

# Analysis and evaluation of the United Kingdom and Spain's sport models

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## ABSTRACT

In this study, we have undertaken an analysis of the status of Spanish and British sport models. Sport has become a major socio-economic marvel of the modern world, with broad media coverage and both active and passive participation. Sporting achievement, the public image of many countries, is a top priority for the governments of developed nations and represents a goal of general interest. Using data analysis, we have examined the reality of the sport models in both countries through sportive variables, as well as the financials behind the sporting economy in the last 5 Olympic Games. The data reveals a more efficiency model in UK and a need of change if Spain wants to keep its current level of achievement internationally, where the current model requires a review of its structure and funding sources, public or private, and the modernisation of the federated management model that must be preserved and encouraged through (non-profit) organisations that benefit from a favourable tax system, such as the Sports Federations. **Keywords:** Sport system; Sport federations; Sport economic; Management; Administration.

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## INTRODUCTION

Sporting success is associated with the international projection and reputation of a country, considering, in addition, that the Olympic Games (OGs) are one of the most outstanding sporting and social events worldwide (Brundage, 1973), where the achievements have a great impact in the life of human beings settling in their memory (Bucur, Macovei, & Margineantu, 2015).

Nowadays, sport is a highly relevant social phenomenon, moving large numbers in every sense of the word. Beyond an interest in practising sport, the sporting world extends to other social areas, which have an effect on the population. Sport is a cultural activity strongly driven by modern states, as well as being an alternative leisure activity (García Ferrando, 2006; Cabello et al, 2009).

According to Scheerder, Willem & Claes (2017), since 2009 as a result of the economic crisis, especially hard in Spain, budgets for sport have declined.

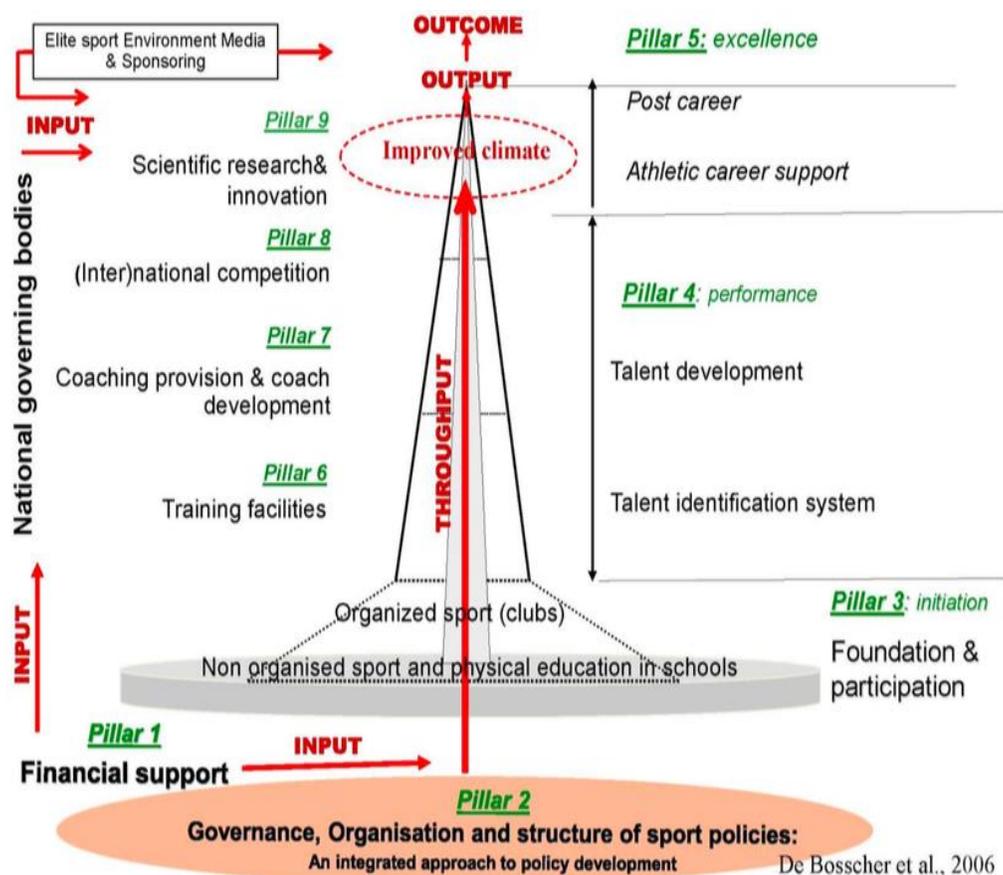


Figure 1. Theoretical model of 5 pillars of Sport Policy factors leading to International Sporting Success - SPLISS (De Bosscher et al, 2009)

The SPLISS (Sports Policy factors Leading to International Sporting Success) study outlined key factors that influence international sporting success, which it called 'Pillars' which are defined in figure 1 and represent an inside-out perspective of an Sport System in accordance to the resource based view (Truyens et al.,

2014). Even though this approach is becoming more familiar in public and economic research, this is not yet the case in sport policy research (Brown, 2014).

In term of sporty systems and models, the practices adopted by each country with regards to sports management and funding can be split into two very different models: an Anglo-Saxon model, which distinguishes itself by prioritising private initiatives with a touch of economic liberalism. On the other hand, a model we could call “continental European”, dominated by strong public intervention, whether centralised, such as in France among others, or decentralised, such as Spain (Heineman 2001 & 2008; Cabello, 2017).

In Spain, high-level competition is of utmost interest to the High Council for Sport or CSD (Consejo Superior de Deportes), but also to the Spanish Sports Federations (SSFF). These organisations work together with the CSD to achieve their goals of sporting excellence (Puig et al, 2010).

In the UK, the main driver of the High Performance (HP) system is UK SPORT who, together with the Sport National Governing Bodies (NGB), approves and develops the HP quatriennial olympic plans.

Sport has historically developed along two paths: the federated structure and its multi-level competitions, and the Olympic movement (Chappelet, 1993; Chantelat, 2001; Giannoulakis et al, 2008). These models currently work together very successfully and reproduce their structure on a national level. Although sporting models are diverse across different cultures and countries, the “federated model” has been the most widespread and successful.

SSFF and NGB are private associations, which sometimes act as government agents when they have to safeguard and promote their own specialty of sport like a monopoly and thus gain public funding (Phelps & Kent, 2010).

The comparative study of the Spanish system with one of the European countries with better sporting results, could have a translation to the Spanish sports system to improve the efficiency of the system, the coordination and management of the associative sector, the organization and excellence of the sports federations and, ultimately, about its impact on high performance and international representation (González et al., 2018).

The main goal of this study is to analyse how public funds affect the high performance achievements of a country and the relationship between the sport system and investment in the third sector of sport and the international sports results.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The economic importance and social impact that the results of the elite athletes representing the national team have for each country and its international brand image, leads us to make a comparative study of the management model of the third sector of sport in Spain, with the model of the UK that has been the best in Europe within the last three Olympic Games, 2nd place in Rio 2016 and 3rd in London 2012.

### ***Participants and design***

The analytical framework surrounding the study is based on Bayle's theories for assessing the performance of organisations (1999, 2000 y 2001) and the work of Zintz (2006). We will thereby use a descriptive methodology with quantitative and qualitative analysis.

A mixed methodology approach was selected to capitalize on information gathered via both qualitative and quantitative data mechanisms. Use of this practice was pioneered by De Bosscher et al. (2009) as a practical framework for the Sports Policy factors Leading to International Sporting Success (SPLISS) study which aimed to reduce “problems relating to the comparability of international data and the objective evaluation and measurement of policies in general and of elite sport policies in particular”. Most sport studies currently utilize non-comparable descriptive data between countries, qualitative methods to evaluate trends, or when mixed methodology approaches are used. While both research methodologies reveal insightful and potentially valuable factors independently, the challenge is to bring the qualitative and quantitative data together in a meaningful way.

The OGs of the last 20 years were selected (n =5). The sports results were analysed together with the public money received in that Olympic cycle (4 previous years) in both country, to prepare Sydney 2000, Athens 2004, Beijing 2008, London 2012 and Rio 2016 OGs) were analysed. The data was collected from entities and organizations of a public and private nature, through direct consultation with responsible sports entities, as well as accessing their official documents (table 1).

Table 1. Scheme of the sources used to obtain data (Spain and United Kingdom)

Country and source		URL
Spain	Consejo Superior Deportes (CSD)	<a href="http://www.csd.gob.es">www.csd.gob.es</a>
	Instituto Nacional Estadística (INE)	<a href="http://www.ine.es">www.ine.es</a>
	Federaciones Españolas (FF.EE) - SSFF	<a href="http://www.csd.gob.es/csd/asociaciones/1fedagclub/soapcli.2007-02-14.7388867167/">www.csd.gob.es/csd/asociaciones/1fedagclub/soapcli.2007-02-14.7388867167/</a>
	Comité Olímpico Español (COE) - NOC	<a href="http://www.coe.es">www.coe.es</a>
UK	UK Sport (UKS)	<a href="http://www.ukssport.gov.uk">www.ukssport.gov.uk</a>
	Uk Government	<a href="http://www.gov.uk">www.gov.uk</a>
	National Sport Governing Bodies (NGB) - <i>Sport Federations</i>	<a href="http://www.ukssport.gov.uk/">www.ukssport.gov.uk/</a>
	British Olympic Association (BOA)	<a href="http://www.teamgb.com/about-boa">www.teamgb.com/about-boa</a>
Specialized website - Investing		<a href="http://www.investing.com">www.investing.com</a>
Specialized website - Medalspercapita		<a href="http://www.medalspercapita.com/">www.medalspercapita.com/</a>

### Procedure

The following variables were analysed:

- The **number of medals** obtained by each country in the Olympic Games of the last 20 years.
- The **value (weight) of sporting results** (measured by the number and type of medals achieved), following the guidelines internationally recognized by sports bodies to establish the ranking of world sporting power-house and accepted by other specialized websites (Investing and Medalpercapita) which consists of assigning a numerical value (points) to the metal of the medal (gold = 4 points, silver = 2 points, bronze = 1 point) .
- The **public financial support** (subsidy) to the SSFF or NGB with Olympic disciplines in each Olympic cycle, measured in millions of euros.
- The **average cost of an Olympic medal**, obtained by dividing public support by the number of medals obtained, measured in millions of euros.

**Analysis**

A descriptive analysis of each one of the variables was carried out, where average and standard deviation are shown. To observe the possible differences between the two selected countries (Spain vs UK), the Student T test was used for independent samples. A level of significance of 95% was considered.

The statistical analysis was conducted with the statistical package SPSS, version 22.0 (IBM SPSS Statistics).

**RESULTS**

In figure 2, the results obtained by both countries in the evolution of medals in the last 5 OGs (Sydney 2000, Athens, 2004, Beijing 2008, London 2012 and Rio 2016) are showed.

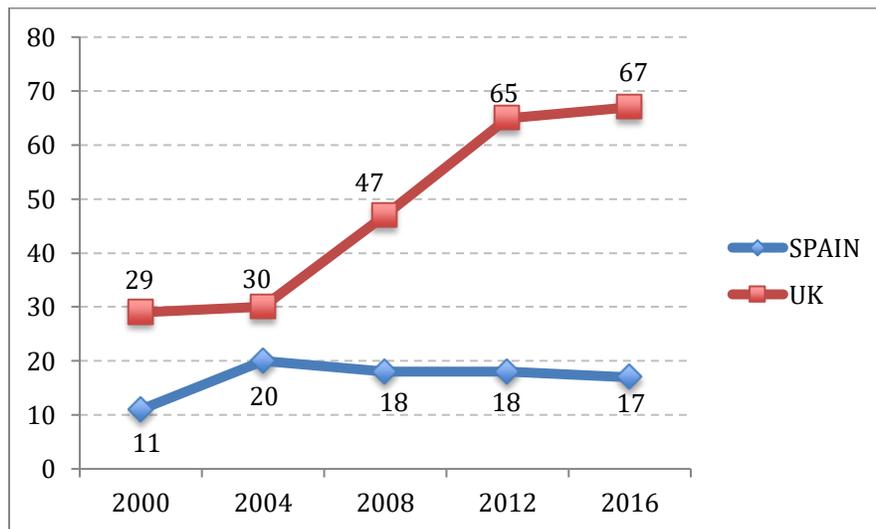


Figure 2. Number of medals in the last 5 OGs (from Sidney 200 to Rio 2016)

In figure 3, the weight of the results obtained by both countries is showed with a better data for UK.

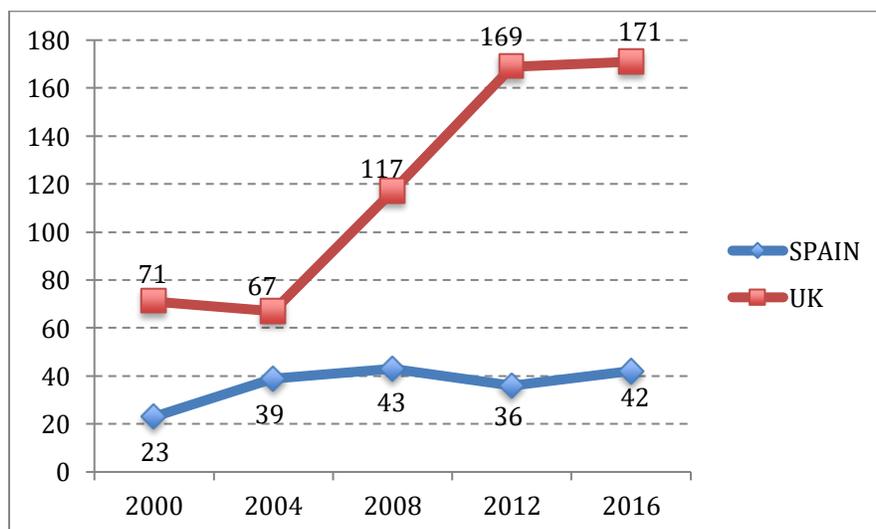


Figure 3. Weight of medals (4-Gold, 2-Silver & 1-Bronze points) in the last 5 OGs (from Sidney 200 to Rio 2016)

The public financial support for the last 5 OGs is showed in figure 4.

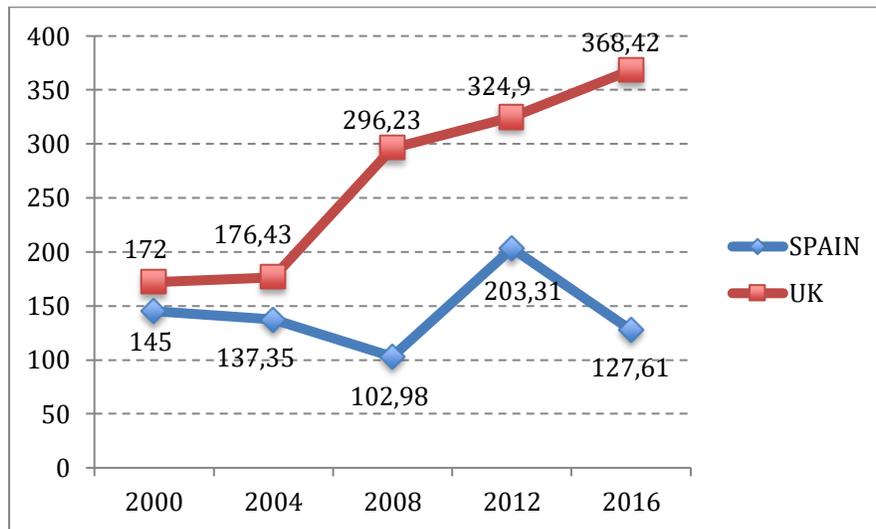


Figure 4. Public financial support in the last 5 OGs (from Sidney 200 to Rio 2016)

In figure 5, you can check the cost medal in both countries with a more efficient ratio for UK.

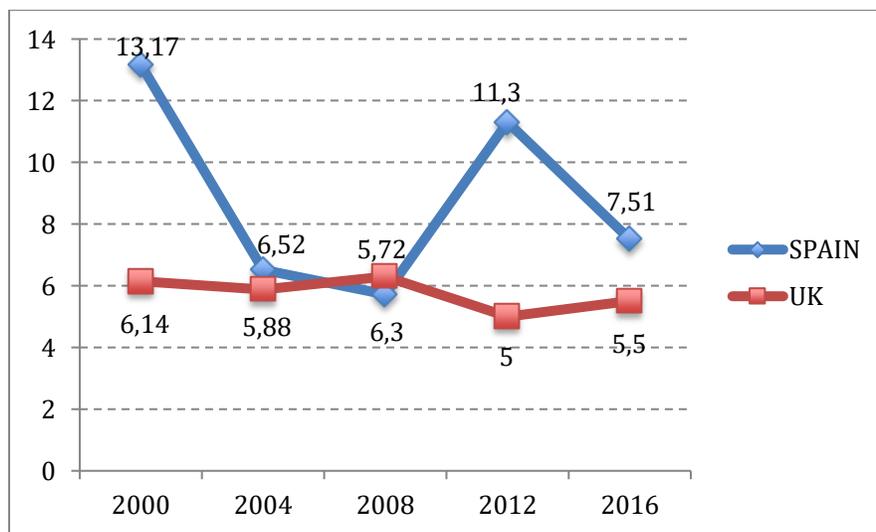


Figure 5. Cost of an Olympic medal in the last 5 OGs (from Sidney 200 to Rio 2016)

Table 2 shows the differences between the last five Olympics from Sydney 2000 to Rio 2016, comparing Spain versus the UK.

There are statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) in all the variables analysed, except for the cost of an Olympic medal where the average is 8,8 for Spain and only 5,7 for UK.

Table 2. Analysis of the significant differences of the performance and financial variables between Spain and UK.

Variables	Spain	UK	p<
Number of medals	16.8±3.4	47.4±18.5	.008
Value (weight) of medals (points)	36.6±8	119±50	.008
Public financial support (millions of euros)	143±37	267±89	.021
Cost of an Olympic medal - average (millions of euros)	8.8±0.8	5.7±1.3	.069

In summary, the average amount of public subsidies received by the NGB of the UK, is higher than those obtained by the SSFF. Values are clearly higher in the obtaining of medals by the UK than those obtained by Spain.

One of the main reasons why it is so difficult to obtain financial backing from private initiatives is the lack of media support, particularly from TVE. This situation is critically significant for obtaining sponsorship, and generates a problem with no easy solution, as have observed Biffi (2003) & Ferrand, Camps & Torrigiani (2007) in their studies.

Understandable enough, if we consider that the increase in public grants applied for - to properly carry out their work and to guarantee that they will carry out the responsibilities which they have been delegated to do.

If we add to this the diversity of organic structures in Spanish Federations, (Figure 2), we can clearly observe an undefined federated model, lacking the uniformity and efficiency that would facilitate a consistent method of developing sport in Spain (Hood, 2007).

## DISCUSSION

Sport, through any of its manifestations, constitutes one of the most economically important sectors. The proliferation of events and the promotion of sports facilities has encouraged the use of impact analysis instruments to predict the expected economic flows in host localities (Sánchez, Baraja & Alén, 2013).

In this sense, after analysing the data, and despite the fact that Spain has medium-high level of international results, especially when we talk about team sports and sports with media coverage (football, basketball, cycling, tennis, motorcycling, etc), the overall organization of the Olympic federative sport in the UK is more efficient, with significant differences in 3 of the 4 variables (table 2). The UK invests more money in its Olympic federations (1.8 times more than Spain) and its athletes get more medals (triple the average in the last 5 OGs), with a medal cost per inhabitant lower for the British case, 5.7, for € 8.8 million, for the medals achieved by Spain.

In addition to the economic strength of the UK and its success dealing with the crisis, the new financing system that started in 1996 transferring a percentage of the benefits obtained from the National Lottery has made a big difference. This increase in funding, together with a detailed analysis of the medal possibilities and the Olympic cycle preparation plan of each sport, has been a key factor in the increase of medals by the UK, going from a range of 20-30 medals before the year 2000, to 65 & 67 in the last two OGs. While Spain has maintained a ratio of 16 to 19 after the Barcelona Games (with 22 medals, 13 gold), except for the 11 of Sydney 2000 (González et al, 2018).

According to Williams (2012), in the last 40 years, winning Olympic medals has been driven by four factors: population, income per capita, historical performance (sports tradition) and a welcome effect for hosting the Olympic Games. If we look at the Olympic history of Spain, the welcome effect of Barcelona 92 OG was the one that drove the achievement of medals, together with important measures, such as the implementation of the ADO (Olympic Sports Association), which has been progressively decreasing, going from 79 million euros in Barcelona 92 to 37 in Rio 2016, which will have very negative consequences if it is not corrected. In the case of Olympic sport in the UK, it seems that the main reason for excellence is not one of the previous four, since it has always enjoyed a privileged economic position as a country, a stable population and had already hosted OG previously (Cabello, 2017).

Following González et al (2018), in the results of pre-crisis and post-crisis in Spain there is no significant difference, which suggests that, in relation to Olympic sport, Spain has not emerged from the crisis or has been always. Indeed, during the Olympic cycle of London 2012, the effectiveness of the athletes was higher in the main international competitions, although tending to disappear in the last year of the Olympic cycle, which should be analysed in future research (De Carlos, Alén & Pérez, 2017).

The exit of the crisis has been much stronger in the case of the UK, with a significant increasing the number of medals achieved in the post-crisis period, almost doubling compared to the pre-crisis period (González et al, 2018).

In addition to the British economic strength, it would be important a further analysis of the legal and structural differences of its model, also analysing the qualification of the professionals that interact with the grassroots sport, the connection of the school sport with the sport performance or the hours dedicated to physical education, which could explain why their management model and sports structure are more efficient and effective (Cabello, 2017 & Deloitte, 2018).

It would be also important a further analysis about the inefficiency of the Spanish model, which prior to the 2008 crisis, had closer funding levels of the UK with results below the British team, although this trend seems to have changed thanks to the effectiveness of programs that incentive women whose results have a remarkable increasing in the last years (González et al, 2018 & Deloitte, 2018).

## CONCLUSIONS

The organizational structure of the Olympic federative sport in the UK is more efficient than the Spanish one, investing more money in its sports federations, which leads to better international results and greater efficiency in the ratio of the cost of an Olympic medal than Spain, although they would be more analysis is needed to be able to determine all the causes. This study reinforces what has already been described by Cabello et al (2009), Cabello (2017) and González et al (2018), about which the Spanish Sporting Model requires an extensive debate to reconsider many core elements, starting with the assumption that the current model, largely federated, is no longer the exclusive pillar of sporting activity. We therefore highlight the need for a rethink, working on the basis of institutional coordination to improve the efficiency of the Spanish Sporting model.

Spain's structure of Regions requires improved coordination to maximise the output of the different entities that encourage sporting activity throughout our country's different territories. As a result, the relevant projects and areas of action lack individual identity, resulting in highly inbred organizations devoid of versatility (Deloitte, 2018).

It is essential that the Spanish Federations acquire, throughout this whole process, the financial resources needed to develop the activities they have been delegated. Therefore, it is necessary to study alternative sources of funding to which the Spanish Federations have access and check the economic rationality that must guide the use of such funds, especially in terms of public financing. The implementation of a model to assess excellence - through objective and operational indicators for distributing funding, where investment in training quality assurance managers would take priority - would improve the federated system and, ultimately, Spanish sport (Cabello, 2017).

However, we must not stop reflecting on the weaknesses and serious requirements of our system, rethinking the model.

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