

UMA MACRO-ANÁLISE DOS SERVIÇOS DO DESPORTO UNIVERSITÁRIO

UN ANÁLISIS MACRO-ORGANIZATIVO DE LOS SERVICIOS DE DEPORTE UNI- VERSITÁRIO

A MACRO-ORGANISATIONAL ANALYSIS OF UNIVERSITY SPORTS SERVICES

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Resumo

A estrutura organizacional dos Serviços Desportivos Universitários é o tema descrito neste artigo, tendo em consideração os membros das Universidades do Comité Espanhol do Desporto Universitário. A base científica da análise é estabelecida através do modelo de Mintzberg. Os resultados obtidos demonstram uma heterogeneidade de modelos com as suas peculiaridades na amostra utilizada (65 agentes), concluindo que a relação entre os parâmetros do *design* é claramente recíproca e não sequencial.

Palavras-chave: Estrutura organizacional; Parâmetro do *design*; Serviços desportivos universitários.

Resumen

La estructura organizativa de los Servicios Deportivos Universitarios es el tema descrito en este artículo, teniendo en cuenta aquellas Universidades miembros del Comité Español de Deporte Universitario. La base científica del análisis se establece a través del modelo de Mintzberg. Los resultados demuestran la heterogeneidad de los modelos con sus particularidades en la muestra utilizada recogida (65 agentes), llegando a la conclusión de que la relación entre los parámetros de diseño son claramente recíprocos y no secuenciales.

Palabras clave: Estructura organizativa; Diseño de parámetros; Servicios deportivos universitarios.

Abstract

Organizational Structure of the University Sport Services is the subject that this article outlines, taking into consideration the Universities members of the Spanish Committee of University Sport. The scientific basis of the analysis is settled on the conceptual model of Mintzberg. The obtained results show a heterogeneity of models with their peculiarities in the sample made (65 agents) concluding the relation between the parameters of design is clearly reciprocal and non sequential.

Keywords: Parameter of design; Organizational structure; University sport services.

Introduction

Much has been written about organisation and the organisational functions in many studies and projects of all types (Cameron & Whetten, 1983; Hall, 1996; Meyer, 1971; Peris, González & Méndez, 2001; Waterman, Peters, & Philips, 1980), pointing out both concepts are important for the success of both, entities and institutions. This article is the result of an organisation analysis research project, targeting the sports environment.

Generally speaking, wherever sport has been democratised the university sports service is a body that, within the sports administration system, dominates as an organisational unit not only with respect to any of the sports environments or sub-systems, but also concerning university activities in general, which is why this article focuses on this particular entity as its analysis subject.

Having compared the information provided by a number of different sources regarding organisation and the organisational function within the university sports services, it's proved that despite the existence of projects studying organisational factors, the design of the organisation is a case subjected to little or no analysis at all, which is the reason why the goals of this investigation are based on this issues.

Conceptually speaking, this article is based on the theory of organisation (Blau & Schoenherr, 1971; Robbins, 1990) and, considering the many different ways of approaching the considered subject of study, a general macro-organisational approach was adopted. Bearing this in mind, the research work done regarding the formal design of the organisational structure forms the basis from which the organisational structure of the university sports services are analysed using a descriptive-type research design (Guerrero & Gómez, 1999) of the sports services members of the Comité Español del Deporte Universitario (CEDU).

The analyzing process itself, based on Mintzberg's conceptual development, turned to be proved and agreed as important scientific evidences taken from this area of knowledge were used. In such an analysis process the population parameters of the most important design variables or factors of the formal organisational structure are described and analysed, as are the contingency factors (Campos, 1996; De la Fuente, 1990; Rodríguez, 1986).

The results presented meet the objectives set for the development of the research project, confirming as they do the existence of a characteristic type of structure common to an important majority of these services. Furthermore, they confirm the repercussion and importance of the organisational dimension within the structural configuration and, given the importance of the role of the environment within this contingency approach, the existence of different types of structure in accordance with environmental conditions is also confirmed.

Organisations are an instrument for developing different social functions. Robbins (1990) defines the organisation as "a consciously coordinated social entity, with a relatively identifiable boundary, which functions on a relatively continuous basis to achieve a common goal or a set of goals" (p. 4). In the area of sport, organisation is a constant activity (Scott, 1992). The organisational factor has an extremely important impact on the results achieved by the sporting entities (Child, 1977), and this why every sporting organisation needs to develop an adequate structure using certain organisational principles.

First and foremost, but not exclusively, the theory of organisation studies a system, namely the company, and it sets about analysing the organisation process using two main dimensions as its starting point: systematically (from the perspective of how its structure is de-

signed and how it functions); behaviourally (from the perspective of the people who go to make up this system).

Blau (1972) classifies organisations into four types: business or company; mutual benefit association; service organisation; community organisation; the service organisation is that in which the beneficiaries are the users of the organisation themselves (Hall, 1996). Within this category, García Ferrando (1990) lists four basic forms of organisation within the sports environment: the non-organised sports organisation; sports clubs; the commercial offer; sports services.

The focus of the research into the organisational process can be directed towards specific objectives or areas which will form the focal point during the investigation: individual; group; organisation; organisational groups. The first two levels are considered as being micro-organisational (or as organisational behaviour), and the second two levels fall within the macro-organisational approach, which is that corresponding to our purpose, given that it is the organisation as a whole that is being analysed. This approach places emphasis upon a group of variables that design the basic structure of the organisation or that contain the fundamental building blocks of the system.

The contingencies approach is an expression of the general systems theory, reduced to three fundamental elements: the organisation as an open system; the influence of the environment, determining the organisation nature; there is no better way to organise statement. The contingency approach sets out to establish and/or analyse the relationships that exist between an organisation, its components and the means used to arrive at the proposal of organisational designs that are suitable for every situation or contingency. The best known work on the application of the contingency approach to organisational design is that of Mintzberg (1984), which presents a classification of structural configurations that uses different organisational variables as its starting point: organisational components; coordination mechanisms; organisational design parameters or variables; contingency factors.

Organisational Design

The task of designing a structure is governed by a series of general organisational principles that lead to further series of designing principles, stating how the organisation is structured. According to Mintzberg (1984), these design principles are: defining the jobs/tasks; defining the organisational units; ensuring that the units act in a coordinated and consistent way; defining the degree of centralisation-decentralisation.

These principles take shape in a series of design variables that specify the questions or decisions of the formal organisational structure. Taking the previous proposal one step further, these variables are: specialisation, formalisation and preparation; the way the units are grouped and their size; planning and control systems and link-up devices; the decision-making system. The combination of internal and external organisational principles and variables gives a specific form to the organisational structure, model or structural configuration that is built in a formal design. With a systems-based approach, these combinations are seen as being “gestalts” or groups of closely interdependent relationships.

These configurations enable the possible types of organisational structure that might be adopted by the university sports services to be explained and characterised. Burns and Stalker (1961) developed the characteristics of different models in their approach to the analysis of the organisational structure. Based on this, Mintzberg (1984) proposes a classification and

defines models or mechanical structures (machine bureaucracy and professional bureaucracy) and organic models or structures (multi-divisional, adhocracy and new models).

During the qualitative investigation phase it was decided that, given the general characteristics of the university sports services, the research process should concentrate upon three structures (Table 1).

Table 1. Design principles and description of the basic composition of different structures.

Type of structure	Simple	Bureaucratic-professional	Adhocratic
Design Principles	- Minimal Specialisation	- Specialisation	- Specialisation
	- Non-formalisation	- Formalisation	- Little Formalisation
	- Non-departmentalisation	- Functional Departmentalisation	- Different departmentalisation criteria
	- Non-existence of Staff	- Administrative Comp.	- Little Hierarchy
Basic Structure	- Centralised Structure	- Decentralised Structure	- Decentralised Structure
	- Fundamental Part	- Strategic Apex	- Number of Operations and Staff
	- Coordination Mechanism	- Direct Supervision	- Mutual Adaptation
	- Fundamental Parameter	- Centralisation	- Specialisation and Link-up Devices
	- Contingency Factors	- Young and Small	- Diverse Age and Size
		- Simple/Stable Environment	- Complex/Dynamic Environment

Research Methodology

In accordance with the research budgets and with the development of the theoretical framework, the objectives of this research project are:

- To prove whether the organisational structure that characterises the university sports services is the simple structure;
- Bearing in mind the importance of size as a contingency variable, to prove whether the size values of the sports services shows any relation with the complexity of the organisational structure;
- To prove whether the perception of the degree of stability and complexity of the environment influences the degree to which the structural configuration is more or less simple, bureaucratic or adhocratic.

To illustrate this, a simple model has been formulated that helps to integrate the complex panorama of the open system that is university sports in order to analyse the formal organisational structure of the university sports service (Figure 1).

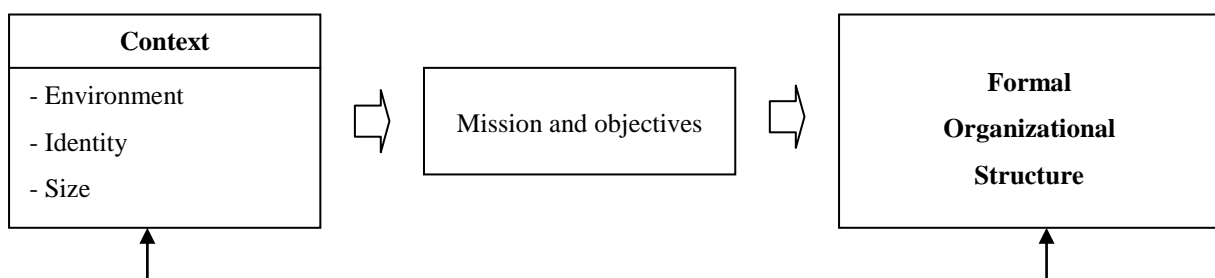


Figure 1. The formal organisational structure of the university sports service.

This model is based on the contingency approach and it enables attention to be centred both on the individual elements and on the possible interactions between the different variables by being able to determine a type of configuration in accordance with the conditions of the context.

This is a descriptive-type empirical investigation developed using the model presented. The tool designed to obtain the data has been applied to all the sports services pertaining to those universities recognised by the CEDU. On completion of the field work, a total of 65 universities had answered the questionnaire.

The suggested design is a traditional organisational design analysis based on Mintzberg (1984) proposal, chosen because: it is adapted to the current conditions of the university sports services; it has a more descriptive character than others of a more analytical nature; it enables the multi-variable relationships between organisational structure variables and contingency factors to be analysed by checking types of association; it enables us to obtain results regarding structural configurations (organisational typologies). This design allows for few possibilities other than those suggested by the author, which is why the definition of the objectives has been extremely carefully chosen.

The tool used to capture the data was the structured survey which was applied using two questionnaires. The first questionnaire requests job/task-related information and data regarding divisions within units and the organisational chart of the Service. The second questionnaire requests information regarding the remaining variables and dimensions defined for carrying out and developing the investigation.

Results

The design of the investigation and the analysis model used are of a descriptive nature, which is why more attention is paid to the content of the organisational design than to the process itself. In the descriptive analysis high typical deviation values were observed for the majority of variables. This shows a diversity of values in the design and contingency parameters, which in turn underlines a relative organisational diversity between the university sports services.

On a general level, the structural analysis results confirm the basic design principles of the simple structure. Given that among themselves the configurations are not exclusive categories, the characterisation of the simple structure is subject to exceptions and to diverse conditions that are shared with configurations, as can be observed in the case study.

The results of the co-relational analysis of the size variable with organisational complexity variables prove a high and positive relationship (0.87) between the size variable and the specialisation variable. This correlation can also be proved using the number of units or departments as well as the administrative component of the sports services. In the same way, a low and negatively biased relationship (0.31) between the size variable and the administrative intensity is proved, showing that this administrative component shrinks proportionally in accordance with the increase in size of the services.

Eleven (11) university sports services meet these environmental conditions. On a general level, the results enable simple structure conditions to be identified, thus: the specialisation, formalisation and preparation of the jobs/tasks present low values; seven of the eleven services do not divide up the structure; seven of the eleven services do not measure results;

only two of them have link-up devices; the size of 75% of these services is less than 20 jobs/tasks; the same percentage of these services are less than 10 years old; they do not have staff bodies, nor do they have middle line.

Forty-one (41) university sports services meet these environmental conditions. On a general level, the results enable bureaucratic-professional structure conditions to be identified. When compared with the previous category, these cases present a higher level of formalisation in the design of jobs/tasks. From among those which differentiate their structure the most, three types of departmentalisation are observed: a departmental division lower than or equal to five units and lower than or equal to five sub-units (four sports services); a departmental division of more than five units and lower than or equal to five sub-units (seven sports services); a departmental division of more than five units and of more than five sub-units (eleven sports services). In general: seventy percent of services do not measure their results; there are diverse size categories and ages range from between 5 and 15 years; little apex and staff. The jobs/tasks are basically concentrated within the operational core. There are middle line jobs/tasks.

Eleven (11) university sports services meet these environmental conditions. On a general level, results here enable adhocratic structure conditions to be identified, given that these cases present a higher degree of specialisation than those of the other two categories: there is no departmentalisation; if there is, it is functional or of the function-market type combination; forty percent of these services measure their results, although planning activity continues to be low (this category presents a greater amount of link-up devices than the others); different ages and sizes; the jobs/tasks here are concentrated in the operational core. There is a middle line and staff bodies.

Two of the sports services have only one job/task registered. This case study has enabled the author to carry out quite a precise in-depth analysis of the content of the sports services' organisational structure and to identify differences in the key aspects of each configuration.

Discussion

The Structural Characteristics of the University Sports Services

The simple structure is that most used by the university sports services. However, the analysis carried out enables the fact that there exist other organisational structures that offer an alternative to this configuration to be confirmed.

The simplicity with which the environment is perceived may be one of the causes of the low level of specialisation observed. This reduces the uncertainty related with the type of tasks undertaken and with the production needs.

The preparation variable is one of the parameters that enable one to determine the structural movement from the simple structure towards a bureaucratic-professional or adhocratic-type structure. This is because professional organisations require good skills and know-how.

A third of the services studied do not divide up their structure, though a certain contradiction between the concept of departmentalisation and the material realisation thereof within the organisational chart is noticed. However, the way in which departmentalisation is carried out can be used as a good indicator when it comes to proposing a basic typology classification of the organisational structure of the services (Table 2).

Table 2. Typology classification of the organisational structure of the services.

Undivided services	Elemental structure
Basically divided services (1 to 4)	Basic structure
Services divided into > 4 units	More elaborate structure

The grouping criteria (functional, market-related or combined) are correlated with the Age of the organisation (0.60), which means that the age affects the type and conditions of the departmental division process.

The organisation structure of the university sports services is characterised by the fact that it has very little apex, little or no middle line and little or no staff. In most of the cases, the tasks/jobs are concentrated in the operational core. From the analysis made regarding the distribution of the tasks/jobs within the structure of the services, it is observed that:

- a) With the exception of the bigger services (those with 10 or more units), no administrative components (apex and middle line) are present;
- b) The way in which the components of the structure develop would appear to follow the progression suggested by Starbuck and Nystrom (1981) in which first the production jobs/tasks are installed, followed by the marketing-related jobs/tasks and then others that give rise to the superstructure;
- c) The larger number of units, the more middle line figures exists. These cover almost all of the jobs/tasks that carry responsibility within the departments, but not in the sub-units. Three middle line demarcations are detected which correspond with the proposed departmentalisation indicator;
- d) The existence of four large areas of activity or departments within the services is proved: activities, administration, installations and maintenance;
- e) The inexistence of techno-structure (analysis and/or auditing jobs/tasks) is proved, which confirms the decision to base the approach to the study on the simple or unitary configuration forms to be the right one.

Despite a low level of planning activity is observed, it's coherently structured and whenever any results are demanded, all control measures are set in place. Generally speaking, results are demanded on the initiative of the service's management, providing a clear indication of organisational maturity and the degree of professionalism of the management process.

Throughout the investigation, a general observation was made regarding an inverse relationship between centralisation and the degree of complexity. It was observed that size affects complexity and, in accordance with this parameter, the high decentralisation and complexity values noticed in many of the cases can be explained.

There exists a total correspondence between priority and the percentage of usage of the control mechanisms. In small-sized services (those with less than 5 or 6 jobs/tasks) mutual adaptation (informal communication) prevails as the priority mechanism. Generally speaking, between 65% and 80% of directives related with the exercise of control and coordination tend to be verbally transmitted. Whenever coordination needs exceed the directive, mutual adaptation is also used. Generally speaking, it was observed that in decentralised structures such as the university sports service, hierarchical mechanisms such as direct supervision (monitoring and control) do not prevail.

Despite the priority usage of mutual adaptation, the data observed confirmed that the use of the control mechanisms is quite compatible, given the fact that their choice is subject to matters that have little or nothing to do with the specifications of the configurations. It can be confirmed that the different configurations operate together with different mechanisms to

provide support to the task of coordination. There is, therefore, no correspondence between the type of configuration and the type of mechanism; each director or directive, rather than using one mechanism, uses a combination of these depending upon the directive style as well as on the characteristics of the activities and/or tasks to be carried out.

As far as the contingency factors are concerned, it was observed that the university sports services are generally young organisations (of between five and fifteen years old), small in size, and with two outstanding demarcations: between 1 and 20 jobs/tasks where the majority of services are located, and between 20 and 40 jobs/tasks where the services with the greater structural elaboration are located. All of the services present little external control or, what amounts to the same thing, a high degree of managerial autonomy.

In general, a series of basic principles were observed that characterise the simple structure as the most characteristic organisational structure of the university sports services, but with three counterpoints: high decentralisation; concentration of the jobs/tasks in the operational core; compatibility in the usage of the control mechanisms.

As expected, it can therefore be confirmed that this is not a pure structure, and this opens the door to another type of suppositions and possible explications regarding the way it is designed and what it is that is being discussed here.

The Influence of Size upon the Organisational Design

It has been proved that size is related with differentiation and structural elaboration, in other words that the increase in size is not merely an influx of staff, but that it is closely connected with the organisational design. The analysis enabled certain suppositions that bestow an important value upon this variable as regards the type of organisational structure that might be adopted by the university sports services to be confirmed.

Confirmation that the relationship between size and degree of specialisation is a clear indicator of organisational complexity can be found in De la Fuente, García-Tenorio, Guerras, and Hernangómez (2000) and Robbins (1990). It can also be stated that the sports services of a size greater than that of 50 collaborators that show a high level of specialisation are relatively complex organisations.

The relationship between size and other structural variables enables one to observe how the university sports services pass from one set of organisational structures to another. It also confirms and/or broadens suppositions regarding the way designs are carried out, given that as the services become increasingly structurally elaborate, they change from being a more or less pure simple structure into another more organisationally complex type of structure. The analysis undertaken has enabled certain relationships to be investigated more explicitly and to offer conjectures and/or suppositions regarding the impact this variable has both on individual values and on the structure as a whole.

The reasons that might explain why the ratios between size and age (0.61) are not higher are the existence of a considerable number of elementary structures that do not develop organisationally or that present zero growth rates and the presumption that the rate of growth is not strictly quantitative or, put another way, once the organisational structure has been consolidated, the growth vector is more qualitative in character.

In agreement with that stated by Meyer (1972) and Robbins (1987), it can therefore be assumed that organisational size is a determining factor in terms of organizational design.

However, the opposite statement is not true, a fact proved in some longitudinal studies (Daft, 2009; Nadler & Tushman, 1988).

Organisational Design in Sports Services

Results prove the existence of relatively diverse sports structures that form a consolidated part of all Spanish universities. This investigation has proved the existence of certain relationships, and although these are neither timeless nor universal, they can serve as a reference when it comes to learning more about organisational structure and, practically speaking, about the structural design of sports entities.

Organisation is not only an activity that involves a high level of complexity, but it is also a central aspect as regards the long-term success of both entities and institutions. Therefore, organisational design becomes a decisive element for the achievement of objectives within the university sports services, and the organisational structure is the instrument used to make it possible to meet these objectives.

An important conclusion is that it is not possible to describe a single basis upon which to build and develop the organisational design with respect to the university sports services. Furthermore, there is no one perfect structure for these, rather a number of possible combinations according to the conditions of each service.

It has been proved that the environmental characteristics condition the type of structural configuration of the university sports services, although it has been observed that the environment-structure relationship is not a standard one and that it affects the different services in different ways. A greater or lesser degree of influence over the organisational structure has been observed depending on the type of environment. The results allow us to suggest that stable environments encourage the formation of bureaucratic-type structures by proposing that the relationship in question is asymmetric, in other words, that the dynamic conditions exercise a greater degree of influence within the structure than do their static counterparts, and that bureaucratic structures use their power to stabilise environments. Other proposals complementary to these are that instability reduces bureaucratisation and that stability makes adaptation difficult.

Further Propositions to Help Understand Organisational Design in Sports Services

Reaching an acceptable degree of know-how with respect to organisational structure has never been easy due to: the complexity of the relationships that might be established; the difficulty of delimiting the structure conceptually and operationally; the difficulty of establishing reliable measures that enable structural differences to be established.

This research project includes a description of the most characteristic structural configuration of the university sports services in Spain using organisational design as its starting point. It also describes certain existing and latent structural differences that have enabled a whole series of proposals and suppositions to be developed, the intention of which is that of developing a research framework and providing a greater degree of conceptual breadth for future investigations.

All attempts made to define the concept and the decisions associated with organisational structure must be understood as a part-being. This is because it can be considered as a whole

set of approaches with longer of fewer validations trying to best reflect the analysis perspective.

The organisational design does not tend to materialise in a vacuum. Rather it originates from knowledge of previous structures, and this is why certain similarities between structures created during a specific period are found. Structures do not change their composition overnight. They are better represented by stating that they pass through transitional phases (changes in the organisational parameters) that result in different configurations. Once the characteristics of the configurations have been presented, it is a matter of determining whether a model or yardstick exists that enables the characteristics of the sports services to be synthesised at different times and that helps predict the design in accordance with the most important parameters. Based upon the organisational life cycle (Cameron & Whetten, 1983; Peris et al., 2001; Quinn & Cameron, 1983), different organisational statuses are reflected according to periods. This model recognises the existence of four statuses or phases during the lifespan of all organisations: the statuses of creation, growth, consolidation and decline. These enable a certain type of structure to be characterised as well as allowing for certain structural differences to be accurately recognised.

Whilst in each of these statuses organisations show different structural characteristics. The university sports services might well employ this model as a reference to both recognise and analyse the most suitable structural design for each of their status phases or during each of their periods of transition.

The organisational design prepares the system in such a way that it works, but it is the task of strategic management to decide what has to be done and to qualify the results that must be achieved. The organisational design demands strategic basis in order to achieve the organisational and operational objectives and thereby ensure that the jobs/tasks and the activities all have a content that is both precise and coordinated. The choice of organisational structure, therefore, must be guided by the strategy, given that the initial grouping (the differentiation of activities) or primary structure must be carried out using the key success factors and the strategic contingencies as its starting point.

The selection of structures and of their design is not merely a rational process, rather one that is subjected to the political power and decision making of individuals such as managers and directors. There is no such thing as a mechanical adaptation process. Generally speaking, the directors have more autonomy than that suggested by the defenders of contextual determinism. Those in charge of the organisations can choose from a wide range of structural possibilities that are compatible with the environment in which the entity is active. They can even go so far as to modify this environment via their actions and decisions in such a way that organisations are not condemned to always doing the same thing, nor to organise themselves in the same way. It is patently obvious that those who run the organisations enjoy a certain degree of autonomy when it comes to choosing the structural design that best suits their interests and their perception of the environment in which their entity is positioned. However, this design must take into account the external or contingency factors, if not as determining elements of the structure, then as agents that restrict it.

Throughout the analysis, a high percentage of small-sized organisations was found, the majority of which have been recently created. Organisations such as these are faced with different organisational and structural problems. In small-sized organisations, those in charge have somewhat more limited structural design options than in larger organisations. The possible organisational problems or conflicts facing small organisations reduce their possibilities of

finding a structural solution, which is why they show, as has been observed, greater degrees of correspondence regarding the values of the population parameters.

Further longitudinal studies are necessary to clarify the relationships presented between the variables, enabling the propose of more explicative investigation designs. Merely by comparing the structural dimensions within time it is possible to determine the influence that they have on the organisational structure. Once these population parameters are known, initiatives to develop a different type of organisational investigations within the sports entities field can be faced from now on.

One of the most important conclusions of this investigation is that the relationships between the design parameters are clearly reciprocal and not sequential. The design parameters form an integrated system of processes and decisions in which each and every one of them is linked with all the rest, meaning that any change or modification made to a design parameter implies or may imply changes in the rest of the variables.

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