez, 1999). The current crisis is a new reality, not only economic, but also social and in the sports sector, where management is faced with the challenge of optimizing diminishing resources. The aim of this study was to determine the transition of leadership in sports institutions.

History of sports

In primitive times, sports provided a social identity as well as a way to adapt to the environment. The practice of sports formed part of daily life: our ancestors ran in order to escape from bigger animals, fought against their enemies, and swam to get from one place to another by crossing rivers...

Sports have been widely investigated throughout history. In primitive times, it was a competition characterized by ethics, values and survival. In today's society, it is an activity promoted as way of growth, development of healthy habits, entertainment, and leisure (Rodríguez, 2000). Thus, sports reflect a sociocultural and educational phenomenon and are a part of human history since its beginnings. Sports are part of human culture. The simple urge to compete is innate to human beings (García Ferrando, 1982). With the evolution of society, the idiosyncrasies of each village, and the culture of different periods, the term "competition" came into being in the language of sports.

Along these lines, Cagigal (1975) indicates that sports are something intrinsic to human nature which has always managed to manifest itself since the beginning of man's existence. García Ferrando (1990) considers sports as a source of health: physical, mental, as well as social (Lucas-Marín, 1986; Cazorla, 1979).

Sports today

Demographic growth, progress in transportation and communications, greater social mobility, constant technological innovations, globalization, social change, the increase in free time, both for the individual and for our society in general, have made possible active leisure time in the form of physical activity and sports.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2002), the number of persons older than sixty years of age is increasing: worldwide, in Europe, and especially in Spain. In 2025 there will be 1.2 billion persons in the world who are older than 60, of which 840 million will live in developed countries. Europe is one of the countries with more elders. It is possible that by 2050, 37% of the European population will be more than 60 years of age.

Because of this aging population, physical activity must become an obligation (Salinas, Cocca, Kamal & Viciano, 2010). This affirmation is supported not only by studies (Martínez & Camps, 2008), but also by Public Administrations (Ramos & Pinto, 2005).

The practice of any physical activity is directly related to well-being, healthy lifestyles, as well as improved health and quality of life (Landi & Onder, 2007; Rebollo & Sanchez, 2008). Marcos & Galiano (2004) bring to light that the benefits that practicing a physical activity contribute to good health and quality of life are more evident among the elderly. The risks entailed in a sedentary lifestyle have been analyzed and clearly demonstrated in numerous epidemiologic studies (Guayar, Santa-Olalla, Banegas, López, & RodríguezArtalejo, 2004; Chodzko-Zajko, 2006; Salinas et al., 2010).

However, in spite of the increase in the number of older persons practicing a physical activity in recent years, this number is still insufficient (Gonzalo & Pasarin, 2004; García Ferrando, 2006; Martínez del Castillo, 2009). Therefore, at present, a sedentary lifestyle poses a threat to public health (Varo & Martínez-González, 2006). It follows that the practice of a physical activity carried out on a regular basis brings a series of benefits for good health in adults (Serratos, 2011). On the contrary, sedentary lifestyles are associated with risks which negatively affect an individual's quality of life (Varo & Martínez-González, 2006).

The relationship between practicing a physical activity or sport and physical and psychological health is a subject much studied by researchers. There are numerous investigations which evaluate the benefits, such as psychological well-being, that physical exercise produce (Jiménez, Martínez, Miró & Sánchez, 2008). However, Fox (2000) affirm that physical activity improves state of mind equally in children, youths, and adults. Regarding reduction in clinical depression, we make mention of Lawlor & Hopker (2001) who report an improvement in mild depression not due to a physiological pathology. In reference to reduction in levels of anxiety, Garnier & Waysfeld (1995) attest that leisure time and physical activity outdoors help to promote lean muscle development and serve as a distraction from mental activity. Holmes (1993) maintains that coping with stress through physical activity produces a sense of satisfaction, improved physical shape, and an enhanced emotional state.

Finally, in relation to research on increased self esteem in individuals who practice a sport, we note the studies of McAuley, Mihalko & Bane (1997), and those of Huertas, López, Pablos, Colado, Pablos-Abella & Campos (2003), as among the most significant.

Sports as a socializing element

For Mestre (2002), physical activity and sports have different social connotations, i.e., team sports improve cooperation and honesty, and individual sports improve responsibility and autonomy.

According to the High Sport College of Spain (García-Ferrando & Llopis, 2010), adult persons practice sports for various reasons: 37.5% as a daily escape; 23.4% for enjoyment; and 14.3% for competition. 24.8% practice a physical activity to improve their health and their social relations (Table 1).

Table 1: Reasons for practicing a physical activity in adults (García-Ferrando & Llopis, 2010)

Reason	Percent
Leisure: Amusement and hobby	23.4 %
Relationships: Meet people	4.8 %
Avoidance: Exercise and escape from routine	37.5 %
Competition: Enjoy sports and competition	14.3 %
Health and beauty: Improve health and figure	20.0 %

Definitely, sports require not only good trainers, as in the past, but also new elements and techniques included in the concept of management (Mestre, 2013).

In the late seventies, democracy came to Spain, and with it a change in expectations. People wanted quality of life, which brought about a new social reality. For this reason, the municipalities began to assume responsibility for the infrastructures and services necessary to narrow the gap between themselves and other surrounding European countries (Cecilio, 2000).

At the municipal level, the city councils constructed and equipped most of the installations in existence today. They also provided the funds for putting in place the management and development of sports policies aimed at disseminating what had been coined “sports for everyone”. They have therefore played a key role in the development and implementation of this concept (Andrés & Delgado, 1995). As a consequence, these installations are under municipal management. However, user satisfaction should not and cannot be considered separate from the business philosophy and objectives on which the future of the organization is based (Luna-Arocas & Mundina, 1998). Celma (2008) affirms that the generation of change witnessed in these past few years in Public Administration, and more specifically in the sports sector, stems from the different management forms and models they adopted in response to the essential need to adapt the organization and its services to the level of quality that citizens demand in regard to physical activities and sports. There are three important elements in sports management at the municipal level. They are:

- Active: participants, users, entities, associations
- Structural: equipment, activity space
- Organizational: administration and management

Applied sports management becomes a process that requires a coordinated and interdependent effort (Mestre, 2013) on the part of the manager of some basic elements, namely:

- a) The sports needs and objectives of the population (socio-demographic profile)
- b) Legislation regarding sports
- c) The sports manager
- d) Sports organizations and their directors
- e) Planning as a work method
- f) Economic resources (budget)
- g) Sports programs
- h) The sports installation
- i) The trainers
- j) Ethics and values of sports
- k) The environment and its protection
- l) Quality

Among its various functions, one of the principal tasks of the City Councils is sports management. In Spain, municipal sport is the greater reality in regards to the different manifestations of sports in existence presently. Although it is not alone, municipal sports dominate “sports for everyone”, and consequently, all categories of sports events and activities, not only at the municipal level, but also at the national and international level.

According to Teruelo (2009), the people have a right to satisfy their need to practice and attend sports events, and it is the responsibility of the City Councils to create sports centers, team sports, and local competitions. Municipal sports managers need a space where they can measure and compare their areas of management with those of other municipalities with a similar population. This information is needed in order to share common criteria and to become aware of other criteria, thereby promoting innovation. There is also a need to set up work groups in

various areas of management to evaluate the services provided and the sports installations in general (benchmarking).

Benchmarking is a systematic and constant evaluation of the products, services and work procedures of an enterprise, and is recognized as one of the best practices to improve an organization (Spendolini, 2005).

Managing in times of crisis

It is therefore of utmost importance to conduct an exhaustive diagnosis in order to plan adequately for the medium- and long-term, using a participatory model based on the right balance between the commercial, public and social sectors (Rifkin, 1997). As we saw previously, at present and with an eye toward the future, municipal management should move towards carrying out six basic functions (Blanco, 2012): administer, coordinate, manage, integrate, invest, and plan. These functions should lead to the achievement of strategies based on actions and tasks that the municipalities can develop in an autonomous way and to their capacity to provide quality services.

We must work to change. We have to know where we're going, what we are, and what we are here for. Along this line, about public sports, render a faithful portrait of the reality we have before our eyes and which has installed itself in our society, a reality that has come to stay for a long time. Anyone who refuses to see it this way has and will continue to have a problem because "one can not hope to resolve new situations with old formulas". Planning, structure, and organization of Human Resources are the most valuable assets any organization or business has. Sharing common goals, managing talent, improving team work, and management's leadership are key elements for the organization to function.

Leadership

It is clear that leadership is fundamental for the effectiveness of work groups and for the organizations to which they belong (Baquero Pecino & Sánchez Santa-Bárbara, 2000).

During a visit to Spain, John Kotter, speaker on the subject of Leadership and Change, stated that "it is not possible to manage organizations of the 21st century using frameworks from the 20th century and directors from the 19th century", and that only one out of every five persons occupying an executive position has the makings of a leader. Leadership must respond effectively to the new needs of organizations: innovation, cultural diversity, work-based knowledge, communication, and work groups. Work groups play a central role in organizations, and leadership is essential for the effectiveness of these teams (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; O'Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman, Lapiz & Self, 2010).

Because of their characteristics and diversity, today's organizations represent fertile ground for the study of leadership models (García Saiz, 2010). More specifically, globalization, new technologies, communication, and economic and social trends challenge organizations with new leadership roles and functions (Burke & Cooper, 2006).

The need to face new challenges in a globalized world requires leaders to accept a complex role which involves combining continuity with innovation, based on a solid foundation of social values, ethical principles and the practice of integrating groups of professionals from different areas.

In comparison with typical traditional leadership, there have emerged new models of leadership much more dynamic and in step with reality. Thus, we see other types of leadership, for example, the transformational model which demonstrates positive correlations not only among different individual variables in the leader (ethics, emotional management, knowledge-building, etc.), but also with results at the organizational level (better performance, higher team satisfaction).

In recent years, interest in studies of the relationship between leadership and ethics (Simola, Barling & Turner, 2010), transcultural leadership (Chocar, Brodbeck & House, 2007), and global leadership (Heames & Harvey, 2006) has grown.

Team leadership can be understood in two ways (Day, Gron & Salas, 2004). Firstly, leadership as those attributes (abilities and behavior) that the members bring to the team, for example, charisma, integrity, etc., which have an impact on the group processes and performance. Secondly, leadership as the result of group processes (group learning) that facilitate the adaptation and performance of the work team in different stages of development. Both approaches are essential to the understanding of team leadership.

Among the new tendencies or models in team leadership, we make mention of the following:

- The Model of Hackman & Wageman (2005) deals with team coaching. It indicates how leaders can influence team learning and development by carrying out distinct functions in each work stage. For example, at the initial stages, the function of motivation, to get the members of the team to know each other better; later, strategy consultation for carrying out tasks; and in the final stages, education, with the objective of stimulating the group to think.

- The Model of Zaccaro, Heinen & Shuffler (2009) establishes the foundation of team leadership on connectivity, integration, and coherence among the team members. The leader's fundamental role, aside from general management and leadership, is achieved specifically through coaching and developing the skills and capacities of the team members.

- The Model of Kozlowski, Watola, Jensen, Kim & Botero (2009), or adaptive, flexible, and fluid model, adapts to the contingencies of the work load, the abilities of the team members, and the relationships between them. The leader's role can rotate among the team members depending on the circumstances, thereby creating distributed leadership.

- The Model of Morgeson, Scott & Karam (2010) proposes two dimensions: internal and external leadership and formal shared leadership. In addition, they identify two stages of team development. First, the transition phase where the team defines its mission, establishes goals, plans, organizes, works on the development of the team, and provides feedback. Second, the action phase where the task of the leader is to supervise, manage limits, create challenges, encourage self-management, and promote an atmosphere of social support.

Today's situations, so characterized by ambiguity and complexity, make it difficult for a leader to successfully carry out all the functions inherent to leadership. For this reason, the leader needs to exercise shared leadership, which can be defined as a dynamic and interactive process among the team members whose objective is to actively communicate with each other in order to attain the team's goals or the organization's goals or both (Pearce & Conger, 2003).

It has been noted that the effectiveness of shared leadership increases with the complexity of the team work, for example with decision-making. Shared leadership also improves group processes such as collaboration, cooperation, and coordination (Yeatls & Hyten, 1998). In regard to the effectiveness of the work team, it has been shown that there is a positive relation between shared leadership and the efficiency of the task in certain contexts, such as senior management, non-profit organizations, etc. (Carson, Tesluk & Marrone, 2007). We understand and share with Celma (2004) the fact that the new role of the sports manager should be based on an evolution that goes beyond strictly technical aspects to achieve an executive or leadership level. In this vein, the author establishes the differences in managerial styles between traditional leadership and newer forms of leadership (as demonstrated graphically in Table 2).

Table 2: Difference in managerial styles (Celma, 2004)

Managerial Styles

Conclusions

The leader of a sports institution knows how to use all the resources he has at hand. He not only administers and controls, but develops and innovates. In the face of the economic crisis, many sports institutions have been able to keep their doors open as a result of a different managerial style. The desired quality a sports institution achieves is a product of the new role the leader has assumed, sports marketing, and above all, the day to day reality of greater cooperation and sense of purpose the institution now experiences.

A leader who knows how to listen to all the employees in his institution and who makes decisions accordingly, brings about change and benefits from an increased confidence in the leader on the part of his work team.

References

- Andrés, F. & Delgado, C. (1995). *Política deportiva municipal. El nuevo papel de las corporaciones locales*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Deportes.
- Blanco, D. M. (2012). *Desarrollo de la gestión de la comunicación de las empresas*. Tesis Doctoral. Buenos Aires: Universidad San Andrés.
- Burke, R. J. & Cooper, C. (2006). *Leading in turbulent times*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Baquero Pecino, C. y Sánchez Santa-Bárbara, E. (2000). Análisis de la fiabilidad del lead (descripción de la efectividad y adaptabilidad del líder). *Anales de Psicología*, 16(2), 167175.
- Cagigal, J. M. (1975). *El deporte en la sociedad actual*. Madrid: Magisterio español.
- Carson, J. B., Tesluk, P. E. & Marrone, J.A. (2007). Shared leadership in teams: an investigation of antecedent conditions and performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(5), 1217-1234.
- Cazorla, L. M. (1979). *Deporte y estado*. Barcelona: Labor, D.L.
- Cecilio, R. (2000). *Perspectivas de futuro, la gestión deportiva en España*. Barcelona: Inde.
- Celma, J. (2004). *ABC del gestor deportivo*. Barcelona: Inde.
- Celma, J. (2008). *La gestión deportiva local: claves de futuro en la gestión y práctica deportiva*. Barcelona. Inde
- Chocar, J. S., Brodbeck, F. & House, R. J. (2007). *Culture and leadership across the world. The globe book of in-depth studies of 25 societies*. New Jersey: Lawrance Erlbaum Ass.
- Chodzko-Zajko, W. (2006) The USA National Strategic. Plan for promoting physical activity in the mid-life and older adult population. *Studies in Physical Culture & Tourism*, 13, 1518.
- Day, D. V., Gron, P. & Salas, E. (2004). Leadership capacity in teams. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15, 857-880.
- Fox, K.R. (2000). The effects of exercise on self-perceptions and self-esteem. In S.J.H. Biddle, K.R. Fox., & S.H. Boutcher (Eds.), *Physical activity and psychological well-being* (pp. 88117). London: Routledge.

García Ferrando, M. (1982). *Deporte y sociedad*. Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura

- García Ferrando, M. (1990). *Aspectos Sociales del Deporte*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial. García Ferrando, M. (2006). Veinticinco años de análisis del comportamiento deportivo de la población española. *Revista internacional de sociología*, 44, 15-38.
- García-Ferrando, M. & Llopis Goig, R. (2010). *Ideal democrático y bienestar personal*. Madrid: CSD.
- Garnier, A. & Waysfeld, B. (1995). *Alimentación y práctica Deportiva*. Barcelona: Ed. Hispano Europea.
- Gonzalo, E. & Pasarín, M. A. (2004). La salud de las personas mayores. *Gaceta Sanitaria*, 18(Supl 1), 69-80.
- Guayar, P., Santa-Olalla, P., Banegas, J. R., López, E. & Rodríguez-Artalejo, F. (2004). Actividad física y calidad de vida de la población adulta mayor en España. *Medicina Clínica*, 123, 606-610.
- Hackman, J. R. & Wagerman, R. (2005). A theory of team coaching. *Academy of Management Review*, 30, 269-287.
- Heames, J. T. & Harvey, M. (2006). The evolution of the executive from the 20th century manager to the 21st century global leader. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 13(2), 29-42.
- Holmes, D.S. (1993). Aerobic fitness and the response to psychological stress. In P. Seraganian (Ed.), *Exercise psychology. The influence on physical exercise on psychological process* (pp. 39-63). Nueva York: John Wiley.
- Huertas, F., López, L., Pablos, A., Colado, J. C., Campos, J. & Pablos-Abella, C. (2003). Efectos de un programa de ejercicio físico en mujeres mayores de 55 años. *Revista de Psicología del Deporte*, 12(1), 7-26.
- Jiménez, M., Martínez, E., Miró, E. & Sánchez, A. (2005). Bienestar psicológico y hábitos saludables, ¿están asociados a la práctica del ejercicio físico? *International Journal of Clinical Health & Psychology*, 8(1), 185-202.
- Judge, T. A. & Piccolo R. F. (2004). Transformational and Transactional Leadership: A MetaAnalytic Test of Their Relative Validity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89(5), 755–768.
- Kozlowski, S. W. J., Watola, D., Jensen J. M., Kim, B. & Botero, I. (2009). Developing adaptive teams: A theory of dynamic team leadership. In E. Salas, G. F. Goodwin & C. S. Burke (Eds.). *Team effectiveness in complex organizations: Cross-disciplinary perspectives and approaches* (pp. 109-146). New York: Routledge Academic.
- Landi, F. & Onder, G. (2007). Physical activity prevented functional decline among frail community-living elderly subject in an international observational study. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiologic*, 60, 518-524.
- Lawlor, D. A. & Hopker, S. W. (2001). The effectiveness of exercise as an intervention in the management of depression: Systematic review and meta-regression analysis of randomised controlled trials. *British Medical Journal*, 322, 763-767.
- Lucas-Marín, A. (1986). *Fundamentos de teoría sociológica*. Madrid: Tecnos.

- Luna-Arocas, R. & Mundina, J. (1998b). El marketing estratégico del deporte: satisfacción, motivación y expectativas. *Revista de Psicología del Deporte*, 7(2), 172-177.
- Marcos, J. F. & Galiano, D. (2004). El envejecimiento y sus problemas. El ejercicio como solución de algunos de ellos. Sevilla: Consejería de Turismo y Deporte.
- Martínez del Castillo, J. (2009). Los hábitos de actividad física de las mujeres en España. *Revista Internacional de ciencias del Deporte*, 14, 81-93.
- Martínez, I. & Camps, A. (2008). La externalización de los servicios deportivos municipales. Estudio de caso de Bizkaia. *Apunts. Educación Física y Deportes*, 92(2), 74-80.
- McAuley, E., Mihalko, S. L. & Bane, S. M. (1997). Exercise and self-esteem in middle-aged adults: Multidimensional relationships and physical fitness and self-efficacy influences. *Journal of Behavioural Medicine*, 20, 67-83.
- Mestre, J. A. (2002). *Planificación estratégica de la gestión de piscinas*. Madrid: Gymnos.
- Mestre, J. A. (2013). Componentes de la gestión deportiva. Una aproximación. *Revista de Educación Física*, 2(2), 1-8.
- Moreno, J.A. & Gutiérrez, M. (1999). La gestión de las instalaciones acuáticas cubiertas. *Revista Apuntes de Educación Física*, 57, 68-76.
- Morgeson, F. P., Scott, D. & Karem, E. P. (2010). Leadership in teams a functional approach to understanding leadership structures and processes. *Journal of Management*, 36(1), 539.
- O'Reilly, C., Caldwell, D., Chatman, J., Lapid, M. & Self, W. (2010). How leadership matters: The effects of leaders alignment on strategy implementation. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 21(1), 104-113.
- Pearce, C. L. & Conger, J. A. (2003). *Shared leadership. Reframing the hows and whys of leadership*. Thousand Oaks: C.A. Sager.
- Ramos, P. & Pinto, J. A. (2005). *Actividad física y ejercicio en los mayores*. Madrid: Instituto de Salud Pública Comunidad de Madrid.
- Rebollo, S. & Sánchez, A. (2000). Situación del mercado laboral actual en el ámbito de la actividad física y deportiva. *Motricidad*, 6(1), 141-154.
- Rifkin, J. (1997). *Contabilidad de gestión para tomar decisiones*. Barcelona: Marcombo.
- Rodríguez, J. (2000). *Historia del deporte*. Barcelona: Inde.
- Salinas, F., Cocca, A., Kamal, M. & Viciano, J. (2010). Actividad física y sedentarismo: Repercusiones sobre la salud y calidad de vida de las personas mayores. *Retos*, 17, 126-129.

- Serratos, L. (2011). *El deporte como promotor de la salud y agente socializador/sociales*. Bogotá: I.C.F.E.S.
- Simola, S. K., Barling, J. & Turner, N. (2010). Transformational leadership and leader moral orientation: Contrasting and ethic of justice and an ethic of care. *Leadership Quarterly*, 21, 179-188.
- Spendolini, M. J. (2005). *Benchmarking*. Bogotá: Editorial Norma.
- Teruelo, B. (2009). *Planificación y Calidad de los Servicios Deportivos*. Bilbao: Universidad Deusto.
- Varo, J. J. & Martínez-González, M. A. (2006). El consejo sanitario en la promoción de la actividad física. *Medicina Clínica*, 232, 138-146
- World Health Organization (2002). *Physical Activity and Older People*. Ginebra: WHO
- Yeats, D. E. & Hyten, C. (1998). *High-performing self-managed work teams. A comparison of theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks: C.A. Sager.
- Zaccaro, S., Heinen, B. & Shuffler, M. (2009). Team leadership and team effectiveness. In E. Salas, G. F. Goodwin & C. S. Burke (Eds.). *Team effectiveness in complex organization: Cross-disciplinary perspectives and approaches*, 83-11. New York: Psychology Press.