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## What do they do? Competency and managing in Brazilian Olympic Sport Federations

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### ABSTRACT

**Research question:** This study explores the link between management competencies of 15 presidents of Brazilian Olympic Sport Federations (OSF) from the state of Minas Gerais and how they actually manage. Overemphasizing the conceptual importance of managers' competencies at the expense of what they actually do can lead to the creation of an illusory image of the model manager whereas in reality such a person hardly exists.

**Research method:** A mixed research sequential transformative design was employed where two theoretical frameworks guided the study and the initial quantitative phase of the research was followed by a qualitative phase of observations and interviews. Qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed with QSR NVivo 10 and SPSS.

**Results and findings:** Presidents of OSFs perceived themselves as facilitators, visionary leaders and innovators, who are expected to develop the organization into a more professional entity. They have been working mainly on the people and information plane of management and were less concerned with conceptual issues, instant results and specific deadlines. OSF presidents' competencies were intended to deliver greater organizational effectiveness but this was difficult to achieve due to the lack of strategic skills and resources. Presidents' competencies were also not necessarily doing the right things and were only partly delivering the desired results.

**Implications:** Understanding sport managers' competencies and how they relate to their daily activities is important not just for the purposes of staff selection and appraisal and for development and learning, but also for the constant realignment of management as a science, intuition and practical activity.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

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Presidents of Brazilian Olympic Sport Federations; management competencies; management postures; managing; voluntary sport organizations

## Introduction

The topic of sport managers' competencies has been recognized as central to the field in the pioneering work of Zeigler and Bowie (1983), and recently Ko, Henry, and Kao (2011) analyzed 24 studies on the subject. Paton's (1987, p. 30) review of sport management research during the 1960s and 1980s concluded that 'administrators and managers tend

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to be practical people. The day-to-day task of both personal and organizational survival requires such an orientation'. There is virtually a general agreement that at its core management is a practical activity, yet, still very little is known about what managers actually do. Mintzberg (2011, p. 3) made this concern clear: '... today we find remarkably little systematic study of managing. Many books are labeled "management", but not much of their contents are about managing'. This statement is equally valid for sport management and forms the focus of the present study.

The decade of Brazilian sport, which started with the 2007 Pan American Games and culminated with the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games, has provided a strong impetus for the development of sport management both as an applied field and educational practices (Hoye, Smith, Nicholson, Stewart, & Westerbeek, 2012; Mazzei, Amaya, & Bastos, 2013). Barros Filho et al.'s (2013) literature review concluded that the profile of sport manager in Brazil is poorly studied, which ultimately inhibits the identification of key competencies that may be important in defining their role.

This study explored the link between management competencies of presidents of selected Brazilian Olympic Sport Federations (OSF) from the state of Minas Gerais and how they actually manage. Understanding sport managers' competencies and how they relate to their daily activities is important not just for the purposes of staff selection and appraisal and for development and learning, but also for the constant realignment of management as a science, intuition and practical activity. In scrutinizing how competent the competencies are Packard (2014) posed three important questions concerning 'what are competencies intended to do? are they doing the right things? and are they getting desired results?' (p. 313), which are equally relevant to the present study and help to address its main research question – how do presidents of Brazilian OSF manage? Overemphasizing the conceptual importance of managers' competencies at the expense of what they actually do can lead to the creation of an illusory image of the model manager whereas in reality such a person hardly exists.

## Theoretical framework

This study drew on two complementary frameworks – the competing values model (CVM, Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983) and Mintzberg's (2011) general model of management. Combining theoretical frameworks to explain complex phenomenon such as that of organizations and managers' work offers a number of advantages (Schultz & Hatch, 1996). The first framework concerned the competencies of managers, which have been regarded as essential to their performance and organizational effectiveness (Boyatzis, 1982; Hart & Quinn, 1993; Lambrecht, 1991; Yukl, 2008).

Competency was defined by '... the skills, knowledge, behaviours, and attitudes required to perform a role effectively' (Brophy & Kiely, 2002, p. 167). Similarly, Wickramasinghe and Zoyza (2009) considered competency as a person's behavior in a specific job, organization or culture, and Winterton (2009) added the ability to demonstrate performance according to the standards required of his/her work context. The sheer diversity of concepts has made it difficult to identify a single all-encompassing theory (Le Deist & Winterton, 2005; Mulder, 2007). Nevertheless, it is possible to classify the different concepts into three perspectives emanating from different schools of thought including behavioral (USA), functionalist (UK) and holistic (France), and to identify the main properties of the concept.

This research adopted a holistic perspective on competency based on the CVM (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983) which drew from organizational theory and role theory. This framework suggests that the integration of competing expectations faced by managers is best indicated by the performance of competing roles. From this perspective, competency is considered the knowledge that the individuals responsible for managing the organization have and the demonstrated ability to properly use this knowledge to respond to the different situational demands (Quinn, Faerman, Thompson, McGrath, & Clair, 2012). The concept of competency is associated with a multidimensional model that demonstrates managers' ability to apply effectively the knowledge and skills in the performance of management tasks through certain leadership behaviors (Lawrence, Lenk, & Quinn, 2009; Quinn et al., 2012). This model was developed by Lawrence et al. (2009), and built on Quinn's (1984) CVM. The managerial behavior instrument (MBI) consists of four dimensions – collaborate, create, control and compete, bringing together 12 competencies and 36 managerial behaviors.

The 'collaborate' dimension corresponds to managers' behaviors that contribute to interactions with people, promoting involvement, developing and committing members of the organization. This dimension encompasses the competencies of facilitator, mentor and empathizer. The 'create' dimension refers to managers' behaviors that contribute to the implementation of changes and their ability to motivate organizational members. Associated competencies include visionary, innovator and motivator. The 'control' dimension encompasses managers' behaviors that favor the execution of tasks, project control and clarification of institutional policies. The competencies that make up this dimension are regulator, monitor and coordinator. The 'compete' dimension concerns managers' behaviors that emphasize and focus on competition and includes the competencies of competitor, producer and driver. This model allows analyzing the ability of managers to perform a variety of behaviors to achieve the desired objectives.

But how competent are management competencies and what do they tell us about managing? Sport management literature offers limited answers to these questions. A search for the words 'managers/management competencies' in the index pages of 17 main sport management books in English published between 1991 and 2014 revealed that 7 texts did not include the word, 3 texts made reference to the word 'skill', and 7 indexed 'competence' and related words. However, from the texts that indexed competence only one was explicit in linking it with sport managers' tasks (Parks, Quarterman, & Thibault, 2011), while the rest tended to associate it mainly with skills. We have analyzed six studies on sport managers' competencies where they were captured by a number of instrument items ranging from 25 in Germany (Horch & Schuette, 2003), to 16 in Greece (Koustelios, 2003), 45 in Malaysia (Shariff & Ismail, 2008), 70 in Taiwan (Ko et al., 2011), 65 in Turkey (Farzalipour et al., 2012) and 33 in USA (Lambrecht, 1987), which makes both conceptual orientation and instrument selection difficult.

The second framework employed by this study helped to address the above questions. Mintzberg (2011) proposed a general model of managing that conceives management as a combination of art (i.e. vision), science (i.e. analyzing) and craft (i.e. experience). For Mintzberg (2011) 'managing takes place on three *planes*, from the conceptual to the concrete: *with information, through people*, and to *action* directly' (p. 49, emphasis in original). Each plane includes a number of roles and sub-roles of managing, which together frame the job and schedule the work of the manager. The information plane involves two main roles of

communicating internally and externally (i.e. monitoring, nerve center, spokesperson, disseminating) and controlling (i.e. designing, delegating, designating, distributing and deeming). The people plane concerns the roles of leading (i.e. energizing individuals, developing individuals, building teams and strengthening culture) and linking (i.e. networking, representing, convincing/conveying, transmitting and buffering). The action plane includes the roles of doing (i.e. managing projects and handling disturbances) and dealing (i.e. building coalitions and mobilizing support) (Mintzberg, 2011, p. 90).

Related to the roles of managing are four categories of competencies including 'personal', 'interpersonal', 'informational' and 'actional', which broadly correspond to the MBI's 12 competencies. However, none of the models, reviewed in this study, pay attention to sport managers' personal competencies concerning managing self both internally (reflecting, strategic thinking) and externally (time, information, stress and career), and scheduling (chunking, prioritizing, agenda setting, juggling and timing) (Mintzberg, 2011, p. 91). Mintzberg (2011) argued that it would be unrealistic to expect managers to exhibit perfect balance among the competencies required by them, thus 'when managers manage, the distinctions between their roles blur at the margins' (p. 91) and in reality it becomes hard to distinguish them behaviorally. As a result, managers tend to be more responsive to their own specific needs, which give rise to what Mintzberg calls postures of managing. This model overcomes the charges levied on Mintzberg's (1994) earlier work for lacking explanatory power (Hales, 1999).

Mintzberg's (2011) model drew attention to five contexts in which management takes place including external (i.e. culture, industry), organizational (i.e. form, size, age, stage), temporal (i.e. pressures, fashion), personal (i.e. background, tenure) and job (i.e. scale and scope). These contexts are intertwined and in combination both frame the job and schedule the work of the manager. Interactions within these different contexts urge managers to make the job as well as to do the job.

In developing a robust understanding of the varieties of managing Mintzberg (2011) examined the pattern that best describe it in the behavior of 29 top managers. He put together similar patterns into nine groups and called them postures, depicting where the managers stand at that point in their job. The nine postures of managing acknowledge the importance of context while imposing some consistency in managerial work at the same time and include: 'maintaining the workflow', which is concerned with maintained homeostasis and keeping the organization on course; 'connecting externally' refers to maintaining the boundary conditions of the organization; 'blending all around' has to do with the integration of all organizational activities; 'remote controlling' describes internal activities on the information plane; 'fortifying the culture' tries to strengthen the culture of the organization and its sense of community, which in turn allows people to function to the best of their abilities; 'intervening strategically' concerns managers' personal intervention in driving specific changes in the organization; 'managing in the middle' involves mainly the communicating and controlling function of management and not so much the doing and dealing ones; 'managing out of the middle' is associated mostly with the external roles of linking and dealing, and 'advising from the side' depicts those managers who prefer to indirectly influence others, or to respond to requests.

The two theoretical frameworks are highly integrative and underpinned by a similar logic: Mintzberg's model integrates four critical constructs including the management planes at which managers operate (i.e. process approach), the key roles performed by them (i.e.

role approach), the core competencies needed to perform the roles and the contexts in which management takes place; the CVM, on which the MBI is based, links organizational theory (i.e. process approach) with management roles literature. The theoretical link between functions and roles has been demonstrated by Fells (2000) and Lamond (2004). As de Oliveira, Filho, Nagano, Ferraudo, and Rosim (2015, p. 6) noted 'While the process approach is focused on abstract aspects, the roles approach is focused on observable aspects'. Boyatzis (2011) also supported such an integrative approach based on managers' emotional, social and cognitive intelligence competencies and suggested that 'it offers a theoretical structure for the organization of personality and linking it to a theory of action and job performance' (p. 94). The complementarity of the concept of managers' competencies based on their knowledge, skills and attitudes and the general model of managing allowed to better understand how the presidents of Brazilian OSF manage in a variety of milieux.

## Method

A mixed research sequential transformative design (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003) was employed, where the two theoretical frameworks guided the study and the initial quantitative phase of the research (i.e. online questionnaire) was followed by a qualitative phase of observations and interviews. There was no language barrier as two of the authors were fluent in Portuguese.

## Participants

There are 30 National Olympic Sport Confederations in Brazil and 509 voluntary state OSFs across 27 states, of which 19 are in the state of Minas Gerais. The state is home to the leading sport programs in the country and has an unparalleled public sport policy designed to support the management of OSF. Minas Gerais is the second largest state in Brazil with a population of over 20 million people and due to the scale of the country, resource and time limitations a convenience sampling method was used. The small quality study sample comprised 17 presidents of OSFs (89% of all state OSFs presidents) who agreed to participate in the research and 10 of them gave consent to be personally interviewed and observed. Table 1 shows some key characteristics of the 10 OSFs, which represent relatively small organizations with an average club membership of 34, just over 1600 registered athletes, annual budgets ranging from US\$2000 to US \$130,000 and one staff member. Using presidents to study management and managing is seemingly incongruous but in the context of Brazilian OSF it makes perfect sense because they do not have full-time managers and their presidents have to be both leaders and managers at the same time to ensure organizational survival. Moreover, the notion of leadership, despite claims to the contrary, inevitably places the emphasis on the individual, which is antithetical to the collaborative ethos of managing as a social process particularly in a collectivist culture such as Brazil.

## Data collection

Data about managers' competencies were collected with the MBI (Lawrence et al., 2009), which was translated and adapted in Portuguese. Since one's competency is not a fixed but

**Table 1.** Selected characteristics of Brazilian OSF and their presidents.

OSF	Directors no.	Committees no.	Staff no.	Clubs no.	Athletes no.	Annual budget US\$	President gender/ age	President background	Full-time occupation	Mandate <sup>a</sup> as president
Cycling	3	5	0	1	3000	n/a	M/46	Administration	Manager	1st
Canoeing	5	4	2	7	75	2000–2300	M/49	Law	Lawyer	2nd
Rugby	6	0	0	16	480	n/a	M/37	Adm/Physical Ed	Professor	2nd
Basketball	9	6	0	93	374	n/a	M/39	Administration	Manager	1st
Tennis	4	0	4	21	250	n/a	M/75	Adm/Law	Retired	5th
Gymnastics	17	7	0	19	1800	10,000	F/51	Physical Ed	Professor	1st
Volleyball	4	0	10	116	3958	n/a	M/58	Adm/Law	Retired	5th
Athletics	5	0	2	23	457	n/a	M/59	Engineer	Manager	1st
Swimming	6	0	5	24	3000	n/a	M/52	Physical Ed	Professor	1st
Handball	2	0	2	25	3000	130,000	M/47	Physical Ed	Professor	1st

<sup>a</sup>A mandate is of four years.

an evolving concept managers were asked to rate their real (i.e. as per original instrument) and ideal (i.e. what they want to have) competencies. The survey was conducted online (Google Docs Software Application) over a period of 8 weeks and 15 valid responses (79% return rate) were obtained.

In order to get a deeper understanding of the actual activities of the OSFs' presidents, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 of them. Following the conceptualization and the objectives of the study, an interview guide was constructed with 42 questions, including 20 on personal and organizational status and 22 on management competencies. It was examined by three academic experts in the field of sport management from a leading Portuguese university who confirmed its consistency with the study's conceptual premises. The interview guide was piloted with one vice president of Brazilian OSF and no substantial issues were raised, which provided confidence in the relevance of the instrument (Ghigliione & Matalon, 2005). Interviews lasted about 55 minutes each, and with permission, were audio-recorded, but informal interactions with presidents lasted much longer. Observations included visits to presidents' federation offices and notes were taken about their communication behavior, staff dress code, workplace's physical layout and other artefacts in order to understand the environment in which managing takes place. The above observable elements provide vital clues about the four dimensions of managers' competencies. For example, how a president talks and interacts with staff is indicative of their competency as a facilitator, mentor and empathizer, motivator, monitor or coordinator, whereas the physical layout of an office allows determining what staff behavior is encouraged and discouraged.

### **Data analysis**

The analysis of the variables related to the socio-demographic profile of presidents was done through descriptive statistics in the case of continuous data and by the distribution of frequency and percentages for categorical or nominal data. The normality of data distribution was checked using the Shapiro–Wilk test. Because none of the data were normally distributed, the Wilcoxon's test was used to compare presidents' real and ideal competencies. The effect size was calculated with the correlation coefficient ' $r$ ', which references values below .29 as low, between .30 and .49 as medium and above .50 as high (Cohen, 1988). The significance level adopted was 5% and all statistical procedures were performed with SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) for Windows<sup>®</sup>, version 20.0. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed with QSR NVivo 10 by using codes derived from the conceptualization of competencies. This procedure helped categorize data according to competencies and management postures. Further in the text presidents will be referred to either as 'president' or 'informant' followed by a number corresponding to the organization's place in Table 1 (i.e. 1, 2).

### **Results and discussion**

Table 2 shows the real and ideal competencies of the 15 presidents of OSFs who perceived themselves as facilitators, visionary leaders and innovators who were expected to professionalize the organization, to promote their sport within the state and to gain national recognition. Similar competencies were reported by sport managers in the USA (Lambrecht, 1987), Iran (Goodarzi, Asadi, Sajjadi, & Moradi, 2012) and Greece (Koustelios, 2003). All



**Table 2.** Real and ideal competencies of Brazilian presidents of OSF.

Dimension	Competency	Profile				<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
		Real		Ideal			
		Median	SD	Median	SD		
Collaborate	1. Facilitator	4.67	0.45	4.84	0.31	.170	.35
	2. Mentor	4.13	0.78	4.64	0.56	.020	.60
	3. Empathizer	4.20	0.98	4.82	0.31	.009	.68
Create	4. Visionary	4.29	0.58	4.84	0.35	.005	.72
	5. Innovator	4.24	0.54	4.60	0.73	.035	.54
Control	6. Motivator	4.20	0.63	4.58	0.64	.055	.49
	7. Regulator	4.33	0.60	4.82	0.38	.018	.61
	8. Monitor	4.31	0.60	4.80	0.37	.005	.73
Compete	9. Coordinator	4.31	0.64	4.73	0.47	.060	.49
	10. Competitor	4.13	0.82	4.16	0.86	.809	.06
	11. Producer	4.11	0.94	4.22	0.91	.421	.21
	12. Driver	4.29	0.65	4.73	0.38	.028	.57

presidents were involved with designing and implementing organizational changes of varying magnitude. This, however, is not the same as managing change, which Clemmer (2010) described as an oxymoron, as it involves recognizing, responding, capitalizing and creating change, which was not observed to be the case with the sample organizations. Research pointed out to a strong relationship between experience and competencies where experience is an active process in which people are constantly exposed to events, and the reconstruction of those events contribute to behavioral modifications, which are required for the development of competencies (Louw, Pearse, & Dhaya, 2012; Mumford, Marks, Connelly, Zaccaro, & Reiter-Palmon, 2000; Paloniemi, 2006).

Statistically significant differences were found between seven of presidents' real and ideal competencies across the four dimensions, but for two of them, competitor and producer, the effect size was low. This finding is indicative of the tension between the imperative to introduce certain organizational changes and the lack of knowledge, skills and resources to successfully implement them. Producer and competitor, or the need to act fast and to produce instant results, were the two competencies presidents lacked the most. Brazilian OSFs are voluntary bodies with virtually no paid staff, which makes it harder to impose strict performance targets and deadlines. This finding is in keeping with Thiel and Mayer's (2009) analysis of the main characteristics of voluntary sport clubs management.

A closer scrutiny of the main priorities and activities of each president, however, revealed that they were working on different management planes. The top four median value competencies (1, 7, 8 and 9; Table 2) suggest that presidents tend to operate mainly on the people plane followed by the information plane (i.e. collaborate and create dimensions of MBI). This finding is echoed by studies of Brazilian marketing managers who placed a much greater emphasis on customer relations and satisfaction than their UK and Chinese counterparts who were concerned with profitability and gross margins (Sampaio, Simões, Perin, & Almeida, 2011). The 'motivator' competency (i.e. create dimension) was also evident among American (Lambrecht, 1987) and Taiwanese (Ko et al., 2011) sport managers. The main contextual factors responsible for this mode of management included: a local culture marked by a great sense of personal relationship

and societal collectivism (Javidan, Dorfman, Luque, & House, 2006) (i.e. external); a relatively small organizational size (i.e. organizational); lack of pressure to deliver targets (i.e. temporal); lack of experience and networks in sport (i.e. personal) and job-specific (i.e. small scale and scope).

### **Competency of management competencies**

But how competent Brazilian sport managers' competencies really are? The organizational context, which involves the form, size, degree of formalization and age of the federation, plays a significant role in determining managers' competencies and turns them in to 'a child of the organization' (Hales, 1999, p. 324). That is, regardless of their personal traits and ambitions, as managers steer the organization, at the same time they also get shaped by it through its culture, structure and procedures. Brazilian OSFs exhibited a very low level of formalization understood as the degree to which the organization has put in place written rules and procedures to guide the behavior of individual members. Nichols, Wicker, Cuskelly, and Breuer's (2015) study of voluntary sport clubs in the UK, Germany and Australia revealed several clusters of formalization. The semi-formal cluster in the UK is comparable with the nature of Brazilian OSFs, which exhibited only limited aspects of formalization such as written statutes and rules.

All presidents have indicated the ever pressing need for greater formalization related explicitly to the need for a head office, better financial control and procedures for dealing with poor management practices. In the words of Informant 2 'It is precisely the demand for bureaucracy that exists' (personal communications, June 10, 2014). The level of organizational formalization has significant implications for management because it requires greater managers' competencies and shapes interactions with other members (Slack & Parent, 2006). The manager-organization interdependency was reinforced by president 1 who explicated that 'it was necessary to train our administrator so to create some rules and norms that did not exist before' (personal communications, April 1, 2014). Another critical function of formalization is that it provides structural and interpretative legitimacy to the organization and is often seen as a measure of success in dealing with outside agencies in securing resources. According to Jarzabkowski (2005, p. 130), structural legitimacy 'refers to the *social order* displayed in stabilized structural practices, such as routines, hierarchies and roles', while interpretative legitimacy 'refers to those *frameworks of meaning* through which individuals understand what constitutes appropriate action in a community'. Compared to structural legitimacy, interpretative legitimacy requires the continuous involvement of the top management and relates directly to presidents' collaborative and creative competencies. The words of the presidents of the swimming and handball federations illustrate these two forms of legitimacy respectively: 'the credibility of the federation is its main asset, including its name, the events it organizes, and clubs and athletes' selection criteria' (personal communications, April 14, 2014), and 'I am searching for a marketing person to enhance the image of the federation' (personal communications, August 16, 2014).

All respondents agreed that a management background was essential to be a good president and six of them said they needed more education in sport management. Furthermore, three informants suggested that their background as university professors was not conducive for being an effective president. As informant 5 expressed 'you can't put

a totally layperson to lead an entity as a federation, you need to know legislation, laws ... management training is critical' (personal communications, March 11, 2014). Five presidents also explicitly saw the core management competencies as essentially falling in the people's plane and revolving around good people's management, and social and political contacts. Far less emphasis was placed on having specific skills concerned with the application of knowledge through practical experience. However, Mintzberg (2011) considered the distinction between leadership and management as conceptually unhelpful because 'instead of distinguishing managers from leaders, we should be seeing managers as leaders, and leadership as management practiced well' (p. 9).

### **Management postures**

Brazilian presidents of OSF tended to show five management postures with the most prevalent being fortifying the culture exhibited by the presidents of tennis, gymnastics, athletics and handball. The main concern of this posture is to enhance organizational performance through personal leadership and a good deal of communicating and linking with the external environment. The end result of management, thus, becomes creating a sense of community where people can feel trusted and valued, which subsequently leads to fortifying the culture of the organization. Morgan (1997) referred to organizational culture as an ongoing, proactive process of reality construction. Organizational culture is expressed in a number of ways, but its main function is to provide points of reference for the way organizational members think about, and make sense of, the context in which they work, and where managers become reality constructors (Girginov, 2006).

The four presidents highlighted the importance of achieving interpretive legitimacy expressed in enhancing the credibility of the federation by changing its objectives and management style. As informant 6 expressed:

our management style differs from others, because they are more dictatorial, the president speaks and you must comply; here we have standards, and our management is much more democratic and engaging as we're listening to people and provide opportunities for everyone to grow ... (Personal communications, June 3, 2014)

Informant 8 echoed this view: 'you need credible knowledge in economy, accounting, operations, so the federation can do its job properly' (personal communications, March 11, 2014). Working with people to get things right was also stressed as an important part of the job.

Presidents exhibiting this posture of management were typically devoting four hours a day (20 hours/week) to the job and were engaged in a good deal of communications via personal meetings, emails and phone calls. None of the four OSF had any committees as they preferred to delegate functional responsibilities to a number of directors, but their roles were vaguely defined and not underpinned by real powers and they were not regularly consulted about key decisions and daily operations. Managing by committees is a main challenge to voluntary management where committees' effective utilization in organizational governance requires a great deal of human, material and time resources, which are in short supply (Doherty, Patterson, & Van Bussel, 2004; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2003; Papadimitriou, 2002). At the same time, there was a clear realization that sport has become too demanding to be handled only by volunteers. This was succinctly captured by informant 6: 'the manager of a sport federation has to work full-time, if not, s/he will pretend s/he runs a federation' (personal communications, June 3, 2014).

The second posture of management was maintaining the workflow, which was observed in the work of the presidents of cycling, canoeing and basketball. The essence of this posture was ‘fine-tuning than major renewing’ (Mintzberg, 2011, p. 135), or the maintenance of a dynamic balance between the essential tasks of the organization and possible break downs in their implementations, so if these do indeed occur they can be effectively remedied. Presidents were spending on average 13 hours a week on federation-related business, but they were supported by a number of committees and directors, which ensured a better handling of day-to-day operations. Corrective changes were introduced in cycling to improve organizational communications through the use of new technologies, but these should not be interpreted as a marked departure from established practices. As Westley (2010, p. 15) observed, ‘the Internet is not changing the practice of management fundamentally, but rather reinforcing characteristics that we have been seeing for decades’. According to informant 4:

last year we introduced some changes, mainly conceptual and behavioral. This was necessary because if we did not do it, we would not have been able to find solutions to the promotion of sport ... those staff members who could not adjust left the organization. (Personal communications, April 1, 2014)

The canoeing president was somehow different as he exhibited a tendency to connect externally with the authorities, but his posture was away from blending all around one, which integrates the managing of the workflow with connecting externally.

Presidents’ key role here was of doing things. In particular, the presidents of cycling and canoeing were very much at the center of various activities, including project management and following people daily, as opposed to being on the top of the pyramid and just monitoring their performance. Informant 4 exemplified the essence of doing within this role despite the odds: ‘if you consider our financial realities and our organizational limitations, practically all our projects are ambitious, because if we were to achieve our ambitions given our structure, it looks practically impossible’ (personal communications, April 1, 2014). Grabowski, Neher, Crim, and Mathiassen (2015) study of the application of the CVM in non-profit organizations found management to be concerned with means rather than ends and day-to-day operations and echoes this role.

The next posture of management, intervening strategically, was exhibited by the president of rugby. He was spending 10 hours a week with the federation without committees or staff for support, but was assisted by six directors. His main concern has evolved substantially: ‘when I was elected, my goal was to promote rugby within the state of Minas Gerais ... Today we’re aiming to semi-professionalize our sport in the state’ (personal communications, April 21, 2014). This tended to be an emerging and ad hoc, rather than a well-planned strategic shift, driven mainly by the president’s experiences and intention to forge partnership with the state government to secure a permanent venue for rugby. He was exercising a close control over the work of his directors and other personnel and insisted that credibility is the main asset of the federation. Doing things was the core characteristic of this management style.

The president of volleyball was advising from the side, which is the next posture of management. His philosophy was simple – ‘making the federation self-sustainable was my first goal. I have achieved it, and today the federation is not depending on anything ... our strongest point is that Minas Gerais breathes volleyball’ (personal communications,

April 1, 2014). At the center of this posture is a position taken by the manager as influencer, or one who seeks to affect other people's views and behaviors and to respond to various requests. Thus, he was more involved in linking and communicating with people rather than doing things. The president was in his fifth mandate on the job and was very experienced in supervising staff daily. His main concern was to enhance staff's motivation by raising their expectations for growing sport as well as to address various problems. During his tenure, he worked to decentralize management and at present was doing 6 hours a day assisted by 4 directors and 10 staff, but had no committees. Influencing individuals is easier than committees, and for him, the most important management competencies included leadership, valuing fellow colleagues, networking and good relationships with people.

Finally, the study found evidence for blending all around posture exhibited by the president of swimming. He came from a physical education background and was working on average 3 hours a day on federation business. He was assisted by six directors and five staff but had no committees. The president was a hands-on type of manager, dealing with organizing events and meetings, financial control and marketing, yet striving for a balance between strategic and operational management. He was well-connected to the outside world by working closely with state politicians and other agencies in developing legislations empowering regional sport governing bodies to recruit and train people and to become financially sustainable. The key management roles performed include dealing with issues and doing things. Although Mintzberg (2011, p. 138) suggested that 'middle management may be the best place in an organization to integrate its activities' inherent in this posture, in the case of swimming, it was actually the president. This is partly because the federation has a strong brand name and legitimacy among its 24 affiliated clubs, some 3000 swimmers and the society in general.

No sufficient evidence was found to support the other five postures of management suggested by Mintzberg. This could be explained by the nature of the study (i.e. conducted at a particular point in time) and the prevailing contextual factors at the time. It should be noted that no posture is more important as managers tend to exhibit all of them in various degrees but to be successful they ought to be able to perform all nine postures.

## **Managers' competencies and postures: conclusion**

The voluntary nature of Brazilian OSFs is very different from the contractual and highly formalized organizational relations of big companies for the study of which the MBI was designed. In order to capture the environmental and practical aspects of managers' role, the study analyzed what presidents of OSFs actually do and how.

When applied to the five management postures identified by the study, Mintzberg's (2011) model of management suggested that with the exception of advising from the side that was dominated by science, or the tendency to analyze and reflect on performance, the remaining postures – fortifying the culture, maintaining the workflow, intervening strategically and blending all around – were all rooted in craft, that is, the ability of presidents to use their experience and practical learning in running the federation. [Table 3](#) shows the relationship between presidents' roles, postures and competencies.

There have been some overlaps as well as significant discrepancies between Brazilian OSFs presidents' competencies and how they manage. Quantitative findings depicted

**Table 3.** Management postures, roles, planes and competencies of Brazilian OSF's presidents.

Management posture	Management role	Management plane	Competencies
Fortifying the culture	Leading + communicating	People + information	Facilitator, mentor, empathizer + visionary, innovator, motivator
Managing the work flow	Doing + leading + controlling + communications	Action + people + information	Regulator, monitor, coordinator + competitor, producer, driver + facilitator, mentor, empathizer + visionary, innovator, motivator
Intervening strategically	Doing + controlling + communication	Action + information	Regulator, monitor, coordinator + visionary, innovator, motivator
Advising from the side	Linking + communicating	People + information	Facilitator, mentor, empathizer + visionary, innovator, motivator
Blending all around	Doing + dealing + information	Action + information	Competitor, producer, driver + regulator, monitor, coordinator + facilitator, mentor, empathizer

presidents as operating mainly on the people plane followed by the information plane (i.e. the control dimension of MBI). This finding was partially confirmed by presidents who exhibited the fortifying the culture and maintaining the workflow postures. Fortifying the culture emphasizes leadership, complemented by communications and linking with the outside world, and is premised on visions (i.e. art) and experience (i.e. craft) and belongs to the people's plane of management. However, those presidents did not establish any committees, as a form of collective participatory decision-making, to assist them with strategic and operational matters. Such committees form the core of the collaborative dimension of the MBI. The difference between managers' competencies and how they manage can be explained with the varying degrees of manifestation of their cognitive, emotional and social competencies (Boyatzis, 2011).

In maintaining the workflow posture, presidents relied on a number of committees. Further, the mentor-developing people item of the MBI collaborative dimension could not have been fully realized in an organizational environment dominated by volunteers, who have little real prospects for personal development in the organization. This posture is associated with doing things and is complemented by leadership and controlling. Thus, it tended to be more on the information plane, and represents practices rooted in experience or management as craft in Mintzberg's terminology.

Despite strong evidence that Brazilian managers cherish personal relations, this was not the same as managing and developing people in an organization (i.e. collaborate dimension). de Oliveira et al.'s (2015) study of what Brazilian small business owner-managers do, identified four management styles including activity structuring (i.e. process), public relations, supervising and leading, and problem solver (i.e. roles) that resemble the postures of OSF's presidents and confirmed the interplay between the process and roles approaches to management. It also lends support to the findings of the present study in that managers' preferences are not mutually exclusive and they may use several management styles simultaneously which is determined by various contextual factors. Shapero's (2010, p. 16) point about the nature of management summed up succinctly the reality in which presidents of OSF operated 'the term management conjures up images of control, rationality, systematics; but studies of what actually managers do depict behaviours and situations that are chaotic, unplanned, and charged with improvisation'.

Packard's (2014) first question 'what are competencies intended to do' pointed to a clear answer – to enhance organizational effectiveness. Presidents were working on the

people's plane, which allowed them to exercise leadership and communications. However, their roles were blurring at the edges as even their leadership qualities were questioned by one president's suggestion that one cannot really exercise effective leadership while working part-time. Effectiveness is a contested abstract concept (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983), which did not come across as an important issue that needs to be neatly defined so to encompass both strategic and operational matters.

Are presidents' competencies doing the right things? Findings suggested that they were not necessarily doing the right things. All managers talked about the need for strategic and financial management skills (i.e. science) so they can face the challenges posed by the drive for professionalization of sport. As with professionalization elsewhere (Guttman, 1978; Houlihan & Green, 2009), the professionalization of Brazilian sport is set to gradually replace the voluntary ethos of OSFs with market forces and competition for resources. At the same time the compete dimension of the MBI, interpreted as getting work done quicker and developing a competitive focus, was almost absent from the work of presidents.

Are presidents' competencies getting desired results? If we take as a measure of success the number of participants, events and athletes/teams rankings and media coverage of sports, the answer to this question would be positive. However, ensuring a greater professionalization of sport means putting in place more robust key performance indicators and a range of monitoring and reporting mechanisms, particularly when public and private funding is involved (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011).

Mintzberg's (2011) model of managing allowed discerning five contexts that shaped OSF presidents' management postures. The external context provided two powerful influences of: (i) national culture, which valued social relations and collectivism, as opposed to results and targets; and (ii) a specific drive within the sport sector for professionalization. The organizational context implied that OSFs are relatively small operations that were still possible to manage on a voluntary basis. The temporal context emanating from the 2016 Rio Games added the specific pressure on OSFs to perform well as a matter of national prestige. According to the Executive Director of Sport for the Brazilian Olympic Committee, Brazil is aiming to win between 27 and 30 medals in Rio, which is up from the 17 it won in 2012 in London. To that end, Brazil would spend a record US\$600 million compared to US\$350 million in the previous Olympic cycle (Wade, 2014).

Some presidents' personal context (i.e. background and tenure) enabled them to better address the strategic and financial challenges of the job, compared to others who did not have the right academic and professional background. Since most presidents had been on the job for more than one term, this has provided them with valuable experience. Regarding the job context (i.e. scale and scope), it transpired that being a part-time manager of a Brazilian OSF has been associated mainly with craft (i.e. experience, practical learning) mixed with a bit of art (i.e. vision, creative thoughts) and much less with science (i.e. analysis, systematic evidence).

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