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Investigating the Aspects of Sport Structure in Iran

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to investigate the aspects of sport structure in Iran. Literature review, Delphi method, and a researcher developed questionnaire were used to fulfill the research objective. At the first stage, 10 faculty members of sport management participated in Delphi study. At the second stage 302 the researcher developed questionnaire distributed among staff and operational managers in the Ministry of Youth and Sports, managers of executive board in the National Olympic Committee, heads of federations, experts in NOC and the faculty members. The results showed that in terms of the importance, sports for all, training sport, championship sport and professional sport are in the priority of sport structure in Iran, and in designing the Fifth Five-Year Development Plan of Iran, none of the four aspects of sport structures have properly been taken into account.

Introduction

Nowadays, sport organizations in any country should be unified and specified. Also, there should be a rationale behind their ongoing and follow-up activities and objectives. In the structure and organization of a country's sport plans, the importance rate of activities, objectives, plans and organizations must be clear. Given the mentioned cases, for a regular and systematic planning for sport in any country, all aspects of sport should be considered and emphasized. Model is a series of findings that researcher accepts as truth in consequence with his perception of the subject and its related phenomena. So, creating a model requires proper understanding of the topic by the researcher through studying and researching so that via a complete identification of the issue, the researcher could determine the relationships between effective and important factors to achieve the objective in that special issue. Managers use a model as a software and tool which have the capacities of

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processing and coordination management for making complex relationships between various factors to improve decision-making and planning. It is important to have a model for work and activity in many areas. For example, in any curriculum, models indicating the process of teaching, learning and retention are very helpful for teaching and make it more effective. Any model is considered as a fundamental principle and deep structure supporting processes of the surface phenomena (Ghafouri et al., 2007).

According to Mull et al. (2005), formulating sport models aims to predict and plan the sport and leisure time of different community levels in the future. Understanding correct policies and identifying logical strategies determine the fate for each community. Inattention to factors affecting various social phenomena will undoubtedly lead to damage to the society. In some developed countries, people and specialists are surveyed in order to determine the social demand and planning for it.

In a variety of resources, a pyramid has been considered for sport development in which sport for all and championship sport are on its base and top, respectively (Shilbury, 2006). In the sport pyramid, the primary objective is an increase in the number of participants at each level, so that the potential of championship sport increases (Sotiriadou, 2008). The development of sport for all provides a field for the development of championship sport and it is necessary to develop the sport for all before the championship sport. The sport for all and championship sport are intertwined (Ghafouri et al., 2005). In another model provided by Shaibory et al. (2009), on the base of the pyramid and at the wide level is the training and preliminary sport, in the next level is the sport for all and championship sport on the same level and on the top-level is the professional sport. In sport participation model of Green et al. (2007), the sport for all, sport with a high performance level (championship) and professional sport are at the base of the pyramid, higher level and finally top of pyramid, respectively. The model by Mull et al. (2005) is one of the known models in the hierarchical approach to sport. These researchers visualized a model for four parts (training, recreational, championship and professional sport). In the above model, the extent of each sport has been determined. Educational (training) and professional sports are at the base and top of the pyramid, respectively. The highest level of participation is related to the base of the pyramid and the more the closer to the top of the pyramid, the more the reduction in the number of participants in the sport will be. In other words, the number of spectators is the lowest in the training sport and is the highest in the professional one. The model asserts that the expansion of the training sport and then, sport for all will cause to increase the public participation. If the professional sport spreads, a lower number can take part in it and people have to often watch it. In his study on the recreational and sport activities in European Union countries, by drawing patterns of movement and models of sport, Van (2008) stated that despite plans and policies for thirty years in these countries, among from 10 individuals, 4 cases do not do sport activities in their leisure time. In a study, Veselina (2010) examined the model of sport in Bulgaria in which it was specified that State laws determine the country's sporting activities, public health, legal aspects of sport, rights and relationships between athletes, athletes' responsibilities and financial resources.

The following figure shows a hierarchical pyramid of sports in which the structure of sports is divided according to the priority of participation and the amount of spectators.



Figure 1. Pyramid dimensions of sports structure

Accordingly, based on literature review, the overall structure of sport has often been composed of four principles including: training sport, sport for all and recreation, championship sport, and professional sport. Considering this structure is critical in the process of sport management and developing different aspects of sport. The structure of sport and its priorities can be a local-oriented issue, and it may be different from one country to another. Therefore, providing a comprehensive model specific to sport context in Iran can be of great importance. Identifying and exploring the position of each dimension of sport structure in Iran can help the policy makers to have deep understanding of the priorities of different sport elements in the explored structure. Given the significance of sport structure and exploring the priorities of its elements, this study was set up to explore the model of sport structure in Iran.

Methodology

The research method was analytical descriptive and in terms of the purpose, it is an applied study. Methods of data collection include library research, Delphi method and finally a researcher made questionnaire. Thus, first, using library research, the data were collected in these areas. The Delphi Method was used for the consensus over and collection of the data for which there was no complete certainty. Delphi is a quantitative research method in descriptive studies, but it is also referred to as an integrated research method (quantitative and qualitative). And finally a synthesis (new agreement and consensus) has been formed. In order to start the process, 10 sports management professors were asked for their opinions in three surveys (via Electronic Mail). In this method, through surveying all experts, weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and threats of the country's four-type sports formulated by library studies were first identified. In the next (second) round, the selected cases were discussed by these experts and some cases were established and moderated by the experts. At the end of the discussion (the third round), those agreed by experts were considered as the study basis and the final questionnaire was prepared. To determine the validity of the questionnaire, professors and professionals were finally consulted and after applying all corrective suggestions, necessary modifications for consistency with conditions, the questionnaire was used. The questionnaire included three sections of personal information (4 questions), 5 questions about the structure of sports in the country and 145 questions about 4 sections of sports in the country. According to Cronbach's alpha, the reliability was found to be 0.91, which indicates a high reliability of the research instrument (questionnaire). The study population consisted of staff and operational managers in the Ministry of Youth and Sports, managers and members of executive board in the National Olympic Committee, heads of federations, experts of National Olympic Committee and the faculty members specialized in physical education. In the present study, given that the number of study population is limited based

on the descriptive study; the study sample was determined equal to the population by counting all. Totally, 302 individuals were evaluated as the research sample and from 302 questionnaires sent for research sample, 238 questionnaires (79%) were completed and returned. The data analysis includes descriptive statistics and tests to compare the mean of the population and Friedman's analysis of variance and the Kruskal-Wallis test.

Findings

In summary, the findings of the Delphi section showed that the importance of public sports, educational sports, championship sports and professional sports are in the priority of the country's sports structure, respectively. The results indicate the great importance and attention of public sports in the country and this importance is due to the basic role of this part of sports.

To identify the priorities of dimensions of sport structure, a Friedman test was conducted.

Table 1. Friedman test results

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| Number of sample | 238 |
| Chi-square distribution | 118.155 |
| Degree of freedom | 3 |
| Significance level | 0.001 |

As it can be seen in Table 1, according to the level of significance, the priority of the sport structure (training sport, sport for all, championship sport and professional sport) in Iran is different. The results have been given in Table 2.

Table 2: Ranking the sport structure in Iran

| Aspects of sport structure | Mean | Standard deviation | Ranking (in terms of importance and property) |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|--|
| Sport for all | 1.73 | 0.921 | 1.73 |
| Training sport | 1.98 | 0.985 | 1.98 |
| Championship sport | 2.87 | 0.781 | 2.87 |
| Professional sport | 3.42 | 0.861 | 3.42 |

In Tables 4 to 6, it can be observed that with respect to the study samples, the most important part of sport in Iran is sport for all and then, training sport, championship sport and professional sport. (Note that in determining the ranking, 1 and 4 have been allocated to the highest and lowest properties, respectively).

Table 3: Comparison of the opinions of job groups on the structure of sport in Iran using Kruskal Wallis test (H test)

| Aspects of sport structure | Chi-square distribution | Degree of freedom | Level of significance |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Training sport | 0.457 | | 0.79 |
| Sport for all | 1.468 | 2 | 0.48 |
| Championship sport | 0.974 | | 0.61 |
| Professional sport | 3.178 | | 0.20 |

As it can be seen in Table 3, given the lack of significance, the hypothesis has not been approved and it can be stated that there is a statistically significant difference between the opinions of faculty members, managers, senior experts and specialists on the hierarchy of the importance of the structure of sport in Iran (training sport, sport for all, championship sport and professional sport), while there is a little and non-significant difference in their perspectives on the priority of various parts of sport. Such difference is given in Tables 4 to 8.

Table 4: Ranking the structure of sport in Iran from the perspective of various groups using Friedman Test

| Groups | Faculty members with PhD degree in sport management | Senior experts and certified managers | Certified experts sport |
|--|--|--|--------------------------------|
| Ranking variables in terms of priority and importance | | | |
| The first rank | Sport for all (1.48) | Sport for all (1.78) | Sport for all (1.90) |
| The second rank | Training sport (2.00) | Training sport (2.00) | Training sport (1.94) |
| The third rank | Championship sport (2.90) | Championship sport (2.78) | Championship sport (2.94) |
| The fourth rank | Professional sport (3.61) | Professional sport (3.44) | Professional sport (2.23) |

In Table 4, it can be seen that faculty members, senior experts and managers have absolutely identical opinions on prioritizing various parts of sport while they have disagreement with certified experts on the first and second ranks of preferences of the structure of sport. (It must be note that in determining the ranking, 1 and 4 have been allocated to the highest and lowest properties, respectively).

Table 5: The rate of government's interest in each of the four aspects of sport structure in Iran in the Fifth Five-Year Development Plan

| Aspects of sport structure | Quite inadequate | Inadequate | To some extent | Adequate | Quite adequate |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Training sport | 22% | 55% | 19% | 2% | 2% |
| Sport for all | 36% | 51% | 9% | 2% | 2% |
| Championship sport | 30% | 46% | 21% | 2% | 1% |
| Professional sport | 32% | 55% | 9% | 2% | 2% |

In Table 5, it is observed that with regard to the study samples, in each of the four parts of the structure of sport in the country (training sport, sport for all, championship sport and professional sport), near to 80% believed that the related government and authorities did not meet all the needs of the four main parts of the structure of sport in Iran in the formulation of the Fifth Five Year and that attention to those parts is inadequate and about 4% have only been considered as adequate (in the related questionnaire, all Rules related to the formulation and implementation of sport in the mentioned had have been described).

Table 6: Ranking the status of four main parts of sport in the country in the Fifth Five-Year Development Plan using Friedman Test

| Aspects of sport structure | Mean | Ranking (Friedman Test) | Chi-square distribution | Level of significance |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Training sport | 2.05 | 2.73 | | |
| Sport for all | 2.00 | 2.58 | 7.592 | 0.055 |
| Championship sport | 1.87 | 2.36 | | |
| Professional sport | 1.83 | 1.83 | | |

In Table 6, it can be observed that from the perspective of the study samples, the training and championship sports have been considered more than the professional sport and sport for all in the Fifth Five-Year Development Plan; although, given that p-value was not significant, they are not so

much different with each other, the means indicate that in the formulation of the Fifth Five-Year Development Plan, four parts of sport in the country have not generally been considered. The questions were rated from 1 (lowest attention) to 5 (highest attention).

Discussion and conclusion

Results show that in terms of the importance, sport for all, training sport, championship sport and professional sport, respectively are in the priority of the sport structure in Iran. The results reveal the great importance sport for all in Iran and that this type of sport is in focal attention. Such importance pertains to the basic role of this kind of sport in society. As Ghafari (2003) asserted, the level of public health is related to sport for all because both social and age groups can participate in it and governments are also trying to take steps in this field via types of advertising instruments and mass communication. Raised (2001) considered sport for all as an important issue that is why the twentieth century is popular as the century of Olympic sports while the twenty-first century is known as sports for all century. Hansen (2002) announced the budget of sports for all in the British government as 2 or 3 times more than championship sport and stated that the Russian government also pays 70% of subsidy of participation in sports for all and recreational sport. In a study, Mull et al. (2005) investigated the effect of sport for all on championship sport. They considered sports of all as the basis for championship and professional sports in their model. In a study, Green et al. (2006) insisted on the role of sport for all and its development on the growth of championship sport and entitled it as the support for professional and championship sports. In the study conducted by shabani (2009), the rate of attention and priority for parts of sport were investigated from the perspective of people. Based on their findings, people allocated greater priority to sport for all and recreational sport and less priority to the championship and professional sports. These studies confirmed the priority of sport for all compared to the other parts of sport obtained in this study; however, in models of structure of sport presented in studies such as Shaibory et al. (2009) and Mull (1997), training sport was considered prior to the sports for all and these two were considered as the most important ones compared to championship and professional sports. In this study, the study samples allocated the second priority to the training sport after sports for all. Goudarzi (2013) argued that physical education has specially been considered and mentioned as an important tool for training and education. Also, Mull et al. (2005) stated that training sport causes a comprehensive growth in physical, mental, intellectual, social, emotional and ethical dimensions of individuals and is one of the major aims of physical education. In the model provided by Shaibory et al. (2009), there is the training and preliminary sport on the base of the pyramid and at the wide level, the sport for all and championship sport on the same level and the professional sport on top-level that indicates the importance of the training sport in terms of the hierarchy of sport. In their model of the structure of sport, Mull et al. (1997) stated the training sport as the most important part for the wide participation of individuals and claimed that the development of training sport and then, sport for all would increase the public participation. In this study, it was determined that after professional sport, the championship sport is in the last priority of importance. Although these parts are in next priorities of sports for all and training sport, they have also an important status in the structure of sport in a way that these parts lead to motivate individuals to perform physical activities. Evidence suggests that generally, the states intentionally or unintentionally widespread championship sport because governments pay attention to its financial income. In recent decades, Green's studies (2007) have determined that nations try to achieve a medal in great international competitions and governments and sport organizations highly invest to achieve success at the highest level. In addition, access to a systematic and strategic approach is an essential issue for nations to develop championship sport so that they achieve advantages against other competing countries. Mull et al. (2005) believe that by developing professional sport, a smaller number of people can take part in it and they have to often watch it. Participation in sports gives its place to watching sport; on the other hand the process of professionalization of sports disrupts its continuity and relationship with the sport for all, and it is feared that too much attention to a number of professional sports and athletes may harms the ideals and spirit of sport. Also, the priority of the parts of the structure of sport from the perspective of different groups (faculty members,

administrators and experts) were analyzed using H test. No significant difference was observed between their views on the importance and status of four parts of sport; however, faculty members dedicated the highest priority to sport for all; while directors designated the highest priority to athletic sport and experts dedicated the highest priority to training and professional sports.

Results show that about the status of sport in the Fifth Five Year Plan, training and championship sports have been accentuated more than professional sport and sport for all in the Fifth Five-Year Development plan (2011-2015). However, considering that the P value was not significant, there was not much different between them. The results of the comparison of the means show that in general, in the formulation of the Fifth Five Year Development Plan, not much care has been given to these four parts of sport in Iran. In recent years, many similar cases have been observed of the negligence of the government and legislators on sport such as non-performance of sports master plan in 2002, weakness of rules about television rights for the clubs and federations, weakness in copyright laws and advertisement in sport and lack of proper ground for privatization in sports.

Finally, given the results of this study and the importance of the role such models play in sport, it is recommended that the relationship between the four main parts of sports (training, sport for all and professional title) be provided by related authorities since the relationship and integrity of these parts with each other are the complement and developers of each other, and the development of any part of sport leads to the development of other parts and the development of sports in Iran in terms of quantity and quality.

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