

SPORTS MANAGEMENT EDUCATION – THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Abstract: A frequent situation in the field of management of sports organizations is the situation where these organizations are managed by people without proper education in the field of management or, more specifically, sports management. This is a consequence of the fact that managerial positions are often held by former professional athletes themselves, after finishing their active sports careers. Within this context, the aim of the article is to map the current situation about education in sports management. This is monitored within science and research, as well as the practice of selected sports organizations in Slovakia. The research presented in this article is based on the analysis of secondary data obtained from scientific articles indexed in world databases and available data on the education and professional experience of sports organizations' managers. Pieces of data and information were processed and connected via various methods and thought processes, including orientation and content analysis, deduction, induction, synthesis, and rapid review. The main recommendation based on the results of the performed analyses is the creation of new interactive educational content with a focus on sports management. Appropriately collected and stored information distributed via web technologies and other modern ICT tools will enable sports managers to acquire relevant knowledge continuously, even during the performance of their managerial functions. Such a portal will also serve for the education of future sports management professionals as a part of a dedicated university study program.

Keywords: sports management, sports organizations, education, ICT

JEL Classification: Z20, L83, I23

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, sport has a status not only as a voluntary leisure activity improving people's health, but also as a full-fledged industry. From this perspective, it is no longer surprising that a more narrowly perceived field of sports management has gradually emerged within the management theory and practice. For the managers of individual sports organizations to be able to set up and effectively influence operation of these organizations, they need to connect a lot of pieces of knowledge and skills. That is why the infrastructure preparing future sports managers is gradually being created as a part of the education system. The presented research is linking the intersection of sports management and education with appropriate support in the form of selected ICT tools and modern web technologies (Figure 1).

The basic aspects analysed within the research were also captured as their graphic representation. From a broader point of view, it can be stated that the basic element is *management*, and a narrower focus is *sports management*. Other researched sets are *education* and *ICT and web technologies*. These sets were studied within their relation to sports management. Therefore, it was possible to look for a common intersection. The joint connection of the aspects listed represents the focus of the research presented in this article. The recommendations created at the end of the article are taking this logic into account.

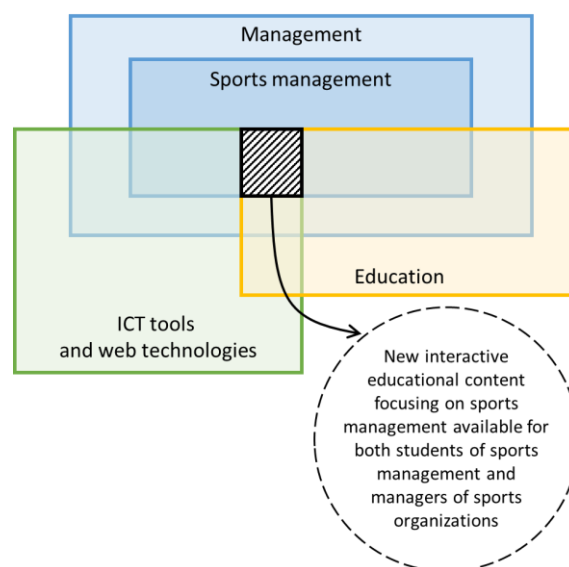


Figure 1 Intersection of the fields included in the presented research

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The analysis of the theoretical background focused on four specific areas. Basic characteristics were obtained for each area for achieving a better common understanding. These areas were *management*, *sports management*, *education*, and *sports management education*.

2.1. Management

Management as a set of knowledge, a scientific discipline, and the very practice of performing managerial functions in companies and other organizations, is continuously

developing across several separate but interconnected directions. These include, for example, the *resource-based view or the stakeholder theory* (Freeman et al., 2021). Regardless of whether the given company or other organization operates in virtually any environment, it is important for its managers to correctly identify the resources necessary for the creation of products or the provision of services. It is also important to sufficiently know the individual interested parties who constantly influence the activities of these organizations.

Fernani (2022) then particularly draws attention to the need for the ability to *evaluate scenarios of possible future development*. Only in this case the managers of individual organizations can adjust their operation in a dynamically changing environment and, ultimately, achieve long-term prosperity.

2.2. Sports management

Within a very broad area of management, many more narrowly focused sub-areas were gradually distinguished. One of them is the topic of sports management. Part of the current knowledge in sports management is, e.g., the research carried out by Mills (2021). This describes sports management as an *intersection of management, politics, and sport itself*. The author further emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the sports market and the individual forces acting on it.

In sports management, Ballesteros-Herencia (2021) focuses on the need to create a *comprehensive communication plan* for the successful operation of a sports organization. The created communication plan must enable the responsible manager of the sports organization to effectively set up internal communication. However, it must also enable him/her to manage communication interactions with the overall, broader environment in which the organization operates. For example, this includes communication with the public.

These were only selected aspects of current knowledge in the field of management and, more specifically, sports management. Their selection demonstrates the diversity of what managers of sports organizations encounter in practice daily. This underlines and *emphasizes the need for proper education in this area* so that managers of sports organizations have the best conditions possible for the fulfilment of their managerial roles.

2.3. Education

The field of education as such represents an irreplaceable part of modern society. Via many research works carried out in the past from all over the world, this broad topic has gradually developed into its present form – both theory and practice. *Digital transformation* is one of the challenges to which the field of education is currently trying to respond. This was only accelerated and supported by the situation related to the Covid-19 pandemic (Iivari et al., 2020).

The key role of modern technologies in today's education in general is highlighted by Bond et al. (2020). The authors identified higher engagement of students, both affectively and cognitively, as the main positives of using various *modern information technologies* in educational processes.

What was confirmed based on current research for the field of education can be further applied to the more narrowly defined field of sports management education.

2.4. Sports management education

The focus on sports management education in the context of *global perspectives* is described by LeCrom and Naylor (2020). They draw attention to the fact that even today the education in the field of sports management must be carried out with the acceptance of the connection to a wide global environment.

The research carried out by Wohlfart et al. focuses on the *competencies* that individual sports managers should acquire during their education (2022). The authors investigated the situation in Germany and focused on the competencies that the practice of sports management needs for proper operation. They compared these with the achievements of students of this discipline. Based on the results achieved in this research, the authors also provide recommendations for a better setting of the entire education system in the field of sports management.

3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the presented article was to examine the issue of sustainable management of sports organizations. This was based on theoretical pieces of knowledge on sports management, sports organizations, and education in sports management. It was also supported by the results of the analysis of the sports industry, sports associations, and sports clubs in Slovakia. The priority focal point was the creation of recommendations for the system of education in sports management. To achieve the presented purpose, the following procedure was undertaken:

- analysis of the theoretical foundations created by foreign authors,
- analysis of 78 sports associations in Slovakia, identification of presidents/executive managers of individual associations, collection of their basic characteristics (name, surname, gender, age, university education – degree, short description of careers, experience),
- prioritization of factors, focusing on the field of education and practical experience,
- comparison and evaluation of the knowledge obtained from the analyses listed above,
- creation of the recommendations focused on the education in relation to sports organizations.

This procedure can be divided into four parts. In the preparatory part, the attention is paid to the analysis of theoretical knowledge (*sports management, sports organizations, education in sports management*). This was followed by the analytical part, which was devoted to the analysis of the current state of sports associations operating on the territory of the Slovak Republic. A part of the design phase is represented by the recommendations that should help sports organizations with the issue of their sustainable management via effective and systematic education. The presented procedure was graphically captured in Figure 2.

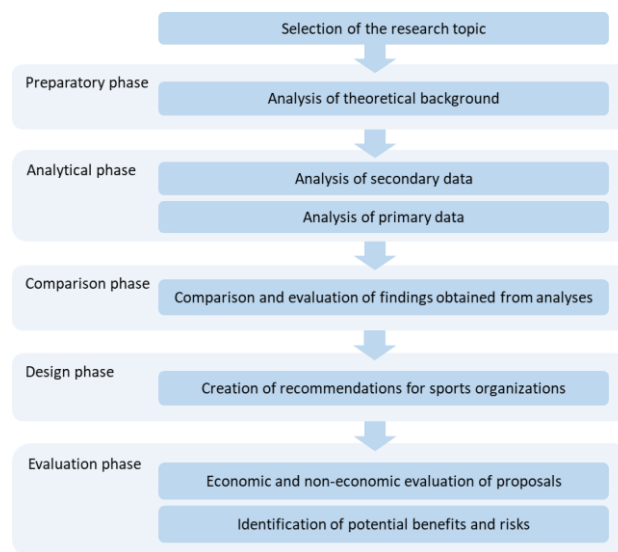


Figure 2 Methodological procedure of the research

The analysis of secondary data was carried out based on various sources (scientific articles indexed in world databases, available data on the education and professional experience of managers of sports organizations). Diverse methods, techniques, and procedures were used in the research. *Orientation and content analysis, deduction, induction, synthesis, rapid review, comparison, and summarization* were applied.

4. RESULTS

The results of the performed analyses were divided into two sections. The first includes the results related to education in sports management obtained from the rapid review. The next section is an analysis of the current situation of sports organizations in Slovakia with a focus on the managers' education.

4.1. Rapid review of the sports management education

Recently, managing a sports organization has become even more challenging, and one of the main reasons is the sports market competition. A proper sports management education needs to keep up with the development of the sports market so that the sports managers fully understand the environment in which their sports organizations operate. As a result of globalization, competition has increased tremendously. For example, sports organizations in America are trying to expand globally, while other organizations with sports equipment, such as the Kappa brand, are mainly targeting the American market. The second reason for the change in the management of sports organizations is the fact that competition as such is focused on marketing and advertisement. When dividing the market share according to the type of sport, the latest information available (from 2017) state that, globally, football (43%), American football (13%), and baseball (12%) have the highest shares (Allcock, 2017). The paradox is that the most profitable sports teams in recent years are not football teams. Figures for 2021 show that a team of American football (NFL) – Dallas Cowboys with \$5.7 billion is taking the first place. The second place was taken by baseball (MLB) – New York Yankees with \$5.25 billion, and the third place was taken by basketball (NBA) –

New York Knicks with \$5 billion. Only then the football followed, represented by the teams Barcelona (\$4.76 billion) and Real Madrid (\$4.75 billion) (Ozianian, 2021). According to the Statista portal, the sports organization focusing on selling sports products with the highest market value has long been Nike. Of course, the pandemic has affected this area too, and Nike reported a drop in the brand value from \$34,792 million to \$30,443 million (2022).

Another important factor of dominant sports organizations is the field of personnel management. This is also confirmed by the case study performed by the University of Ohio. The survey focuses on the NCAA National Collegiate Athletic Organization, which includes 136,000 athletes. The goal was to identify the relationship between personnel management (which also includes the aspect of education and managerial education and development) and the results of these organizations. The main finding presented in the selected study was that the schools that belong to a higher level in the field of personnel management had higher levels of athletic results to some extent. Schools that focused less on the area of personnel management were those with below average results. From the conclusions stated above, a presumption emerges that sports organizations could improve performance if they improved personnel management and thus focused more on the development and training of their managers (Ohio university, 2022).

Young people who are currently still actively engaged in educational institutions as students will become a part of sports organizations in the future. It is appropriate to focus on meeting the increasing need for the use of social networks and ICT solutions. Via them, relationships can be established, which also results from the study conducted at the University of Tübingen, in Germany (Wang, Zhou, 2015). If the education of young students in the specific field of sports management is supported, the expected success of sports organizations in the future will increase as well.

Gonzalez-Serrano et al. focused on the incorporation of an entrepreneurial perspective into sports education within the conditions of Spain. (2021). The authors analysed what results can be achieved for students when applying such an approach in education. It was a longitudinal study. Several

benefits were identified for the students themselves who were guided to identify an entrepreneurial perspective within the management of sports organizations. Based on this specific research, recommendations for the field of sports management education were created by the authors.

4.2. The current situation regarding the managerial education of the selected sports organizations' managers in Slovakia

The analysis, aimed at mapping the current situation of sports organizations regarding the education of managers, was carried out in a systematic way. The authors focused on mapping all recognized sports associations in Slovakia (n =

78). Subsequently, only other sports were selected for this article, excluding tennis, basketball, football, and ice hockey. The mentioned four sports are among the most popular ones in Slovakia. That is why special attention is paid to these sports in many research projects. Therefore, other sports, which are often omitted in research, were purposely analysed in this article. The results of the analysis were processed in a structured way via summary tables. Subsequently, a deliberate filtering of the data was used according to their completeness. Out of the 78 analysed associations, excluding the four most popular sports, complete data was available only for 21. Table 1 shows those data entries that were complete.

Table 1 The summary of the data collected on the education and experience of sports organizations' managers

N.	Association	Details on the association's president	
		University education	Experience
1	Slovak Biathlon Association	Ing.	a former biathlete, currently an entrepreneur
2	Slovak Athletic Association	PaedDr., PhD.	a former member of representation in fast walking, later a director of the sports centre, currently a vice president of the Slovak Olympic Committee
3	Slovak Floorball Association	Mgr.	co-founded one of the first floorball clubs in Slovakia, has a floorball coaching license, a teacher at a sports school
4	Slovak Golf Association	MBA.	an entrepreneur in gastronomy, a former professional golf player
5	Slovak Figure Skating Association	Ing.	a long-time member of representation in the sports pairs competition with his sister, worked as a financial intermediary
6	Slovak Swimming Federation	Mgr.	a former successful swimmer, a chairman of the swimming club and a manager of the representation
7	Slovak Weightlifting Association	Ing.	an active referee and a weightlifter
8	Slovak Dog Sledding Association	MVDr.	a member of the dog sledding representation, has a veterinary clinic
9	Slovak Table Tennis Association	Ing.	a former general secretary of the association, a player, a coach, and a referee of table tennis
10	Slovak Association of Fitness, Bodybuilding and Powerlifting	graduated from the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports in Bratislava	an entrepreneur and the first holder of the bronze medal in karate for Czechoslovakia, which was won at the World Championships in Paris in 1982
11	Slovak Chess Association	graduated in finance from College of Marketing and Business	worked for many years in the financial sector, founded a successful family business
12	Slovak Squash Association	Mgr.	an entrepreneur
13	Slovak Volleyball Federation	graduated from the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports in Bratislava, volleyball coach, highest licence A, FIVB certificate	a player and a coach
14	Slovak Fencing Association	JUDr.	started the sports career in 1971, founded the Fencing Academy in 2013
15	Slovak Rowing Association	Mgr.	a rower
16	Slovak Bocce Association	Ing.	a coach
17	Slovak Association of Fishing Technique	MVDr.	won 17 gold, 23 silver, and 18 bronze medals at the European Championships
18	Slovak Sports Fishing Association	PhDr.	father taught him how to fish
19	Slovak Sumo Federation	Ing.	a heavyweight wrestler
20	Slovak Association of Dance Sports	Mgr.	a dance teacher and a dance sports coach (III. class)
21	Slovak Field Hockey Association	Ing.	a former member of the Czechoslovakia's representation in the sport, a long-time referee

Source: elaboration based on data obtained from the websites of the selected sports organizations

Based on the presented results, it can be stated that the *availability of information* on the education and practical experience of managers is at a low level. Only 21 sports associations declared some data on the university education of their managers. Therefore, it is possible to assess that both the availability and transparency of information on the education is low. Further steps of the research should therefore be focused on the collection of primary data, for example via interviews with the management staff of sports organizations themselves (qualitative research) or via sociological interviews using the questionnaire survey technique (quantitative research).

At this stage of the research, it is not possible to rely only on secondary data; the findings cannot be generalized. However, the partial results show that out of 21 associations (which transparently provided information about their managers' education), all managers graduated from college/university and thus received a university education. Based on the transparently displayed data, only two of the managers of the included associations (n = 21) graduated from university in the field of sports (green colour in Table 1) and only two others with a focus on management (orange colour in Table 1).

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Various research teams from around the world focused on, for example, covering all managerial functions that should not be neglected even in the management of a sports organization, within the framework of linking the topics of sports management and education. In this context, Vazhenin et al. (2019) mention the definition of goals, processes related to the collection and distribution of information, the creation of forecasts of future development, the decision-making process, management of work performance, communication processes, and controlling. Other interesting results stem from the research conducted by Lopez-Carril et al. (2021), who focused on the use of social networks (specifically the LinkedIn network) in the process of education and professional training of future sports managers. According to the authors' conclusions, this social network is a very suitable platform for sports management students to establish long-term professional contacts with the sports industry. This is another argument supporting the importance of applying modern ICT tools for achieving better results in sports management education and its practical application.

The main findings resulting from the analyses carried out include the fact that sports management and its education

are constantly developing fields. However, the topicality of this field and the need for its continuous development are proven by the conclusions obtained from the synthesis of selected foreign research projects and by mapping the current situation within the management of sports organizations in Slovakia. It can also be stated that education is a key area for sports organizations and their long-term operation. In this case, it is not only a matter of continuous and systematic education of the managers of these organizations, but also of a focus on the education of university students with a direct orientation on the sports field. If university graduates are prepared to work directly in sports organizations and have knowledge in the field of management, they will be better prepared for the challenges of this environment.

Specific recommendations were formulated as a follow-up to the pieces of information presented above. The main recommendation is the creation of *new interactive educational content with a focus on sports management*. Specifically, it is recommended to focus on the following points:

- make collected and stored pieces of information and knowledge on sports management accessible,
- apply web technologies,
- analyse and select other appropriate ICT technologies,
- create the possibility of training managers directly during the performance of their managerial functions,
- integrate the above-mentioned points into a unified educational portal,
- create access to the portal and knowledge base also for the students of relevant (and still emerging) study programs at universities.

Future directions of the presented research can be described in the following way. In the next steps, it is necessary to focus on the collection of primary data, which will smoothly supplement the secondary data obtained and analysed so far. It is also appropriate to focus on analysing possible interactive methods of education used in various sports institutions around the world. These pieces of information and knowledge will bring enriching inspiration for the setting of further research goals in this field.

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