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Sports management strategy to facilitate the preparation of combat sports athletes

[Estrategia de gestión deportiva para facilitar la preparación de atletas de deportes de combate]

[Estratégia de gestão esportiva para facilitar a preparação de atletas de esportes de combate]

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Sport is currently considered an unprecedented social phenomenon, and therefore all those involved in its development are constantly seeking ways to improve its management. In this regard, preliminary studies confirmed the existence of shortcomings in sports management that affected the training of combat sports athletes at the Camagüey Sports Initiation School (EIDE).

Objective: To design a sports management strategy that facilitates preparation.

Materials and methods: The research was conducted using a participatory action research model. The theoretical methods employed were analytical-synthetic and inductive-deductive reasoning; the empirical methods included document analysis, observation, and interviews, which were triangulated for the analysis of the results. The sample consisted of managers, coaches, and athletes from combat sports.

Results: a sports management strategy is obtained that favors preparation based on the interdependence relationships and synergy established between the organizational and operational indicators, which led to an improvement in the management process and in the qualitative and quantitative results of the sports under study .

Conclusions: the strategy is suitable to promote the sports preparation of combat athletes from the EIDE of Camagüey.

Keywords: combat sports, sports management, sports training.

RESUMEN

Introducción: el deporte en la actualidad es considerado un fenómeno social sin precedentes, por lo que todos los implicados en su desarrollo buscan de modo constante cómo perfeccionar su gestión. Al respecto, estudios preliminares constataron la existencia de insuficiencias en la gestión deportiva que afectaba la preparación de los atletas de los deportes de combate en la Eide de Camagüey.

Objetivo: diseñar una estrategia de gestión deportiva que facilite la preparación.

Materiales y métodos: la investigación se concreta por medio del modelo de investigación-acción-participante. Se ponderaron como métodos teóricos: analítico-

sintético, inductivo-deductivo; en los empíricos, el análisis de documentos, observación, entrevista, los que se triangularon para el análisis de los resultados. La muestra estuvo integrada por directivos, entrenadores y atletas de los deportes de combate.

Resultados: se obtiene una estrategia de gestión deportiva que favorece la preparación a partir de las relaciones de interdependencia y la sinergia que se establece entre los indicadores de organización y funcionamiento, que provocó una mejora en el proceso de gestión y en los resultados cualitativos y cuantitativos de los deportes objeto de estudio.

Conclusiones: la estrategia es adecuada para favorecer la preparación deportiva de los atletas de combate de la Eide de Camagüey.

Palabras clave: deportes de combate, gestión deportiva, preparación deportiva.

RESUMO

Introdução: O esporte é atualmente considerado um fenômeno social sem precedentes e, portanto, todos os envolvidos em seu desenvolvimento buscam constantemente maneiras de aprimorar sua gestão. Nesse sentido, estudos preliminares confirmaram a existência de deficiências na gestão esportiva que afetavam a preparação de atletas de esportes de combate na EIDE (Escola de Iniciação ao Esporte) em Camagüey.

Objetivo: Desenvolver uma estratégia de gestão esportiva que facilite a preparação. A pesquisa foi realizada utilizando o modelo de pesquisa-ação participativa.

Materiais e métodos: Os métodos teóricos utilizados foram analítico-sintético e indutivo-dedutivo; os métodos empíricos incluíram análise documental, observação e entrevistas, que foram trianguladas para a análise dos resultados. A amostra foi composta por gestores, treinadores e atletas de esportes de combate. Resultados: Foi desenvolvida uma estratégia de gestão esportiva que promove o treinamento com base na interdependência e sinergia estabelecidas entre indicadores organizacionais e operacionais. Isso levou a melhorias no processo de gestão e nos resultados qualitativos e quantitativos dos esportes em estudo.

Conclusões: A estratégia é adequada para promover o treinamento esportivo de atletas de combate na Escola de Iniciação Esportiva de Camagüey (EIDE).

Palavras-chave: esportes de combate, gestão esportiva, treinamento esportivo.

INTRODUCTION

Sport is considered an integral part of life, from school age to professional life. Within this context, there is uneven development between developing and developed countries, as the former lack the financial resources, infrastructure, and highly skilled human capital necessary to compete against the large clubs and sports monopolies based in developed nations.

For this reason, efforts are currently underway to develop a management process in this area that reduces the gaps. Management is related to marketing, operational, commercial, and administrative activities (Salgado-Ortiz *et al.*, 2021; Cardona-Mejía & Padierna-Cardona, 2021). Padierna & Orozco, 2022). Although other authors argue that it does not respond exclusively to administrative theories (Rozo *et al.*, 2022).

This is the case for authors who consider it an interdisciplinary concept that integrates theories and methods. Its essence lies in knowing what one wants to achieve and attaining that purpose efficiently and with quality (Marín *et al.*, 2022; Schaerer, 2023).

It is evident that the concept of management has been analyzed from different perspectives, including sports, where it is known as sports management. In defining it, the authors consider it to be a process of planning, organization, direction, and control, where marketing, communication, law, satisfaction, economics, finance, promotion, and ethics interact in order to achieve its objectives, and is not exclusive to administration (Castro & Damián, 2021; Cardona & Cardona, 2021; Montull). *et al.*, 2022; Wu, 2022; Simmons, 2022; Redondo *et al.*, 2023; Hernández- Hernández *et al.*, 2023; Niebles *et al.*,

2023; De Araujo Vasconcelos *et al.*, 2024; Pérez, 2024). It constitutes an operational task based on action plans aimed at improving the sports organization (García, 2023).

Applying the principles of sports management requires developing a planning process where actions are coordinated, sound decisions are made, leadership is exercised, resources are weighted, tasks are defined, and constant evaluation is carried out to correct distortions and enhance successful actions (Aguilera, 2025).

In this context, Cuba, and especially Camagüey, identify with the aspects discussed. In this regard, González (2022) argues that management strategies in sports should consider economic and financial indicators as an essential element in the analysis of athletic training.

The scientific community has developed significant work to establish and refine the process of managing sports training. However, this same level of attention is not seen at the provincial level, particularly in Camagüey, within the context of the School of Sports Initiation (EIDE). This has resulted in a lack of proposals from national or provincial authors related to the management of sports training in Cuban EIDEs, especially those in Camagüey province.

The assessment of the current situation, conducted through document analysis, observations, and unstructured interviews with coaches, methodologists, and athletes in the disciplines under study, reveals deficiencies in sports management that negatively impact the training of combat sports athletes. Therefore, the objective is formulated as follows: Design a sports management strategy that facilitates the preparation of athletes in combat sports at the EIDE Cerro Pelado in Camagüey.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was developed assuming the participatory action research model (Hernández *et al.*, 2018), adjusted to the particularities of the present one, since the

participation of all members of the sports organization was required in the process of solving the problem, so collaboration between the researcher and other members was encouraged, promoting collective participation in decision-making.

The investigation went through five phases: problem identification, diagnosis, strategy proposal design, implementation, and finally, evaluation.

In the problem definition phase, the existing situation within the sports organization was identified, thus defining the scientific problem to be solved. The problem was then analyzed, including its main characteristics, the context in which it manifests itself, and the various aspects of the situation, as well as the different perspectives on the defined problem. It is important to note that this phase takes place before the diagnosis is carried out.

Next, the diagnosis was carried out. This study examined the current state of sports management indicators. The necessary data was collected to accurately diagnose the situation, and action plans were established to address the problem. The methods used included document analysis, non-participant observation, and interviews. semi-structured group, which allowed to characterize how the indicators related to sports management are used in the preparation of athletes from the Eide of Camagüey in the selected sports.

Upon completion of the analysis and interpretation of the information gathered during the diagnostic phase, a sports management strategy was designed that facilitated the change in the problematic situation and the solution to the identified problem. This involved a rigorous process of deconstructing the object of study in order to recognize the multiple relationships and separate components that manifest themselves in the sports management process, revealing the need to take into consideration... Aguilera (2025), which reveals the particularities that sports management strategies should have. The bibliographic review was considered.

The sports management strategy was implemented during the 2022-2023 academic year. It is important to note that it was integrated into the daily operations of the sports organization, beginning in September and concluding in August. This allowed for a smooth transition through the various stages of the sports preparation process, from general training to the school games, which constitute the main competition.

The evaluation phase was evident at various points, marking the cycles in the spiral of refinement of the proposal, as the application of the research technique enabled the improvement of the actions. The evaluation process unfolded during the conception of the sports preparation, at the end of the general preparation stage, at the end of the specific preparation stage, and at the end of the competitive stage.

The evaluation was carried out during the 2022-2023 academic year. The following information collection techniques were applied: semi-structured group interview, observation and document analysis.

The results obtained in each of the phases are analyzed from the triangulation of the research techniques: document analysis, observation and interview, weighing the qualitative results that make it possible to understand the different situations found using the units of analysis: organizational strategy and operational strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Triangulation of information derived from document review, group interviews, and observation related to the organizational strategy unit of analysis revealed difficulties, thus requiring improvements to the planning process. Specifically, it is necessary to achieve adequate synergy between managers and coaches involved in planning so that activities are conceived in a coordinated manner (Carranza-Bautista, 2021).

Regarding the results of the operational strategies analysis unit in general, there were difficulties that have hindered the achievement of the planned objectives, due to non-compliance with the rules and the establishment of norms that have made it difficult to face the risks and threats that have been faced.

The results derived from the diagnosis allow us to conclude that it is necessary to carry out the development of a sports management strategy that promotes the transformation of the current situation of the sports preparation of the athletes of the sports under study.

*Management strategy to facilitate the preparation of combat sports athletes at the EIDE
Cerro Pelado in Camagüey*

The fundamental purpose of sports organizations is to achieve the best possible sporting results. In this pursuit, improvisation and arbitrary actions by managers must be avoided; instead, it is necessary to systematically implement planning that guides and directs the actions of every member of the organization. In light of this position, the strategy is proposed. The components of the strategy are described below.

General objective: to promote the improvement of the sports preparation management process, based on the use of sports management indicators in combat sports at the EIDE of Camagüey.

Stage 1: Characterization of sports management in combat sports

The characterization stage of sports management aims to carry out an assessment that allows characterizing the process in combat sports; for this purpose, the indicators of the particular organizational strategy and those of the operational strategy are used. The indicators that are strong are highlighted, as well as those that are weak because they have not been achieved to the required quality. The actions are carried out in the order mentioned in the following paragraph.

Actions to be developed include: determining the growth potential of combat sports; determining the potential for differentiating sports services in combat sports; determining the potential for offering other non-sports services that support athletic training in combat sports; determining the potential for positioning combat sports; determining the potential for creating a local sports market; determining the potential for research and innovation; determining the potential for total quality management; determining the potential for continuous improvement; determining the potential for improving the quality of human resources; determining the potential for improving athlete support; and determining the potential for improving outreach.

Stage 2: Sports Management Planning

Actions to be developed include: planning the activities that comprise the specific strategy to foster the organization's growth and thereby enhance the improvement of athletic training; developing a comprehensive support system for API students enrolled in the organization to promote organizational growth and athletic training; developing a specific strategy for non-athletic services that support athletic training; planning other non-athletic services that contribute to athletic training; developing a specific strategy for the organization's national repositioning; developing a comprehensive support system for API students who form the organization's reserve; developing a specific strategy for revitalizing the local sports market; and developing a support system for grassroots coaches.

Stage 3: Operation of the sports management strategy

This stage is completed with the practical application of the planned actions, its essence lying in verifying the results of the strategy designed to enhance athletic performance. In this regard, attention is paid to compliance with the established guidelines, allowing for the resolution of any identified difficulties and, if necessary, the modification of any planned actions. Throughout the strategy's implementation, the education of all members of the sports organization is emphasized.

Actions to be developed include: implementation of the activities that comprise the specific growth strategy; implementation of the comprehensive support system for API students enrolled in the sports organization; implementation of the specific strategy for non-sports services that support athletic training; implementation of other non-sports services that contribute to athletic training; implementation of the specific strategy for the organization's national repositioning; implementation of the comprehensive support system for API students who make up the organization's reserve team; implementation of the specific strategy for revitalizing the local sports market; and implementation of the support system for grassroots coaches.

Stage 4: Control of the sports management strategy

Control, even when limited to a specific stage of the process, is evident throughout the entire strategy, as it is considered a tool that allows the necessary feedback to make decisions at any stage of the process, making control a cross-cutting component of the strategy.

Actions to develop are: conception of Sports preparation management strategy control system. Implementation of control at different stages of the management process.

Results of the application and evaluation of the sports management strategy

Upon completion of the first cycle in the participatory action research process, which coincided with the development of the training plan, the main results showed a positive shift in the perceptions of coaches and managers regarding the integrated strategy. This strategy comprises actions designed to improve the organization's standing on the national sports map. Furthermore, the analysis of training plans revealed a deeper understanding of the scientific and methodological aspects influencing performance, and scientific findings were identified for each sport that could serve as a service. A comprehensive support plan for athletes of interest to national teams was also proposed. This outcome demonstrates a positive change within the sports organization, one that should continue progressively. In this regard, we share the view of Carranza-Bautista *et*

al. (2024), who argued that strategic planning generates progressive changes that positively modify the organization in the short, medium, or long term.

However, at the end of this first cycle in the application spiral, although the differentiation of sports services was achieved, the participation of grassroots coaches in the planned methodological activities was not realized; the increase in motivation to join the sports organization was not achieved, as evidenced by the quality of enrollment; a culture of total quality has not yet been established. Regarding this, it is considered that the persistent deficiencies are a consequence of the very dynamics of the complex, open process that is preparation. The interaction of the components with each other and with the environment generates new patterns, and therefore, the complex system must adapt (Yung). *et al.*, 2022).

Upon completion of the general preparation stage, an assessment was made of the second phase of the strategy's implementation with the aim of progressing further in its improvement spiral. This resulted in the refinement of scientific outcomes that constitute services, which in turn promotes commercialization and professionalization, leading to improvements in management (Užík). *et al.*, 2022), offering economic value.

A culture related to quality in the services provided to guarantee preparation is beginning to be appreciated; the activities that were perfected with a view to ensuring that the training plans included the specific indicators to measure sports performance have led to a more in-depth assessment of each athlete, which contributes to understanding what factors contribute to health and the optimization of performance in sports (Ayala *et al.*, 2022).

Based on the results obtained in this evaluation, the actions that required it were refined, and implementation will continue until the special preparation stage is completed, at which point the evaluation process returns. In this regard, a transformation in the operation was observed, indicating that the refinement of the strategy's actions allowed for growth in the process of perfecting the scientific outcome being developed.

Once the competitive stage was completed, the final refinement of the strategy was carried out based on the results obtained. It was noted that a considerable improvement was achieved in the sporting results attained in the school games, as well as in the performance as expressed in the point evaluation. In this regard, improvements were made in wrestling (3rd place). boxing (2nd), judo (7th), in relation to the school games of the previous year. In the case of taekwondo (10th grade), the result was lower than in the games of the previous year.

Overall, the strategy has been refined throughout the development process through the collective participation of all members of the sports organization. The results demonstrate that the systematic improvement of actions and procedures allowed for the proper development of the sports management process, thus enhancing preparation.

CONCLUSIONS

The theoretical and methodological foundations that support the sports management process show that it has a scientific character in which it is fundamental to apply the basic concepts that constitute consolidated theories, but from the perspective of innovation, because the particularities of each sports organization limit the use of formulas that can be applied tacitly, even when the invariants of the process are used, but always adjusted to the reality of the organization being managed.

In the present research, from an operational perspective, the dimensions of organization and functioning are added with their indicators adjusted to the particularities of the sports organization being studied.

The triangulation of the applied data collection sources allows us to conclude that in the sports organization under investigation there are difficulties in the use of the indicators that characterize the organizational strategy and the functioning that have hindered the achievement of the proposed objectives and goals, so it is necessary to develop a sports

management strategy that promotes the transformation of the current situation of the sports preparation of the athletes of the sports under study.

The sports management strategy is developed based on the results of the diagnosis carried out; therefore, it comprises a general objective aimed at improving the sports preparation management process, the stages of characterization, planning , operation and control of the sports management strategy in combat sports; made up of actions and procedures that enable the relationships of interdependence and synergy established between the organization and operation indicators.

The results obtained as a result of the application of the strategy allow us to conclude that it contributes to the proper sports management in the preparation of athletes of combat sports at the EIDE Cerro Pelado in Camagüey.

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