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Professionalisation of Sport Federations - A multi-level Framework for analysing Forms, Causes and Consequences

Abstract

Research question: International and national sport federations as well as their member organisations are key actors within the sport system and have a wide range of relationships outside the sport system (e.g., with the state, sponsors, and the media). They are currently facing major challenges such as growing competition in top-level sports, democratisation of sports with "sports for all" and sports as the answer to social problems. In this context, professionalising sport organisations seems to be an appropriate strategy to face these challenges and current problems. We define the professionalisation of sport organisations as an organisational process of transformation leading towards organisational rationalisation, efficiency and business-like management. This has led to a profound organisational change, particularly within sport federations, characterised by the strengthening of institutional management (managerialism) and the implementation of efficiency-based management instruments and paid staff.

Research methods: The goal of this article is to review the current international literature and establish a global understanding of and theoretical framework for analysing why and how sport organisations professionalise and what consequences this may have.

Results and Findings: Our multi-level approach based on the social theory of action integrates the current concepts for analysing professionalisation in sport federations. We specify the framework for the following research perspectives: (1) forms, (2) causes and (3) consequences, and discuss the reciprocal relations between sport federations and their member organisations in this context.

Implications: Finally, we work out a research agenda and derive general methodological consequences for the investigation of professionalisation processes in sport organisations.

Introduction

Both voluntary sport federations and sport clubs have a long tradition and still play a central role in the organisation, promotion and development of sports in the national and international context. The tasks of sport federations especially include representing one or more sports, acting on behalf of their interests in relation to society and to (inter-)national sport organisations (NSOs), promoting competitive sports and organising competitions, championships and sport events, as well as articulating rules and regulations which govern them. In the past few decades, their social, economic and political impact has grown in many countries. However, because of changes in modern sports and society, sport federations currently face a variety of challenges (e.g., Breuer, 2013; Lamprecht, Fischer, & Stamm, 2012; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011): (1) There has been a major growth of international competition in top-level sports. (2) Sport activities are becoming increasingly differentiated and open to new groups of members ("sports for all"). (3) The organisations' services can no longer be carried out exclusively by volunteers but also, to a certain extent, by paid employees. (4) Service orientation, flexibility of membership forms and quality management seem to be becoming important instruments for the performance of sport organisations and are being associated with new task areas. (5) Sport organisations are applying modern forms of communication and media. (6) They are cooperating with new partners, public and private institutions, and a greater range of stakeholders in order to obtain new funding. (7) They are faced with the challenge of obtaining government funding in the context of changing priorities.

These challenges create the impression that sport federations need to establish contemporary management structures and programmes to accomplish their work more efficiently and to adequately meet the expectations of a complex and dynamically changing environment. At national and international levels, these developments are associated with new governance structures and increased strategic capability (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011) and capacity building (Robinson & Minikin, 2011) in order to manage the complex challenges more

efficiently. We can summarise these developments in sport organisations, moving from a volunteer-driven logic to a more formalised and business-like one, as a form of professionalisation that seems to be an appropriate strategy for dealing with current problems and challenges (e.g., Chantelat, 2001; Dowling, Edwards, & Washington, 2014; Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards, 1999). Within sport federations, this can lead to fundamental organisational changes characterised by a strengthening of institutional management and the implementation of (efficiency-based) management instruments (e.g., strategic planning, human resource management, reporting tools).[1]

In this regard, two perspectives of professionalisation should be differentiated: (1) professionalisation in the context of occupational fields (in traditional professions such as medicine, law, teaching etc.) also labelled "professionalism" (see Evetts, 2011) or "occupational professionalization" (Dowling et al., 2014), and (2) professionalisation (of the organisational structures) in the context of the rationalisation and efficiency of organisations (basically Chantelat, 2001; see also Dowling et al., 2014). In our paper, we shall focus on the

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[1] This pressure for organisational development is common to other national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs; e.g., Red Cross, WWF, etc.) and other big non-profit organisations. Growing competitive pressures from for-profit organisations for government contracts have also prompted non-profits to search for ways to improve their operations and to document their contributions and efforts (a "show me culture" instead of a "trust me culture") in order to strengthen their legitimacy and position in the political sphere as well as in more competitive market situations. In response to these changes, non-profit organisations have turned to individuals with managerial expertise and credentials, and added administrative skills through professional training. Consequently, these organisations have adopted an array of organisational practices purported to improve accountability and efficiency. The phenomenon of professionalisation in general and the increase in "organisational professionals" in particular are important sources of organisational and institutional change (Powell & Friedkin, 1987). Moreover, professionalisation and the attendant expansion of professional networks facilitate institutional isomorphism (see DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Hwang & Powell, 2009). In this sense, it generates a conflict of values for some volunteers (Ughetto & Combes, 2010) and a dilemma between their commitment to the cause (mission of the non-profit) and their commitment to the job that seems to have been reformed.

second perspective and broadly define professionalisation of sport organisations as a process of transformation leading towards organisational rationalisation, efficiency and business-like management (see Chantelat, 2001; Dowling et al., 2014). This has led to a profound organisational change, particularly within sport federations, characterised by the strengthening of institutional management (managerialism) and the implementation of efficiency-based management instruments and paid staff. However, this professionalisation does not necessarily mean paid staff (Chantelat, 2001, p. 7). In the context of sport governance research, the adoption of traditional governance structures (e.g., board structures, board roles, shared leadership between board and CEO) is discussed as an indicator for the degree of professionalisation of sport organisations (Dowling et al., 2014; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011).

In the current body of literature we only find stipulative definitions and no detailed conceptualisation of this phenomenon that could integrate the different aspects used to characterise the professionalisation in sport organisations. Many studies reduce professionalisation to the perspective of paid staff and disregard other organisational activities, structures and processes (e.g., strategic planning, specialisation). In this context, it seems useful to develop broad concepts of relevant aspects, which we call *forms of professionalisation.* According to Bayle and Robinson (2007) we will distinguish in this context the professionalisation (1) of activities, (2) of individuals and (3) of structures and processes. When we look at the development of professionalisation, we can see fairly broad differences between the various sport organisations (e.g., Nichols, Padmore, Taylor, & Barrett, 2012; Seippel, 2002). Whereas some sport organisations have not yet changed, others seem to be completely professionalised. Therefore, the question arises: Which *causes* promote the process of professionalisation and what are the possible barriers? Furthermore, it seems interesting to analyse the *consequences* of professionalisation processes for governance and strategic management.

The current research usually focuses only on single aspects of professionalisation and does not consider the interaction of a broad range of causes and consequences. Many studies consider only few organisational factors (e.g., growing tasks, financial resources, organisational values) which can promote or hinder the process of professionalisation. Frequently, only negative consequences of the employment of paid staff in sport organisations are emphasised (e.g., deinstitutionalisation, tensions, conflicts). Positive aspects such as an increase in the quality of governance, services and performance (efficiency, effectiveness, etc.) are less frequently discussed. Furthermore, there is no comprehensive framework that integrates the broad range of aspects, which may influence or be influenced by professionalisation. Therefore, a framework is needed that considers the whole variety of causes and consequences of professionalisation.

In this context, it seems necessary to develop a more general approach to understanding the process of professionalisation that also takes a systemic perspective of the federation (Dowling et al., 2014), because not only the specific structure and culture of the organisation might be relevant. Professionalisation may often be the result of the expectations and resources of different stakeholders in sport and society (e.g., umbrella federations, government, business partners). Aside from the external environment of a sport organisation, the member organisations – as a type of internal environment – appear also to be relevant to the question of professionalisation. However, professionalisation in the headquarters of an umbrella organisation is rarely considered in relation to its member organisations (e.g., regional federation; see Ferkins & Shilbury, 2010). In this context, it also interesting to observe what the consequences of such professionalisation are for the member organisations.

In this paper we propose a conceptual framework that also integrates and synthesizes current sport professionalisation research and that considers the broad range of forms, causes and consequences of professionalization on different levels. By highlighting current findings in

this area and by developing a multi-level model that regards and combines external and internal environment, this paper may help academics to examine professionalisation in sport federations in a deeper way. The knowledge generated through the proposed multi-level approach can provide valuable support for better theoretical understanding of professionalisation and can be a comprehensive framework for future empirical studies. Both can provide a starting point for the development of practical concepts for the management of modern sport federations, which are faced with the challenge of professionalisation.

The main research problems can be summarised by the following basic questions:

(1) Which forms of professionalisation have to be differentiated?

(2) Which internal and external causes are relevant to the professionalisation of sport organisations?

(3) What are the consequences of professionalisation for the organisational structures, culture and processes as well as for the member organisations?

This article addresses these questions using a threefold approach. First, we review the approaches towards and studies on the professionalisation of sport organisations. Second, based on existing research deficits, we develop a comprehensive multi-level framework for analysing forms, causes and consequences of professionalisation in sport federations. Finally, after some specific theoretical reflections on these different perspectives, we point out some methodological aspects for the investigation of professionalisation in sport federations and outline a research agenda.

Literature review

The international literature on the professionalisation of sport organisations can be split into studies that analyse organisational change in general and those that focus more or less explicitly

on the problem of professionalisation. We can classify the current research on sport federations and clubs in different countries with different sport systems in three areas of research: (a) forms of professionalisation, (b) causes of professionalisation and (c) consequences of the professionalisation process.

Forms of professionalisation

First of all, it is necessary to gain a clear picture of the different forms that characterise professionalisation of sport federations. The following dimensions can be differentiated (according to Bayle & Robinson, 2007; Legay, 2001):

- *Professionalisation of activities*: A professionalised organisation defines goals, develops and implements measures to work towards these goals, and regularly evaluates these measures in terms of their efficiency and effectiveness. Evaluation provides feedback and ensures a cycle of self-monitoring and control, thus making potential improvements possible. Furthermore, such evaluation determines not only how an organisation views itself and others (in particular people and other organisations) but also the ways in which roles and positions in the organisation are defined and connected.

- *Professionalisation of individuals*: This means an increase in the number of paid employees and in the competencies of volunteers and the time they dedicate to the organisation. The activities of the individual can be threefold: political, managerial (project or activities) and operational (administrative, sporting or development tasks). Therefore, more formalised concepts of human resource management can emerge such as a recruitment strategy for professionals and volunteers, new job designs, different kinds of incentives and training policies.

- *Professionalisation of structures and processes:* This means a centralisation and a more hierarchical process of decision-making. It can also be associated with the specialisation in the roles and functions needed to address different tasks, new intra- or inter-

organisational linkages, the processing of organisational learning and knowledge management as well as the application of modern technologies of communication and administration.

The literature review further shows that organisational changes in the context of the challenges of modern sports have sometimes been experienced as a rationalisation process (Slack & Hinings, 1987), or more often as a process of professionalisation (e.g., Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2002, 2004a, 2004b; Kikulis, 2000; Kikulis & Slack, 1995; O'Brien & Slack, 1999, 2003, 2004; Skinner et al., 1999; Slack & Cousens, 2005; Washington, 2004).

Organisational change is related to an overall structural formalisation process: a shift from an amateur logic towards a more formalised and professional one. The professionalisation process refers more to an internal process experienced by sport organisations in which the different expectations of the environment impose a need to formalise activities, structures and positions in order to meet these expectations optimally. In this context Bayle and Camy (2004) analyse the role of elected volunteers and paid staff in three areas (political, management, operational) to determine the professionalisation process in French national and regional sport federations.

Ferkins et al. (2005) investigate the following governance topics which serve as indicators for professionalisation: shared leadership, structure and role of the board, board motivation. Ferkins and Shilbury (2012) use two case studies of national sport organisations (Squash New Zealand and New Zealand Soccer) to demonstrate the importance of shared leadership between the board and the CEO and point out four main elements of the strategic capability of a board that can also be used as characteristics of the professionalisation of a sport organisation: capable people, frame of reference, facilitative board processes, facilitative regional relationships.

In summary, the following three forms of professionalisation can be differentiated: (1) activities (e.g., strategic planning, quality management); (2) individuals (e.g., profile of paid employees, shared leadership); (3) structures and processes (e.g., formalisation, board structures and roles). These three dimensions generate the starting point for the multi-level framework of professionalisation (see Figure 1).

Causes of professionalisation

In the following section we shall sketch the main results of the relevant existing studies on causes of professionalisation (see overview Table 1: selection of important studies) before summarising the current knowledge.

Horch and Schütte (2009) point out the following determinants that influence the need for paid managers (also called occupationalisation): costs and benefits of paid managers, the desired role of a paid managing director as a cultural indicator, relations to actors in business and government, and increased work requirements. There seems to be no pressure on sport associations, federations and even clubs to employ more paid managers in Germany (Horch & Schütte, 2009). However, they show that once the process of occupationalisation has been started it stimulates a further need for paid managers. Seippel (2002) points out that there are large differences between various types of sport organisations in Norway, and, for some, the pressure to engage paid staff is increasing. In general, the coercive pressure of government through its funding of sport organisations seems to be rather low in Norway and Belgium (Skille, 2009; Vos et al., 2011). However, the influence of the external environment is probably dependent on the specific national sport system. Edwards, Mason, and Washington (2009) as well as Slack and Hinings (1994) have found clear coercive pressure on sport organisations in Canada, and Nichols et al. (2005) describe several forms of field level pressure on the UK voluntary sport sector. Shilbury and Ferkins (2011) discuss the dynamics of an increasingly

professionalised environment in Australia and New Zealand (e.g., media, sponsors, government; see also the overview on environmental dynamics of professionalisation: Ferkins, Shilbury & McDonald, 2005); these environmental dynamics lead to professionalisation and bureaucratisation. Furthermore, Shilbury and Ferkins (2011) point out that the strategic capability of the board plays a crucial role in the process of professionalisation.

Cachay, Thiel, and Meier (2001) compare sport federations and clubs in Germany and show that sport federations have more paid employees than sport clubs. They explain the differences through the higher subsidies the federations get from the government. Thus finance is a crucial factor for the professionalisation of a sport organisation. In a follow-up study, Thiel, Meier, and Cachay (2006) demonstrate that a traditional organisational culture can be the main barrier in a professionalisation process. They also show that the main condition for professionalisation is strategic planning and the trust of the members in the chairpersons who are responsible for the processes of organisational change. In line with these findings, Stenling and Fahlén (2009) show that a (changed) logic of commercialisation/professionalisation is the result of the implementation of attitudes and values in the organisational structure. In this context, Enjolras (2002) demonstrates that the level of commercialisation is higher in sport organisations that are particularly oriented towards competition and dedicated to team sports. Furthermore, he shows that commercialisation does not hinder voluntary work nor public support.

The detailed investigations of processes of professionalisation show that they are closely linked to external factors as well as to internal characteristics of the organisation (Thibault & Babiak, 2005). Organisational changes that occur in the area of professionalisation are often characterised by a crucial role of key individuals and the specific interest of organisational members and their decisions (Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1995). Besides leadership activities and competencies of the organisation's elite, individual or sub-unit interest and power

distribution exert a profound influence on the outcome of large-scale change processes (Amis et al., 2002). Furthermore, decision-making structures are relevant to organisational changes such as professionalisation (Kikulis & Slack, 1995). In addition, organisations that contain members who hold values congruent with the prescribed changes were able to successfully engage in the transition process (Amis et al., 2002). O'Brien and Slack (2003) also show the relevance of values in the context of professionalisation processes.

Summing up, we can point out that internal as well as external factors are relevant to the professionalisation of sport organisations. Although the majority of the studies investigate sport clubs and not sport federations, the following main findings can be used for the multi-level framework (see Figure 1).

Firstly, there are environmental dynamics and coercive pressure from (1) government and sport policy, (2) business partners and media, and (3) umbrella sport federations imposed on sport organisations. The expectations and resources of these stakeholders in sport and society play a crucial role in professionalisation.

Besides these external factors, several studies investigate the crucial relevance of endogenous causes for professionalisation, particularly the following main aspects: (1) growing requirements regarding the work of the organisation, (2) ==size and sport of the federation==, (3) financial resources, (4) strategic capability of board, (5) structures of decision making, (6) individual key actors, (7) role of paid managing director(s) and of the board, and (8) organisational values. Thus, the specific structure and culture has to be considered when analysing professionalisation of any sport federation.

Finally, it has to be emphasised that the expectations of member organisations (e.g., regional federations, clubs) often play a role in the professionalisation of sport federations.

[Insert Table 1 here]

Consequences of professionalisation

Several aspects are discussed in the literature as consequences of professionalisation (see Table 2 for a selection of important studies). Thibault, Slack, and Hinings (1991) show that hiring professional staff increases the levels of specialisation and formalisation in Canadian sport organisations by changing the structural arrangements. This implies an evolution in the forms of organisational structure demonstrated by typological approaches (e.g., Theodoraki & Henry, 1994; Thibault et al., 1991). In line with Max Weber's work, this evolution can be characterised by a process of bureaucratisation (e.g., Bayle, 2010; Bernardeau-Moreau, 2004; Slack, 1985).

Arcioni and Bayle (2012) and Kikulis (2000) demonstrate that organisational governance can be affected by the way the professionalisation process is conducted and the political role played by the CEO or executive director. Shilbury & Ferkins (2011) also show that the process of professionalisation influences the governance of sport organisations and creates specific challenges (see also Ferkins, McDonald & Shilbury, 2010). The aspects of shared leadership and board motivations, as well as board roles, structures and performance become important in this context (see overview in Ferkins et al., 2005). The relevance of a healthy balance in the dynamic between the CEO and the board of volunteers is particularly stressed, as the influence of an elected board is normally reduced in the process of professionalisation. Connected to this, the roles and functions of boards in sport federations are discussed in detail (e.g., Shilbury, 2001; Inglis, 1997), in particular board involvement in strategic questions (Ferkins, Shilbury & McDonald, 2009) and the strategic capability of the board (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2010). Changes in governance structures and role of the board may be important consequences of professionalisation.

A great deal of research on national sport-governing bodies has found that another consequence of professionalisation is the transformation of objectives and organisational values

(e.g., Horch, 1998; Loirand, 2003; Shilbury, Ferkins & Smythe, 2013; Thibault et al., 1991). This has generated paradoxes for national governing bodies in sport (Koski & Heikkala, 1998).

For this reason, there is resistance to professionalisation in those types of organisations in which volunteer values are deeply institutionalised and where the risk of cultural deinstitutionalisation in the sport organisation can generate major conflicts. Several studies analyse the tensions and conflicts between paid staff and volunteers and have mainly found negative effects on volunteering (e.g., Amis, Slack, & Berett, 1995; Auld, 1994, 1997; Cuskelly, Boag, & McIntyre, 1999; Seippel, 2002). However, in contrast to this research, Thiel et al. (2006) conclude that the employment of paid staff has no negative effects on the identity of sport clubs and can be a positive factor for the promotion of voluntary work (see also Enjolras, 2002) provided that the activities of paid staff are in line with the goals and cultural conditions of the organisation. More generally, Taylor and McGraw (2006) analyse the difficulty of formalising human resources management in sport clubs.

Professionalisation can also impact on how performance is managed in NSOs (Bayle & Robinson, 2007). The review of current studies indicates how sport organisations try to optimise efficiency and effectiveness through improved managerial skills (e.g., Ferkins et al., 2010). In this context, board performance has proved to be an interesting dependent variable of professionalisation (e.g., Hoye & Doherty, 2011). Future research should consider this as a means with which to leverage processes of professionalisation. Some authors (e.g., Bayle, 2000a, 2000b; Ferkins & Shilbury, 2010; Madella, Bayle, & Tome, 2005) have identified organisational performance (headquarters and the federation network linked with professionalisation or interorganisational relationships) or social performance (social climate, absence of conflict between volunteers and professionals) as key factors in the production of other types of performance (sport and financial performance of the federation).

Finally, there is some research on the consequences of professionalisation on member organisations. Ferkins and Shilbury (2010), with their action research of Tennis New Zealand, focus on the impact of the board on the interorganisational relationship. They show that the board's strategic priorities enhanced a more collaborative partnership with the regional associations. Aside from this finding, Shilbury and Ferkins (2011) point out that professionalisation increases the expectation of external stakeholders (e.g., government, sponsors, sport consumers).

In summary, current research indicates that professionalisation of sport federations has consequences for the structure and culture of the organisation itself, as well as for the expectations of and relationships with external stakeholders (e.g., cooperation with business partners) and member organisations (e.g., centralisation vs. regionalisation) (see Figure 1).

In regard to internal consequences, the following main aspects are addressed: (1) rationalisation of the work process leading to a bureaucratisation process, (2) change in governance and role of board, (3) conflicts between paid staff and volunteers, (4) transformation of goals and organisational values, and (5) impact on performance (sport, financial, social).

[Insert Table 2 here]

Multi-level model for analysing professionalisation of sport federations

Review from previous studies cited in section 2 reveal several forms, causes and consequences of professionalisation that can be located at different organisational levels - the internal structures and culture of the sport federation itself as well as the internal and external environment. In order to integrate the findings, we propose a multi-level framework that includes and combines different research perspectives: (1) the broad range of forms, causes and

consequences of professionalisation, and (2) various levels of organisation. Figure 1 shows the multi-level model, which links the main results of the literature review (see the summary at the end of each of the three sections). The forms of professionalisation in the middle of the figure are the starting point for analysing this phenomenon. Both the causes at different levels and the consequences for the sport federation as well as for the internal and external environment are constituted. In the following sections the theoretical background of the model will be developed and specific theoretical concepts will be considered which could serve as starting points for future research.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Theoretical background of the multi-level approach

In order to consider the different research perspectives (forms, causes, and consequences) and particularly to combine the different levels of organisation and their mutual interplay, it seems suitable to analyse sport organisations using the social theory of action (Coleman, 1974, 1986; Giddens, 1984) and derive a multi-level framework that enables the integration of internal and external environment as levels of analysis (according to Nagel's, 2006, 2007, specific concept for sport clubs). The basis for actor-theoretical thinking is – according to Giddens (1984) and his structuration theory – the presumption that social acting and social structures are in a constant reciprocal relationship that develops over the course of time (see also Schimank, 2010). Each social structure is the result of the interaction of actors. However, social acting always depends on social structures. Accordingly, sport organisations change due to the ongoing reciprocal interplay between the members' social acting and the organisations' structures.

When specifying these basic assumptions for sport organisations, we need to conceptualise sport federations (and sport organisations in general) as corporate actors (Nagel,

2008; Schimank, 2005) whose goals are developed from the interests of their member organisations. Therefore, sport federations as corporate actors can be characterised in terms of their specific social structure as interest communities (as defined by Coleman, 1974) of their members or member organisations that combine their resources with the aim of realising shared interests and goals, particularly in the field of sports (e.g., Heinemann, 2004; Nagel, 2007). Shared interests and preferences of the members form the goals of the organisation (Coleman, 1986; Schimank, 2010). The sport federations as corporate actors in a supra-individual sense are characterised by the specific purpose of the association, the articles of association, the membership conditions, and the internal decision-making structures. Everything that is anchored informally, such as cultural self-understanding, tradition, or federation history, provides the federation with social stability (internally) and a distinctive identity (externally). The specific structural conditions of a sport federation are still subject to change through the corresponding impulses of the members (or key actors). Nonetheless, it is not the people, but predominantly these specific structural conditions that characterise the sport federation as a corporate actor.

Accordingly, structures and processes of decision-making and the respective individual players (elected volunteers and paid staff) are relevant factors. Through the joint actions and decisions of members of a sport federation, different forms of professionalisation are created (see Figure 1). In turn, specific forms of professionalisation result in consequences due to changed organisational actions and decision-making.

Based on the actor-theoretical concept of sport federations as corporate actors and the ideas of Coleman (1986) and Esser (1999) we developed the multi-level model that also considers the expectations of external stakeholders and member organisations. Thus, this framework integrates the internal and external causes as well as consequences in order to

appropriately understand the professionalisation of sport organisations in a broader sense (see Figure 1). The following three levels are distinguished:

Sport federation: Since not all sport federations reveal the same changes, it is necessary to take a closer look at the organisational structures and culture in order to understand the causes of specific developments such as professionalisation. Here we can assume, for example, that specific organisational structures such as the number of member organisations, or the importance of traditions and cultures in different kinds of sport, influence the actions and decisions about professionalisation taken by the federations as corporate actors. Furthermore, it is interesting to analyse the consequences of professionalisation on the organisational structure and culture of sport federations (for details see literature review).

External environment: We also have to consider the systemic perspective, the environment of the organisation. Sport federations are embedded in several environmental fields (e.g., political, economic, social, the media, the health system, etc.) with different expectations. Developments in modern societies in general and in modern sports in particular (e.g., commercialisation, globalisation, and political changes) generate so-called "field-level pressures" (O'Brien & Slack, 2004, p. 36), and may have a strong influence on the development of the structures and culture of sport federations (e.g., coercive governmental pressure; see Vos et al., 2011). Consequences should be considered as it might be possible that the professionalisation of a sport organisation leads to a close cooperation or joint venture with partners from business or has a general impact on the development of a certain sport (e.g., the role of important global sport federations for the development of a specific sport).

Internal environment: Finally, it also seems appropriate to look at the reciprocal correlations between sport federations and their member organisations (e.g., sport clubs). Given the consequences of structural changes such as professionalisation, it would, on the one hand, be interesting to analyse the consequences for the member organisations: Can they benefit from

the process of professionalisation in their umbrella organisation or are there negative consequences? In this context Ferkins and Shilbury (2010) show the shift from a hierarchical to a networked model that seeks to develop the strategic capability of regional federations. On the other hand, member organisations with their specific expectations and values might, for example, play an important role as drivers for the professionalisation of their umbrella organisation. Since sport organisations exist on various levels, we have to differentiate and consider clubs and/or regional federations as the members of national sport federations, and these, in turn, as members of international sport federations (e.g., Klenk, 2011).

Specific considerations and theoretical concepts

Based on this multi-level framework, we can integrate existing theoretical reflections and formulate more specific research questions concerning causes and consequences of professionalisation in sport federations. The following considerations expand on the corresponding boxes in Figure 1.

Causes of professionalisation: The causes of organisational changes (as well as the barriers to them) can result from their internal or external environment (exogenous factors) and/or from the organisation itself (endogenous factors).

     Exogenously determined change: Referring to external causes for organisational change, environmental influences can be differentiated into the dimensions of dynamics and complexity. These, in turn, determine the pressure for change in organisations (e.g., Kieser, 1975). According to contingency theory (situational approach), organisational features are modified in response to environmental events/characteristics (e.g., Blau & Schoenherr, 1971; Child, 1972). However, the contingency theoretical approach suggests that organisational characteristics are intentionally changeable and thus change depending on the complexity and dynamics of the

environment. According to Scott (1981), the production and legitimation function in organisations also varies according to the extent of corresponding expectations in their environment. This may be particularly important for organisations that are relatively highly dependent on external resources (see Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, for activities dependent on the external resources of corporate actors). The financial subsidies from the state and public authorities to national or regional sport federations can exert considerable coercive pressure on local sport organisations and national-level sport organisations (e.g., Edwards et al, 2009; Slack & Hinings, 1994).[2] The pressure to professionalise can also be an answer to developments in different sport markets. Sport federations are presumably confronted with a tendency towards professionalisation due to environmental constraints (pressure from the sport system, their competitors, sponsors, media, etc.). This leads to the following question: *What role does the external environment (stakeholders in sport and society) play in the process of professionalisation of sport organisations?*[3] Here, one can assume that the expectations of sport policy or business partners lead to growing tasks and requirements, which then influence the forms of professionalisation.

Furthermore, the member organisations (as the *internal environment*) with their goals, interests and culture might also impact the professionalisation of the umbrella organisation.

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[2] The concept of new institutionalism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) has been extended to sport organisations by Skille (2009) either in the form of bricolage (as in the recombination of existing institutional elements within a field) or in the form of an organisation and translation (as in importing new institutional elements from outside the investigated field or organisation).

[3] According to system theoretical concepts (basically Luhmann, 2000; Willke, 1995; see Thiel & Mayer, 2009, for voluntary sport organisations), organisations are conceptualised as self-referential, operationally closed systems that cannot be determined directly by their environment. With the development of their own institutional complexity and logic, social systems react more to themselves and deal with their environment only in a selective way. Thus, environmental expectations can lead only to irritations within an organisation and either induce or not induce intra-organisational changes in this way. Due to their structural specifics, voluntary sport organisations in particular that are able to successfully repulse irritations from their environment (e.g., Slack & Parent, 2005; Thiel & Meier, 2004).

They can stimulate the process in a bottom-up way, because they hope to improve their own situation by gaining better support and performance from their federation, or they can restrain it because, for example, they do not want increased membership fees or it does not fit with their organisational culture. The influence of member organisations on the professionalisation process is probably more important in sport and administrative domains than in development domains (e.g., events, promotion of sport, use of sport as tool for development). However, there is hardly any research on this perspective, and this is something that needs to be analysed in more detail in future studies: *To what extent do member organisations influence processes of professionalisation?*

Endogenously determined change: According to organisational theories based on the rational-choice paradigm, endogenous organisational change is a function of goals of the organisation, and thus is a purposeful process of increasing their effectiveness and efficiency by, for example, an (evolutionary) optimisation of institutions (e.g., performance incentives) to reduce divergences between collective and individual objectives (e.g., Picot, Dietl, Franck, Fiedler, & Royer, 2012). Further intra-organisational factors (situational factors, according to Kieser, 2002) might also be relevant to the professionalisation of a sport federation; these could be such things as size, financing structure and economic situation, socio-economic logics, cultural values and characteristics of the sport. It can be assumed that larger organisations with stronger financial resources and a clearly formalised strategy are more prone to adopt general professionalised structures in three domains (sport, administrative and development) whereas medium-sized and small federations with financially constrained resources have more hybrid professionalised structures focusing only on the sport and administrative domains.

A stronger emphasis on individual interests and thus a rejection of the model of rationally planned organisational change is the focus of studies of micro-political negotiation processes in organisations (e.g., Cyert & March, 1963). March and Olsen (1976) and Crozier

and Friedberg (1977) worked out more or less contingent causes of organisational changes for organisations with diffuse decision-making constellations (e.g., Nagel, 2006, for sport organisations). The importance of political dimensions in such organisations, particularly the role of the main dominant actors such as, above all, the president or/and the director(s) and their interest to stay in power and maintain their position, is a key aspect when trying to understand professionalisation (Bayle, 2000b). The operations of organisations can be influenced by volunteers' or employees' experiences in other organisations or in training and education structures ("normative isomorphism" DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; see Hinings, Slack, & Thibault, 1991, in sport organisations).

In order to gain a deeper understanding of how far intra-organisational factors affect or trigger processes of professionalisation, institutional theory (see notably the research of O'Brien and Slack, 2003, 2004) seems an appropriately specific theoretical approach. From an organisational perspective, the following general questions seem significant: *Which internal factors, that is the specific structures and cultures, promote or hinder processes of professionalisation? Who are the key actors/initiators of professionalisation processes? Which decisions and specific events are essential for the process of professionalisation?*

Consequences of professionalisation: Within our multi-level framework, two perspectives for analysing consequences of professionalisation in sport federations are of interest: (a) the impact on the professionalised federation at the headquarters and (b) the impact on member organisations and external stakeholders. Since most of the existing studies on the first perspective do not work with a specific theoretical concept, we can present only some brief reflections and preliminary questions on important research topics here. The outcomes of professionalisation can be studied with regard to the management of the federations (e.g., governance, specialisation, managing methods and instruments, specific habitus of leadership). This particularly raises the following question: *Which internal restructuring is emerging and*

what are the effects on organisational behaviour? Here, aspects of governance (e.g., role of board, shared leadership), of performance (e.g., sport, financial) as well as social aspects (e.g., organisational culture, values, identity and common interests, relationships between paid staff and volunteers) are of interest in relation to the process of professionalisation. Furthermore, institutionally specific design archetypes of professionalisation in sport federations should be outlined in order to describe specific features and developments in more detail. Accordingly, it seems worth taking a closer look at an organisation's performance (e.g., goals, strategic linkages, output, service quality, organisational capacities), because this aspect is usually one of the main reasons for professionalisation. This leads to the general question: *Does the professionalisation of a sport organisation lead to the intended consequences and what are the unintended results?*

Finally, it seems interesting to analyse the consequences of professionalisation for the relationship of a sport federation with its member organisations (e.g., the clubs) as well as with external stakeholders. *To what extent does professionalisation have consequences for the expectations of and the relationships with member organisations and external stakeholders?*

Conclusion: Towards a multi-level framework and an adequate research agenda

The elaborated multi-level framework for analysing professionalisation in sport federations is able to integrate most of the existing findings and theoretical concepts and therefore, the broad range of internal and external factors that might be relevant in the context of the professionalisation of sport organisations. In the previous section, specific research questions for the perspectives, consequences and causes have been formulated. These questions can be the starting point for future empirical research. In the following, we will provide some further and more general issues (potential avenues) for research related to professionalisation in sport federations, and make suggestions for the methodological design of empirical studies.

- *Analyses of different types of sport federations.* Most studies have investigated clubs, regional or national sport federations, and little research on professionalisation has been conducted on international sport organisations. However, it might be useful to know to what extent there are differences in the forms of professionalisation between diverse kinds of sport federations (e.g., big, medium and small sport federations)*,* and whether there are differences between national and international sport federations. Therefore, future research needs to analyse different kinds of sport federations to identify common ground as well as differences in the forms of professionalisation, in order to gain a more heterogeneous picture of what professionalisation in different sport federations looks like. Such findings may also enhance the understanding of the role professionalisation plays at different levels of the sport federation context. Based on these analyses, the multi-level framework can be (inductively) further developed and refined (specific forms, causes or consequences).

- *In-depth analyses of forms of professionalisation.* The current concept of forms should be further developed according to the broad focus on forms of professionalisation. In order to describe specific features of professionalisation in more detail, it might be useful to understand to what extent different archetypes (forms) of professionalisation in sport federations can be identified and categorised, based on differences in their structures and processes, activities, and individual membership. In this context, specific topics should be analysed in more detail, for example, shared leadership of elected board and paid managing staff, strategic capabilities, changing in decision-making practices, or organisational values.

Against this background it may also be interesting to analyse what causes and consequences are relevant in relation to these different archetypes of professionalisation. Firstly, are there similar developments that are typically connected to specific types of

professionalisation? Such a perspective would be useful for gaining a clearer picture of what (external as well internal) impulses stimulate and/or predict professionalisation. Secondly, how are specific archetypes of professionalisation related to the organisational performance? Focussing on this perspective, allows one to discuss the consequences of specific forms of professionalisation in terms of their appropriateness for achieving specific organisational objectives and managing the existing challenges that had triggered the process of professionalisation. On this basis, more differentiated statements with regard to the functionality of professionalisation in relation to the organisational performance can be derived.

- *Focus on the interrelation with member organisations.* Current studies on national sport federations focus mostly on professionalisation in the headquarters of the umbrella organisation and not on their member organisations (regional federation and sport clubs). However, the (recursive) interplay between sport federations and their member organisations also needs to be explored to gain a deeper understanding of causes and consequences of professionalisation. Since member organisations can stimulate or hinder processes of professionalisation, and professionalising the umbrella organisation can influence the member organisations, it seems useful to combine within the one study different levels of organisations. Therefore, on one hand the extent to which member organisations (clubs) promote professionalisation processes in sport federations should be examined, and on the other, what the consequences are of professionalisation on member organisations.

- *Analyses of professionalisation in sport federations over the course of time.* A simultaneous consideration of different perspectives of professionalisation in a few selected sport organisations (case studies) has to be advanced in future research. Professionalisation in sport federations cannot be constructed as a simple linear process

as there are several non-linear and reciprocal effects and dynamics. Depending on the specific theoretical framework, there may be mutual relationships and feedbacks between the causes and consequences over the course of time ("dynamics"). This corresponds to the analysis of steps in the professionalisation process (Bayle, 2004).

Based on the conceptual framework and the research agenda, we can identify several consequences for the methodological design of studies intending to analyse the different issues of research on professionalisation in sport organisations. The following characteristics seem to be useful for the multi-level research design (see Nagel, 2007):

- Data needs to be collected on different levels: Not only the forms of professionalisation and relevant structures of the organisations should be taken into account but also important characteristics of the environment as well as a consideration of members or member organisations, and particularly of key actors who might play a crucial role in order to gain an understanding of professionalisation processes in sport organisations.

- In order to carry out such a complex organisational research design, it seems necessary to focus on case studies – an approach that has become increasingly important in organisational research (see e.g., Skille, 2013; Stake 2005). When selecting cases, several types of sport federations have to be defined based on theoretical reflection or empirical data. A carefully chosen, criteria-led sample restricts the number of cases, but ensures that the most relevant are considered and that the diversity and heterogeneity of situations are taken into account. The following criteria might lead the selection of case studies: degree of professionalisation (in relation to forms e.g., specialisation and differentiation of functional roles, proportion of full-time professionals), goal profiles (e.g., support for junior and elite sports vs. popular sports orientation), size (regarding

members) and types of sports. With regard to the research strategy, case studies can be analysed in detail or different cases could be compared and the results integrated.

- Different strategies and methods of data collection have to be used within the case studies (e.g., interviews with experts within the organisations, questionnaires for selected people in the organisation, document analysis). Therefore, qualitative and quantitative research strategies have to be combined and triangulated (basically Denzin, 1977). This mixed-method approach provides more detailed data on development processes compared to the quantitative data gained from larger studies. To understand the dynamics of professionalisation, it seems appropriate to analyse the complex process over a longer period (retrospectively).

- Especially data from different levels of the analysis (e.g., of federations and member organisations) have to be combined in order to simultaneously assess the different relevant aspects. The appropriate method for simultaneously assessing hierarchical data is a multi-level analysis. This method ensures robust findings from simultaneous estimations of multi-level data, as neither a pure aggregate nor a pure individual data analysis would deliver satisfactory results.

The scientific work along this research agenda could lead to a broader and deeper understanding of the complex process of professionalisation in sport federations in order to improve the current multi-level framework. In addition, it can serve as a useful framework for investigating other non-profit organisations that are facing an increasing pressure to professionalise. Furthermore, the concepts and findings developed in the context of professionalisation could offer promising approaches for the analysis of development and organisational change in sport federations in general.

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Table 1: Overview of studies on causes of professionalisation in sport organisations

Author (Year)	Sample	Theory/ Concept	Method	Key findings
Amis et al. (2002)	35 Canadian Olympic NSOs	Institutional theory perspective on value–change relationship	12-year real-time data collection; reports and interviews	Organisations that contained members who held values congruent with the prescribed changes were able to successfully engage in the transition process. Conversely, those with members who opposed the change entered into a period of largely superficial conformity.
Cachay et al. (2001)	85 sport federations and 490 sport clubs in Germany (with more than 1,000 members)	No specific theory	Written questionnaires	Sport federations have more paid employees than sport clubs due to the higher subsidies the federations get from the government. Sport clubs with a traditional club culture and ideology have fewer paid staff.
Edwards et al. (2009)	16 provincial sport organi-sations in Canada	Institutional theory with the dimensions of institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983)	Interviews with key informants (full-time management or executive board members)	The criteria and reporting requirements of an organisation that is responsible for government funding operate as institutional. Geographic location and the implementation of brown bag lunch seminars also operate as institutional pressures.
Horch and Schütte (2009)	531 sport associa-tions (federations and clubs) in Germany	Economic theory; contingency theory; new institutionalism of organisations theory	Written questionnaire to sport associations; stepwise multiple regression analysis	There seems to be no pressure on sport associations to employ more paid managers. It is an opportunity that the organisation can take or leave. The following factors determine the need for paid managers: benefits and costs, desired role of a paid managing director as cultural indicator, co-operation with business and government, increased requirements of the work.
Kikulis & Slack (1995)	36 Canadian NSO's	Impact of decision-making structures on organisational design change	4-year real time data collection: document analysis, interviews	Decision making is important for understanding differences between organisational designs, as well as differences between high-impact systems.
Kikulis et al. (1995)	36 Canadian NSO's	Role of human agents and their choices in the changing processes of NSO in Canada	4-year real time data collection: document analysis, interviews	Variation in organisational processes in response to institutional pressures reflects the active role of human agents in the design of organisations. The incremental changes that did occur in the area of centralisation are characterised by the interest of organisational members and their decisions.

O'Brien & Slack (2003)	Nine English rugby clubs	Institutional theory	43 semi-structured interviews with key individuals, document analysis; literature-based coding scheme	Change processes in an organisational field tend to move organisations towards same structures, though values and beliefs explain the differences that still exist. Powerful new actors with strong ties to business environments brought with them professionally oriented values and a new institutional logic.
Seippel (2002)	294 Norwegian sport clubs (random sample)	General concepts of voluntary work	Questionnaire to sport clubs	Voluntary work is still the foundation of most sport organisations, but there are large differences between various types of organisation. Structural features such as size and age influence the number of paid staff.
Shilbury & Ferkins (2011)	New Zealand NSOs	Concepts of governance research	Three case studies; the data derived from an action research study on strategic capability	The process of professionalisation is influenced by the dynamics of an increasing professionalised environment (e.g., media, sponsors, government).
Slack and Hinings (1994)	36 Canadian NSO (national level)	Institutional theory with the dimensions of institutional isomorphism according to DiMaggio and Powell (1983)	Holistic approach; development of taxonomies by analysing reports and interviews with key persons	NSOs adopt a more professional and bureaucratic design because of environmental pressures from a state agency.
Stenling and Fahlén (2009)	6 Swedish sport clubs (theory-based, snowball-sampling)	Institutional theory; concept of design archetypes	Semi-structured interviews with club representatives	There are three dominant logics: the sport-for-all logic, the result-oriented logic and the commercialisation/professionalisation logic. The order of logics originates from the implementation of attitudes and values in organisational structures.
Thibault & Babiak (2005)	Canadian sport system	Pettigrew's (1987) contextualist approach to organisational change	Document analysis, literature overview	Impact of change depends on external factors, internal characteristics of the organisation and key individuals.
Thiel et al. (2006)	9 sport clubs in Germany with more than 1,000 members (theory-based selection)	Sport clubs as social systems (Luhmann, 2000); professionalisation as a decision-making process	Case studies with interviews (e.g., chairpersons)	The main condition for professionalisation is strategic planning and the confidence of members in the chairpersons. However, the traditional organisational culture can be a main barrier.

Vos et al. (2011)	651 sport clubs in Flanders (in 2009) and 232 local sport authorities in Flanders (in 2010)	Neo-institutional approach based upon resource dependence theory; concept of coercive isomorphism	Web-based survey; bivariate statistics, multinomial logistic regression analysis	There is a relationship between the proportion of governmental subsidies in the total income of sport clubs and their adoption of subsidy conditions regarding the qualification of the sport technical staff. However, the pressure of the government through its funding seems to have only a low coercive effect.

Table 2: Overview of studies on consequences of professionalisation in sport organisations

Author (Year)	Sample	Theory/ Concept	Method	Key findings of the research related to professionalisation
Auld (1997)	Australian NSOs	Development of professiona-lisation of Australian sport management; involvement of volunteers and professionals in decision-making processes	Self-administered questionnaires utilising a mail survey (325 professional and volunteer administrators)	Professional administrators presently have the most influence on decision making in Australian NSOs. Conflicts in perceiving whether the professionals or the volunteers should have the most influence in the future.
Amis et al. (1995)	Canadian voluntary sport organi-sations	Different political concepts of conflicts in organisations	20 semi-structured interviews; construction of four case studies	Conflicts and tensions in these organisations are a result of design arrangements
Bayle & Robinson (2007)	French national sport governing bodies	Adaptation of Lawrence and Lorsch's theoretical framework	Documentary analysis, survey in 1996 and 2005, 11 case studies, circa 100 semi-structured interviews	The framework suggests that potential performance may differ from actual performance and that actual performance will be affected to a greater or lesser degree by a number of factors and mechanisms in the NGB context. One crucial factor is the professionalisation of an organisation.
Cuskelly et al. (1999)	67 Queensland state sporting organi-sations	Organisational behaviour approach: Meyer and Allen's (1991) three component model of organisational commitment	Self-administered questionnaires (175 paid and volunteer sport administrators)	Significant differences in affective and normative organisational commitment between volunteers and paid staff.
Ferkins & Shilbury (2010)	Tennis New Zealand	Concepts of governance research	The case studies data derived from an action research study on strategic capability	The board's strategic capability and priorities enhanced a more collaborative partnership with the regional associations by introducing a power-sharing approach.
Koski & Heikkala (1998)	Finnish NSOs	Concept of organisations of mixed rationales (OMR)	Literature review; Documentary analysis of 65 NSOs; 3 different questionnaires	Process of professionalisation generates some paradoxes and tensions between rationality of economic logic of functioning and non-profit value orientation.
Kikulis (2000)	Canadian NSOs	Institutional theory	Literature review	Change processes have defined new governance and decision-making structures and the inclusion of

				professionals has increased the level of specialisation and formalisation of the structure.
Shilbury & Ferkins (2011)	New Zealand NSOs	Concepts of governance research	Three case studies; the data derived from an action research study on strategic capability	The process of professionalisation influences the governance of sport. Focusing on three aspects: shared leadership, board motivations, and board structures and performance. It is important to develop a healthy balance of policy, strategic and operation roles for CEO and elected boards.
Taylor & McGraw (2006)	NSW Sport Federation (including all non-profit sport organisations that are full members of the federation)	No specific theory	43 self-report questionnaires; *t* tests, correlational analysis, binary logistic regression analysis	Despite pressures to become more strategic in their people management, only a minority of organisations with both paid and volunteer human resources have formal human resource management systems. Strong differentiation is noted between organisations with versus without formal human resource policies.
Thibault et al. (1991)	Six Canadian sport organisations	No specific theory	Document analysis; semi-structured interviews; examination at different points in time after the first introduction of a professional staff member	In sport organisations, the hiring of professional staff increased the levels of specialisation and formalisation, changing the structural arrangements.

Causes   **Forms**   **Consequences**

external environment

Expectations and resources of stakeholders in sport and society
- umbrella federations
- government and sport policy
- business partners and media

Expectations of and relationships with stakeholders
- E.g. cooperations and joint ventures with business partners

sport federation

Specific structure and culture
- growing requirements
- size, sport
- financial resources
- strategic capability of board
- structures of decision making
- individual key actors
- role of paid managing director
- organisational values

Forms of professionalisation
- Activities (e.g. level of diversification; strategic planning)
- Individuals (e.g. profile of paid employees)
- structures and processes (e.g. formalisation, specialisation)

Structure, culture and processes
- governance and role of board
- human resource management
- conflicts between paid staff and volunteers
- transformation of goals and values
- performance

internal environment

Expectations of member organisations
- regional federations
- clubs

Expectations of and relationship with member organisations
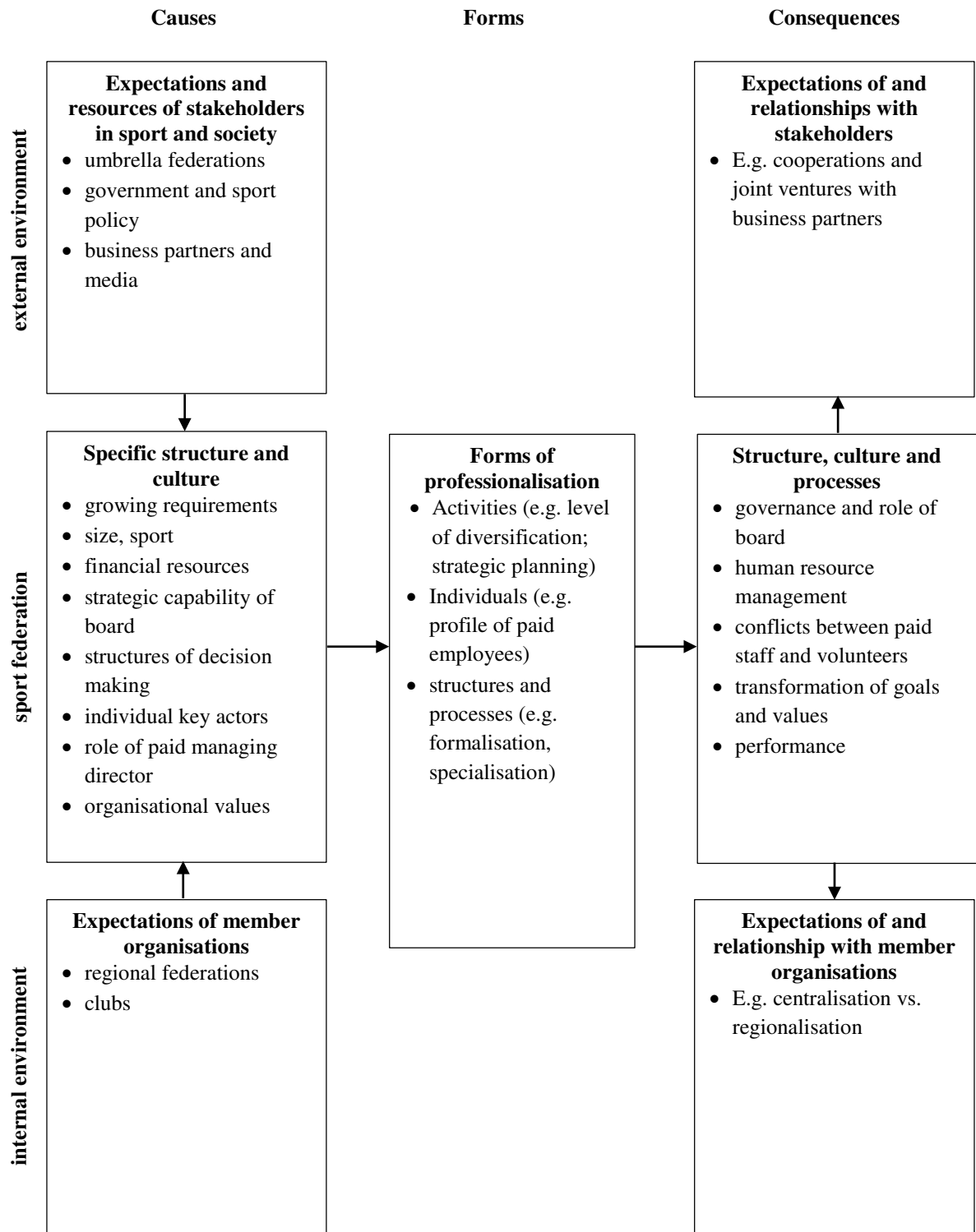- E.g. centralisation vs. regionalisation

Figure 1: Multi-level framework for analysing professionalisation in sport federations