

HOW LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN JAPAN FACILITATE COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY SPORTS CLUBS

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Aim of abstract/paper - research question

This study determines underlying data about the relationship between local governments and Comprehensive Community Sports Clubs” (CCSCs) and examines whether local governments promote sports activities of local residents by facilitating CCSCs. The research questions are as follows: 1) How do local governments support CCSCs? 2) What public–private partnership projects should local governments outsource to CCSCs? In 2000, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) issued a “Basic Plan for the Promotion of Sports.” The establishment of CCSCs was one of the main policies for local sports promotion in the Basic Plan. CCSCs are expected to provide facilities for various sports activities for local residents to experience a “lifelong sports society,” where they can engage in sports they enjoy “any time,” according to their individual physical condition, age, skill, interest, and objective. MEXT planned to establish at least one CCSC in each municipality throughout Japan within a 10-year period. As of 2011, there were 2,851 CCSCs in Japan.

Theoretical background

Since the 2000s, with the increasing hollowing-out adopted by the state and local governments, the role of non-state actors has risen in the New Public Management (NPM) approach for public services delivery. Expectations for CCSCs have risen over the same period. Previous studies about CCSCs have focused on local resident volunteers, their social capital, and the cooperation among diversified actors (including local governments, businesses, residents, and private bodies) to promote sports activity among local residents in Japan (Nakamura 2006, Kurosu 2008). However, these studies have not focused on the role of the local governments that facilitate CCSCs. Most CCSCs use public sports facility and public facilities as their club office. Some CCSCs receive subsidies from local governments and are public–private partnership public sports services projects outsourced by the local governments.

Rhodes (2000) illustrated two approaches of governance related to public management (p.72). The first is the “instrumental approach,” which is a top-down approach to network steering. The second is the “interactive approach,” which focuses on the dependence of network actors and developing goals and strategies by mutual learning; collective action depends on cooperation. Kondo and Ito (2010) indicated that synergy between the two approaches is important to achieve public interest in Japan (p49). This indication is also true for local sports promotion. It is important to enhance the “interactive approach” to intensively examine the “instrumental approach” of local governments (Houlihan & Groeneveld, 2011, p11).

Methodology, research design and data analysis

In this study, first, we determine how local governments support CCSCs and outsource public–private partnership projects to CCSCs. Second, we analyze the relationship between local governments and CCSCs in each local government sector grouped according to the local population. Third, we analyze CCSCs’ activities in each local government sector to determine the impact of the local government–CCSC relationship on the activities of each CCSC group. We categorized the local governments into eight groups based on the local population in accordance to the MEXT official report about public sports services. This study analyzes data acquired from 1) a questionnaire survey sent to all local governments in which there were CCSCs’ statuses as of August 2011, 2) a questionnaire survey sent to all NPO clubs (incorporated nonprofit organizations operating CCSCs) 3) Statistical data on all NPO club activities has been provided from MEXT. Since approximately 10% of CCSCs are operated by NPO clubs, we choose to focus on them because they tend to be active.

Results

Local governments questionnaire survey form was mailed to 1142 local governments. The recovery rate was 64.7%. The valid response rate was 64.2%. The survey was conducted in November 2011. NPO clubs questionnaire survey form was mailed to 280 clubs. The recovery rate was 66% (185 clubs). The valid response rate was 64%(180 clubs). The survey was conducted in November 2010.

Local governments with NPO clubs have a high percentage of outsourced public–private partnership projects. Such NPO clubs tend to facilitate diversified activities and deliver a substantial amount of public sports services to local residents. This may imply that local governments steer NPO clubs toward undertaking public–private partnership projects. This analysis indicates that the “instrumental approach” of local governments enhances the “interactive approach” for local sports promotion. Therefore, it is important to focus on both CCSCs’ management and the role of local governments in facilitating the outsourcing of public–private partnership projects to CCSCs. This point has not been addressed in previous studies in Japan. We will present detailed results of the analyses and implications of the results of the survey at a conference.

References

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