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THE MANAGEMENT OF THE SELECTION AND TRAINING OF
WATER POLO PLAYERS

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Abstract

The present research aims at finding ways to solve the difficult conjunctures in which a private-type sport structure develops its activity for initiating children into the practice of sport and designing the training program required to become a professional athlete. It provides the future sport managers with certain methods and managerial techniques applicable to everyday work, increasing their efficiency and giving them the opportunity to identify the connections between the managerial practice and theory. The scientific management methods and techniques are implemented in the organization and management of a private sports club. A private club is characterised by significant sports results and the ability to attract as many sponsors as possible. The main task of a sports managerial team is to organize the performance activity. The paper also deals with the design and practical application of a strategic project for the managerial development of a private sports club whose purpose is the selection and training of water polo players. It promotes the attributes specific to performance management. Implementing the research at a national level helps to determine how much the sports school and sports club managers know and apply performance management techniques into their activity. The strategic development project model will serve the managerial activities performed by private sporting structures.

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1. Introduction

In the last five decades, sport has strongly developed in terms of performance, facilities, equipment, apparatus and devices, structural organization, competitions, management and, last but not least, scientific research (Rață, 2006).

The development of swimming as a sport has been an important premise that favoured the emergence of water polo, one of the oldest games that can also be found in the program of the 2nd edition of the modern Olympic Games held in Paris, in 1900 (Vasiliu, 1998).

One of the shortcomings in the selection and training of water polo players is the small number of centres and clubs that have proper facilities for playing the polo game. This is a key aspect, because in the countries where polo is highly developed, such as Hungary, Croatia, Spain, Italy, the number of sports clubs for children and juniors is much larger, allowing a wide range of athletes to become elite polo players.

The need to set up a polo school must be determined first by consulting the interested groups through the method of direct approach and the application of questionnaires and discussions with children and parents on the reasons for creating a polo school, but also on their expectations regarding this school.

A private club is characterised by significant sports results and the ability to attract as many sponsors as possible. The main task of a sports managerial team is to organize the performance activity. Each member of this team must group together and perform the tasks that they are supposed to fulfil. There are employees in charge with collecting the funds necessary for purchasing sports equipment and other employees who deal with the organization and carrying out of competitions and training camps.

2. Problem Statement

Performance sports “is an essential factor for the national sport development, which fulfils an important representative function for Romania in the official international sports competitions” (Law 69/2000, Article 12).

“The performance sport aims at developing the skills of an individual in an organized system of selection, training and competition meant to improve the sports results, beat the records and win” (Law 69/2000, Article 13).

There is not much literature about the activity of water polo private sports clubs. It is worth noting, however, that there were successfully set up private schools for other sports disciplines, too: basketball, football, tennis, swimming etc.

From the analysis of documents, it results that the teams that achieved performances were composed of former swimmers who started to play polo because of the lack of performance in swimming.

The water polo game is “a branch of swimming and sports games carried out in the water between two teams, each one made up of 7 players (6 field players and one goalkeeper) and 6 reserve players who can be used as substitutes.

The sports club is “a basic sports structure with legal personality established under the law:

- legal entity under private law, non-profit structure or joint-stock sports company; legal entity under public law;

- under private law, non-profit legal entity set up under the law with single-sport or multi-sport structure;
- under public law, it is a public institution subordinated to the state administration bodies; its activity objective is performance, selection, training and participation in domestic and international competitions;
- under public law, single-sport or multi-sport structure that is organized and operates".
(*Enciclopedia Educației Fizice și Sportului din România*, 2002, p. 111)

The sports legislation refers to the sports structures with juridical personality, established under the Law 69/2000 and GO 26/2000 regarding the Associations and Foundations (Law 69/2000, Paragraph 1, Article 26); private law sports clubs are non-profit legal entities established under the law as single-sport or multi-sport structures (Law 69/2000, Article 27).

Sports clubs have their own administration, budget and patrimony management regime approved by their general assemblies, under the law (Law 69/2000, Paragraph 1, Article 28); Sports clubs are subjected every year to financial inspections according to the law (Law 69/2000, Paragraph 2, Article 28).

Sports clubs, regardless of the organization form provided by the present law, will comply with the specific provisions of the national federation norms and regulations and, where appropriate, of the professional leagues from the respective sports branch (Law 69/2000, Paragraph 6, Article 28).

The management of a sports club involves a concrete resolution to the following operations: establishment of strategic and operational objectives; searching and creating the conditions for conducting activities in order to obtain measurable performance; priority acquisition of resources; making decisions of different types; considering the manager as head of the institution; energetic and creative attitudes in order to obtain effective results (Gherguț, 2007).

In the content of the management process, the specialists have defined a number of specific functions or assignments. The management process is a continuous process that has a cyclical character and can be structured in three main phases (Gheorghe & Covrig, 2008): forecasting, operationalization and commensuration.

The structural organization consists of grouping the functions, activities, assignments and tasks according to certain criteria and distributing them in organisational subdivisions, per groups and individuals, in order to achieve them for ensuring the best conditions for accomplishing and getting beyond the objectives of the organization" (Nicolescu & Verboncu, 1996).

Cornescu, Mihăilescu and Stanciu (2001) consider that the delimitation of the management process content, in terms of functions, should take into account the nature of the tasks involved, how they are accomplished and also the homogeneity of activities.

According to Nicolescu and Verboncu (2001), the development of the organizational function leads to its shaping as an independent scientific discipline which includes a set of specific concepts and a rich operational range among which: job analysis, SWOT analysis, analysis of organizational variables, critical path, GANTT diagram, organizational chart etc.

3. Research Questions

Given that we had little information about the setting up and management of the public sports structures under private law, we have issued the following interrogative assertions:

What would be the social resonance of such structures at the local and national levels?

What educational offers and cost-effective services (of large interest) could provide these institutions?

What are the legal requirements and the normative documents necessary for running a private club?

How should the activity be organized in order for the organization to become profitable and survive?

Do we have the strictly necessary resources to start the activity?

What does effectiveness, efficiency, economic and effective really mean in organizing and managing the business?

Following the interrogative assertions, we have considered that:

If the organization and management of a polo sports club promote the attributes of performance management (consistency, courage, clarity, consideration) and at the same time take into account the general (social – economic – political context) and specific factors of the private sports organizations (actual and efficient spending of resources), then will the club improve its activity and become profitable?

Does the entire activity of the sports club fall within the scope of a short-term (one year) strategic development project?

4. Purpose of the Study

To develop, implement and monitor a strategic development project meant to promote the attributes of performance management (consistency, courage, clarity, consideration) and to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the processes of selection and training of the performance polo players.

5. Research Methods

The research methods and techniques used in managerial science are mainly designed to solve as efficiently as possible some issues specific to the different functions of organization and management.

The research methods and techniques used in this paper are:

- methods specific to educational sciences: method of diagnosis, bibliographic documentation, direct and indirect observation, questionnaire survey, method of experiment, mathematical-statistical method and graphical representation;
- methods specific to the managerial science: SWOT, PESTLE, logical framework method (logframe) and scoreboard method.

The scientific experiment was conducted in “Delfi” Sports Club (CS Delfi) that the author has been running since 2005. This club is in partnership with “Dinamo Bucharest” Sports Club, according to a collaboration agreement within which we managed to implement the aforesaid research methods.

The study took place in the sports facilities of the above-mentioned military club subordinated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which provides optimal conditions for training, but also for carrying out competitions in summer time (in the outdoor swimming pool located in the park of the club). During the cold season, we can use the “Floreasca” indoor swimming pool.

Applying the SWOT analysis phases to our research enables us to differentiate the following action situations:

I. Strict delimitation of the activity field for which they are responsible in order to avoid confusions.

II. Preliminary documentation - consisting in collecting information about the field for which they are responsible. The most important objective of this phase is to bring together the main fund of information regarding the respective field in order to be able to start the analysis of the issues involved.

III. Establishment and recording of the main issues (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats).

IV. Drawing up four lists:

- Strengths (A),

- Weaknesses (B),

- Opportunities (C),

- Threats (D) – that reveal the terms of comparison of the causes that generate effects, the phenomena and the solutions for solving the problematic situations.

The PESTLE analysis shows the political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental factors that influence the current work of the institution and must be taken into consideration when we determine the priorities.

6. Findings

For creating and implementing a strategic development project of a private sports club (CS Delfi, in our case), we monitored the sequence of the applied research operations and activities:

- Analysis of the legislative and normative framework for the setting up and operation of a private sports club;

- Opinion poll in clientele population and interest groups on the necessity to set up private sports clubs for swimming and water polo;
- Logistics framework of club operation.

The activities carried out by CS Delfi at the beginning were:

- swimming learning (initiation);
- performance polo.

Subsequently, following the inventory of the resources and especially due to the demand of the clientele, new offers and services were provided starting from 2009: therapeutic swimming and leisure swimming (recreational swimming).

Table 01 shows the evolution of the number of participants in the activities of CS Delfi from 2009 to 2011.

Table 01. Evolution of the number of participants in the activities of CS Delfi 2009-2011

No.	Categories of activities	2009	2010	2011	Percentage of increase (%)
1	Initiation into swimming	550	605	693	26
2	Performance polo	60	60	60	0
3	Therapeutic swimming	99	110	132	33
4	Recreational swimming	220	242	275	25
	Total	929	1017	1160	25

This increase is explained by the following reasons:

- popularisation – propaganda – promotional activities;
- meeting the requirements and needs of the customers;
- desire to be systematically trained, to become better;
- possibility of choosing / changing offers and services;
- increasingly better participation costs.

Some activities are offered in the form of packages:

- courses of initiation into swimming (children) + leisure swimming (parents);
- performance polo + participation in competitions;
- recreational swimming + therapeutic swimming.

Table 02. Income and expenses of CS Delfi 2009-2011

No.	Category	2009 (ROL)	2010 (ROL)	2011 (ROL)	Percentage of increase (%)
1	Income from subscriptions	291500	334400	385300	32
2	Income from sponsorship	48000	50400	58000	21
3	Income from donations	500	680	1120	124
4	Income from fund rising	5300	6100	7200	36
5	Income from interests	380	433	488	28
6	Logistics expenses	-11554	-13102	-15111	31
7	Material expenses	-12006	-13615	-15703	31
8	Administrative expenses	-282788	-296686	-319327	13
9	Advertising/promotion costs	-2000	-2000	-2000	0

The results of SWOT analysis reveal:

Strengths:

- the teaching-learning activities are more rigorous and effective;
- increased interest in the game of polo / stimulated by the qualification of the national team at the Olympic Games of London 2012;
- teachers / coaches of high professional competitiveness;
- interest groups and clientele population interested in promoting swimming and polo game;
- performance sports clubs interested in the selection-training of the gifted elements;
- favorable legislation for the establishment and operation of the private structures;
- offers, services, sports equipment, optimum conditions for swimming;
- benefits of swimming and polo game – with optimal bio-psycho-social effects;
- exercising the managerial functions: forecasting, organization, management, control, evaluation within the structural organization of the private club;

- acquisition of supplementary resources (financial, informational, material, human) and their use for developing the club;

- possibility of continuous development of the club according to a strategic development project and to the programs for improving the main resources and services: training, financial-accounting and maintenance ones;

- satisfaction of clientele population and interest groups.

Weaknesses:

- sponsorship and attraction of sponsors;
- activity of acquiring additional resources;
- lack of necessary space for learning to swim and to play polo;
- renting of spaces, swimming pools etc. – very high prices;
- material resources – poor;
- procedural and structural organization of the club / overlapping of functions, services and roles;
- participation fees – inaccessible to low-income families.

Opportunities:

- involvement in the CS Delfi activity of strong sports clubs interested in polo players' development;

- more constant support from local administration and institutions interested in the club services;
- partnership activities in solving club activities;
- investments in maintenance of the sports facilities under collaboration agreement;
- building of new spaces for training and organization of the competitions;
- organization of competitions for some categories of athletes.

Threats:

- financing of the sports programs proposed as an instrument of implementation of the strategic development project;

- tax policies for organizing the financial resources;
- fluctuations of currency and sale / purchase prices.

SWOT analysis is particularly useful in our study; it is one of the main managerial tools that can help to make the activity of “Delfi” Sports Club more efficient.

Model – Logical framework (Logframe) of the strategic project. According to the logframe method, the Logframe Matrix has four goals: project description, hypotheses / risks, control indicators and verification means.

Our scientific investigations allow us to perform the function of long-term, medium-term and short-term managerial forecasting. The general view includes 6 main headings, namely:

- long-term strategic objectives;
- resources needed to achieve these objectives;
- strategies for solving the objectives;
- deadline;
- person in charge;
- indicators for the assessment of the proposed objective.

Within the strategic project of the club, 6 development programs for the key-functional fields are designed and presented. These programs are listed below:

No. 1 – Program for improvement of offers and services;

No. 2 – Program for development of material resources;

No. 3 – Program for attracting financial resources and sponsors;

No. 4 – Propaganda program of club activities;

No. 5 – Program for modernisation of the training process and participation in competitions;
Syllabus for teaching-learning swimming and polo game;

Nr. 6 – Program for modernization of the club management.

After consulting the specialty works of Băcanu (1999), Lador (2000), Frîncu (2001), Jinga (2005), Gherguț (2007) and Popa (2008), it was agreed upon preparing a medium-term project of managerial development for the expected performance of “Delfi” Sports Club as follows:

- Club identification data;
- Mission of the club;
- Organization profile;
- Functional and structural organization of the club (board of directors, financial-accounting department, technical team for instruction and training, sports physician, supporting members);
- SWOT analysis and PESTLE analysis (internal and external environment).

The control of management strategy implementation in our club was made through the analysis of the proposed objective / spent resources / achieved results.

The monitoring of programs was made according to the time schedule set in the plan, while checking the benefits too. The project development and implementation were carried out for one year per functional fields and represented the means of solving strategic targets (objectives). The design of the operational plans for different activities and per definite time units is shown below:

- Propaganda plan for the club popularity;
- Plan to promote the club activities;
- Plan for services development and information provided to the club members on the monthly offers;
- Plan to popularise aquatic activities;
- Plan of branding the club name;
- Plan to promote the site of the club;
- Plan to improve the methods of attracting the population to practice recreational swimming;
- Human Resources Development Plan – club members (children, young people and other target groups);
- Plan to guide and select the gifted children to the performance groups;
- Plan to attract new sponsors and donors;
- Plan to ensure the conditions of rehabilitation and recovery after effort and accidents;
- Plan to develop the material resources and to purchase sports equipment and materials.

The “Delfi” Sports Club has the mission to provide and develop the resources and tools necessary for carrying out the processes of selection and promotion of talented athletes to the high quality standards needed to ensure competitiveness in the national championships.

7. Conclusion

The whole optimisation process is achieved by strategic objectives (promoting the thinking through objectives).

The organization and management of the polo sports club promoted the attributes of performance management (consistency, courage, clarity, consideration) and at the same time took into account the general factors (social – economic – political context) and the specific factors of the private sports organizations (actual and efficient spending of resources), and thus the club has improved its activity, making it profitable.

The whole activity of the private sports club falls within the scope of a short-term (one year) strategic development project; this fact has been confirmed in the research.

Implementing the research at a national level helps to determine how much the sports school and sports club managers know and apply performance management techniques into their activity.

The strategic development project model will serve the managerial activities performed by private sporting structures.

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