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Municipal public sports provision and its resilience in the face of the great crisis of 2008

Amadeo Aznar Macías

Dr. en Economía Aplicada. Universidad de Valencia (España)

amadeoaznar@yahoo.es



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ARTICLE SECTION

Municipal public sports provision and its resilience in the face of the great crisis of 2008

Abstract: The current economic and social panorama is forcing us to reconsider aspects of the public economy in our country. Spanish society has progressed substantially since the 1970s. This was due to appropriate development models for the economic and social context of that time. However, in the 21st century it is necessary to consider changes in some of these models, such as the non-professional sports model. The aim of this work is to determine to what extent the 2008 crisis could have affected the practice of amateur sports in Spain, as well as the local public sports provision. Based on information from secondary sources, it is determined to what extent said crisis affected the practice of sport by citizens and the expenditure items of local administrations destined to the provision of sport. The results of the work show the consolidation of amateur sports in Spain, consistent with the social and economic development of the last four decades. The results also reveals the level of vulnerability of local sports policies in a recession period. The paper concludes with a reflection on the need to adapt the Spanish sports ecosystem through a set of actions in order to obtain greater economic efficiency during periods of recession.

Key words: sports economy and local development, economic crisis of 2008 and amateur sports, sports for all, public economy.

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IDEAS CLAVE / HIGHLIGHTS / IDEES CLAU

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. La Administración Local ha sido la protagonista del fomento del deporte amateur y del deporte para todos en los últimos cincuenta años en España.2. La oferta pública deportiva municipal amortiguó el efecto de la crisis de 2008 en la práctica de deporte.3. El gasto público en deporte durante la crisis de 2008 se redujo más que la media del conjunto de programas de las administraciones locales.4. En períodos de recesión económica, la partida de personal de las entidades locales lastra las cuentas públicas deportivas.5. Se precisa de mayor concreción normativa para una mayor eficiencia en la provisión pública deportiva.6. Es necesaria una mayor cooperación público-privada para afrontar los nuevos retos del deporte amateur. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Local government has played a leading role in the promotion of amateur sport and sport for all over the last fifty years in Spain.2. Municipal public sports provision cushioned the effect of the 2008 crisis on the practice of sport.3. Public spending on sport during the 2008 crisis fell more than the average for all local government programmes.4. In periods of economic recession, local authorities' personnel costs weigh on public sport accounts.5. More specific regulations are needed for greater efficiency in public sports provision.6. Greater public-private cooperation is needed to meet the new challenges of amateur sport. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. L'Administració Local ha sigut la protagonista del foment de l'esport amateur i de l'esport per a tots en els últims cinquanta anys a Espanya.2. L'oferta pública esportiva municipal va esmorteir l'efecte de la crisi de 2008 en la pràctica d'esport.3. La despesa pública en esport durant la crisi de 2008 es va reduir més que la mitjana del conjunt de programes de les administracions locals.4. En períodes de recessió econòmica, la partida de personal de les entitats locals llastra els comptes públics esportius.5. Es precisa de major concreció normativa per a una major eficiència en la provisió pública esportiva.6. És necessària una major cooperació públic-privada per a afrontar els nous reptes de l'esport amateur. |
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT¹

Since the 1970s, Spain has undergone a process of administrative decentralization in which the autonomies and municipalities have increasingly gained a leading role in the planning and execution of social, cultural and sports programmes. During this process, sport has gained importance as a tool for local development.

Although local public sports activity is not the basis of development in many municipalities, in some cases it is one more component of a strategy designed and executed, in order to improve their social cohesion and economic development.

From an economic point of view, the municipal sports offer also contributes to the revitalization of some territories, either because the natural environment is ideal for organizing tourist-sports events, which has had a direct impact on the local economy (Granero, 2007), or by the construction of sports infrastructures (sports centers, sports tracks, etc.). In both cases, public-private collaboration has been necessary, either for the development of such sporting events or for the hiring of workers from different professional categories (administrative staff, sports professionals, maintenance staff, etc.).

The content of this article is contextualized in the period of “the great crisis” in Spain, which spanned from 2008 to 2013, as well as the subsequent stage of economic recovery. During this period of recession, public services were threatened by public spending adjustments and by the economic-financial situation of public administrations

The main objective of this article is to determine how the 2008 crisis affected the physical activity carried out by Spanish society and also how the crisis altered the spending of public administrations to the provision of sport.

The proposed objective is approached from the perspective of amateur sport and sport for all, as it is the area in which local administrations have acquired a greater role. This role has been achieved thanks to the regulatory development developed in Spain over the last forty years. For this reason, this article presents the regulatory framework that has fostered the participation of local administrations in the provision of sports services.

To achieve the indicated objective, the official information available has been used. Such information is offered in open access by key public institutions such as Consejo Superior de Deporte (1980-2020), the National Institute of Statistics (2019) and the Ministry of Finance and Public Function, (2006-2015).

This article is focused on a period that covers the years of the economic crisis (2008-2013) and the following years of economic growth (2014 and 2015). It is, therefore, a sufficiently interval time to achieve the proposed objective.

It should be noted that the analysis of the spending of the local Administrations has been done by annual data from the liquidation of budgets of the local entities database (Ministry of Finance). Such annual data, instead monthly data, are considered definitive and therefore not subject to variation.

As far as the 2008 economic crisis is concerned, between 2008 and 2013 the spending of local entities on sports provision was substantial. Specifically, 3,735 million euros were allocated to staff costs (3.2 % of the total staff expense of local entities during those six years), 5,317 million euros were allocated to the current expenses item (4.7 % of total

¹ Traducción exclusiva de los autores / Authors' exclusive translation.

current expenses during the six years), and 4,625 million euros were allocated to the item of real investments (6.9 % of the total expenditure on real investments of local entities during the six years) (Ministry of Finance and Public Function, 2015).

The current financing model has contributed to incorporate sport as a daily activity in a significant part of the population, with the benefits that this entails at a global level for all of society. However, in view of the results obtained in this analysis, it is time to reflect on changes in this model.

During the economic crisis of 2008, the need to contain public spending led to the reduction in sports-related items to a greater extent than the average for all local administration programs. The data analysis demonstrates the degree of vulnerability that sports policies have during economics crisis, and alerts to the need to apply modifications to the local sports public provision model.

These modifications could focus on the public-private co-financing of local sports policies, which would reduce the allocation of public resources without prejudice to the plaintiffs. In turn, the greater participation of the associative movement in the sports model could contribute to greater efficiency in the execution of the programs and a greater ability to adjust provision costs during periods of economic crisis, among other aspects.

In relation to the associative movement, the current Spanish sports model is characterized by being eminently federative, which is not representative of the current social and sports context, therefore does not imply an advantage for amateur sports. For decades, a large part of sports policy has been channeled from a competitive perspective and has not paid the necessary attention to recreational sports, leaving it in the hands of local administrations. For this reason, the reinforcement of recreational sports associations and their empowerment could mean a new boost to physical activity in society and to the principles of sport for all in the 21st century.

Another important aspect dealt with in this article refers to the regulatory development of amateur sport and sport for all in Spain. The regulatory framework that grants powers in sports matters to the Public Administration was developed according to the social context of the 1970s and 1980s. Some authors agree that the definition of the powers at different levels of the Administration is imprecise. Therefore, laws or other regulations should be more specified. This aspect is increasingly necessary due to the emergence and consolidation in recent decades of new sports entities/agents (foundations, self-employed professionals, among others).