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**Title: Multi-functionality and occupations of sport and physical activity professionals in Spain**

**Abstract**

**Research question:** Increased attention to the multiple benefits attributed to sport and physical activity in recent years, has boosted the sport industry and related employment opportunities. Sport and physical activity (SPA) professionals are central in delivering the core services in this sector. This paper analyses the key functions of Spanish SPA professionals in order to reveal the range of opportunities and to strengthen their position in a tapering labor market in Spain.

**Research Methods:** Face-to-face interviews based on a standardized questionnaire were conducted with 2500 SPA professionals, who were active in 1797 sports facilities across the country. Functions and multi-functionality were analyzed based on city size, age, sex and type of organization.

**Results and Findings:** The results show an extensive, diversified and multifunctional panorama of SPA functions in cities of all sizes. SPA functions shift with age, and women are underrepresented in the majority of these occupations. Multi-functionality is significantly higher among men, older SPA professionals and in the for-profit sector (compared to public and non-profit sector).

**Implications:** The results assist professional and entrepreneurial training institutions to align their programs with the needs of the labour market, thereby enhancing the employability of their graduates, the level of professionalism as well as the working conditions in the SPA sector. Human resource processes can also be enhanced, improving the quality and efficiency of sport and physical activity services delivered in SPA organizations.

**Keywords:** Career path; Human resources; Labour market; Mobility; Profession

## **Introduction:**

Research about the multiple benefits attributed to sport and physical activity (SPA) includes notions that SPA enhances skill development (Commission of the European Communities, 2007; Wuest & Bucher, 2006), health (Vuori & Fentem, 1995; Willis & Campbell, 1992), social cohesion (Collins, 2014; Svoboda & Patriksson, 1995), and economic development (e.g., Andreff & Weber, 1995; Conference Board of Canada, 2005; Heinemann, 1998; National Sports Council, 2000). These common and popular beliefs have strongly been supported and promoted by many governments of developed countries since the 1970s through the “Sport for All” movement (e.g., DaCosta & Miragaya, 2002). These trends, and particularly the connection between SPA and “health” (e.g., Dekkers, 2012), have boosted the growth of the SPA industry and related employment opportunities.

The significance of the sport industry has been documented for individual countries as well as for Europe as a whole (e.g., Andreff & Weber, 1995). In Spain, the share of sport-related gross value added is estimated at 1.28% (European Commission, 2012). SPA professionals play a central role in delivering the core services in this expanding industry. Spain currently holds one of the highest levels of unemployment in Europe (23.7% in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2014), especially among adults, who are 25 years of age or younger (48.9%) and women (24.7%) (National Statistics Institute, 2015). The contribution of sport-related employment to total employment in the European Union is estimated to be 2.12% and 1.77% for Spain (European Commission, 2012). A similar number of 2% was reported for Canada (Conference board of Canada, 2005). This paper analyses functions of Spanish SPA professionals in the field in order to reveal the range of opportunities in this sector, thereby providing deeper insight into the current labour market for SPA professionals. The specific objectives are: (1) to describe the basic functions and multi-functionality of SPA occupations in the labour market in Spain; and (2) to analyze the specific SPA functions and multi-

functionality according to city size, age, sex, and type of organization. In doing so, this contribution assists educational and training institutions to adapt their offerings to the needs of the current labour market, and it informs both, institutions and students about career paths, mobility, career development, and the multi-faceted panorama of occupations in this sector for people of all ages and both sexes, all over the country. Revealing these opportunities allows to strengthening the position of SPA professionals in a tapering labour market in Spain.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First we elaborate on classification systems for sport occupations, and define concepts SPA professionals and functions as established in human resources theory. The literature provides an overview of the significant growth of the SPA industry in the past few decades, and its implications for the SPA labour market in general, and in Spain in particular. Specific attention is given to the age and sex of the SPA professionals as well as the degree of urbanization where the functions are performed as important determinants for SPA functions. The method section explains how the data were collected from a representative sample of 2500 SPA professionals in Spain. The results reveal an extensive, diversified and multifunctional panorama of SPA functions in facilities of different sizes across the country. How these vary by degree of urbanization, age, sex and type of organization is also uncovered. Implications of the findings are discussed and recommendations for future research are provided, followed by an overall conclusion.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Classifications of Human Resources in Sport and Physical Activity**

The sport and physical activity sector offers a wide variety of services, requiring different levels of specialization from consumer (i.e., low skill and routine services) to professional services (i.e., based on knowledge, expertise and special competencies) (Chelladurai, 2014). The wide variety of jobs within the sector makes it challenging to analyze and structure human resources and

employment in the field (Camy, Clijsen, Madella, & Pilkington 2004; Juillet, Buisine, & Gouju, 2013; Madella, 2003). In the context of sport and physical activity, human resources refers to employees who deliver professional services (e.g., Chelladurai, 2014), manage sport organizations (e.g., Tracey, 2004), and/or operate sports facilities (e.g., Le Roux, Chantelat, & Camy, 1999). Occupations in these areas require specific knowledge, capabilities, experience, abilities and competencies.

The International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08; International Labour Organization, 2007) grouped specific sport and physical activity occupations under codes “1431: Sports, recreation and cultural centre managers” and “342: Sports and fitness workers” (with “3422: Sports coaches, instructors and officials” and “3423: Fitness and recreation instructors and program leaders”). Other specific sport and physical activity occupations (physical education teachers, extracurricular activities teachers, personal trainers ...) appear under codes: “23: Teaching professionals”, “2269: Health professionals” (not elsewhere classified), and “5169: Personal services workers” (not elsewhere classified).

Following the international classification and structuring of human resources in sport and physical activity organizations and services, Le Roux et al. (1999) established the following two categories in a European context: *Sport professions* (professional sports persons, referees, sports activity leaders, sports instructors and sports coaches) and *Sports-related professions* (sport managers; sports doctors; physical education teachers; sports journalists; sports physiotherapists; caretakers and maintenance workers of sports facilities ...). In Spain, Mestre (1995) grouped sport and physical activity occupations into: *Sport and Physical Activity “Specialists”* and *“Non-specialist”*.

The current study uses the classification by Campos-Izquierdo (2005; 2010), which was specifically developed for Spain. This classification is comprehensive and serves to identify,

analyze and structure specific human resources in the different sport and physical activity services in any organization or facility based on the functions they perform. This classification differentiates three types of human resources, which are in turn divided into two groups of sport and physical activity services:

- *Indirect (non-specific) sport and physical activity human resources*: Individuals who work in sport and physical activity services but who carry out functions, which are not specific of sport and physical activity. These can be subdivided into:
  - Those who do not belong to a profession but do have salaried positions: attending to clients, cleaning, sports equipment sales persons, maintenance, etc. (similar to consumer services as identified by Chelladurai, 2014)
  - Those who belong to a profession: physicians, physiotherapists, architects, engineers, journalists, psychologists, economists, etc. (similar to sports-related professions by Le Roux et al., 1999)
- *Specific sport and physical activity human resources (SPA professionals)*: Individuals who carry out one or several functions, which are specific for sport and physical activity. This category falls under the “professional sport and physical activity services” as identified by Chelladurai (2014); “standard occupations” as identified by Petry, Froberg, and Madella (2006); and the “Sport and Physical Activity Specialists” as identified by Mestre (1995) and Martínez (1991).

This study focuses specifically on SPA professionals. These workers use sport and physical activity as the fundamental and central element of their professional performance. SPA professionals apply specific practical, theoretical and scientific knowledge, procedures and techniques. Their competencies are acquired through specific training in sport and physical activity.

This qualification ensures the quality, safety and efficiency of the services (Campos-Izquierdo, 2010; European Observatoire of Sport & Employment [EOSE], 2014).

### **Functions of SPA Professionals**

A thorough understanding of specific sport and physical activity functions assists in shaping and delimiting sport and physical activity jobs, occupations, and professions. In the sport and physical activity sector, “a professional area may be characterized by a set of tasks and functions corresponding to the production of goods or services and which have led to identify ‘functional maps’” (Petry et al., 2006, p. 53).

The job analysis literature is replete with terms. There is, however, some consensus about the hierarchy of terms, ranging from general to specific; more specifically for the three work activity terms: job, function and task (Gael, 1983), as well as occupation (International Labour Organization, 2007; see figure 1). A function is "a broad subdivision of a job composed of a group of tasks that are somewhat related because of the nature of the work or the behavior involved" (Gael, 1983, pp. 9-10). Fernández (1995) rendered that a function is a component, a part or dimension of a job, and defined it as a set of related or similar tasks in content, requirements or objectives. A job is “a set of tasks and functions performed, or meant to be performed, by one person” (International Labour Organization, 2007, p. 1). The distinction between jobs and occupations is also relevant. Occupations refer to aggregations of jobs, grouped on the basis of their similarity in: content and tasks, duties and responsibilities, and the conditions under which they are performed (Cain & Treiman, 1981).

[INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Functions of SPA professionals include: assessing clients’ needs, developing appropriate programs, providing guidance, coaching and leadership in sport and physical activity (National Sports Council, 1991). Moreover, SPA professionals perform their work in a variety of

environments, such as: physical activity (Hoffman & Harris, 2000), human movement (Sergio, 1999), physical education, sport or physical exercise (Del Villar, 2004; Federal Council of Physical Education of Brasil, 2002; Wuest & Bucher, 2006). In Spain, the following sport and physical activity occupations are generally recognized: physical education teacher, sport instructor, sports coach, fitness instructor, sport animator, physical trainer and director of SPA (National Sports Council, 2007). In addition, Lalín (2008) pointed out that some tasks performed by physical trainers are readaptive in nature, thereby referring to a profession, which he labeled physical-sports readaptator<sup>i</sup>. Campos-Izquierdo (2005, 2010) identified 12 basic functions of sport and physical activity occupations in Spain (see Table 1). It should be noted that each specific sport and physical activity function, job or occupation is usually performed in a specific context, determined by one or several factors, such as: (a) the development, characteristics and context of the respective individuals and population (e.g., toddlers versus seniors; novice versus high performance athletes,...); (b) the type and complexity of the sport and/or physical activity (e.g. football versus skiing); (c) the type of sports facility (e.g., swimming pool, arena, stadium, track, natural environment, tourism destination, residential or school facility); and (d) the type of organization (public sector, non-profit or for-profit organization).

## **Literature Review**

### **Growth of the SPA Industry**

The strong emphasis of sport and physical activity contributing to an improved quality of life and social well-being (e.g., Commission of the European Communities, 2007; Conference Board of Canada, 2005; National Sports Council, 2000; Wuest & Bucher, 2006) encouraged by government support (e.g., Downward, Dawson, & Dejonghe, 2009), has stimulated the individual and societal demand for sport and physical activity. For example, studies from the Spanish Sociological Research Centre & National Sports Council (2010) on sports participation revealed a

considerable increase from 25% (in 1980) to 45% (in 2010) among Spanish adults, aged 15 to 65. These studies were carried out every five years from 1980-2010 in a similar manner. Sport participation was consistently defined as participating in sport at least once in the previous year. García and Llopis (2011) attributed this important increase in sport participation to two causes. First, the authors mentioned the transformation of the Spanish society and the sports system due to the consolidation of democracy and socioeconomic development in recent decades. Second, García and Llopis emphasized the profound changes in diversification and amplification of the demand, to the broader motives for participation in sport, such as enjoyment, pastime, health, social relations and body image.

The growth in sport and physical activity consumption (i.e., demand) is associated with an increased supply. This can be demonstrated through the growth of the number of sport facilities in Spain. Studies of the census on sport facilities of the Spanish national statistical services, revealed an increase in sport facilities from 48.723 in 1985 (first census of sport facilities) to 79.059 in 2005 (last census; National Sports Council, 2006). Sport facilities were consistently defined as spaces where sport and physical activities are developed and supplied. The National Sports Council (2006) explained the possible causes for this rise to the increased level of sport participation (as outlined above), but also emphasized the increased support from the local, regional and national governments to promote and support SPA, with the intention to create healthy SPA habits among the Spanish population. It can be assumed that this growth in facilities, has been paralleled with a growth in employment opportunities.

### **The SPA Labour Market**

From an employment perspective the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (2013) estimated that 163.400 employees were working in sport related companies, accounting for 0.9% of total employment; and the National Sports Council (2000) estimated that 200.000

occupations were specifically related to sport and physical activity in a wide variety of organizations.

The growth of the sport industry has positively impacted employment and attracted researchers' attention. Studies on employment in SPA are diverse and carried out from different perspectives. There are, for instance, regional or national overviews (e.g., Camy, 2006; Juillet et al., 2013); specific studies on the employment of graduates in sport and physical activity (e.g., Minten, 2010; Petry, Froberg, & Madella, 2008; Taks, Delheye, Hartmann-Tews, & Demuynck, 2003); or research that focus on areas of intervention, specific sectors, occupations or professions, such as the fitness sector (e.g., Lloyd, 2007; Viallon, Camy, & Collins, 2003), or basketball coaches (e.g., Beccarini, Madella, & Mantovani, 2000).

An extensive study by the European Observatory on Sport Employment (EOSE, 2014) illustrated that the growth of the sport industry led to a greater variety of functions, as well as an expansion into new areas, occupations, and services. The information was general in scope (e.g., characteristics of the work force, strengths, weaknesses and gaps in the labor market, quality assurance processes, etc.), and was not related to specific countries. This study served a variety of stakeholders, including governments, national qualifications authorities, national sport movements, employers, education and training providers as well as individual-employees (EOSE, 2014).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] (2011) disclosed that most SPA occupations in Australia were fitness instructors, sport animators and coaches. Madella (2002) revealed the same dominant occupations for Italy. Occupations with the strongest growth in Australia were fitness instructor and manager-of fitness centers. In the United States, Hoffman (2000) concluded that the most traditional SPA occupations have been physical education teacher and coach. In the Czech Republic physical trainer, instructor and coach were the occupations in greatest demand in different types of organizations (Caslavova, Kraft, & Voracek, 2011).

Previous studies on sport and the labour market have indicated that the sport and physical activity sector is an important source of employment for youth and women (e.g., Di Cola, 2006; Le Roux et al., 1999). For example, young professionals represented the majority of employees in SPA occupations in Australia, with the majority (23%) working as fitness instructor (ABS, 2011). Other findings revealed a big gap between men and women in some sport and physical activity functions (Camy et al., 2004; International Working Group on Women and Sport, 1993). For example, men particularly dominate sport coaching (e.g., Greenhill, Auld, Cuskelly, & Hooper, 2009) and sport management functions (e.g., Moore, Parkhouse, & Konrad, 2010; Pfister, 2006).

### **The SPA Labour Market in Spain**

Studies on sport and employment in Spain have been carried out from national (e.g., Martínez, 1991) and regional perspectives (e.g., Campos-Izquierdo, 2005; Martínez-Serrano, 2007; Gallardo & Campos-Izquierdo, 2011). The employment situation of graduates in sport and physical activity (e.g., Puig & Viñas, 2006), as well as specific sectors or professions (e.g., Gómez, 2003; González-Rivera, 2008; García-Merino, 2011), have also been investigated. In the 1990s, the following occupations were most prominent in Spain: sport coaching (42.9%, with 36% in the low and middle levels); teaching physical education (21.1%); physical conditioning (16.7%); SPA management (12.2%); sports and recreation animation (3.8%); and, physical training (mainly geared towards competitive sports) (3.4%) (Martínez, 1991). Martínez (1991) emphasized an increasing importance of SPA management and teaching occupations. Around the millennium, fitness instructors, personal trainers, and physical-sport readaptators became more prominent (Campos-Izquierdo, 2005; Martínez-Serrano, 2007). All studies pointed to a high level of multi-functionality and functional mobility of SPA professionals (e.g., Campos-Izquierdo, 2005; Madrid Association of Sports Services Companies, 2001; Martínez, 1991), and were executed in a wide

variety of organizations, including the public sector, non-profit and for-profit organizations (Camerino, Miranda & Pigeassou, 1995, Campos-Izquierdo, 2005; Pablos, 2007).

SPA functions are executed all over the country, regardless of city type or size (Campos-Izquierdo, 2005; Martínez, 1991; Martínez-Serrano, 2007). For example, in the region of Valencia the most performed functions were: instructing SPA (sports instructor) and basic group physical conditioning (fitness instructor), with over 13% each; followed by managing and coordinating SPA (SPA manager), teaching physical education (physical education teacher) and sports coaching (coach) (Campos-Izquierdo, 2005; Martínez-Serrano, 2007). In Coslada (a municipality in the Madrid region) the two most important functions were sports coaching and instructing SPA (Gallardo & Campos-Izquierdo, 2011).

Data from the 1990s revealed that 42% of the SPA employees were 30 years of age or younger, carrying out functions such as coaching, basic physical conditioning and sport animation (Martínez, 1991). More recently, instructing SPA and extracurricular SPA became also important functions among young employees (Campos-Izquierdo, 2005; Martínez-Serrano, 2007). These authors also observed a tendency towards more stable functions and occupations with increasing age, such as teaching physical education and management of physical activities and sports. This is not surprising, since these occupations generally have better working and professional conditions and therefore many people tend to work in these occupations with increasing age. Furthermore, this could be because the Physical Education teacher in Spain is a regulated and recognized profession.

Men dominate SPA functions and occupations in Spain. In the 1990s, Martínez (1991) revealed that only 23% of the SPA professionals were women. The dominance of men was also confirmed by later studies (e.g., Campos-Izquierdo, 2005; Martínez-Serrano, 2007; Puig & Martínez, 2002). The gap between men and women was particularly large for sport coaching

(Campos-Izquierdo, 2005; Martínez, 1991) and SPA management functions (García, 1986; Gómez, 2003; Puig & Soler, 2003), which aligns with similar findings in other parts in the world (e.g., Greenhill et al., 2009; Moore et al., 2010; Pfister, 2006).

Overall, the variety of SPA functions and contexts has evolved over time, leading to a broad range of sports and physical activity jobs, occupations and services. Spain has amongst the highest levels of unemployment in Europe (23.7% in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2014), especially among these younger than 25 years of age (48.9%) and women (24.7%) (National Statistics Institute, 2015). In addition, unemployment is higher in rural areas compared to more urban areas (Camarero, 2009). Given the growth of the sport industry, the sport and physical activity sector can enhance employment opportunities, especially for women and youth, in all parts of the country. Therefore, it is highly relevant to analyze SPA occupations and functions by taking into account age and gender differences, while making sure that all parts of the country are well represented.

## **Method**

### **Sample and Participants**

Data were collected from a representative sample of 2500 Spanish individuals who worked in sport and physical activity occupations in 1797 sports facilities, located in 696 different municipalities country wide (covering 50 provinces and 17 regions). Sport facilities provided the right context, since these are the spaces where sport and physical activities are developed and supplied. To our knowledge, there are no SPA professionals who are not somehow affiliated to one of these facilities (Martínez-Serrano, 2007; Oña et al., 1995; Pablos, 2007). The sport facilities were proportionally stratified based on the most recent official census of sport facilities of Spain (National Sports Council, 2006), and included: schools (25.1%), fitness facilities (21.5%), multisport facilities (20%), multisport facilities with pool (11.2%), recreational fields (7.4%), pools (4.1%), natural facilities (3.2%), single sport facilities (2.7%), residential facilities (2.6%) and

tourist facilities (2.2%). Multistage probability sampling was used to select the participants (Bryman, 2004). Clusters were stratified according to: region, province, municipality, sport facility, and subject to be interviewed. Random sampling was applied at each stage. Proportional stratification according geographic area (city size) allowed for a maximum of two people to be interviewed in each facility. When the interviewers visited the facility, they identified the SPA professionals and randomly invited them to participate in the study, until the required number of two was reached. Occasionally, only 1 person was interviewed. This was the case if there was only one SPA professional working in the facility, or when only one SPA professional agreed to participate.

### **Survey**

An existing questionnaire was used to collect the data, namely the PROAFIDE (i.e., Recursos humanos de actividad física y deporte [Sport and physical activity human resources]) (Campos-Izquierdo, 2011). This questionnaire is an adaptation and extension of a previous questionnaire developed by Campos-Izquierdo (2005). It has been used in several research projects and doctoral dissertations (e.g., Gallardo & Campos-Izquierdo, 2011; González-Rivera, 2008; Martínez-Serrano, 2007).

The content validity of the PROFIDE questionnaire was established based on input from sixteen independent experts, as well as a discussion group of national and international experts. The survey was pilot tested with 250 individuals who performed SPA functions in all regions of the Spanish peninsula, taking into account a proportional allocation according to population size. No significant changes were required after the pilot study. The final version of the questionnaire consisted of 57 closed questions, in five sections: (1) socio-demographic characteristics, (2) sport and physical activity functions, (3) professional performance in specific occupations, (4) work characteristics, and (5) training characteristics of these professionals. For the purpose of this study

the following variables were included: age, sex, size of the municipality (retrieved from section 1); type of organization (retrieved from section 4), and SPA functions (section 2).

## **Measurements**

### **Socio-demographic variables and types of organizations**

Age was collected in number of years, and three age categories were established: younger than 30 years of age, between 30 and 44; and 45 years of age and older. Men were coded as 1; women as = 0. City size was operationalized in 2 categories: (0) less than 50.000 inhabitants; and (1) equal or more than 50.000 inhabitants. Type of organization was operationalized in 3 categories: (1) public; (2) non-profit sector; and (3) for-profit sector.

### **SPA functions and multi-functionality**

Based on the list of 12 SPA functions listed in Table 1, respondents were asked to identify all SPA functions they had performed over the course of their career, and which ones they are currently performing. Multi-functionality was measured by adding the total number of functions the respondents performed in their current career (ranging from minimum 1 to maximum 7, because 7 was the maximum number mentioned by respondents). The distribution for multi-functionality (MF) was as follows: MF=1, 66% (n = 1662); MF=2, 23% (n=584); MF=3, 7% (n=179); MF=4, 2% (n=59); MF=5, 0.4% (n=11); MF=6, 0.1% (n=3), and MF=7, 0.1% (n=2). Given this distribution it was decided to create a dummy variable where code 0 represented no multi-functionality (i.e., the respondent performed only one function at the time of the investigation; 66%, n= 1662), and code 1 represented multi-functionality (i.e., the respondent performed two or more functions at the time of the investigation; 34%, n = 838). The respondents were also asked to identify their three most preferred SPA functions (regardless of the fact whether they had performed these functions or not).

## **Data Collection**

Face-to-face interviews were conducted by trained interviewers, who filled out the standardized questionnaire described above, based on the participants' responses. An interview lasted 15 minutes on average. Nineteen interviewers were specifically trained and supervised for the purpose. The data were collected in the winter, spring, summer and autumn of 2011. Seasonal collection of data guarantees adequate representation of SPA functions, since many physical activities and sports services have a seasonal character (e.g., skiing in winter, wind surfing in summer).

## **Data Analysis**

Frequencies were calculated to describe the SPA functions by city size, age, sex, and type of organization. Frequencies were also calculated to demonstrate which combinations of SPA functions are readily apparent. Given that the level of multi-functionality (MF) was transformed into a dummy variable, binomial logistic regression analysis was applied to determine which variables best explain multi-functionality. The following model was tested:

$$\mathbf{MF} = a + b(\text{sex}) + c(\text{age}) + d(\text{city size}) + e(\text{organization type 1}) + f(\text{organization type 2})$$

with women, cities < 50.000 inhabitants, and for-profit organizations being the reference categories. Data were analyzed using SPSS (V 19.0).

## **Results**

### **Functions of SPA Professionals**

The analysis of the specific SPA functions currently performed in Spain showed a mixture of 12 functions. These functions reflect the professional activities of SPA professionals, their sector and their labour market. The most performed functions are: coaching competitive sport (18.3%); developing and conducting basic fitness and physical conditioning for groups (fitness instructor; 17.1%); and, instructing sport and physical activity outside the educational system (sport instructor;

16.3%). Three functions had participations rates that were lower than 1%, namely instructing SPA theory in courses for permanent education programs of SPA professionals (n=16 or 0.4%), researching or consulting SPA (n=16 or 0.4%), and inspecting SPA services (n=3 or 0.1%). Because of their low participation rates, they will not be part of further analyses. Table 2 provides an overview of the basic functions of the SPA professionals according to city size, age, sex, and type of organization (in % of each function).

Of the total of 2500 SPA professionals, 48% were active in more rural areas. All functions are readily apparent in cities of all sizes. Only a few functions stand out, such as instructing SPA in rural areas, showing a percentage of 55% in the smaller municipalities (<50.000 habitants). Developing basic physical conditioning, training physical activity and exercise, teaching extra-curricular SPA and readapting through SPA and exercise are clearly more dominant in urbanised areas (i.e., cities with more than 50.000 inhabitants). All other SPA functions do not necessarily dominate in one particular geographic area.

The ages of the respondents ranged from 16 to 70 years ( $M=33.4$  years,  $SD=10.29$ ) with 42% under 30 years of age, 41% between 30 and 44, and 17% over 44. Functions dominated by younger SPA professionals (< 30yrs. old) include: developing recreational SPA, teaching extra-curricular SPA, instructing SPA and coaching sport. Functions dominated by the middle age group (30-44 yrs. old) were: managing SPA, teaching physical education, developing basic physical activity and conditioning, training PA and exercise, and readapt through SPA or exercise. While the older age group ( $\geq 45$ yrs. old) is least represented, functions that are most frequently performed by SPA professionals of this group include: teaching physical education and managing SPA.

Of the 2500 SPA professionals, 71% were males and 29% were females. Men clearly dominate in SPA professions, particularly coaching, managing SPA, training PA&E and teaching

extra-curricular SPA (percentages over 75%). The only function where women outweigh men is for developing recreational SPA (52% and 48% respectively). Developing basic physical conditioning is the second most important SPA function in which women participate (40%), but men still dominate with 60%.

When analyzing the type of organization, it can be observed that 44% of the SPA functions are performed in for-profit organizations, followed by 29% in non-profit organizations, and 27% in public sector organizations. The latter is dominated by teaching physical education. Coaching and teaching extra-curricular SPA are typically performed in non-profit organizations. All other SPA functions are more prominent in for-profit organizations.

### **Multi-Functionality of SPA Professionals**

The multi-functionality of SPA professionals stands out. Over the course of their careers, 60% of the respondents performed multiple functions simultaneously, and 33.5% were performing two or more functions simultaneously at the time of the investigation. In addition, 39% of the respondents were performing different functions at the time of the investigation compared to the past. Table 3 provides an overview of the determinants of the multi-functionality of Spanish SPA professionals. The model is significant with  $LRT = 3049,86$ ,  $p < .001$ . Unlike the relatively low Nagelkerke  $R^2 = 0.075$ , the model has a good reclassification value (greater than 66.9%), satisfying the statistical assumptions of the model. The OR ( $\beta$ ) predictive values, indicated that multi-functionality is significantly higher among men ( $p < .001$ ), older SPA professionals ( $p < .001$ ) and those working in the for-profit sector ( $p < .001$ ).

Table 4 provides an overview of the functions, which are most frequently combined in the current professional context of the SPA professionals. The results show that training basic physical conditioning for groups (fitness instructor) is frequently combined with other functions; and most

frequently with training physical activity and exercise (personal trainer/physical trainer; 205 cases), managing SPA (133 cases), instructing SPA (sport instructor; 107 cases), and to some extent re-adaptation through SPA or exercise (readaptator; 72 cases). Coaching sport is frequently combined with instructing SPA (sport instructor; 117 cases) or managing SPA (102 cases). Other frequent combinations include training physical activity and exercise (personal trainer/physical trainer) with managing SPA and (115 cases), and with readaptation through SPA or exercise (readaptator; 93 cases).

Of the professionals, 17.4% would prefer to have a different function from the one they are currently performing. The most desired functions are: teaching physical education (34.2%); managing SPA (19.6%), training PA and exercise (13.9%), readapting through SPA and exercise (12.1%) and coaching (11.6%). The remaining functions accounted for less than 2% of the preferences.

## **Discussion**

The results reveal an extensive, diversified and multifunctional panorama of SPA functions, following earlier trends identified by Martínez (1991), the National Sports Council (2000), Oña et al. (1995) and Puig and Viñas (2006). There is an expansion into new areas, occupations, employment, opportunities and services (EOSE, 2014; National Sports Council, 2000), which can be explained by the stronger emphasizes on sport and physical activity for the individual and overall social well-being in the past decades (e.g., Conference Board of Canada, 2005). This diversification of SPA functions is noticeable all over the country and thus the whole Spanish population can benefit from these enhanced and expanded SPA services, both from a demand (i.e., the SPA participants) as well as from a supply perspective (i.e., the SPA professionals). The increase and variation in the supply and demand of SPA has also been demonstrated by García and

Llopis (2011). The wide variety of functions defines and delimits the SPA professionals, the labour market and employment in this sector.

As an expanding industry, the SPA sector offers highly needed opportunities for developing strategies and actions to reduce unemployment in Spain. It should be noted, however, that compared to previous studies (Martínez, 1991), the results point towards a decrease in traditional SPA functions and occupations, such as coaching. This can partially be explained by an overall decrease in participation rates in traditional, competitive sports (e.g., Camerino et. al, 1995). This decline is offset by substantial increases in functions such as training physical activity and exercise for the general population and competitive athletes as personal trainer and/or fitness trainer (e.g., García-Merino, 2011; Spain Football Federation, 2013). The function of readapting and re-educating through SPA or exercise is another area of expansion (see also Lalín & Peirau, 2011). This aligns with trends in other countries such as Canada (e.g., Canadian Athletic Therapists Association [CATA], 2010; College of Kinesiologists of Ontario, 2014; National Athletic Trainer' Association [NATA], 2011). Other functions on the rise at the national level are: developing basic physical conditioning for groups, instructing SPA and managing SPA, which reflect similar trends observed for the Region of Valencia (Campos-Izquierdo, 2005; Martínez-Serrano, 2007), as well as in other parts of the world such Australia (ABS, 2011), the Czech Republic (Caslavova et al., 2011) and Italy (Madella, 2002). The increased importance of developing basic physical conditioning for groups has generated employment opportunities for fitness instructors (e.g., Madrid Association of Sports Services Companies, 2001; García-Merino, 2011). In many developed countries, teaching physical education is a well-established and regulated profession, and sport manager has been identified as an emerging occupation (e.g., Chelladuari, 2014). To improve employment in these functions and occupations, proper promotion and training is

essential. Scientific and professional collaboration with other countries should be encouraged in this regard.

The SPA professionals in this study demonstrated a high level of multi-functionality and mobility. Multi-functionality is apparent both, over the lifespan of their careers as well as in their current occupations, meaning that the SPA professionals were or are performing multiple functions in the same or multiple occupations. Mobility refers to the flexibility that SPA professional demonstrate to switch and move between functions during their current career. Mobility is also apparent by the fact that functions change over time with increasing age, thus over the course of their career path.

Several trends in the SPA labour market explain this high level of multi-functionality among SPA professionals. First, there is the fact that, except for Physical Education teacher, most SPA occupations are not regulated and do not require official SPA qualifications (Campos-Izquierdo, 2005; González-Rivera, 2008; Martínez, 1991; National Sports Council, 1991). Thus, SPA professionals compete with other less qualified people for the same jobs. In addition, many of these jobs are part time (González-Rivera, 2008; Martínez-Serrano, 2007), forcing SPA professionals who seek full-time employment to work in a variety of SPA organizations, requiring different sets of functions (i.e., multi-functionality in multiple organizations simultaneously). This precarious employment situation stimulates SPA professionals to switch and move between functions over the course of their careers to pursue new and improved job opportunities for themselves (González-Rivera, 2008; Martínez-Serrano, 2007; National Sports Council, 1991; i.e., multi-functionality over the course of a career in on one or multiple organizations). Finally, the majority of SPA organizations offer a wide range of SPA services (Campos-Izquierdo, 2010; Madrid Association of Sports Services Companies, 2001; Peiró & Munduate, 1999); thus, from an organizational perspective it is highly effective and efficient to employ SPA professionals who can

perform several functions (i.e., multi-functionality in one organization). It is expected that these trends will continue into the future (Campos-Izquierdo, 2010; Pablos, 2007), thereby confirming the importance of multi-functionality of SPA professionals in Spain.

This high level of multi-functionality and mobility aligns with findings in studies on sport occupations in other European countries (e.g., EOSE, 2014; Le Roux et al., 1999; Taks et al., 2003). Peiró and Munduate (1999) argued that it is important to stimulate multi-functionality in human resources because it efficiently organizes and improves employment. Thus, multi-functionality must be taken into account when managing human resources in the SPA sector (e.g., Chelladuarai, 2014). Multi-functionality should become an integral part of the job selection process, the job description and the training of SPA professionals. However, multi-functionality must also be fully acknowledged and incorporated in the initial (academic) and life-long (permanent education) training of the SPA professionals, as this would strongly enhance their position and career opportunities in the labour market. Multi-functionality also promotes opportunities for self-employment of SPA professionals (Campos-Izquierdo, 2010; Martínez-Serrano, 2007; National Sports Council, 1991).

Coaching, instructing SPA, teaching extra-curricular SPA, and developing recreational SPA are proportionally more executed by younger SPA professionals (younger than 30 years of age). As age increases, there is a tendency to evolve into more stable functions with better working and professional conditions, such as teaching physical education (as a PE teacher) and managing SPA (as a sport manager). This is in line with previous finding by Martínez (1991) and Pablos (2007). In addition, the degree of multi-functionality also increased with age. This can be explained by the fact that SPA professional gain more experience as they get older, which they can then easily apply to multiple functions (e.g., González-Rivera, 2008; Mestre, 1995; Pablos, 2007).

Women are significantly under-represented in SPA occupations in Spain, especially in coaching and managing SPA. This is consistent with findings from previous studies in other countries (e.g., Greenhill et al., 2009; Moore et al., 2010, Pfister, 2006; Puig & Martínez, 2002; Puig & Soler, 2003). In addition, women show significantly lower levels of multi-functionality. Spanish girls and women participate less in sport and physical activity compared to boys and men (García & Llopis, 2011). This, together with the higher number of male students in SPA qualifications (Campos-Izquierdo, 2005) may explain both, the underrepresentation and the lower level of multi-functionality of women in SPA occupations. Implementing strategies and tactics to reduce this gender gap in SPA functions and occupations (Camy, et al., 2004; Pfister, 2006) enhances employment opportunities for women in the labour market, which would benefit from this greater diversity (e.g., Chelladurai, 2014). Almost 20 years after the fact, the findings of this study still need to refer to the declaration of the “Brighton declaration on women and sport” (International Working Group on Women and Sport, 1993) which stated that: “Those responsible for these areas should develop policies and programs and design structures which increase the number of women coaches, advisers, decision makers, officials, administrators and sports personnel at all levels with special attention given to recruitment, development and retention” (p. 3).

More SPA functions are carried out in for-profit organizations, compared to public and non-profit organizations, indicating that commercial companies are picking up the slack and taking advantage of the increased demand in SPA and the expanding industry. This supports similar findings in Europe, where it became evident that commercial organizations have become more involved in the mass participation sector, whereas in the past, this was clearly the mandate of the public and voluntary (i.e., non-profit) sport sector (e.g., Downward et al., 2009; Gratton & Taylor, 2000). In addition, the level of multi-functionality is also higher in commercial sport organizations.

This is not surprising, since for-profit organizations are generally more dynamic, and therefore require more flexibility from its employees to quickly adapt to changing demands in society (e.g., Eschenfelder & Li, 2007). Also, there is less multi-functionality in public organizations because selections for those jobs usually pertain to only one SPA function (Martínez-Serrano, 2007; Mestre, 1995). Furthermore, over the years, public organizations have been outsourcing more and more functions and occupations to commercial organizations, thereby considerably decreasing the number of civic employees. This was indeed the case for SPA programs offered by public services (Campos-Izquierdo, 2010). Thus, younger, unemployed and female SPA professionals would benefit to target for-profit organizations in their search for job opportunities.

### **Implications**

A thorough job analysis serves two purposes. First, it allows to structure and direct tasks and functions in a suitable and efficient manner, thereby enhancing work conditions in the field. Second, it assists with developing efficient and effective training programs, improving curricula, and consequently competencies of SPA professionals (Board of Certification [BOC], 2010; Campos-Izquierdo, 2010; Chelladurai, 2014; National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2006, 2009). Countries around the world offer different qualifications through a variety of SPA programs of different levels. Findings of this study can help develop different types of qualifications, permanent education and/or life-long learning programs; which subsequently require appropriate guidelines for competencies, objectives, contents and structures. More accurately trained SPA professionals ultimately enhance the profitability of the sport and physical activity industry.

Although, the SPA university degrees in Spain have acknowledged the importance of multi-functionality, institutions would benefit from giving it greater importance by broadening the scope of their offerings and by providing a better orientation to the students. For example, strong

partnerships between SPA training programs and especially for-profit organizations through internships, can possibly create new and varied professional opportunities thereby benefitting graduate students to enter the labour market rather than unemployment.

In order to get more younger, unemployed people in the labour market, mentoring programs could be set up (Campos-Izquierdo, 2010; National Sports Council, 2000; Pablos, 2007) where younger SPA professionals work alongside SPA professionals, especially older SPA professionals, since they have more experience and showed higher levels of multi-functionality. This will enhance the work experiences of the SPA professionals who are entering the labour market, and potentially help them find their way, and/or create their own SPA occupation. The recommended implication can enhance the employability of SPA professionals, especially the younger, female and unemployed SPA professionals and facilitate their insertion into the labour market, thereby, stimulating their professional mobility in Spain. Moreover, this study can assist students in qualifying SPA programs to make informed decisions about their training itineraries (both initially and throughout their professional lives) and their professional careers, occupations, profession, labour market and professional performance.

The results could also help to identifying, analyzing and improving procedures related to organizing and leading human resources in SPA settings; especially by taking into account the level of multi-functionality in SPA occupations (e.g., Chelladurai, 2014).

### **Future Research**

Future research should focus on analyzing the labour characteristics of the SPA functions as well as the qualification and training of SPA professionals. There are wide-ranging options for qualifications of SPA professionals in Spain. Besides vocational diplomas and university degrees in SPA, there are multiple possibilities for people with general, non-SPA degrees to become qualified in SPA through specific certification programs (e.g., in different levels of one or more

specific sports, coaching, etc.) and/or permanent education programs. While the qualification of SPA professionals is an important component to enhance our understanding of the SPA labour market, it would require a full explanation of the complex educational and qualification system in Spain, including a full discussion on the need for norms and standards, the relationship with the quality of services, and so on. This is outside the scope of this contribution and will become the focus of another manuscript. In addition, the current study was a snap shot of the employment situation in Spain in 2011. It would be beneficial to carry out this study at regular intervals, so that up to date trends can be identified over time. Comparing the Spanish data with data from other countries (e.g., EOSE, 2014) will enhance our insights in the SPA sector and the training and qualifications of SPA professionals. This will allow generating a common structure, which favours labour mobility among the different countries and facilitates the establishment of academic and professional connections.

## **Conclusion**

Increased attention to the multiple benefits attributed to sport and physical activity in many developed countries has boosted the industry thereby increasing the demand and supply for services, and enhancing employment opportunities in the SPA sector. Spain is experiencing a high level of unemployment, and could benefit from new labour market opportunities. The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the basic functions of occupations in the sport labour market in Spain in 2011. A previous national study of this kind dated back from 1990 (Martinez, 1991).

The basic functions refer to the actual tasks that SPA professionals perform while executing their occupations. These functions make up the core of the professional activities, and are essential to guarantee an adequate level of performance in the labour market. Data were collected from 2500 professionals using face-to-face interviews based on a standardized questionnaire. The SPA professionals were interviewed in sport facilities, since these are the spaces where sport and

physical activities are developed and supplied. Sport facilities were located in municipalities of all sizes, and representative for all provinces and regions in Spain. As is the case in many other countries, Spain has witnessed an expansion in the number and diversification of SPA functions and occupations. This wide variety of functions is equally apparent in cities of all sizes, provinces, and regions in the country and all type of organizations (public sector, non-profit sector and for-profit sector).

Overall, coaching competitive sport, developing basic physical conditioning for groups (fitness instructor), and instructing SPA (sport instructor) are the most frequently performed functions among SPA professionals; followed by teaching physical education (physical education teacher), managing SPA (sport manager), and training PA and exercise (personal trainer/physical trainer). The last three functions together with that of readapting and re-educating through SPA or exercise are applied in more stable occupations, making them more desirable among SPA professionals. We see these functions being carried out at a later stage in the SPA professionals' careers. The strongest growth is seen in functions related to personal trainer/physical trainer, readaptator, and fitness instructor, while coaching has seen an important decline in the last decades. Women are under-represented in all SPA functions, especially in coaching and sport management occupations. There is a strong need to reduce this gap between men and women to increase diversity in the SPA workplace.

Overall, trends in the Spanish labour market point towards a continued importance and necessity of multi-functionality of SPA professionals; this is pertinent in their current jobs, and remains relevant throughout their professional careers. There is a high level of labour mobility, because similar functions can be applied in a variety of sport and physical activity occupations. Thus, multi-functionality and mobility facilitate employment and career opportunities of these professionals, at present and in the future.

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**Table 1:** Basic Functions of Sport and Physical Activity (SPA) Occupations in Spain (adapted from Campos-Izquierdo, 2005, 2010)

<b>SPA Functions</b>	<b>SPA Occupations</b>
– Instructing SPA outside the educational system	Sports instructor
– Teaching PE in the education system	PE teacher
– Teaching extra-curricular SPA in school	Extracurricular PE teacher
– Instructing SPA theory in courses <sup>(1)</sup>	SPA theory instructor
– Coaching individual and team sports in competition	Sport coach
– Training PA and exercise to individuals and groups (including athletes of individual and team sports at different levels of competition)	Personal trainer, physical trainer, fitness trainer
– Readapting (reconditioning) and re-educating through SPA or exercise (including athletes of individual and team sports at different levels of competition)	Physical-Sport Readaptator (similar to kinesiologist; athletic trainer) <sup>i</sup>
– Developing and conducting basic fitness and basic physical conditioning programs for groups	Fitness instructor; aerobics instructor
– Developing and conducting recreational SPA programs	Sport animator
– Managing, organizing and coordinating SPA in sports facilities	SPA manager
– Inspecting SPA services	SPA inspector
– Advising, researching and certifying SPA	SPA advisor, researcher and consultant

*Note.* SPA = Sport and Physical Activity; PA = Physical Activity; PE = Physical Education;  
<sup>(1)</sup> These courses are offered in permanent education programs for SPA professionals

**Table 2:** Basic Functions of SPA professionals in Spain in 2011: Overall and According to City Size, Age, Sex, and Type of Organization (in % of each function; excluding SPA functions < 1%)

SPA Functions	Overall n (%)	City Size (population)		Age (yrs.)			Sex		Type of Organization		
		< 50.000 (48)	≥ 50.000 (52)	< 30 (42)	30-44 (41)	≥ 45 (17)	Male (71)	Female (29)	Public (27)	Non-Profit (29)	For-profit (44)
Coach SPORT	675 (18.3)	52	48	<b>46</b>	38	16	<b>88</b>	12	13	<b>74</b>	13
Develop BPC	631 (17.1)	41	<b>59</b>	42	<b>50</b>	9	60	<b>40</b>	15	5	<b>80</b>
Instruct SPA	600 (16.3)	<b>55</b>	45	<b>58</b>	32	10	67	33	22	27	<b>51</b>
Teach PE	499 (13.5)	51	49	14	<b>52</b>	35	67	33	<b>73</b>	7	20
Manage SPA	452 (12.3)	52	48	18	<b>56</b>	26	<b>79</b>	21	25	20	<b>55</b>
Train PA&E	395 (10.7)	42	<b>58</b>	39	<b>50</b>	11	<b>77</b>	23	11	17	<b>72</b>
Teach extra-curr. SPA	188 (5.1)	29	<b>71</b>	<b>67</b>	26	8	<b>73</b>	27	18	<b>49</b>	33
Readapt SPA/E	126 (3.4)	39	<b>61</b>	37	<b>50</b>	9	67	33	10	19	<b>71</b>
Develop recr. SPA	88 (2.4)	52	48	<b>74</b>	22	5	48	<b>52</b>	16	13	<b>71</b>

*Note.* **BPC** = Basic Physical Conditioning; **extra-curr.**= extra-curricular; **PA&E** = Physical Activity & Exercise; **PE** = Physical Education; **recr.**= recreational; **SPA** = Sport and Physical Activity; **SPA/E** = Sport and Physical Activity or Exercise; **BOLD** emphasizes importance.

**Table 3:** Multi-functionality of SPA Professionals in Spain in 2011 (current career) according to City Size, Age, Sex, and Type of Organization (Results of the Binomial Regression Analysis)

	<i>B</i>	<i>B SE</i>	Wald	OR ( $\beta$ )
Constant	-0.644***	0.166	15.023	0.525
Sex	-0.389***	0.100	15.173	0.678
Age	0.017***	0.004	14.432	1.017
City Size	0.003	0.089	0.001	1.003
Organization (1)	-0.940***	0.110	72.926	0.391
Organization (2)	-1.029***	0.114	80.998	0.357
R <sup>2</sup>	0.075			
Reclassification	66.9%			

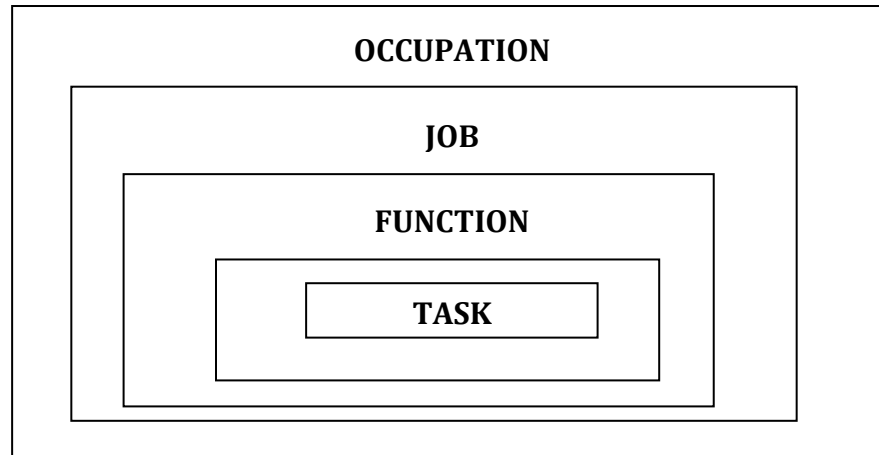
*Note.* \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ ; Multi-functionality (0) = No (1) = Yes; Sex (women = 0; men = 1); City Size (0) = < 50.000 inhabitants, (1) =  $\geq$  50.000 inhabitants; Organization Type (1) = Public sector, (2) = Non-profit Sector; reference organization = For-profit sector

**Table 4:** Combinations of SPA Functions in Number of appearances in their current careers (excluding SPA functions < 1%)

	SPA FUNCTIONS								
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Coach SPORT	--	30	<b>117</b>	56	<b>102</b>	40	41	17	5
2. Develop BPC		--	<b>107</b>	10	<b>133</b>	<b>205</b>	20	<b>72</b>	10
3. Instruct SPA			--	17	<b>80</b>	60	31	37	8
4. Teach PE				--	19	21	27	9	2
5. Manage SPA					--	<b>115</b>	24	40	14
6. Train PA&E						--	17	<b>93</b>	4
7. Teach extra-curricular SPA							--	9	6
8. Readapt through SPA/E								--	5
9. Develop recreational SPA									--

*Note.* **BPC** = Basic Physical Conditioning; **PA&E** = Physical Activity & Exercise; **PE** = Physical Education; **SPA** = Sport and Physical Activity; **SPA/E** = Sport and Physical Activity or Exercise; **BOLD** represents SPA functions with high levels of multi-functionality.

**Figure 1:** Concepts in the Job Analysis Literature (adapted form: Gael, 1983 and International Labour Organization, 2007).



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<sup>i</sup> The profession of “physical and sport readaptator/re-educator” should not be confused with physical and sport rehabilitator or physiotherapist. The latter is allowed to diagnose the former cannot. Note that several names may refer to the same job or occupation. For example, in Canada, a “physical and sport readaptator” is a professional kinesiologist, who “assesses and manages human movement and performance in order to maintain, rehabilitate or enhance movement and performance” (see: [www.coko.ca](http://www.coko.ca)). Here too, kinesiologist is a different occupation than physiotherapist; a kinesiologist can assist a physiotherapist. In USA, “athletic trainer” is the common name used to refer the profession of “physical and sport readaptator”.