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<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>H. Polster</td>
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<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td>研究年報 1996: 52-58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue Date</td>
<td>1996-08-01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Departmental Bulletin Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Version</td>
<td>publisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL</td>
<td><a href="http://doi.org/10.15057/7594">http://doi.org/10.15057/7594</a></td>
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2. The structure of research in the former GDR sport science

Harald Polster

Preliminary remarks

The great successes of the GDR competitive sport at international championships and Olympic Games are led back frequently to the unusual level of the sport science in the GDR. This conclusion is free of doubt, if one considers, that the sport science in the GDR is not identical with the sports medicine. Unfortunately today the international success in the competitive sport of the GDR is reduced unilaterally on the supporting means of doping substances. In addition just the sport science is estimated in the former GDR as a politically burdened science. Both reproaches may be legitimate, however should lead on no account to an absolute negation of all these, what was produced in the GDR sport science.

In reality there was a broad landscape of sport-scientifical institutions and forms of structured scientific work. To this, as one part also the co-operation with the competitive sport belonged. In the GDR generally the opinion consisted, that scientific knowledge, produced in competitive sport, can be used also for other social areas, for example in the leisure time sport or health sport. The fact remains well, that this was not such a successful issue then it was expected.

Nevertheless, the GDR sport science can refer to internationally acknowledged scientists and to scientific discoveries, which is unparalleled in the world.

In this contribution an overview to the structures and columns of the GDR sport science should be given. It is a pure experience report. That is to say, because the developed structure may not be identical with the former reality absolutely. However one aspect should be elucidated with it: *It was a generally organised system of producing scientific knowledge in a certain area of the society. This meant - collective co-operation in sport-scientifical research.*

Structures of the research

One could divide the structural organisation of the research into two main terms.

A. **Institutional research** - in which over a longer period was worked scientifically.

B. **Project research** - in which variably and temporary limited research assignments were processed.

A. **Institutional research**

In essential the financial resources of the research came from following 5 state pillars:

- Ministry of universities and technical colleges
- State secretariat of physical culture and sport at the Council of Ministers
- Ministry of National Defence
- Ministry of state security
- Social organisations (DTSB - German Gymnastics and Sports Federation, Union)
University systems

The responsibility for research in the university and college system laid at the sections of sport sciences in the universities and pedagogical colleges. They educated chiefly students, which became teachers in several subjects after completion their studies. It is getting clear, that the teacher students were equipped in part with a good level of sport-scientific knowledge and methodical experiences if they started their occupation in the school education. To these sport-scientific centres belonged:

Sections of Sport Sciences (SSW)
- Rostock (sailing)
- Greifswald (psychology, motor activity and motor coordination)
- Potsdam (canoe, rowing, track-and-field sports)
- Jena (sled sport, biomechanics, motor behavior in sport)
- Berlin (school sport)

Pedagogical Colleges (PH)
- Magdeburg (track-and-field sports, school sport)
- Halle (swimming, speed training)
- Zwickau (school sport).

In these grouping with the years crystallised out different research emphases. Each institution was joined in a different way with the competitive sport, school sport or concentrated on particular scientific themes.

State secretariat of physical culture and sport

The state secretariat was associated according to its enormous task field rather different scientific institutions. Thereby Leipzig took in a particular position. In this town were located two sport-scientific institutions on one terrain. However they supported quiet different goals. The Research Institute for Physical Culture and Sport (FKS) was aimed exclusively to the research in competitive sport. On the contrary the German College of Physical Culture and Sport (DHfK) in Leipzig educated coaches and teachers for physical education and investigated mainly the field of new generation sport.

The state secretariat were subordinated Scientific Centres (WZ) of the sports associations, the Research and Developing Centre (FES), just as the Sport Medical Service (SMD) with his centre in Kreischa.

The scientific centres (WZ) of the sports associations were distributed over the whole country. They were localised chiefly nearby a Sport Club (SC) and engaged up to 10 staff members. Scientific centres had the task, to support the training of the competitive athletes in a certain sport. They worked together with coaches and athletes very narrowly and co-ordinated all research assignments in the sports association.

The research - and developing centres (FES) in Berlin and Ilmenau investigated the progress of sports equipment. It was incumbent on them the task to co-ordinate the research with other institutions.

The sport medical service in the GDR was organised as a separate system. There existed main investigation and consultation centres in the 15 districts of the country.
The capacities of research in the three following fields were not so large surely. However in the Sport Clubs of the National Army, State Security and German Gymnastics and Sport League were engaged scientific personnel, which worked directly in competitive sport. These assistants were engineers, training methodologies, psychologists and sports medical doctors chiefly.

**National People's Army (ASV/ASK)**

The competitive sport in the army concentrated on the so-called Army Sport Clubs (ASK) in Frankfurt/Oder (track-and-field sports, boxing, canoe, shooting), Oberhof (winter sport) and Rostock (track-and-field sports, aquatic sports).

**Sport Organisation of State Security (SV Dynamo/SC Dynamo)**

In similar way like at the army, the performance sport was organised by the ministry of state security (MfS). In Berlin the summer sports as well as speed-skating were settled and in Zinnwald, not far from Dresden, the winter sports club. They carried the name SV Dynamo.

**German Gymnastics and Sport Federation (DTSB/SC)**

A far spread network of sports clubs (SC) had the DTSB itself, as largest sport organisation in the former GDR. In this net worked specific scientific and technical employees, who were responsible for a practical oriented training research.

**B. Project research**

As second important sector served the project research, which was arranged actually as a matter of order research by the sports associations, especially their scientific centres. In this way was pursued a research, supported by the industry and mainly Technical Universities.

1. **Example:**
The research in the sled sport for example integrated following, so-called *executives of research* and singular projects:
   - Technical University of Magdeburg (gliding friction for runners)
   - Aviation Technology Dresden (frame of sled, helmets)
   - Technical University of Ilmenau (construction sled)
   - Textile Industry Zwickau (racing wear).

2. **Example:**
As further form of the research, which considered also other areas of the sport, has to be mentioned such projects given by the union and the ministry of people's education (school education). This affected for example such topics concerning:
   - Sport in factories and in the leisure time (Institute for Leisure time sport DHfK Leipzig)
   - Contents of physical education at school (Sections of Sport Sciences in Rostock, Zwickau, Greifswald, Potsdam).

3. **Example:**
Also for the preparation of the national sport festivals, accomplished usually each four years, were established special research groups. They examined new-fashioned arrangements of the festival program and created newly mass exercises. The financial resources were provided by the DTSB, the union and perhaps still more social organisations.
Coordination of the research

The more partners are involved in research, the more necessary is a co-ordinated management of the research process. In the sport science of the former GDR for this purpose committees were created, which had the tasks to consult as well as to decide topics and financial resources.

Sport specific research

The specific research in the different sports was conducted through the sports associations themselves. In each type of sport existed up to four coach councils, responsible for different age groups and performance levels. In the coach instalments following persons worked:
- Coaches of the national team
- 2 or 3 coaches of club teams
- 1 or 2 scientists
- 1 staff member of the scientific centre
- 1 sports medical doctor
- 1 representative of the athletes (national teams only)

This coach advice worked on the basic of a 4-annual plan corresponding to the Olympic cycle. From that annual plans were terminated. Between the sports association and the scientific institutes of the universities annual contracts were completed, in which the tasks of the scientists were determined. These contracts contained following main points:
- Theme and subtitle of the research.
- Problems, tasks, hypotheses.
- Investigation design and nominal responsibilities.
- Scientific events in the sport association and the respective institute.
- Form of the scientific results (report, technical device, publication, diploma thesis, dissertation etc.)

The coach council came together for meetings 4 or 5 times in the year. Once a year a scientific event took place at the university. For these events were invited coaches and also the students reported about the results of their scientific work. Likewise the scientific centre of the sports association accomplished a conference once a year, which united all partners of the research.

Special commissions

Under the responsibility of the state secretariat of physical culture and sport emerged special commissions of sport science. These were scientific committees absolutely. They represented the essential sport-scientifical disciplines and served the sciences as forum for public work. The special commissions were important for those disciplines that could not work together with the sport practice easily. Among them could be find following commissions:
- Sport Pedagogy
- Sport Sociology and Sport Psychology
- Sport History
- Sports Medicine
- Sport Motor Activity
- Movement Science and Training Methodology
- Literature and Documentation.
Both the sports associations as well as the state secretariat provided the financial budget for the respective meetings and conferences. This included among other things the travelling expenses, overnight stays and a corresponding daily allowance for all participants of the conference. If larger projects were planned, a prior submission of the financial costs had to be presented. This financial plan could be submitted to the state secretary, was corrected, confirmed or refused by him.

**Organisation of the research at the DHfK Leipzig**

The education and research were based on the structure of 4 sections. These sections were associated approximately 200 students respectively. In the sections 1 and 2 were joined all theoretical disciplines of sport science. Contrary in both other sections were organised the sport-practical subjects. Furthermore an independent Institute of Leisure Time and Recreational Sport existed. No students were associated to this institute directly. However, in science interested students could announce in scientific student circles and were supported from the institute to write their diploma thesis.

In each of the 4 sections existed a directorship for education and a directorship for research. The directorship for research checked the activities of the science disciplines with their partners of the sport practice. Besides it was responsible for the provision of financial resources on the part of the university. Under the leadership of the director of research the scientific student days occurred every year. They were not only a scientific highlight but also days of cultural contests among the students. During these days academic discussions, cabarets, athletic competitions and exhibitions of scientific posters were accomplished.

Finally an overview should be given for the subdivision of the separate sections at the former DHfK.

- **Section 1:**
  - Sport Politics
  - Administration and Planning of Physical Culture
  - Theory and History of Physical Culture
  - Sport Pedagogy
  - Sport Psychology
  - Sport Sociology
  - Marxism and Leninism.

- **Section 2:**
  - General Theory and Methodology of Training
  - Biomechanics
  - Sports Medicine
  - Sport Physiology
  - Mathematics and Statistics
  - Foreign Languages.

- **Section 3:**
  - Winter Sports
  - Aquatic Sports
  - Track-and-Field Sports
  - Swimming.

- **Section 4:**
  - Combat Sports
  - Sport Games
  - Technically - Compositional Sports.

- Institute of Leisure Time and Recreational Sport
# Structure of Research

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<th>State Secretariat of Physical Culture and Sport</th>
<th>Ministry of National Defense</th>
<th>Ministry of State Security</th>
<th>Social Organisations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Universities/Pedagogical Colleges</td>
<td>Research Institute (FKS Leipzig)</td>
<td>Sports Association of National Army (ASV)</td>
<td>Sports Association of Dynamo (SV Dynamo)</td>
<td>German Gymnastics and Sports Federation (DTSB)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>German College of Physical Culture and Sport (DHfK Leipzig)</td>
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<td>Sections of Sport Science</td>
<td>Scientific Centres of Sports Associations (WZ)</td>
<td>Sport Clubs of Army</td>
<td>Sport Clubs of Dynamo</td>
<td>Sport Clubs of DTSB</td>
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<td>Sport medical Service (SMD Kreischa)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Research and Developing Center (FES Berlin, Ilmenau)</td>
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<td>Rostock, Greifswald, Potsdam, Jena, Magdeburg, Halle, Zwickau, Berlin</td>
<td>Oberhof, Potsdam, Frankfurt/Oder, Schwerin, Rostock</td>
<td>Berlin, Zinnwald</td>
<td>15 District Cities</td>
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- Scientists, College Teachers, Research Students, Correspondence Students, Students, Sports medical Doctors, Technical Scientists.
- Training Scientists, Coaches, Sports medical Doctors, Engineers.
Centres of Science and Research in GDR Sport

- Sport Clubs (DTSB, ASV, SV Dynamo)
- Sport Medical Service (SMD)
- Sections of Sport Science and DHfK
- Scientific Centres of the Sports Associations (WZ)