EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT - A FAVORING FACTOR FOR IMPROVING SPORTS RESULTS AT THE LEVEL OF SCHOOL SPORTS CLUB

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The school sports clubs that operate in our country are educational organizations (schools) inextricably linked to the notion of performance in sports. They are in connection with two social systems with interdependencies (education and sports), have an organizational path influenced by educational system management and by political factors, as well as a history interfering with the history of Romanian sport, to the performances of which these entities have and are contributing. In the Report of the Romanian Court of Accounts from 2013 was found “a decrease of the importance given to physical education and sports, registering a decrease of most sports indicators: number of legitimate athletes, number of prizes in international competitions, places in international rankings, etc.”.

School sports clubs (SSC) are an important component of the sports system, with the role of selecting, training and promoting students in performance sports. A holistic approach reflects the part-whole relationship, so systemic level conclusions must be verified and supported at the level of its component parts. The first part of this PhD thesis, entitled POSTMODERN MANAGEMENT MODELS AND METHODS: OVERVIEW OF SSC includes information and data about five postmodern management models applicable to sport school clubs, respectively Knowledge Management (KM), SECI (a Japanese model), Learning Organizations/School as Learning Organizations (LO/SLO), Benchmarking and Reengineering. These models are related to the specific elements of SSC, as described in the Romanian legislation and considering the position of these sports structures both in sports and in educational system. In the first part, the SSC network and the specific indicators of the National Institute of Statistics, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education and Youth and Sports Ministry were presented. Also, a questionnaire applied to the European Eurydice network members revealed both similarities and differences between countries regarding the model of sports training for performance, but also the importance of implementing a strategy in the sport school field. Some conclusions derived from the theoretical and scientific substantiation of the PhD thesis was useful to build the research intervention plan, as follows:

- developing an evaluation tool focused on sports results that would lead to the construction of an efficiency index relevant to SSC as organizations;
- making benchmarks based on a correct and adequate hierarchy of the results of CSS as organizations;
- establishing a diagnosis that contribute to the identification of management factors with influence on organizational performance, related to the postmodern management models.

The second part of the PhD thesis, PRELIMINARY RESEARCH REGARDING THE RESULTS OF ROMANIAN SPORT SCHOOL CLUBS, aimed to highlight the current
situation recorded after the external evaluation process to the first 13 SSC between 2015-2018, to analyse the existing indicators, to conceive and to apply an adapted instrument of measurement, to analyse the situation related to each sport discipline.

Some conclusions from the preliminary research, as follows:

1. The external evaluation institution, Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance on Pre-University Education (RAQAPE), in the reports produced and published, must present the results of the SCC differently from the results of the educational units in general, for which the terms of national exams, Olympics and other school competitions, etc. are valid. It is necessary for the external evaluation reports to provide complete and relevant information regarding the specifics of the SCC as educational units with additional sports program, respectively their contribution to sports performance.

2. The tools used by RAQAPE in the process of external evaluation at “niche” educational units such as SCC have limitations and inadequacies. The introduction of a new tool for internal evaluation and external data collection is a necessity. The application of a first variant of it to 13 SCC revealed some formal non-conformities, which creates the premises for an amelioration approach followed by a new verification of its correct functioning.

3. The currently achievable hierarchies, considering SCC as a whole, as organizations, reveal a weak correlation between educational and sports results, as recorded in the official reporting documents. However, the organizational functioning aspects registered in the external evaluation reports made by RAQAPE can highlight the management interventions necessary to improve the functioning of SCC, and the rankings made by the Youth and Sports Ministry (YSM) can highlight the periods of poor performance. These aspects are important if we take into account the fact that sports performance represent the mission of these educational units.

4. The application of an appropriate data collection tool and, therefore, the establishment of complete and relevant databases, can lead to SCC hierarchies based on the results in organized sports disciplines. These hierarchies can also reveal aspects of the management factors with influence on sports performance.

5. Establishing an efficiency index based on the aggregation of specific resource and outcome indicators could lead to an appropriate organizational hierarchy, relevant from an educational point of view, but necessarily taking into account the organized sports disciplines.

The third part of the PhD thesis, *BASIC RESEARCH ON THE QUALITY LEVEL OF RESULTS IN EDUCATION WITH SPORTS PROGRAM IN ROMANIA*, aimed to identify factors and levels of management influencing sports performance, by qualitatively evaluating school sports clubs in the context of sports Romanian education.

The proposed objectives were the following:
1. Establishing the main indicators of resources and result for the qualitative analysis of SCC in the context of sports educational organizations;
2. Analyzing of the CSS efficiency based on the resources-results ratio;
3. Elaboration of the comparative table of sports and educational results at SCC evaluated externally;
4. Identification of benchmarks in SSC operation;
5. Identifying the factors and levels of management in order to influence the improvement of sports school performance;
6. Diagnosis of the Romanian pre-university subsystem with sports program.

The research hypotheses were:

Research Hypothesis 1 - The resources of an educational school with a sports program contribute significantly to its sports performance.
Research Hypothesis 2 - The performance index is a significant predictor for the evolution of the school unit with sports program.
Research hypothesis 3 - Efficient management is a basic factor and leads to the improvement of the sports performance index, as a new construct used for SSC.

The study was based on an exploratory research for diagnostic purposes, by investigating with an evaluation tool (a sheet) with 69 items - independent variables of the social field represented by Romanian pre-university education with sports program. The results were processed using descriptive statistics. Other research methods used were:

- Analysis of the educational network using the quality.aracip.eu platforms, www.siiir.edu.ro/carto/;
- Documentary analysis based on the Sports Yearbooks 2011-2018, published by YSM;
- Benchmarking;
- Standardization, unitary expression of variables, in view of a common scale that allows the realization of operations with them. Each resource or result variable was transformed into its standardized form, using Hull standardization, which led to an evaluation scale of 0-100 (H = 50 + 14z), starting from the usual Z with the mean “0” and dispersion “1”; 
- Statistical group analysis based on the aggregation of the defining variables for the two categories (resources, results).
- Construction of the sports performance index as a ratio variable between the results and resources of the school unit;
- Triangulation of data, by correlating data from three sources: self-evaluation, external evaluation reports published by RAQAPE, scores on sports organizations at official internal and international competitions published annually by YSM;
- Testing the homogeneity of the sub-sample of 23 CSS using the coefficient of variability, with the SPSS program, version no. 23;
- Correlation testing of educational and sports variables using the Pearson coefficient, with the SPSS program, version no. 23;
- Statistical analysis based on the mean and standard deviation in order to identify benchmarks at 23 CSS in the sub-sample.

Analysis of the network of educational units with integrated and additional sports program in Romania, so the entire subsystem of education with sports program, at the level of the 2018-2019 school year, led to the identification of a total of 339 educational school, consisting of 254 units with integrated and additional sports program and 85 children's clubs or palaces.
For the transmission of the evaluation tool (the sheet), the 254 educational units with sports program were retained. Responses were received from 176 units (69.3%), but only 155 responses included information on sports activity. Under these conditions, the response rate decreased from 69.3% of responses received to 60.2% of processable responses. The 155 educational units constituted the general sample subjected to the analysis within the network of educational units with sports program. Within it, 53 SSC were identified, which made up the SSC sample and 23 SSC which is the sub-sample subject to analysis, in order to achieve benchmarks (best and weakest organizations, according to the evaluation based on the sheet with 38 resource indicators and 8 result indicators.

Some conclusions from the basic research:

1. The exploratory and descriptive research carried out showed that a relationship can be identified between the resources of a SSC unit and its results. Measurement of efficiency can be done on the basis of specific indicators. The efficiency index can determine the achievement of a hierarchy of organizations in the field. However, the hierarchies made revealed that the results of measurements with educational instruments and those in sports rankings do not correlate, but could be influenced by appropriate management interventions.

2. Ind T (efficiency index, sports performance index), even if it is not entirely a predictor of sports performance in terms of scores in sports rankings (given the specific nature of sports performance), is a signal of the areas of intervention for facilitating sports performance at the level of organizations. Due to its dynamic nature (it is recorded annually), it can be useful in measuring the evolution of each organization by referring to the established sports performance targets (if such objectives expressed in sports performance targets are taken into account). Ind T achieved on the basis of the results-resources ratio is useful both at the level of a school unit, helping to compare with the average and at to identify possible areas of intervention at local level (first hierarchical level) and also to compare at macro level between the “actor” units in the field of education with sports program in Romania, in view of a decision at systemic level.

3. Ind T supraunitary reflects a deficit of resources. It is registered at the level of 56.60% of the independent SSC, 38.09% of the SSC that function as sections within other educational units (high schools, in general), 48.27% at the level of high schools with sports program and 50% at the level of the other units with integrated sports program. The level of results obtained by these units is significantly higher than the level of existing resources.

4. Ind T subunit reflects a potential result, confirmed in the sports rankings, supported by the level of existing resources, but which could increase through an appropriate, individualized intervention, either at the level of resources or process management. 43.40% of the SSC, 61.01% of the SSC that function as sections within other educational units (high schools, in general), 51.73% of the high schools with sports program and 50% of the other school units with integrated sports program demonstrate potential
result. In the case of the others (difference up to 100%, for each category), an in-depth analysis is useful and necessary, at the level of each sports organization, in order to redefine the assumed mission and re-orientation.

5. Management performance as a basic factor in improving the sports performance coefficient can be analyzed by correlating data provided by several sources on the same organization. Thus, it was possible to identify areas for further management interventions to improve sports results.

6. The triangulation method led to the identification and specific analysis of a sub-sample of SSC (23 units) out of a total of 53 SSC addressed in this study, in which benchmarks were identified at the level of 5 CSS (best and most weak organizations in relation to the average), by using the sports performance index. Thus, in 7 of the 8 established result indicators, the edge of good (+) and bad practices (-) in the 5 SSC analyzed, are: Percentage of students who completed sports training: (0% +, 7% -); Percentage of students transferred to senior clubs: (2.5% +, 0% -); Percentage of students who stopped sports activity (15.10% +, 55% -); Percentage of students selected in the national group (2.2% +, .0% -); Percentage of students who passed in the next performance group (40.09% +, .0% -); Percentage of sport disciplines participating in competitions (100% +, 16.7% -); Percentage of sport disciplines titled in competitions (81% +, 0% -).

7. The main management factors favoring sports performance were identified at the level of resource management (human, material, financial). At the central level, support policies are needed to facilitate the detection of students with skills and, subsequently, to keep them in the sports training program, as almost a quarter of sports schools operate in socio-economically disadvantaged areas or with access problems. Disadvantages in terms of the functioning of sports education are also generated by the fact that only one in five SSC offers meal services, less than half have accommodation conditions and very few provide medical or psychological assistance services. Specialized services for sports medicine (dietitian, physiotherapist, physical trainer) are found in a very small number of units. These aspects represent the main areas of managerial intervention with the potential to influence sports performance. Regarding the sports infrastructure, the exploration of the system showed that only half of the SSC have their own sports base and rest areas, and the conditions for organizing camps or training camps throughout the school year are found only at 15.1% of them.

8. The self-assessment tool for sports education schools (“SHEET”), with 69 items and associated independent variables, on the basis of which the resource (38) and result (8) indicators were built, led to the revelation of the aspects specificity of the functioning of education with sports program.

9. The table of sports disciplines organized in educational units with sports program within the sample of 155 units analyzed revealed the top of the 10 sports disciplines in the educational offer, which are, in fact, 11, since on the last place there are 2 disciplines,
rugby and Greco-Roman wrestling. Regarding the number of sports disciplines present in the educational offer, it was found that the SSC and the high schools with integrated sports program have, in general, a large number of sports disciplines, between 3 and 10, while 57.7% of the school units with sports sections attend a single sports discipline.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

1. Sports education is a fertile ground for many models and techniques of postmodern management, not only for an exemplification, but especially by providing the premises for their implementation. The SLO model, School as Learning Organizations, as a description of the dynamic creation of knowledge in organizations and their practical use, associated with Knowledge Management (KM), are representative for SSC and for all sports school, given the obligation of competitive participation for the fulfillment of the organizational mission: selection, training, promotion of students in performance sports activity. SSC as learning organization, respectively as a learning community-organization, but also as a professional network, is a space where learning together increases trust between members of the organization and their well-being. Romanian SSC, as historical organizations with an existence of over eight decades, could, also, successfully implement the postmodern management model named SECI, with its four essential stages: socialization, outsourcing, combination and internalization. Reengineering, i.e. organizational redesign and restructuring in bisectoral strategic frameworks (education and sports), can start even from concrete elements, respectively reconsideration of the SSC communication system, from the “2 Y” model with double circuit to the model “in multichannel star”. Benchmarking in the network of school sports clubs, but extended to all organizations that ”produce” sports performance, is currently possible as a technique, in our country the first necessary steps have been taken in this regard, through external evaluation in the last 7 years of 28 units in this category, respectively approximately 30% of the SSC with legal personality.

2. Without being unique in Europe (in countries such as Austria, Germany, Poland operating the same model), the ”bicephalous” management of the SSC micro-system requires that the two ministries involved (MER and YSM) pay a special attention, which must be reflected in the design of a common intersectoral strategy, following the model of other European countries, such as Greece.

3. The creation of the competitive advantage regarding the SSC can also be achieved through interventions at the level of the regulations regarding the network, respectively regarding the preservation / acquisition of legal personality. The methodology of redesigning the management system of the organization targets all its components and is based on studies of various types (diagnostic, marketing, environmental, etc.), but primarily on country strategies.

4. In our country, indicators are used to measure sports performance, but they are currently non-unitary, ”sprayed” at various institutions with responsibilities in the field, without
making a collage, an overview, to provide a clear image and a starting point for improvement.

5. In ongoing national policies and strategies, the specificity of the SSC micro-network in relation to other pre-university school is not sufficiently highlighted, and in some systemic actions such as regular external evaluation, appropriate tools are not currently used. This situation leads to irrelevant results in regarding the quality of some processes / activities potentially generating high level of performance and, consequently, to inappropriate decisions, including regarding the allocated funding.

6. The operating parameters of the sports program school can be identified and quantified as a unit. These were included in the evaluation sheet proposed and conducted in this study. For a global image of the school sport unit from a qualitative point of view, a common resultant element was built to correlate the results of the unit with the resources it has, highlighting the real efficiency of the evaluated unit: sports performance index, T index.

7. The main characteristics of the operating conditions of the educational unit with sports program, with the potential to influence the sport performance, can be determined on the basis of 69 independent variables grouped into resource (38) and outcome (6) indicators. The present diagnostic research has allowed the creation of a table of the sports disciplines organized in our country, the first of its kind at the moment.

8. The top of the 10 sports (sports disciplines) organized in education with sports program in Romania includes, in fact, 11 disciplines, on the last place, 10, being 2 disciplines in equality, rugby and Greco-Roman wrestling: football, athletics, handball, volleyball, basketball, judo, wrestling, swimming, tennis, rugby, Greco-Roman wrestling. Of the 51 sports disciplines nominated in the regulations in force opposable to education with sports program, 47 are organized in the evaluated units. The 4 disciplines that were not found in the 155 units with sports program analyzed are: go, sports orientation, synchronous skating and Nordic combined skiing. Most units offer football (101 units), followed by athletics (85 units) and handball (82 units). Isolated offers are cycling, aerobic gymnastics, softball, orienteering skiing - each found in one unit or a horse, figure skating, water jumping, rifle / pistol - found in two of the units evaluated.

9. The territorial distribution of educational units with sports program shows that most are in urban areas (149 out of 155), in areas that are not socio-economically disadvantaged or with access problems (119 out of 155, so 76.8%), therefore, the imminent bisectoral strategy requires the inclusion of stimulus measures for the rural environment. Also, as 23.11% of the units have various disadvantages, they must be supported with priority, and among them 19% are SSC.
10. Regarding the characteristics of the family environment (the ethnic structure of the students and the level of education of the family), only 44 schools out of 155 collect data of this nature (28%). The same goes for the situations of vulnerability of students (economic level, SEN and health problems, special family situations, institutionalized, access problems, etc.)

11. The activities at the level of performance of a sport are better represented at high schools with sports program, 82.8%, compared to SSC, 77.4%.

12. Regarding the educational infrastructure, the diagnosis revealed an average endowment of 50.7% compared to needs. Regarding computerization, only in three quarters of the units (78.1%) computers are used in the activity with students.

13. The best situation from the point of view of services is at sports high schools, half of them offering meal services or accommodation, three quarters having their own medical office, and almost all benefiting from psycho-pedagogical assistance. Specialized services for sports medicine (dietitian, physiotherapist, physical trainer) are found in a very small number of units, in this situation being found school sports clubs.

14. Almost half of the SSC declare an insufficient level of funding, which does not cover all their operational needs. At the level of education with sports program in Romania, there is an underfunding in relation to needs, 36.12% of the investigated units fail to cover their needs. The level of sponsorships from companies or economic agents is generally low.

15. At the time of this research (2019-2020), in the evaluated units resulted a total number of 58,546 students, similar to the one communicated by YMS at the beginning of September 2020, on the occasion of the decision to stimulate the first identification at SSC having sports identity certificate. Out of the total number of students included in the evaluated units, 49.2% are entitled to the sport practiced, and 2.4% have double identification.

16. School dropout requires redefinition in the case of education with additional sports program, in the sense of school losses. If at the level of the entire analyzed sample is identified the interruption of the sports activity by over one fifth of the students (21.8%), the percentage is higher in the case of independent SSC or organized within an educational unit. The lowest losses are found in the case of high schools with sports program, the percentage of 12.4% of the interruption of sports activity being half of that reported in SSC.
17. Benchmarking good and bad practices, based on statistically processed findings, can be a useful method for improving the activity of school sports clubs, if they inform each other through a professional network (a learning community), which can facilitate new ways of understanding and a holistic reflection based on specificities. Through a country policy supported by an adequate strategy, we could get closer to the ideal, and the impact on new generations that are healthier, more enthusiastic, happier, would give back the glory and brilliance to the Romanian sport.