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Abstract

The relation between organizational theory and sports has usually presented sports as an interesting field in which to illustrate organizational phenomenon. This literature review aims to examine academic papers and research which explore the particular nature of organizational phenomenon in sports, specifically in relation to sport organizations structure. The topic has been commonly discussed in the context of wider organizational studies, mainly related to organizational change, organizational performance and structural configuration of organizations. This means those changes that have transformed the world of sports have affected not only the structure of sport organizations, but also the environment in which they operate and the traditional measures to evaluate their effectiveness. By exploring the literature we may identify future interesting niches for research on sport organizations structure as well as the essential elements to be considered when studying organizational phenomenon in the sport sector.

Keywords: sport organizations, structure, literature review.

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STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SPORT ORGANIZATIONS: MAIN TRENDS IN THE ACADEMIC DISCUSSION¹

Introduction

There exists an abundant literature on organizational structure from 1950 onwards. There is Mintzberg's work on typologies of organization based on different structural designs (Mintzberg, 1979), Burns and Stalker's types of organizational structure according to different environmental conditions (Burns and Stalker, 1961), Child's structuring of activities inside the organization (Child, 1972) and Miles's and Snow's conception of structure based on the strategy of the organization (Miles and Snow, 1978), among many others. The interest in studying organizational structure resides in the relationship between organizational design and other organizational phenomena, like performance, distribution of power, or control systems. While there is plenty of literature on organizational structure studying different types of organizations, little is written in books and journals on the specific field of sport organizations.

Some authors have used sports as a context for illustrating organizational phenomenon such as organizational loyalty, performance, compensation system, escalating commitment, executive succession, sustainable competitive advantage, and human resources, among others. Although research on the particular nature of sport organizations and their structural characteristics is still scarce, the article "*Sport and Organizational Studies: Exploring synergies*" (Wolfe et al., 2005) presents a literature review in which they cover a broad spectrum of research studying organizational phenomena in the context of sports.

A growing base of knowledge built on experienced-based research is expanding and validating a research field particularly dedicated to sport phenomena. The increasing academic interest in the world of sports can be noted in the proliferation of publications and journals looking into sports from a diversity of disciplines (e.g., history, medicine, psychology, economics, sociology, management), all of which are expanding the knowledge as well as the future opportunities for research and publications on sport related topics. Today, sports present an interesting research field for academics, especially because of the increasing relevance that sports have gained in social life, the various changes experienced by the sport sector, and the still relatively easy data collection opportunities in this field.

¹ This paper was presented at the 14th EASM Congress organized by the European Association of Sport Management in Nicosia, Cyprus at Intercollege on September 2006.

Most of the research on sport organizations structure has been developed by Trevor Slack and other Canadian academics. In his book on sport organizations, Slack gives the following definition of sport organizations describing their particular nature: “A sport organization is a social entity involved in the sport industry; it is goal-directed, with a consciously structured activity system and a relatively identifiable boundary” (Slack, 1997, p. 5). Though their peculiarities can be attributed to the context in which they operate, it is still a broad definition, allowing many different types of organizations involved in the world of sports to be considered sport organizations: public, private and voluntary organizations; for-profit and non-profit organizations; organizations producing sporting goods, delivering sport activities, creating competitive sport opportunities, and broadcasting sport events; as well as many other organizations connected in one way or another to the sport industry. Therefore, the first question arising when studying sport organizations refers to which type of sport organization are we talking about and what different types can be characterized under this broad concept of sport organizations.

The structural characteristics of an organization are, more often than not, examined in the context of wider organizational studies. The relationship between the structure of the organization to its performance, effectiveness, control system, adaptability, and to the motivation of its members (Hinings et al., 1980) explains the common use of other organizational topics when discussing organizational structure. Since this relationship characterizes traditional organizational studies it may also be likely to characterize research on sport organizations. Hence there is a need to clarify the theoretical background in which the discussion on sport organizations takes place.

The economic transformations, the evolution of telecommunications (Stern, 1979) and the peculiarities of the political system (Amara et al., 2005) have had an impact on both sports and, certainly, sport organizations. Changes in the global context within which sports operate affect the internal functioning of the system, their dependence on external resources, the appearance of new communication channels and the support given by the public system. These are all factors that determine the particular characteristics of the context in which sport organizations are operating. The question arising therefore refers to which are the most important contextual elements influencing sport organizations’ structure or, in other words, which contextual elements are being considered the most important within the existing research exploring sport organizations.

The CSBM – IESE Business School² is developing a wider research project regarding the structural characteristics of sport organizations in Spain. In order to correctly address this project we first need to know what other authors have written about sport organizations structure, what kind of sport organizations they have studied, within what theoretical background they have contextualized the discussion on sport organizational structure, and which variables they have considered relevant when discussing sport organizational structure. The answering of these questions may lead us to identify the state of scholarly knowledge on sport organizations’ structure, as well as uncover interesting niches for our research and other future work in this field.

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Literature Reviewed

In a literature review the collection of data refers to the selection of articles that are going to be analyzed. This literature review considered those articles discussing both structure and sport organizations at the same time. Slack (1997, p. 6) defines the structure of a sport organization as "...the manner in which the tasks of a sport organization are broken down and allocated to employees or volunteers, the reporting relationships among these role holders, and the coordinating and controlling mechanisms used within the sport organization." Using this definition, the structure of an organization refers both to the structural design of the organization (differentiation) and to the relationship among actors (coordination and control), which can be associated to the formal structure and the informal structure of an organization.

If sport organizations are to be considered as all those organizations operating in the sport industry, we can include a wide variety of organizations with different goals and means. For the purposes of this literature review, we are particularly interested in those sport organizations dedicated to the promotion and development of sports. This means that we only considered articles discussing sport organizations oriented towards these final goals and, hence, most commonly associated to organizations like federations, national associations, sport departments, leagues and clubs.

The number of articles to be analyzed in a literature review depends on the topic under study and on the resources of the reviewer. Taken that the literature related to research of sport organizations is still scarce, it was important to use multiple sources of information. This review is based on primary and secondary sources (Cooper, 1989), looking not only into journals directly discussing sport management topics, but also journals from other disciplines exploring the issue of sport organizations' structure, as the former journals were established too recently to cover all relevant discussion on the topic.

Our primary sources of information consist of journals directly associated to sport management to which we had electronic access, like the *Journal of Sport Management* and *Sport Management Review*. Moreover, we searched through electronic databases of academic articles looking for all articles discussing sport organizations and structure at the same time. After this first review we used a secondary source of information, checking the reference lists of those articles already selected from the primary sources of information. The use of these two sources of information allowed us to have a sample of articles from a variety of journals and disciplines (e.g., management, organizational studies, leisure, sociology, and economics).³

The use of the secondary sources of information increases the risk of over-representing the work of some authors more than others, because the bibliography used by one author is associated to his primary network of journals (Cooper, 1989). In order to reduce this limitation we continued the search process until it became circular, which means that we stopped the data collection process when the reviewing process brought us back to previously revised articles.

The articles selected cover the period from 1975 to 2006. This is mainly because, until the mid-1970's, sport management textbooks were centered on administrative principles in physical education and athletics, and essentially ignored management analysis and organization theory (Doherty, 1998; Paton, 1987). Therefore, since we in our study of structural characteristics of

³ We searched and selected only articles in English because it is the language commonly used in academic journals, as well as being a language in which the authors are fluent.

sport organizations are more interested in sport organizations structure in its relation to management analysis and organizational theory than in administrative principles, we have only considered as relevant to our sample articles from the mid-1970's onwards.

The final sample included fifty-five articles published during the last thirty-five years, which we considered to be an important representation of the relevant articles discussing sport organizations structure. Once we had all the articles, a matrix was created in order to analyze and compare the information they contained. The matrix consisted of some dimensions and variables that we considered interesting and that would allow us to determine the main trends in the discussion of the structural characteristics of sport organizations. Among the variables considered were the theoretical perspectives used, methodology employed, and type of analysis, country, sports studied, type of publications, main results of the research, and type of sport organizations considered.

Based on these dimensions we organized our results into three main areas that may be useful for understanding the state of scholarly knowledge on the topic of sport organizations' structure, and that may also be interesting for future research on the field. The three areas were: 1) type of sport organizations studied; 2) the theoretical perspectives from organizational theory most commonly used to discuss sport organizations' structure, and 3) the most relevant contextual elements considered when discussing sport organizations' structure.

Academic Discussion on Sport Organizations' Structure

Types of Sport Organizations

The discussion around the structural characteristics of sport organizations has considered various kinds of organizations among those existing in the world of sports; however most of them can be classified as dedicated to the promotion and development of sports, e.g., federations, national associations, leagues, clubs or local departments of sporting bodies. All these sport organizations are associated to sport activity and, though differing in their goals and means, they all respond to the superior mission of promoting and developing sports in society. The differences we identify between them suggest a possible classification into three types: sport governing bodies, sport event organizations and sport providing entities. The first one refers to those sport organizations administering and regulating sports, focusing on its development at all levels, and guaranteeing the rules both of the game and of the competition; the second one refers to those sport organizations responsible for the production of a competition system aimed to satisfy and articulate the needs of professional sports; and the third type includes those organizations producing and delivering recreational or competitive sport programs at a local or community level. The following table summarizes the main characteristics of these three types of sport organizations involved in the promotion and development of sports.

The articles reviewed include discussions about these three types of sport organizations, although the frequency with which each type has been studied differs significantly. Most of the research discussing sport organizations' structure refers to sport governing bodies (80%). This type of sport organization forms part of the international structure of sport governance. This means that their goals and structure are similar across countries, thus allowing the possibility of generalizing research findings. In contrast, little research exists on sport providing entities (19%) (sport organizations delivering sport programs), and almost none on sport event organizations (1%) (sport organizations producing competition events).

Table 1

Classification of Sport Organizations related to the Promotion and Development of Sports

	Sport governing bodies	Sport providing entities	Sport spectacle organizations
Mission	Promote sports at all levels in a given territory and sport discipline.	To satisfy a community's motivation to practice physical activity and socializing through sport activities.	Represent, promote and safeguard the interests of all actors participating in the competitions they produce.
Goal	Govern the sport, ensuring its promotion and development at all levels, monitor the administration of sport, guarantee the organization of regular competitions as well as the respect for the rules of fair play.	Design and offer sport activities, both at a recreational and competitive level, and at individual and team programs, oriented towards official competitions in order to achieve sporting success and social integration.	Design a regular competition system ensuring the contest among rival teams or individuals in a given sport discipline and under the same ethic codes.
Main activity	Govern one or more sport discipline.	Deliver sport programs.	Generate competition opportunities.
Examples	National Associations, Federations, National Organizations, Olympic associations/committees.	Clubs, community centres, fitness centres, university sport programs.	Leagues, associations, circuits, tours.

Source: Authors.

Sport governing bodies are sport organizations whose primary goal is to promote and develop sports at all levels in a given territory and sport discipline. This entails control and supervision of a sport, guaranteeing periodic competition at national and international levels, amateur and professional, and from grassroots to senior categories. It moreover encompasses the administration of the sport and definition of the rules of the game, as well as protection of the values of sports promoted by the Olympic Movement. Research related to this type of sport organization tends to discuss the challenges faced by the need to professionalize both entities and their outcomes.

Another type of sport organization is the one whose main activity is associated to the production of sport spectacles (e.g., leagues, circuits, tours). The operations and activities of these organizations are subordinated to the venue and rules of sport governing bodies, as well as of professional teams. The main activity of these sport organizations is to design a competition system articulating the interests of all the actors in order to create an attractive sport event. Sport events present a major source for developing commercial activity, giving these sport organizations the opportunity of exploiting the relationship between the sports sector and the entertainment sector through commercial activities like, for example, ticketing, broadcasting rights, licensing, merchandising, publicity, and sponsorship. In the articles reviewed related to this type of sport organization the discussion of the structural characteristics of sport organizations may refer to the structure of the competition (Cairns, 1987) as well as to the structure of the community of actors involved in the competition (Slack and Cousens, 2005).

The third type of sport organization in the classification is the one we call the sport providing entity, whose main activity is to design and deliver sport programs for a given community such as clubs, local sport programs, fitness centers, and university sport programs. These are private, non-profit associations, dedicated to the provision of recreational sport activities at a local level. The research related to organizational structure of this type of sport organization have

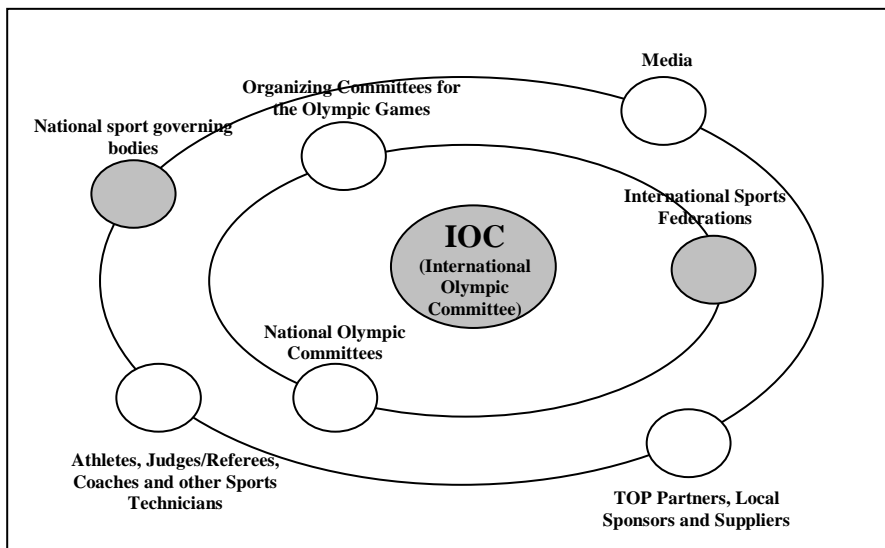
focused on two dimensions of structure, namely the administrative system (De Knop et al., 2004; Fahlén, 2005, 2006; Hoye, 2004; Hoye and Cuskelly, 2003; Ørnulf, 2002, 2004; Papadimitriou, 2002; Westby and Sack, 1976) and the membership system (Hall, 1983).

The discussion on sport organizations' structure has centered on these three types of sport organizations which differ not only in their goals, level of operation and main activity, but also in names and type of entities representing them in each country. Real life entities and institutions may not have such clear limits as the ones we have outlined in our classification table. Nevertheless these three ideal types allow us to compare the research under study, by looking into the different scenarios within which the discussion on sport organizations' structure has taken place for these three different ways of promoting and developing sports.

Sport governing bodies can refer to a national or an international level, but the fact that both of these levels are part of the international structure of promotion and development of sports means that all sport governing bodies are connected to the International Olympic Committee's norms and regulations. The bond between sport governing bodies at a national level and the international structure of promotion and development of sports gives the opportunity to generalize or replicate results. Whereas sport governing bodies from different countries may display a large number of similarities, sport providing entities and sport event producers depend on the basic unit of promotion and development of sports defined at a national level, and hence differ more radically from country to country.

Figure 1

Relationship between sport governing bodies at national and international level



Source: www.olympic.org

Although there are common patterns between sport governing bodies at a national level, the particular sport system defined in each country establishes some differences for those sport organizations providing sport programs and sport spectacles. This means that, while in one country the sport system promotes and develops sports through the educational system, there are others using local sport services or private associations for the same purposes, and that, while the most popular sport in a country has probably achieved a complex structure for its promotion and development through a variety of institution, other sports in the same country are promoted

and developed just through the activities of the sport governing body. Hence sport providing entities and sport event organizations depend on each country's basic unit of promotion and development of sport and on the social relevance of the different sports in a country.

The three types of sport organizations may exist within the sport system of any country; however, the differences in the basic unit promoting sport activity and the extent to which some sports are more popular in one country than another help explain the differences between countries in relation to the type of sport organizations defining the sport system at a national level. As previously mentioned, similarities are nevertheless found at the level of sport governing bodies. The generalizing opportunities of similarities may explain the overrepresentation of research of this type of sport organization, but it may also suggest the need to understand and elucidate the results and effectiveness among different sport systems throughout the world.

Table 2

Distribution of Authors in relation to Type of Sport Organization Studied

Sport governing bodies	Sport providing entities	Sport event organizations
Stern (1979), Frisby (1985), Slack (1985), Frisby (1986), Slack and Hinings (1987), Kikulis, Slack, Hinings and Zimmermann (1989), Slack and Kikulis (1989), Chelladurai and Haggerty (1991), Chelladurai and Haggerty (1991), Thibault, Slack and Hinings (1991), Kikulis, Slack and Hinings (1992), Slack and Hinings (1992), Slack and Hinings (1994), Theodoraki and Henry (1994), Kikulis, Slack and Hinings (1995a, 1995b), Amis and Slack (1996), Papadimitriou (1998), Stevens and Slack (1998), Kikulis (2000), Cunningham and Ashley (2001), Cunningham and Rivera (2001), Frisby, Thibault and Kikulis (2004), Garrett (2004), Hoye (2004), Amis, Slack and Hinings (2004), Smith (2004), Thibault and Babiak (2005), Shilbury and Moore (2006), Danylchuk and Chelladurai (1999), O'Brien and Slack (1999), Skinner, Stewart and Edwards (1999), Thibault, Frisby and Kikulis (1999), Papadimitriou and Taylor (2000), Shilbury (2000), Amis, Slack and Hinings (2002), O'Brien and Slack (2003), Amis, Slack and Hinings (2004), O'Brien and Slack (2004), Smith and Shilbury (2004), Washington (2004), Nichols, Taylor and Garret (2005), Slack and Mason (2005).	Westby and Sack (1976), Hall and Manzi (1983), Ørnulf (2002), Papadimitriou (2002), Hoye and Cuskelly (2003), De Knop, van Hoecke and De Boscher (2004), Ørnulf (2004), Fahlén (2005), Fahlén (2006)	Cairns (1987), Slack and Cousens (2005)

Source: Data from the literature review.

Organizational Theory and Sport Organizations

The discussion on sport organizations' structure has usually taken place within the context of wider organizational studies, which means that, while there is some research specifically concerned with the structural configuration of sport organizations, most research discussing sport organizations structure is situated within the wider theoretical context of organizational change processes and the discussion of organizational effectiveness.

The theoretical background in which to base organizational studies of sport organizations has been of interest to several authors. There are a number of papers specifically concerned with finding theoretical perspectives inside the organizational theory that might be useful in understanding organizational phenomena in the context of sports. Among these there are articles considering bureaucratization processes (Frisby, 1985), rationalization processes (Slack and Hinings, 1987), sociological perspectives (Slack and Kikulis, 1989), institutional perspectives

(Kikulis, 2000), voluntary sector determinants (Nichols et al., 2005), agency theory (Mason and Slack, 2001) and contextualist approach for change (Thibault and Babiak, 2005).

The main theoretical background within which the discussion on sport organizations structure has taken place refers to organizational change theories (45% of the articles in the sample fall into this category). The process of organizational change refers to a shift in the dominant logic that has traditionally determined a certain way of operating within an organizational field (Powell, 1991). In the literature reviewed, this organizational change process was experienced as a rationalization process (Westby and Sack, 1976), a bureaucratization process (Slack, 1985), or a professionalization process (Amis et al., 2002, 2004a, 2004b; Fahlén, 2005; Kikulis, 2000; Kikulis et al., 1992, 1995a, 1995b; Kikulis and Slack, 1995; Nichols et al., 2005; O'Brien and Slack, 1999, 2003; O'Brien and Slack, 2004; Shilbury, 2000; Skinner et al., 1999; Slack and Cousens, 2005; Slack and Hinings, 1987, 1992, 1994; Smith, 2004; Stern, 1979; Stevens and Slack, 1998; Washington, 2004). These three “sub-processes” of organizational change relate to an overall formalization process; a shift from an amateur logic towards a more formalized and professional one. The discussion on sport organizations’ structure in this context refers to the new forms of integration and differentiation inside the organization or inside a network of organizations, which is of particular interest when considering the evolution experienced by sports.

Table 3

Main contributions of the research related to organizational change in sport organizations

Author	Publication	Title	Contribution to sport organizations structure research
Westby and Sack (1976)	The Journal of Higher Education	The Commercialization and Functional Rationalization of College Football: Its Origins.	Commercialization and rationalization introduced business values to College Football.
Stern (1979)	Administrative Science Quarterly	The Development of an Interorganizational Control Network: the case of intercollegiate athletics.	Historical transformation of the network generated a new structure based on a constant tension between controlling interdependence and autonomy seeking.
Slack and Hinings (1987)	Canadian Journal of Sport Sciences	Planning and organizational change: A conceptual framework for the analysis of amateur sport organizations.	The introduction of a planning system resulted in a rationalization of amateur sport organizations.
Kikulis, Slack and Hinings (1992)	Int. Review for the Sociology of Sport	Institutionally specific design archetypes: a framework for understanding change in national sport organizations.	Specificities in the design archetype after a change process in the sport sector can be explained through strategic choice.
Slack and Hinings (1992)	Journal of Sport Management	Understanding change in national sport organizations: an integration of theoretical perspectives.	Change processes depend on the direction of change and the sources of commitment, and the consequence is a new definition for the division of labor, as well as a new control.
Slack and Hinings (1994)	Organization Studies	Institutional pressures and isomorphic change: an empirical test.	Though change in a population of organizations tend to move them to similar structures, values and belief can still make a difference between them.
Kikulis, Slack and Hinings (1995)	Journal of Sport Management	Does decision making make a difference? Patterns of change within Canadian National Sport Organizations.	Decision making is important for understanding differences between organizational designs, as well as differences between high impact systems.
Kikulis and Slack (1995)	Journal of Management Studies	Sector-specific patterns of organizational design change.	Design archetypes and patterns of change can be found when analyzing a process of change in an organizational field.

Kikulis, Slack and Hinings (1995b)	Journal of Sport Management	Toward an understanding of the role of agency and choice in the changing structure of Canada's national sport organizations.	Variation in organizational responses to institutional pressures reflects the active role of human agents in the design of organizations.
Stevens and Slack (1998)	International Review for the Sociology of Sport 33, pp. 143-154.	Integrating social action and structural constraints: Towards a more holistic explanation of organizational change.	Institutional context does influence change, but types of change are related to the strategic choice of agents.
Skinner, Stewart and Edwards (1999)	Sport Management Review	Amateurism to Professionalism: Modelling Organisational Change in Sporting Organisations.	Change processes have a dual nature: impacts on top positions are not the same as in staff and assistant positions.
O'Brien and Slack (1999)	Sport Management Review	Deinstitutionalising the Amateur Ethic: An Empirical Examination of Change in a Rugby Union Football Club.	Institutional pressures and resource dependency are elements determining organizational change.
Shibury (2000)	Sport Management Rev.	Considering Future Sport Delivery Systems.	The evolution of the sport industry can be analyzed through clusters, in order to see the relation between the industry structure and value creation.
Kikulis (2000)	Journal of Sport Management	Continuity and change in governance and decision making in national sport organizations: institutional explanations.	Change processes have defined new governance and decision making structures, and the inclusion of professionals has increased the level of specialization and formalization of the structure.
Amis, Slack and Hinings (2002)	Journal of Applied Behavioral Science (2002)	Values and Organizational Change.	Values determine both the structure and the operations of an organization, and they are also essential for a transition process.
Ørnulf (2002)	International Review for the Sociology of Sport	Volunteers and Professionals in Norwegian Sport Organizations.	There is a massive process of professionalization in voluntary sport organizations, which is changing the traditional dependence of these organizations on volunteer work.
O'Brien and Slack (2003)	Journal of Sport Management	An Analysis of change in an organizational field: the professionalization of English Rugby Union.	Change processes in an organizational field tend to move organizations to the same structures, though values and beliefs explain the differences still existing.
Smith (2004)	Emergence: Complexity and Organization	Complexity theory and change management in sport organizations.	Change can be intentional or emergent, but the governance structure of the organizations remains the most important area on structural change.
Amis, Slack and Hinings (2004)	Journal of Sport Management	Strategic change and the role of interests, power, and organizational capacity.	Sub-unit interests, power distribution and leadership activities will have a profound influence on the outcome of large-scale change process.
O'Brien and Slack (2004)	Journal of Sport Management	The Emergence of a Professional Logic in English Rugby Union: The Role of Isomorphic and Diffusion Processes.	Change process may be influenced by institutional logics, isomorphism or diffusion, but the different organizational designs can be explained through the decision making structures.
Amis, Slack and Hinings (2004)	Academy of Management Journal	The pace, sequence and linearity of radical change.	Even though change may progress at a slower pace at the beginning, when it influences high impact elements, changes become substantive and enduring.
Thibault and Babiak (2005)	European Sport Management Quarterly	Organizational Changes in Canada's Sport System: toward an athlete-centred approach.	The impact of change depends on external factors, internal characteristics of the organization and on key individuals.

Slack and Cousins (2005)	Journal of Sport Management	Field-level change: The case of North American Major League Professional Sport.	Change did occur in the four dimensions considered –communities of actors, exchange processes, governance structure and institutional logics of action– and the consequences of it was a structuration process exhibited in the field.
Nichols, Taylor and Garret (2005)	Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations	Pressures on the UK Voluntary Sport Sector.	A change in the competing elements of the sport market has challenged voluntary sport organizations, as well as the volunteer staff working there.
Fahlén (2006)	Sport and Society	Organizational Structures of Swedish Elite Ice Hockey Clubs.	Although clubs are facing similar environmental conditions and are concerned with similar tasks, they exhibit some variation in structural features.

Source: Data from the literature review.

The other theoretical background within which the discussion on sport organizations structure has developed refers to organizational effectiveness, which accounts for the overall performance of the organization. In this context, structural characteristics of sport organizations are mentioned a) as part of the variables and models explaining the effectiveness of sport organizations (Chelladurai and Haggerty, 1991; De Knop et al., 2004; Frisby, 1986; Hall, 1983; Shilbury and Moore, 2006); b) as part of the evaluation the impact or effect of structural configuration on the performance of sport organizations (Cairns, 1987; Cunningham and Rivera, 2001; Garrett, 2004; Papadimitriou, 1998, 2002; Papadimitriou and Taylor, 2000); or c) associated with the effectiveness of the articulations between structures or roles in the context of sport organizations (Frisby et al., 2004; Hoye, 2004; Hoye and Cuskelly, 2003; Thibault et al., 1999).

Table 4

Main contributions of the research related to organizational effectiveness in sport organizations

Author	Publication	Title	Contribution to sport organizations structure research
Hall and Manzies (1983)	Management Science	A Corporate System Model of a Sports Club: Using Simulation as an Aid to Policy Making in a Crisis.	Corporate system model focuses on the learning process of the organization giving the possibility of considering different variables to effectively manage a crisis.
Frisby (1986)	Canadian Journal of Applied Sport Science	Measuring the organizational effectiveness of National Sport Governing Bodies.	Organizational effectiveness in sport settings is related both to achievement of goals and to the acquisition of scarce resources.
Cairns (1987)	Applied Economics	Evaluating changes in league structure: the reorganization of the Scottish Football League.	Changing the League structure can change the nature of the product, affecting the demand of the sport.
Chelladurai and Haggerty (1991)	Canadian Journal of Sport Sciences	Measures of organizational effectiveness of Canadian national sport organizations.	Organizational effectiveness is perceived differently between volunteer staff and professionals. Perception of effectiveness differs between the personnel working in the organization.
Papadimitriou (1998)	Managing Leisure	The impact of institutionalized resources, rules and practices on the performance of non-profit sport organizations.	Institutional environment influences, externally, the definition both of the structure and behavior of the organization. However values, interests and power do it internally, and both have an impact on the performance of the organization.

Thibault, Frisby and Kikulis (1999)	Managing Leisure	Interorganizational linkages in the delivery of local leisure services in Canada: responding to economic, political and social pressures.	Environmental pressures and organizational network determine the organization, and both are needed for achieving goals and acquiring scarce resources.
Papadimitriou and Taylor (2000)	Sport Management Review	Organisational Effectiveness of Hellenic National Sports Organisations: A Multiple Constituency Approach.	National sport organizations need to identify the most important constituencies and to determine their relationship with the outputs of their organizations in order to achieve effectiveness.
Cunningham and Rivera (2001)	The International Journal of Organizational Analysis	Structural designs within American Intercollegiate Athletic Departments.	Structural design is related to organizational effectiveness and an enabling structure may be better for athletic achievement.
Papadimitriou (2002)	Managing Leisure	Amateur structures and their effect on performance: the case of Greek voluntary sports clubs.	Local sport clubs have arranged their operations around a simple, rather informal structural design.
Hoye and Cuskelly (2003)	Sport Management Review	Board-Executive Relationships within Voluntary Sport Organisations.	Effective or ineffective performance of boards in voluntary sport organizations depends on the existence of trust, which is perceived to be the responsibility of the board chair.
Hoye (2004)	Nonprofit Management and Leadership	Leader-member exchanges and board performance of voluntary sport organizations.	Higher levels of board performance were associated with a perception of higher-quality leader-member exchange between executives, chairs and members.
De Knop, Van Hoecke and De Boscher (2004)	Sport Management Review	Quality Management in Sports Clubs.	The use of a Total Quality Management model for evaluating traditional sport clubs shows that strategic planning, marketing management and the structure of clubs are the main weakness of these sport organizations.
Frisby, Thibault and Kikulis (2004)	Leisure Studies	The organizational dynamics of under-managed partnerships in leisure service departments.	Some managerial structures are contributing to under-managed partnerships, like the lack of planning and policy guidelines, unclear roles and reporting channels, and insufficient human resources.
Garret (2004)	Managing Leisure	The response of the voluntary sports clubs to Sport England's Lottery funding: cases of compliance, change and resistance.	The response of national sport organizations to institutional pressures is perceived to be more effective from volunteer administrators than from professionals.
Shilbury and Moore (2006)	Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly	A Study of Organizational Effectiveness for National Olympic Sporting Organizations.	In the relationship between structural orientation and effectiveness, the impact of the rational-goal quadrant (productivity, planning) seems to be the key to effectiveness.

Source: Data from the literature review.

The third theoretical approach used in the discussion refers to the patterns of structural design (specialization, standardization and centralization) in the particular case of sport organizations. Within this perspective there are articles proposing structural configuration typologies for sport organizations (Kikulis et al., 1989), articles looking into the differences and similarities between traditional and new sports in relation to patterns of organizational configuration (Theodoraki and Henry, 1994), as well as articles analyzing differences and similarities between the design of organizations based on voluntary work versus those that have incorporated professional work (Ørnulf, 2002; Thibault et al., 1991).

Table 5

Main contributions of the research related to structural configuration of sport organizations

Author	Publication	Title	Contribution to sport organizations structure research
Frisby (1985)	Society and Leisure	A conceptual framework for measuring the organizational structure and context of voluntary leisure service.	The structure of voluntary sport organizations can also be studied through organizational theory, looking into specialization, standardization and centralization.
Kikulis, Slack, Hinings and Zimmermann (1989)	Journal of Sport Management	A structural taxonomy of amateur sport organizations.	Eight structural designs types can be found in amateur sport organizations based on their different levels of specialization, standardization and centralization.
Slack and Kikulis (1989)	International Review for the Sociology of Sport	The sociological study of sport organizations: some observations on the situation in Canada.	Amateur sport organizations have gone through a bureaucratization process, which until now has been perceived as a uniform process. Nevertheless, there might be some differences based on interdependency and resources.
Chelladurai and Haggerty (1991)	Canadian Journal of Sport Sciences	Differentiation in national sport organizations in Canada.	National sport organizations were found to be very similar in terms of task differentiation patterns. However, differences were found in the perceived amount of influence between administrative positions.
Thibault, Slack and Hinings (1991)	International Review for the Sociology of Sport	Professionalism, structures and systems: the impact of professional staff on voluntary sport organizations.	In non-voluntary sport organizations the hiring of professional staff increased the levels of specialization and formalization, changing the structural arrangements.
Theodoraki and Henry (1994)	International Review for the Sociology of Sport	Organisational structures and contexts in British national governing bodies of sport.	There is no clear difference between the structural configuration of organizations related to traditional sports and those related to new sports. Structural analysis should consider a historical, contextual and internal perspective.
Amis and Slack (1996)	Journal of Sport Management	The size-structure relationship in voluntary sport organization.	An increase in the size of an organization is not necessarily associated with increased decentralization. In voluntary sport organizations, volunteers were resistant to increases in size, in order to retain control over the organization.
Danylchuk and Chelladurai (1999)	Journal of sport management	The nature of managerial work in Canadian intercollegiate athletics.	Size is an important determinant of the number of managerial responsibilities to be distributed in a sport organization.
Cunningham and Ashley (2001)	Sport Management Review	Isomorphism in NCAA Athletic Departments: The Use of Competing Theories and Advancement of Theory.	The structure and processes of an organization are more influenced by strategic choice than by environment (population ecology).
Washington (2004)	Organization Studies	Field Approaches to Institutional Change: The Evolution of the National Collegiate Athletic Association 1906-1995.	Conflicts and interests can help determining a structuration process in an organizational field.
Smith and Shibury (2004)	Sport Management Review	Mapping Cultural Dimensions in Australian Sporting Organisations.	There are some dimensions related to organizational culture that are important for all types of organizations. However, there are other dimensions which are particularly important for sport organizations like rituals, symbols, size, history and tradition.

Ørnulf (2004)	International Review for the Sociology of Sport	The World According to Voluntary Sport Organizations: Voluntarism, Economy and Facilities.	Nowadays, voluntary sport organizations are increasingly pressured when it comes to recruitment, because of the massive process of professionalization taking place in this kind of organization.
Slack and Mason (2005)	Sport in Society	Agency Theory and the Study of Sport Organizations.	Principal-agent relationship can also be used to explain sport phenomena, especially when there are resources to be allocated. Agency theory doesn't work well under conditions of scarcity.
Fahlen (2006)	The Sport Journal	Organizational structures in sport clubs - Exploring the relationships between individual perceptions and organizational positions.	Perceptions of organizational structure are associated with the position occupied in the organization, and tension can be found between different organizational positions.

Source: Data from the literature review.

Summing up, there are three main theoretical approaches within which the discussion on sport organizations' structure has taken place: organizational change, organizational effectiveness and structural configuration of organizations. The structural characteristics of sport organizations has existed as a research topic of its own through the latter approach; however, most research discussing sport organizations' structure refers to wider organizational theory studies. The relevance of the two former theoretical approaches can be attributed to the significant challenges that have influenced the traditional operation of sport organizations, as well as their traditional way of measuring and conceiving effectiveness.

Context Features in the Discussion on Sport Organizations Structure

More than half of the articles in the sample (64%) considered the influence of the environment when studying sport organizations. Since the moment that organizations started to be conceived as open systems (Hannan and Freeman, 1977), the influence of the environment on their processes and operations has usually been taken into consideration in organizational studies. In the articles reviewed, the environment most commonly refers to the political, economic and social situation in which sport organizations are operating, as well as to the resources existing outside the organization which determine its survival.

In relation to the political, economic and social context of sport organizations, the literature commonly remarks the increasing relevance of sport in social life and the opportunities brought about by the development of communication and information technologies. Following Stern (1979), the increasing relevance of sports in social life can be explained due to the revival of the Olympic Games in 1986, which in turn strengthened the interest in promoting and developing sports at national level; and due to the development of communication and information technologies, which has expanded sport event transmission possibilities – first through the radio and then followed by the television. Both the increasing relevance of sports in social life and the relation of interdependence between sports and the media are contextual features challenging sport organizations today.

The changes in the environment of sport organizations can be characterized through the increasing number of actors participating in the sport sector, as well as by the new type of relationships among them. The nature of these relationships has changed from one based on dependency on outside resources for survival, to one based on interdependence and competition among them. The scarcity of resources forces sport organizations to compete in terms of

revenue opportunities as well as on the preferences and time of spectators (Nichols et al., 2005). The interdependency that has also come to characterize the relationships between the actors in the sport sector is, however, essential for achieving sporting success, fair competition and survival of the organization.

The professionalization process has been another relevant contextual feature within the research and literature reviewed on sport organizations' structure. The movement from amateur status to an increasingly professional one has also affected actors and structures involved in the world of sports – from athletes to sport governing bodies. Sport organizations have experienced this change as an organizational change process, commonly associated to the formalization of activities and procedures inside sport organizations, and the integration of paid staff into organizations traditionally based on voluntary work. One way or another, the professionalization process has had an important effect on sport organizations' structure, and it was considered in 51% of the articles reviewed.

Despite its late appearance in the literature and its relatively modest coverage so far, commercialization presents another important process experienced by sports, and characterizes the context within which the study of sport organizations' structure has taken place. The revenue creation opportunities and the exploitation of commercial activities are challenging sport organizations' traditional operations and processes, pushing them towards the development of new strategies particularly related to marketing (O'Brien and Slack, 2004). The commercialization of sports has gained considerable place in the research discussing sport organizations' structure (24%), especially during the last decade, which reflects its importance for future research studying organizational phenomena within the sport sector.

These three contextual features are influencing the internal dynamic of sport organizations, as well as determining the particular nature of organizational studies in the field of sports. The relevance of the constantly changing environment and the transformations caused by the processes of professionalization and commercialization all contribute to characterize sport phenomena on the basis of its changing nature. Hence, research on sport organizations might encounter all or some of the contextual features here exposed, as well as having to consider their influence over the internal operations and processes of sport organizations.

Conclusion

The aim of our literature review was to expose the state of scholarly knowledge and the main trends of discussions on sport organizations structure, looking deep into the key topics underlying the discussion of the structural characteristics of sport organizations. Following this aim, we wanted to identify the types of sport organizations that have been studied, the theoretical background to those studies, and the main contextual features that have been considered in the discussion of organizational phenomena in the field of sports. More than an exhaustive review of the literature existing on sport organizations' structure, we wanted to explore and clarify the main trends in studies on sport organizations' structure today.

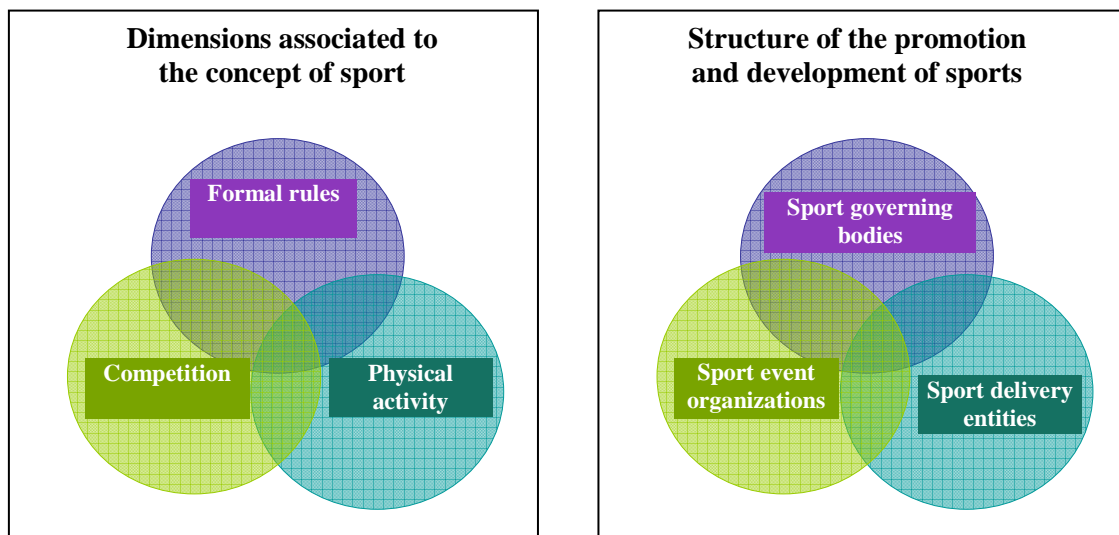
The results reveal that most of the discussion concerning sport organizations structure has been developed on sport governing bodies, and less so on what we have called sport event organizations and sport providing entities. The possibility of finding structural homogeneity between countries in relation to sport governing bodies, and hence the opportunity to generalize results, may explain the relevance that these organizations have gained in the literature discussing sport organizations structure. Sport providing entities and sport event

producers on the other hand tend to differ across countries, because the basic unit from which sport is promoted varies from country to country, as do the most popular sports.

Considering the many types of sport organizations that can be identified within the concept of sport organizations, it is very important to specify the type of sport organizations to be studied. When different types of sport organizations have different goals and work with different activities, the discussion on sport organizations structure should first be limited in terms of types of sport organizations. The three-category classification of sport organizations proposed here for those sport organizations dedicated to promotion and development is based on the three main elements integrated in the concept of sport itself: physical activity, formal rules and competition; play, game and contest.⁴

Figure 2

Relationship between the concept of sport and the types of sport organizations promoting and developing these activities



Source: The authors.

As the figure above illustrates, each of the components of the concept of sports can be associated with one of the three sport organizations promoting and developing sports. Sport providing entities are providing physical activity, sport event organizations are providing the competition system, and sport governing bodies are defining the rules and procedures to guide a sport discipline and other sport organizations. Despite their differences, the three types of sport organizations respond to the superior goal of promoting and developing sports.

The relevance of the environment and the processes of professionalization and commercialization in the research on sport organizations' structures reveal the relevance of the contextual circumstances for the evolution of sports and sport organization. Furthermore, the amount of research studying sport organizations from an organizational change perspective suggests the relevance and impact of those contextual features over the internal processes and operations of sport organizations.

⁴ Sports, (2006). In "Encyclopedia Britannica". Retrieved October 16, 2006, from Encyclopedia Britannica Online: <http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9108486>

The professionalization process refers more to an internal process experienced by sport organizations, where the quality demanded by sport competition imposes a need to formalize their activities, procedures and positions in order to achieve the expected results. By contrast, the commercialization process refers more to the relationship with the environment, which has turned from one traditionally based on the organization's dependence on its environment for survival, to one based on the exploitation of the revenue opportunities existing in the environment today. Both professionalization and commercialization refer to the evolution experienced in the sport sector, which might explain their relevance in the studies of organizational change and performance in the articles reviewed.

The challenges imposed by the new characteristics of sports today have become an incentive for sport organizations to professionalize their activities and define new relationships with its environment. The literature reviewed shows how sport organizations have been searching for efficiency and effectiveness through the improvement of their managerial practices and functioning (Slack, 1998). The new ties between organization and environment are characterized by the interdependence and competition between actors for the acquisition of the resources necessary to survive, and for exploiting the revenue opportunities existing in today's sport sector. Both changes express the new situation in which sport organizations are operating today, which any future research on this field must consider in its analysis. However, as change and performance have been interesting topics in which to frame the discussion on sport organizations' structure, future research might consider taking a new starting point, in which these two challenges are more a variable to leverage the analysis than the dependent variable to be examined.

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