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Causes and Consequences of Professionalisation in Swiss National Sport Federations

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Abstract

In this talk, we present causes and consequences of professionalisation derived from a qualitative multiple-case study of seven Swiss national sport federations (SSF). In documents and semi-structured interviews, we analyzed promoting and hindering factors for and consequences of professionalisation on three levels: federation intern, and in its external and internal (member organisations) environment (Nagel et al., 2015). Causes for professionalisation have been widely similar in the seven SSF. Conflicts in board and unclear competences, increased workload and higher expectations, and initiatives of key actors have been prominent causes for, particularly, defined competences, paid staff and organisational differentiation. Extern, sport policy and Swiss Olympic Association require concepts for athlete promotion and auditing, which the SSF, however, implement autonomously. To gain presence and financial resources, meeting expectations of sponsors and media, especially in marketing and communication, is unavoidable. Nevertheless, SSFs' specific circumstances, e.g. financial and human resources, (media) presence and striving individuals, have influenced continuity of professionalisation. Little professionalisation has been promoted by SSFs' member organisations. Their expectations were rather a consequence of SSFs' professionalisation that tends to exceed capacities of member organisations. Consequently, SSF recognise the need for involvement, transparency and club support. Within the SSF, professionalisation has commonly improved federations' image, structure, event organisation and people's qualifications. However, new challenges are leadership conflicts, increased costs and workload, and organisational divergence. Furthermore, stakeholders often prescribe the expenditure of resources. Professionalisation seems to reproduce SSFs' challenges. However, in deliberate, unhurried professionalisation they see a chance to develop their sport and member services.

References

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