

HOW TO CREATE AS MUCH KNOWLEDGE AS POSSIBLE ABOUT THE IMPACT OF CENTRAL POLICY, ON SPORT

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INTRODUCTION

It is argued elsewhere, that there is a long way to go from central policy making to the implementation of that policy (Skille, 2005). With central policy making I mean policy making which takes place at the national level, either in public sector (by the state) or in the voluntary sector. The latter thus refers to the Norwegian Olympic Committee and Confederation of Sports. The implementation of sport policy, that is provision of sport activity, takes place in the sport clubs at the local level. Research shows that in more 90 per cents of the sports clubs, more than 90 per cents of the work are voluntarily conducted. The mentioned research is a major quantitative survey, done by the Norwegian Institute for Social Research (Enjolras and Seippel, 1999, 2001; Seippel, 2003). With their data the researchers paints a broad picture of sports clubs' size, structure, economy etc.

The former research lacks, however, the deeper description of what really takes place in a sports club, as do any other Norwegian study of the phenomenon. What does the board discuss in their meetings? Out of that, how do, on the one hand, the internal processes in the sports clubs and the external environment influence the debate and decisions that are made in the sports clubs' board? And how do, on the other hand, the decisions in the board influence the provision of activity and the sport which is actually played in the sports club? From these questions is the research question for this paper generated: How to create as much knowledge as possible about the impact of central policy, on sport? As far as this paper is a methodological reflection, where the aim of the paper is to develop a basis for future empirical research, I skip the 'methods' and 'results', and go straight to the 'discussion'.

It is, in some respect, an unorthodox paper, but some of my best memories from the EASM congresses are those of methodological reflection.

METHODS

Text

RESULTS

Text

DISCUSSION

I want to find as much as possible about the influence of central policy on local sport implementation. I have to do so within certain frames: I am one researcher with 60-70 per cents of my work dedicated to research, for three years (2006-9). (The rest is related to teaching and administration of course.) I have a limited amount of economic resources, implying that I have to do the work myself. What should I do? I will tell you what I am doing, while the data collection is taking place during 2007.

I base on three interrelated reasons for applying the methods that I am doing:

1. Based on a phenomenological approach, I try to stay close the phenomenon Norwegian sport. And Norwegian sport is first and foremost the activities, both physically and what we refer to as sport, and organizationally and what I refer to as the sport system. (Norwegian sport is of course not unified and holistic, but varied. That is a main point of departure for the sampling procedure mentioned below.)

2. Based on a hermeneutical and interpretative methodology, I try to do several things. First, I lean on the existing research (as we all do) and my own experience from the field of sport (as former athlete, former coach, voluntary father and sport teacher and researcher) and try to develop a conciseness about my prejudices and the total horizon of understanding (Gadamer, 2004). Second, during the main empirical analysis (which takes place after data collection is defined as finished, although the interpretation is continues in such a study), I try to apply several validation procedures (Seale, 1999), and to generate and give as thick descriptions as possible (Geertz, 1973) to make my interpretations of the holistic phenomenon as good as possible (Ricoeur, 1991). That also allows both understanding and explanation of the processes taking place (Ricoeur, 1991).

3. Summing up the two former to a hermeneutic-phenomenological perspective, the third baseline occurring is that of making strategic use of the case study design and several qualitative methods (Yin, 2003). For example, based on the abovementioned quantitative research (Enjolras and Seippel, 1999, 2001; Seippel, 2003), I make a strategic sampling, to cover a broadest possible representation and still few enough units to go into depth with a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach includes document analysis, observation (in organizational and sport activity contexts) and interviews.

The paper will be a discussion about the presented thoughts, and I hope to get nuanced support as well as more critical comments during my stay in Turin.

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