

Projekt Professionalization of sports federations in Switzerland: Causes, forms and consequences

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Weitere Informationen:	http://wp.unil.ch/profes/

Background

International and national federations are non-profit organizations with social and commercial activities. They are key actors in the relationships within the sport system as well as with state, sponsors and media. The federations are currently faced with great challenges: growing competition in top-level sport, the democratization of sport with “sports for all”, and societal expectations from sport as an answer to diverse social problems (integration, education, health, unemployment, etc.).

In this context, professionalization of sport organizations - defined as an organizational process leading towards organizational rationalization, efficiency and project management – seems to be an appropriate strategy to meet the current challenges. Employment of paid staff, to mention one aspect of professionalization, is increasing rapidly in Swiss national sport federations. The dynamic development is obvious in most of the international federations with headquarters in Switzerland as well. Within the sport federations, this has led to a profound organizational changes, characterized by strengthening the institutional management and implementation of efficiency-based management instruments in the daily practice of the federations.

Aims of the project

Sport federations are initially voluntary driven third sector organizations. Professionalization neither in Swiss sports organizations nor in Swiss non-profit-organisations has ever been studied. Understanding causes, forms and consequences of professionalization in sport federations can contribute to knowledge on management and organizational changes in non-profit-organizations in general, whose economic, social and political weight is increasing in many countries.

At this time, we lack knowledge of how national and international sport federations professionalize and with which consequences. Thus, the purpose of the research project is to understand causes, forms and consequences of professionalization in national and international sport governing bodies in Switzerland. In particular, we are interested in the following research questions:

- 1) How do sport federations professionalize? (causes and forms of professionalization)
- 2) What are the effects of professionalization on the organization structures, processes, performance and the member clubs? (consequences of professionalization)

Theoretical and methodological procedure

After an initial critical analysis of the literature on professionalization of sport federations, we base our approach on social theory of action and development of a multi-level framework for analyzing professionalization in sport federations. We then approach deeper understanding of professionalization in Swiss national sport federations (and the international federations conducted by University of Lausanne). For that, up to 10 case studies will be conducted (document analysis and interviews with key persons) and a questionnaire-based cluster analysis over all Swiss Olympic member federations (~ 85).