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**Original article**

## **Notes for the improvement of sports management in Cuba: the case of baseball**

### **Apuntes para el perfeccionamiento de la gestión deportiva en cuba: el caso del béisbol**

### **Apontamentos para a melhoria da gestão desportiva em cuba: o caso do beisebol**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Cuban revolutionary government has made important efforts for the development of sports, what makes the country to show remarkable results. However, in the last years, it is observed a deterioration of many of these performances, which should be studied and faced, in the light of the current conditions. The particular case of baseball is a clear example, so the research aimed to identify those actions that can contribute to the improvement of sport management, especially at the base level. A diagnosis of the situation was made, based on the analysis of data from official sources and the results of a survey to relatives of children practicing baseball (category 7-8 years old) who participated in the provincial championship of Havana (2019 edition), processed with the SPSS program (version 22). The benefits of sports practice in the formation of human beings, associated with improvements in physical and mental health, disease prevention, formation of individual and collective values, were systematized. As for the practice of sports in Cuba, its most recent deterioration is due, among other factors, to the lack of attention to the basic level and the insufficient resources to which it has access. Hence, the need to use management forms with higher levels of decentralization, as well as to diversify the sources of financing, with a growing participation of the multiple actors that today make up Cuban society.

**Keywords:** Baseball; Financing; Sport management.

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## RESUMEN

El gobierno revolucionario cubano ha desplegado importantes esfuerzos para el desarrollo deportivo, exhibiendo el país notables resultados. Sin embargo, en los últimos años se observa un deterioro de muchos de estos rendimientos, que deben estudiarse y enfrentarse, a la luz de las condiciones actuales. El caso particular del béisbol constituye un claro ejemplo, por ello la investigación se propuso determinar aquellas acciones que pueden contribuir al perfeccionamiento de la gestión deportiva, especialmente en la base. Se realizó un diagnóstico de la situación, partiendo de un análisis de datos de fuentes oficiales y de los resultados de una encuesta a familiares de niños practicantes del béisbol (categoría 7-8 años) participantes en el campeonato provincial de La Habana (edición 2019), procesados con el programa SPSS (versión 22). Se sistematizaron los beneficios de la práctica deportiva en la formación de los seres humanos, asociados a mejoras en la salud física y mental, prevención de enfermedades, formación de valores individuales y colectivos. En cuanto a la práctica deportiva en Cuba, su deterioro más reciente se debe, entre otros factores, a la desatención que sufre la base y los insuficientes recursos a los que accede. De ahí la necesidad de emplear formas de gestión con mayores niveles de descentralización, así como diversificar las fuentes de financiamiento, con una participación creciente de los múltiples actores que hoy configuran la sociedad cubana.

**Palabras clave:** Béisbol; Financiamiento; Gestión deportiva.

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## RESUMO

O governo revolucionário cubano tem feito esforços importantes para o desenvolvimento do desporto, mostrando resultados notáveis. Contudo, nos últimos anos, muitos destes desempenhos deterioraram-se e devem ser estudados e abordados à luz das condições atuais. O caso particular do baseball é um exemplo claro, pelo que a investigação visava identificar as ações que podem contribuir para a melhoria da gestão desportiva, especialmente a nível das bases. Foi feito um diagnóstico da situação, baseado numa análise de dados de fontes oficiais e nos resultados de um inquérito aos familiares de crianças praticantes de baseball (categoria 7-8 anos) que participaram no campeonato provincial de Havana (edição de 2019), processado com o programa SPSS (versão 22). Os benefícios da prática desportiva na formação do ser humano, associados a melhorias na saúde física e mental, prevenção de doenças, e formação de valores individuais e coletivos, foram sistematizados. A mais recente deterioração na prática do desporto em Cuba deve-se, entre outros fatores, à negligência da base e à insuficiência dos recursos disponíveis. Daí a necessidade de empregar formas de gestão com maiores níveis de descentralização, bem como de diversificar as fontes de financiamento, com uma participação crescente dos múltiplos agentes que hoje constituem a sociedade cubana.

**Palavras-chave:** Gestão desportiva; Baseball; Financiamiento.



## INTRODUCTION

In today's society, the terms physical activity, physical exercise and sport are often used as synonyms, although there are differences among these concepts. Physical activity refers to "all bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles, which causes an expenditure of energy higher than that of the state of rest"; physical exercise is "planned, structured, repetitive and intentional physical activity with the aim of improving or maintaining one or more of the components of physical condition"; while sport is when "physical activity is exercised as a game or competition, whose practice is subject to regulatory standards" (Vicente-Rodríguez, *et al.*, 2016, p. 2.).

Thus, from a conceptual point of view, sport can be defined as organized competition that includes everything from the big show to competition at a lower level. On the other hand, Hernández Moreno (1994) defines it as the set of motor situations codified in the form of competition, regulated, of a recreational and institutionalized nature. Other definitions of sport can be found in (Gutiérrez Sanmartín, 2004).

As a social phenomenon, sport has followed a historical evolution. It arises from the need for survival of the human being, at the service of the primary impulse and the need to exercise the body, responding its manifestation over time to the cultural and social facts of a society in constant progress. As it was evolving, human beings had more free time to practice exercises with a different purpose than survival and sport was a way to cover the idle time available. This caused the exercises to acquire a greater degree of complexity, reaching the great development of sport in the 20th century, on a par with the technological, economic and social evolution of this period.

The development of physical activity and sport contributes to the improvement of the physical, psychological and social conditions of people and, in a favorable environment for learning, constitutes a tool for the integral education of individuals, through the promotion of values and skills. This is particularly relevant in the early ages of human beings. At the global level, recognition of these benefits contributes to the high importance of sport in today's societies. For this reason, there has been a growing interest on the part of public and private actors in promoting sport, strengthening sport systems and improving sport management.

For the purposes of this research, the definition used by Blanco Pereira (2003) is that the sports system is made up of a set of interrelated elements that contribute to the development of sport in all its manifestations. These various elements, which have a greater or lesser influence on it, are: the legal and sports system, the sports structure, the sports infrastructure, the economic resources and the personal means.

At present, the practice of sports contains a greater complexity, beyond the simple performance of physical activity, while around it has formed a whole system that needs to have an efficient and effective operation (Mestre Sancho, 2013, p. 5). Hence, the importance of sport management, understood as "the coordination of resources, technologies, processes, personnel and situational contingencies for an efficient production and exchange of sport resources" (Chelladurai, 1995).



The objective of sport management is to direct and lead any type of sport institution and that, from the approach, development, execution, control and an adequate choice of human resources for the accompaniment of the management with the use of the appropriate tools, the necessary objectives for the development of the activity are achieved. In this sense, three fundamental sectors of sport management can be identified. The public sector of sport, which is configured through public intervention, with the different administrations assuming responsibility in the territorial areas where they carry out their work as an administrative body. It must provide accessible sports facilities for the population, make an effort to raise awareness of the benefits of physical activity and sport through the public health sector, develop an urban and transport design that facilitates and stimulates physical activity and promote conditions to make sport-related tourism more attractive. Another fundamental factor of public action on sport is its promotion within the educational sector, through physical education and sports programs established in schools, thanks to the promotional facilities available to a public that can be reached through this route.

The private sector, on the other hand, can be divided according to whether it is for profit or not. On the one hand, there are entities with a commercial character that have a business focus with respect to sport (enterprises that provide sports services, either through the management of activities and/or facilities, and the organization of professional sport that exploits the sports show); on the other hand, there are those that have a social character, made up of non-profit organizations and entities.

The organization and development of the institutions and entities that make up the sports system requires leaders who assume management tasks with responsibility and qualification (Blanco Pereira, 2003). For this reason, a fundamental role in the process of sports management is played by the sports manager, which is that person who carries out, with the appropriate preparation, the management tasks. This figure must be able to make decisions, have the resolution to achieve the objectives that have been planned and have skills in the field of personnel management. The most important quality that a manager must have is to know how to motivate their employees, in addition to coordinating and improving productivity, must also properly manage interpersonal relationships that are established, in order to achieve the success of an organization.

It is also vitally important to have the necessary resources to manage the sports activity. Therefore, given the insufficient amounts of public budgets for the development of sport (both at the central and territorial level), the search for alternative mixed funding is part of the strategies faced by public and private actors responsible for such management.

Cuba is a country that has become, throughout its history, a sports reference at a regional and international level, particularly during the revolutionary period. Before 1959, sport lacked state support and there was no massive practice of it, nor were there plans for sports infrastructure or schools specialized in this area. Its practice was, fundamentally, the privilege of people of better economic position in some sport specialty. Since the Triumph of the Revolution, this situation has been reversed, with physical activity, recreation and the massive practice of sports being seen as a legitimate right of the people. The new institutions that accompanied this process, under the principles that gave rise to it, implied a growing massiveness in its access, organizing from the children's categories the practice of dissimilar modalities. In the



case of baseball, from the very beginning of the revolutionary process, a system for its organized practice was instituted. Nowadays, it begins with the infantile categories (from 7-8 years old), until arriving to the adults; and its practice extends along the whole country, constituting one of the most important pastimes of Cuban people.

The government's political will to prioritize the development of sport and incorporate its practice into Cuban social policy, in its multisectoral and multidisciplinary nature, has allowed the country to show important results. It is the Latin American nation with the most Olympic, Pan-American and Central American medals accumulated. Cuba also shares its experience in sports matters with many nations in the region, based on the international collaboration exercised by coaches and specialized technical personnel, and which extends to 15 countries. The expenditure of the State budget in the sports sector has been significant throughout these years, representing an average of 2 % of the total expenditure of the budgeted activity in the last 25 years.

Despite such efforts, the sports sector has not escaped the impacts of the economic crisis of recent decades, with a deterioration of results in the international arena. The particular case of baseball is a clear example of this. According to figures published by the ONEI, Cuba does not currently have the status of Olympic champion, Pan American champion and Central American champion, after having dominated these tournaments since the 1970s. In the last two editions of the Olympic Games, the country did not obtain any medals; in the last two editions of the Pan American Games it obtained a bronze medal; and in the last Central American and Caribbean Games, held in 2018, it obtained a silver medal; therefore, we can even observe a setback in its results at a regional level (ONEI, 2019).

The available resources have been concentrated mainly on high-performance sport, to the detriment of attention to the lower categories, which are the main source for training future talent. In not a few cases, the objective conditions for maintaining their performance are sustained by monetary and in-kind contributions from coaches and family members of participating children, with the corresponding negative effects that this situation entails. Hence the emerging need to rethink new forms of management and financing of sports activities at the base level, which will safeguard the achievements made by the country and recover the primacy that was once held, at least at the regional level.

For this reason, the objective of this article is to propose a group of reflections that aim at the improvement of sport management at the base level, according to the new context that characterizes Cuban society and economy nowadays.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

In order to develop the research, it was carried out a documentary and bibliographic analysis that gave origin to the conceptual frame of reference, the benefits of sport practice, the synthesis of international experience and the sport system in Cuba. For the diagnosis of the current situation, it was used the evaluation of data from official sources and it was applied a survey to relatives of children practicing baseball in the category of 7-8 years old who participated in the provincial championship of Havana in its 2019 edition.

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The objective was to determine the main factors that impact on the development of children's sports practice in Havana (dependent variable), for which the following variables were evaluated:

i) Motivation to practice sports (indicator of benefits provided by sports);  
ii) Economic factors: level of expenditure by the family (annual expenditure amounts) and main destinations (identification of the main expenditure items);  
(iii) Institutional framework for practicing sport among children (local authorities that provide greater support for practicing sport in this category);  
(iv) Difficulties in practicing sport (associated with resources, availability of time for family members and technical staff for their development). In each case, a block of general characterization of the respondent was added (municipality where the sport is practiced, relationship of familiarity with the child and sector in which he/she worked, according to his/her occupation). An open-ended question was also added to incorporate recommendations aimed at improving the practice of children's sports.

The selection of the municipalities was subject to the performance of the teams in that tournament, as they were the ones that qualified for the second phase of the championship. The results of the survey were processed with the SPSS software in its 22nd version.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research point in two directions. On the one hand, the main benefits that sport practice brings, especially at early ages, are systematized. In a second moment, it is presented a diagnosis of the current situation in Cuba, with emphasis in the base levels, and it is particularized the case of baseball.

From the point of view of the benefits to physical and mental health, the practice of sports is immensely useful to combat a set of diseases with high levels of morbidity and mortality. Among others, overweight and obesity (Gallifa Irujo & Pin Arboledas, 2014), high blood pressure and cancer (Pedersen *et al.*, 2016) and dementia and Alzheimer's disease (Kemoun *et al.*, 2010; Scarmeas *et al.*, 2009).

Furthermore, the regular practice of physical activity produces an increase in self-confidence, a feeling of well-being and an improvement in cognitive functioning; all of which generates a direct impact on psychological health, quality of life, the improvement of emotional states and self-concept, decreases in the levels of anxiety, depression and stress, and has a positive influence on self-esteem and better academic performance (Balibrea *et al.*, 2002; Barbosa Granados & Urrea Cuéllar, 2018).

Additionally, the practice of sports also contributes to the integral formation of the human being, from the first days of birth of the individual, when favoring its motor and psychomotor development; crossing later a process of socialization in the youth, maturity and old age; it exerts an important influence on the psychological functions (emotional) and social (relational); it forms qualities like: Loyalty, cooperation, courage, willpower, resistance and perseverance, creativity, fun, personal challenge, self-discipline, self-knowledge, achievement (success - triumph), rewards, adventure and risk, fair play (honesty), spirit of sacrifice, perseverance, recognition and respect





(social image), playful participation, humility, self-realization, impartiality, participation of all, respect for others, friendship, belonging to a group and its cohesion, competitiveness, teamwork, social responsibility, coexistence, struggle for equality, fellowship, justice, among others. It also helps to reduce a number of self-destructive and antisocial behaviors within the young population (Ramírez *et al.*, 2004); (Gutiérrez Sanmartín, 2004).

All these benefits are particularly important for children and young people, hence the need for societies to create the conditions to promote the practice of sport from an early age. Especially in the current global context, where there is a trend towards increasing levels of inactivity among these age groups, due to the increase in recreational activities associated with the use of information technologies.

Likewise, it is important to take into account that, in a context of influence exercised by professionalized models of show business sport on the more educational models of sport, pressure is exerted on sport for children and young people in the search for victory over all other objectives, victory being the only important thing, which is also often accompanied by violence and deception (Gutiérrez Sanmartín, 2004). As a consequence, if sport is misused, it can promote personal vanity and the desire for victory over any other interest, all of which constitutes an element that creates hatred for rivals and a corporate spirit of intolerance towards the rest of the people who are not in tune with their objectives.

Consequently, in order to counteract the above, it becomes vitally important to emphasize those sports practices that enhance the training and educational value of people, especially from an early age, in which coaches, teachers and family members have a key role to play.

In the case of Cuba, even though the sports sphere has been among the priorities of Cuban social development, in recent years there has been a decline in its performance in the international arena and especially in baseball. This situation is influenced by important factors such as the intensification of the blockade, the theft of talent and the increase in professionalism in the other countries of the world.

With regard to the U.S. blockade, this has a significant impact on raising costs to acquire sports equipment, uniforms and accessories in countries, as well as U.S. branded items established as mandatory in official regulations (Louisville, Wilson, Xbat, Rawlings, Atec, 3N2, Easton and W & W, to name a few) that must be purchased in third countries, spending between 20 and 30 % above the price of products, which adds the increase in the cost of freight. It also has negative implications on the existing limitations in the processing of visas for athletes and coaches who must participate in training bases, competitions and other sporting events (MINREX, 2019).

But there are also difficulties at the internal level, associated with the reduction of resources available for investment and maintenance, with its corresponding effects on the conditions of sports facilities, the availability of implements and the teaching staff dedicated to the activity; as well as other facts associated with bureaucratic, indolent and corrupt practices that have negative impacts on the development of the sports sphere.



The existing sports facilities in Cuba total 5,134, including open-air grounds (3,701), sports complexes (924), sports halls (351) and swimming pools (158). Of these, 1,084 are in Havana, which represents approximately 21 % (ONEI, 2019). Despite having this high number of facilities, the reality is that the lack of stable investments in maintenance has caused them to deteriorate, and many of them are practically inactive.

In relation to the pedagogical sports personnel, it shows a marked decrease since 2011 (from 40154 to 35 376 in 2018), which contrasts with the increase of systematic practitioners of participatory sport and other activities, which went from 3 617 058 in 2011 to 4 125 504 in 2018 (ONEI, 2019).

In particular, when the behavior of these two indicators is analyzed, a reduction of sport pedagogical personnel in sport areas can be appreciated, which constitute approximately 46 % of the total and are those spaces where the massiveness of sport practice is mostly guaranteed. This figure increased from 17,323 in 2011 to 15,971 in 2018. Likewise, although the number of mass practitioners is increasing, there is a reduction in those linked to talent groups, which decreased from 129,447 in 2011 to 95,518 in 2018 (ONEI, 2019).

Among the main causes that could be explaining such behavior in the reduction of personnel, are labor migration to other better paid sectors. Although no figures are available to prove this, salary levels in this sector remain low. According to (ONEI, 2019), in 2018 the average monthly salary in the "culture and sports" sector was only 503 pesos, the lowest of the 18 classifications of economic activity provided.

Emigration should also be considered, since although there are no specific data available for personnel linked to sports pedagogical activity, it has been publicly acknowledged that it has increased in recent decades.

At the same time, it is necessary to analyze labor migration to sectors such as self-employment (TCP in Spanish) or non-agricultural cooperatives (CAN in Spanish). With the emergence of these new figures, professionals find higher remuneration in these sectors, which has led to a constant flow of people to them; and physical education and sports professionals are no exception. In the particular case of self-employed activities, there is the category of Sports Practice Instructor, whose number of licenses granted has been increasing since its inception (501 in 2010 and 747 in 2017). Most of these are concentrated in Havana province, although their relative weight is decreasing, reflecting their increase in the rest of the territories. This proportion increased from 85 % in 2010 to 57 % in 2017 (ONAT, 2017).

In response to this situation, measures have been implemented to increase the income of athletes, with particular attention to those linked to national sport. Thus, in January 2014, Resolution 24 of Inder came into force, associating the income of high-performance athletes to their results; and approving contracts abroad, including personalized hiring. At the same time, Resolution 9 of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MTSS) was approved to regulate the income of high performance athletes, according to their category, with a higher basic monthly salary (1500 CUP); and a system of monthly stimulation for multi-medal athletes and coaches, according to the medal obtained. In addition, the monthly payments in CUC received by athletes, former athletes and coaches for the medals obtained in the Olympic Games and World





Championships are maintained. Due to the importance of baseball in the country, a system of income for athletes, coaches and specialists (collective and individual awards) is also established for the National Baseball Series (SNB).

Notwithstanding the above, it is important to draw attention to the fact that, just as with attention to sports facilities, these efforts benefit high performance sport. Consequently, it has no visible impact on those who are linked to its practice at the base level, which is ultimately the fundamental source for nurturing future talent. If school-level (elementary school) participants in municipal and community sport competitions are analyzed between 2017 and 2018, this indicator reflects a significant decrease from 538,660 to 333,250, respectively. In the case of baseball players, the figures also decrease at these two levels, from 102 006 to 73 618 (ONEI, 2019).

This unfavorable behavior has impacts on the practice of sports at the base that limit their development, a fact that was also confirmed in an anonymous survey applied to a sample of family members of children practicing baseball in the 7-8 year-old category in eight municipalities participating in the provincial tournament of Havana in that category (Playa, Boyeros, Cerro, Habana del Este, Plaza, Diez de Octubre, Marianao and San Antonio de los Baños). To process the information, the SPSS program in its 22<sup>nd</sup> version was used.

From a total of 100 family members surveyed, 50 % work in the state sector (either budget or business) and 25 % in the self-employed sector. Of the family members, the leading role of the mothers stands out (67 %), this result denotes the high participation of women in matters related to the care of their children's extracurricular activities. In relation to the benefits obtained by the child with the practice of this sport, 80.4 % of those surveyed responded that it constitutes a form of entertainment; while 68.5 % indicated that it allows him/her to have a future job as a baseball player. This high proportion shows the willingness of family members (shared or not by their children) that their future employment could be associated with the practice of sports, reflecting the motivation that drives them to keep them in this extra-curricular work.

Likewise, 68.5 % and 68.4 %, respectively, allude to its contribution to the formation of ethical and moral values and to the improvement of their physical and mental health; and 60.9 % and 52.2 %, respectively, state that it helps them to improve their self-esteem and allows them greater socialization. These results confirm the findings related to the benefits of sport exposed in this work.

However, despite such recognition, there is a shared concern about the lack of institutional support they find at the base, as 81 % confirmed that they do not receive any support from municipal authorities. Only 19 % recognized the participation of the National Institute of Sport and Recreation (Inder in Spanish) and 1 % pointed to the government and the Communist Party of Cuba, (PCC in Spanish), in the case of the Boyeros municipality. Similarly, in the open question of the survey, 69 % recommended that there be greater concern on the part of Inder, as well as greater attention to the lower categories (9 %).



This is confirmed by the question regarding the main difficulties they face, in which 56 % identified a lack of support from the institutions. Similarly, 71 % recognized the lack of sports equipment and 44% the current state of the facilities. Other difficulties noted to a lesser extent were the lack of time to take children to practice sports (15 %) and the insufficient number of coaches (10 %). Of special relevance in this question is that 56 % of the respondents expressed as a limitation the expenses that the family has to incur to keep the children practicing sports.

In this regard, 90 % of respondents noted that, as an annual average, they spend more than 100 CUC (6 % between 101 and 125; 13 % between 126 and 150), with 71 % in the range above 150 CUC. Of these, 90 % identify uniforms and accessories as the largest item, followed by transportation (82 %), sports equipment (77 %), food (42 %), grounds maintenance (32 %) and referee payments (31 %). Payment of teachers covered 20 % of the responses.

As can be seen, most of these expenditures are made on matters that could be assumed by local authorities, based on the use of different alternatives for financing them. In this sense, the high proportions of uniforms and accessories, sports equipment and land maintenance (with greater relevance in the municipalities of Boyeros and Habana del Este, with 47 % of the total of affirmative responses in this section), followed by the payment of referees and teachers, all of which shows that the practice of baseball in this category is currently maintained thanks to the practically exclusive support of the children's families.

Facing these levels of expenditure to keep children in sports is a huge challenge for families, which could lead to the potential loss of many infants due to their parents' insufficient purchasing power. As a consequence of these deficiencies due to the high prices of sports equipment, there are manifestations of exclusion and discriminatory treatment, social phenomena contrary to the principle of defending sport as a constitutional right of all persons, according to Articles 46 and 74 of the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba; hence the need for the country to move urgently towards the improvement of sports management at these base levels levels.

From the previous diagnosis, two fields of action can be deduced that need to be addressed. The first one is the failures associated with the institutional and administrative mechanisms that limit a more efficient management of sports activities, particularly at the base levels level. In this direction, it will be necessary to advance towards greater levels of decentralization, as well as in the gradual introduction of other institutional models that complement such management. In this way, designing more effective and efficient organizational systems for sport management, under effective mechanisms of government and popular regulation and control, seems to be a necessity that cannot be postponed in the current conditions.

The second aspect to be considered is related to the need to increase the resources allocated to sport in the lower categories. Therefore, the creation of financial and material funds complementary to the State budget, based on the participation of various actors, constitutes another of the actions that could be implemented at this base level.



Important lessons emanate from international experience that serve as a reference for the improvement of sports management in Cuba. Although it is true that what has distinguished the practice of sport in the country has been its completely state character, in order to promote massiveness and, consequently, social inclusion, the current situation reveals serious deficiencies in sport management, as well as insufficiencies in the availability of resources that are necessary to attend with differentiated models, according to the current times. The fundamental motivation in this direction is precisely to maintain the foundations of social inclusion and broad access to the practice of sport, which is constantly threatened under current conditions. Without the state ceasing to exercise its leading role in the management of sport, it is possible to hope that the rest of the actors that coexist in Cuban society today will participate in its management and financing.

In the process of Updating that is carried out in our country since the VI Congress of the PCC, the coexistence of diverse forms of ownership and management is recognized, that properly interrelated, should contribute to the development of the country. The role of these new non-state forms of management in this process is put forward as one of the main transformations, under the principle of their complementary functioning. Under the protection of these precepts, it is necessary to align the interests of the private sector with social benefits, both at the national and territorial levels. In this sense, linking this sector to practices associated with sports management is not contrary to what the governing documents of the updating process dictate.

Likewise, the identification of the socialist state enterprise as the main subject of the national economy that fulfills its social responsibilities (in accordance with Article 27 of the Constitution of the Republic), allows for the expansion of the responsibilities and possibilities that these have to participate in the management of sports activity, as well as in its financing, through various initiatives. This would also contribute to a greater socialization of their productive activity, which is one of the main difficulties our business system faces today. Taking advantage of the fact that the enterprise system in Cuba is predominantly state-owned, offers greater advantages for making part of its budgets available for social purposes.

Consequently, sponsorship practices could be encouraged in the Cuban enterprise system in the sports sphere (with the full range of state and non-state productive forms that make it up at present). Sports sponsorship constitutes an action by a natural or legal person that seeks to favor another person or institution by contributing money, with the search for a commercial benefit, generally related to image. Sponsorship, on the other hand, is less complex to manage but is less adaptable to the needs of the sponsor. In Cuba, there are antecedents in events of international character, such as the Marhabana, Havana Triathlon, Beach Volleyball Circuits, among others.

Certainly, the contributions that enterprises make to the central and local budget through taxes, as well as the profits they contribute, allow part of these funds to finance the social benefits provided in Cuba. However, these funds do not go directly to the base, but are concentrated on investments and expenditures to support high performance sport. Therefore, redirecting them towards purposes associated with more specific sporting interests in the territory can contribute to better management of sport at this level.



For these purposes, it is necessary to generate a system of incentives that will attract enterprises to participate more directly and actively in the creation of such funds, through various initiatives. Among these, we can mention more flexible tax policies with tax advantages associated with deductions and even exemptions, for specific programs that support the repair and/or maintenance of sports facilities in the territories where the respective business entities are located. The sharing of such facilities by community sports practitioners and business workers may also be an additional incentive. This would involve the organization and implementation of information campaigns aimed at the business system, on the special tax treatment for the financing of sports activities (Gallifa Irujo & Pin Arboledas, 2014).

In addition, part of the enterprises budgets dedicated to advertising and promotion could be used to support sports events in the lower categories, sharing the expenses that are spent on sports equipment and other useful materials for work, uniforms and accessories, transportation and food in the organization of stops that serve as training and the tournament games themselves, as well as activities that are carried out with the children throughout the season (including delivery of diplomas, medals and other incentives at the end of each edition of the championships).

Also, in order to stimulate a greater participation of the enterprise system, a quality seal or mark could be instituted to guarantee its contribution to the development of the sports movement, in order to promote a greater social recognition of the companies that practice it (Gallifa Irujo & Pin Arboledas, 2014).

In order to implement the above proposals, major institutional changes are required in sport management at the base level. Therefore, the creation of programs aimed at the practice of sport, integrating the different forms of ownership and management that converge in a given locality, is a priority. The coordinating and governing role of such programs should be played by organizations dedicated to such purposes, for which it is proposed to create non-profit institutions. These could operate in coordination with local governments, as well as with Inder's territorial directorates. An important function they could perform would be to serve as an interface between sports projects at the territorial level and potential co-financiers.

Establishing effective mechanisms to evaluate their management by both, will be a requirement that accompanies its operation. At the same time, it would guarantee the active role that the sports manager must play in this field, a figure that has gained increasing relevance in the international arena.

With regard to funding, the territorial contribution through 1 % is insufficient to finance sport at the base, while it competes with other productive and social objectives of the territory. Therefore, the creation of mixed budgets that are administered by these same institutions, involving the full range of actors that today compete in the national economy, is another proposal to take into account.

Such funds could be formed from the participation of the State budget, foreign investment, local microfinance funds, donations and collaboration projects (either from foreign individuals and legal entities, or from Cuban individuals who send capital to specific destinations), funds from companies (private and State), territories and families, resources from the 1 % territorial contribution and bank financing.



Crowdfunding campaigns could contribute to this goal, as it is a form of massive funding involving co-financiers, who weave a network with the aim of raising money or other resources to develop a project; and in return, they receive non-monetary rewards that can range from public thanks to other types of rewards depending on the amount they contribute to the project. Once the project has been prepared, which establishes the amount of money to be collected, as well as the rewards for obtaining it depending on the donations, it is disseminated through the various existing communication and information mechanisms. With the necessary amount, its execution in the declared purposes of the project could be carried out with the participation of state and non-state forms. Such is the case, for example, of financing for the repair or maintenance of sports facilities, purchase of implements and materials, among other destinations.

For the correct use of these funds, it will be necessary to create mechanisms and concrete forms of popular participation (participatory budget, technical working groups, public hearings, public competitions and tenders, among others) that guarantee their adequate supervision and execution for those specific purposes for which they were created.

In the particular case of remittances, various initiatives should be generated from the institutional and regulatory frameworks that channel their growing flows towards the sports priorities of the territory, especially those issuers who have or had some kind of link with sports activities. Likewise, these Cubans living abroad could support sports management through donations of sports implements, uniforms and accessories or other goods that can be used in the practice of sports.

It will also be necessary to create alliances with international sport institutions, as well as with international cooperation agencies that can help expand the availability of material and financial resources to support sport management at the base levels level. There are various funds for children's sport development in the world, especially because of their visible impact on the benefits that sport generates for children (UNESCO, UNICEF, IDB, etc.).

Another factor to take into account among the elements to be financed to promote physical activity and sport is that of scientific research and medical support. Advances in sports science and sports medicine are essential. Consequently, steps should be taken to focus on applied scientific research and development in this area, making sport a true science.

In summary, there are multiple alternatives that can be implemented to improve sports management at the base. To break with inflexible schemes of thought, to change mentalities, to decentralize management mechanisms, to promote the participation of the diverse productive forms that converge in a territory, to promote public-private alliances, to apply to funds of the bilateral and international cooperation and to implement practices of co-financing, they need to generate an institutionality that guarantees all the previous thing. This must be one of the main transformations to be undertaken by the Cuban sports system, if the achievements made by this sphere throughout the history of the Cuban Revolution are to be maintained.



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The authors declare not to have any interest conflicts.

**Authors' contribution:**

The authors have participated in the writing of the work and analysis of the documents.



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