

SOCIOLOGY

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ELITE SPORT: PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The paper presents the results of the study devoted to a comprehensive expert assessment of the problems and prospects of high performance sport development in Russia. Only experts from the scope of the study were involved into the research, there was used the method of on-line survey. Based on these results the author made recommendations with regard to the prospects for the development of high performance sport. This research made by the author emphasizes different aspects which influence person socialization from the side of sport such as personality qualities and their significance of development with assistance of sport and including another aspect which is connected with motivation. Furthermore, the investigation includes not only the expert's poll and statistics but also the inferences made by the author.

Keywords: professional sport, challenges, prospects, online survey, expert interviews, sociological research.

Introduction

It is hard to argue, that sport can be excluded from the social life. Hosting big international sport events and winning by the national teams in the competitions of such caliber bringing reasonable impact to making a good

image of the country, and at the same time exert influence on more people's healthy life styles. It can be more clearly seen in the life styles of the young sportsmen, whose images are staying long in the memory of the audience. They usually serve as an example in order to follow the objects which they want to resemble, imitate or admire. Many Russian sportsmen actively take part in public events becoming visible figures in different political parties [1]. Success and a good image of a sportsman exert influence on a greater possibility of the citizens involvement to engage in sport and physical training. Healthy life style as everybody knows is considered as a premise for development different sides of the people's vital functions, reaching longevity and full performance of the social important functions [2].

Involvement into sport also makes people more social. From the professional socialization point of view the researcher Panachev V.D. notes that, nowadays sport became more valuable as a social essential factor for young people. [3]. Jurova I.A. also points out the importance of the characteristics development with assistance of sport: will, character, the rapidity of decision-making, problem-solving. [4].

Shiryayeva E., Slepova L.N. and other scientific representatives in the realm of sport suggest a bit different approach where, first of all, the motivation plays a very significant role. It can be connected with the professional and personal qualities as well as with the motivation to look sporty, lead healthy life style and to improve yourself physically [5].

Such researchers as Kalmikov S.V., Gulgensov S.B., Sagaleev A.S. maintain that sport lifestyle can accompany person for many years. Such an approach to health helps feel better in elderly age. They note that many sport veterans continue to be involved into sport activities according to the amateurish level, realizing their talents through coaching [6]. That is why one of the fundamental goals of the country is a thorough support in the development of sport movement in Russia.

According to that, it is significant to note the development of mass, school, student [7] and professional sport in the country. The last one in part is able to help involve more people to amateur (mass) sport activities. However, in addition, there is a difference between the terms "amateur" and "professional sportsman": in the first case it is a self-check, whereas in the second case – it is a basic kind of activity. Very rarely professionals can perform with the amateurs in the commercial exhibitions tournaments [8]. That is why the development of sport in reaching high achievements is very important. In the context of the importance for our country we should focus on holding big international sport competitions. It is obviously necessary for a successful and adjusted section of the high sport achievements.

In accordance with the national program "Development of the physical activity and sport 2013-2014", one of the main tasks of Ministry for sport of the Russian Federation in section of the high sport achievements is providing with

successful performance of Russian sportsmen in big international sport competitions, enhancing sport preparation system reserve, providing with high competitiveness of Russian sport on international sport arena. Holding of the big international tournaments can not only raise sport prestige of the country but also can ensure a strong economic impulse. As Genusov B.L. remarks, holding of the Football World Championship in 2006 yielded Germany around 12-16 billions of dollars excluding the new sport infrastructure, which is used by the country nowadays [9].

There are diverse ways how to evaluate the efficiency of sport and physical culture management. Thus, Nokovreshenov V.V. notes that in contrast to Western countries, Russia does not draw much attention to financial criteria and indicators. The main indicators are achievements of sportsmen in different competitions and their contentment with the conditions of workouts [10].

In the realm of sport management there is an inadequate number of academic works what makes the results of this research particularly much more interesting. Of course, it is possible to rely on children-junior sport management experience [11], which is responsible for the preparation and shifting of the professional staff; or to the experience of the student sport management [12], the important part of which is connected with the youth cooperation. But it doesn't abolish the deep study of sport management mechanisms, particularly, in sector of elite sport.

The internet online-survey was used in order to gather the experts opinions [13]. They were asked according to the strict requirements [14].

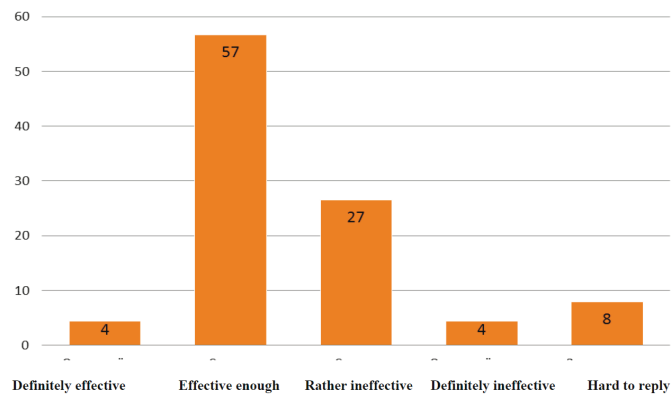
In order to select the experts such a specific method as "snow ball" was used. It allows experts to take part into the survey where the main point is to select the experts according to the recommendations of the "reliable" experts and managers for each interview. The "snow ball" method is the most appropriate in such a case because the special contacts received from one expert assist to increase chances to find the expert by the recommendations of his colleagues who meet the corresponding requirements.

The inspection for data quality was provided with additional events. [15].

The vital results of the analysis regarding sport supporting programs

Experts who reached 18 years old took part in the analysis. Among them there are 44% of women and 56% of men. 26% are representatives of the authorities, 59% are related to scientific research organizations and 3% - business sector representatives. Among the respondents there are 40% who are close related to sport professionals over 15 years, 32% experts – from 6 to 15 years and 28% experts - from 1 year to 5 years. (See the figure 1)

Figure 1 – The assessment of answers “How effective are federal and regional sport supporting programs in the country?”, % from all respondents



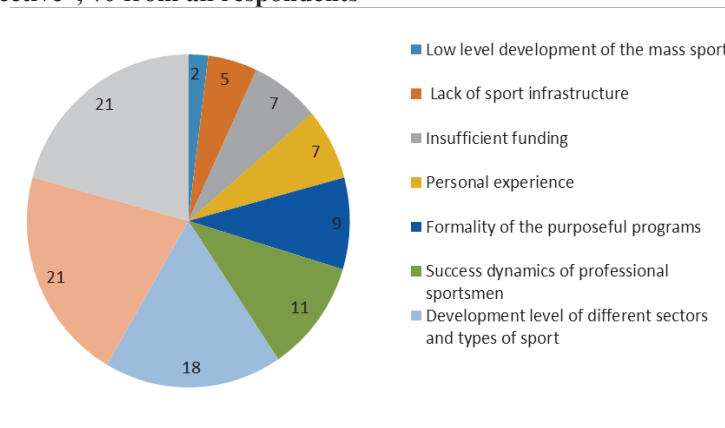
Talking about the experts analysis about the sport situation within the country which represented on the picture 1, it is important to note that active federal and regional programs which support sport are estimated mostly as effective (57% of experts have given such an evaluation).

Those who think that supporting programs are not effective enough form 27%. Some experts consider that those supporting programs are definitely effective or definitely ineffective, small or equal (4%). In other words most of experts (48%) cannot unambiguously say whether the program is definitely effective or not.

In order to explain their evaluation of effectiveness regarding the active federal and regional programs in the country (see the figure 2) experts who evaluated them as an effective category refer to the performance of Russian sportsmen at different levels (23%), to the realization of the main directions of the program: financing, development of the infrastructure, ect. (15%), and also to the positive dynamics of financial base development of sport (10%).

As for those experts who evaluated the active programs as ineffective, their decision was based on the reasons connected with the elite sport: negative dynamics of success regarding professional sportsmen (9%) and a low level of funding (20%). But also 21% of experts explained their negative evaluation by the low level of mass sport development in the country.

Figure 2 –The assessment of answers “Why have you evaluated the active federal and regional sport supporting programs in the country as ineffective”, % from all respondents



It’s worth noting that 67% of experts see “creation of conditions for the formation, preparation and conservation of sport reserve beginning from the children-junior kind of sport” as one of the perspective directions of sport development in general for the next 2-3 years. 49% of expert note that “the development of material-technical base for sport high achievements” can be presented as a perspective direction. Third part of experts (31%) think that it is perspective to raise the competitiveness of Russian sport on the international sport arena.

Passing to the experts evaluation of the effectiveness and realization of the program “Development of sport high achievements and sport reserve system of preparation” (see the table 1) it should be noted that solely less than the third part of experts (30%) knows about the existence of this program. Also it is necessary to note that in general regarding all the directions there is no indication of an extremely high or an extremely low evaluation excluding the evaluation of the events realization which is connected with the preparation for the Olympics and Paralympics games in Sochi and other important sport events. The effectiveness of such approaches is evaluated by the experts sufficiently high – 70% of interviewed gave the evaluation “above the average” or “very high”.

Evaluating different approaches in realization of a particular program the greatest scatter of the experts opinions can be observed in the anti-doping sector regarding the maintenance of Russian Federation sport teams: 28% of experts evaluate the effectiveness of using approaches in this sector “below the average”, whereas the evaluation “above the average” is given by 21% of experts and 29% of interviewed evaluate the taken approach at the middle level.

Table 1 – The Evaluation of effectiveness regarding the approaches according to the realization program “Development of sport high achievements and sport reserve system of preparation”

	Very low	Below average	Average	Above average	Very high	Hard to answer
Improvement of the regulatory legal framework	4	14	45	15	3	20
Holding of the sport events, providing with the preparation of sportsmen at elite level, material-technical maintenance of Russian sports teams	2	16	41	26	8	7
Scope of measures in the developing systems of sport reserves	3	18	44	23	4	8
Anti-doping maintenance of Russian Federation sport teams	3	28	29	21	4	16
Events implementation connected with preparation of the Olympic winter games and Para-Olympic winter games in 2014, in Sochi, and World winter Student Games in 2019, in Krasnoyarsk, and also including other important sport events	1	4	17	31 70	39	7
Improvement of sport infrastructure and material-technical base for the preparation of high class sportsmen	4	15	31	35	6	9

The experts’ evaluation of the “improvement of the regulatory legal framework” is characterized by most of the experts (20%) as it was really hard to evaluate the effectiveness of approaches taken for that part. This fact can be considered in such a way that not all the experts are informed about the approaches which are realized in a particular direction of the program. Moreover, 45% of experts evaluate the effectiveness of the used measures at the average level, approximately equal number of experts demonstrates the level “below the average” (14%) and “above the average” (15%).

In regard to the “scope of measures in development system of sport reserve” which, as it has been noted before, seems to be considered as one of the perspective directions of the sport development for the next 2-3 years. Then 44% of experts evaluate the effectiveness of the program realization at the “average level” in this realm. However, a bit less than the quarter of experts (23%) gave the appraisal “above the average”.

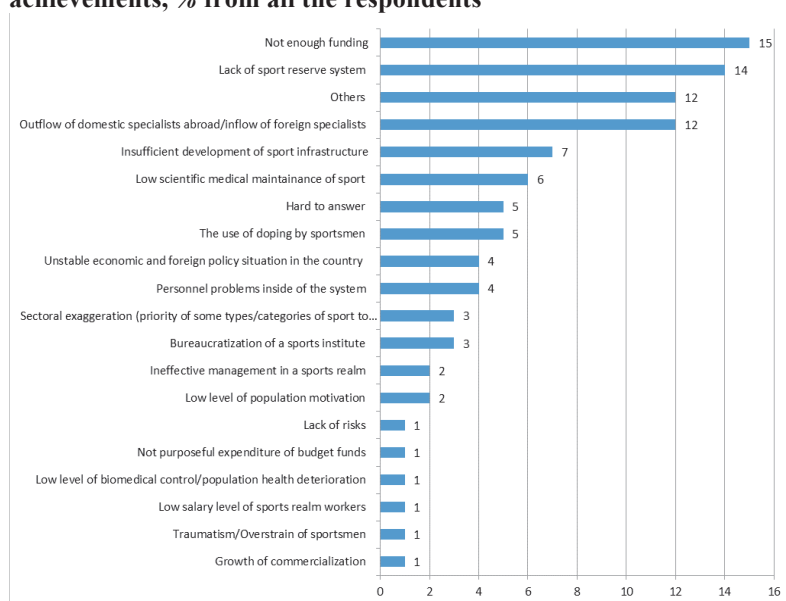
In the same way the appraisals were allocated in the realm of “holding of the sport events, providing with the preparation of sportsmen at elite level, material-technical maintenance of Russian sports teams” where 41% of experts

evaluate the effectiveness of approaches at the “average level”, 26% - “above the average” and 8% of experts talk about “extremely high levels”.

“Improvement of sport infrastructure and material-technical base for the preparation of high class sportsmen” is also considered as one of the perspective directions of sport development in a short-term period. Virtually the third part of the experts (31%) is evaluated at the “average level”, other 35% of interviewed evaluate that at the level “above the average”, 15% of experts evaluate the realization of approaches at the “below average level” according to this direction.

As the current risks for sport high achievements 15% of experts adjudged the under-funding at different levels (see the figure 3): “The Decrease of Funding in some regions; insufficient funding; the lack of funding in particular area”.

Figure 3 – Current risks in the development of sport high achievements, % from all the respondents



14 % demonstrated their interest in the preparation system of sport reserve: the “Lack of a good preparation for sport reserve; a poor level of sport reserve preparation and preservation of sport; the lack of preparation system for sportsmen since their junior age”.

12% paid their attention on the outflow of the domestic specialists abroad and on the inflow of the international ones: “The migration of sportsmen

and their coach team abroad; the outflow of sportsmen abroad; the outflow of high professional sportsmen to the foreign sport clubs and unions”.

7% noted the insufficient development of infrastructure: “The lack of sport bases; the lack of specialized preparation bases on the territory of the country; a weak material-technical base; the lack of sport bases”.

There were also mentioned such main risks as a demographic hole and its consequences; the lack of psychological support for the young sportsmen; the lack of the mass sport”.

Inferences and guidelines according to the conducted investigation

1. In general, to all appearances, the experts estimate the sport situation in the country at the level a bit higher than average. This fact demonstrates not only the effectiveness estimation of acting sport supporting programs, but also the evaluation of realization for the development of high sport achievements and preparation systems of sport reserve.

2. It is necessary to pay attention on a preparation system of sport reserve. It is a direction in which consists one of the important development risks for professional sport in the country. Without an adjusted recruitment system and development of junior sportsmen who conform to the level of national teams, it is difficult to hope for the high results on international sport arena in the future. Besides that, the imperfection of generation substitution system in Russian sport may worsen the situation connected with the outflow of domestic coaches and sportsmen abroad, and it also becomes a kind of risk in a current situation. At the current moment development measures of sport reserve are evaluated as rather above the average, however, it is not an unanimous opinion of the experts, 21% of unsatisfactory appraisals are talking about the fact that there are ways which contribute to further development. That’s why this direction particularly seems to be very perspective for the development in short-term periods (2-3 years).

3. We have the similar situation regarding sport infrastructure and material-technical base for high sport achievements. The state of affairs in this realm is particularly evaluated, in general, as above the average, but based on the pointed disadvantages connected with the lack of sport bases and material-technical provision, it can be concluded that the present measures are realized in a sufficient volume not for all the levels and/or not for all the types of sport. In compliance with that, the future development of this particular realm is considered as a perspective direction for the next 2-3 years.

4. The increase of scandals about doping and, obviously, the availability of a negative trend in this realm requires particularly high attention to the cooperation with anti-doping maintenance for Russian national teams.

5. Under-funding is considered by the experts as the main risk because in the terms of a crisis it can turn into a real problem. That’s why the optimal resource allocation and their purposeful utilization are considered to be

a necessary requirement for effective functioning of the big-time sports in a vested economic situation.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

1. Requirements for experts: recommendations from the other experts, availability of work experience in the realm of investigation problems not less than one year, availability of applied experience according to the theme of investigations or scientific papers (publications, monographs, articles and others), participation in scientific conferences/seminars/forums, participation in meetings run by the public authorities.

2. Control over the data qualities included: control over the secondary filling of the questionnaire from the same computer, the questionnaires which were filled in too fast were excluded from the analysis (control over the time of questionnaire filling), control over the answers on "screening" questions, also the individual control over each questionnaire on the subject of "suspicious" answers on the open questions was conducted. In order to realize the control of the quality of gathering information there was also conducted an efficient strategic selective phone questionnaire of experts with the object of control over the fact of participation in the expert online questionnaire (at the same time the filling of the questionnaire occurred in the anonymous way).

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