MANAGING SPORT DEVELOPMENT: THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

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It is (or should) be of concern to those involved in sport development and sport management that arguably there has been convergence in the contexts within which sport sits ensuirng that terms, that whilst having a synergy and complimentarity, have tended to become synonymous organizational, if not philosophical, terms of reference. Arguably sport management with its over-reliance on neoliberal inspired new public management (Dieffenbach, 2009) has, in dominating sport development discourse, ensured that the language of the market, accountability and evidence become common currency in sport development circles. This paper develops an understanding of NPM, as it applies to the management of sport development, to argue that the structuring structure provided by the adoption of NPM in sport management has led to outcomes that may be judged as being good, bad and ugly. Good operationally, in clarifying the processes involved in being 'business-like' as well as providing the 'how' and 'when' these processes should occur. Bad in terms of implementation; ensuring that sport development occurs in a market orientated milieu where Sport Development organizations (mainly public sector) have to fit into 'the new spirit of capitalism' (Chiapello and Fairclough, 2002:16). Ugly, in promoting evidence, and methodologies of evidence, as necessary, but not sufficient, conditions in establishing political and policy contexts that promote sport development as a legitimate activity. Critically this paper argues first that the two key strategic objectives of NPM; increased efficiency, effectiveness and productivity; and cost-effectiveness (Diefenbach, 2009:895) have an almost ideological and hegemonic hold over sport management, and second that sport management and sport development can and should establish distinct identities in defining and providing particular public and private goods. The purpose of this research therefore was to conceptualise both sport development and sport management philosophically with a view to understand the ethos, and any transfer to practice, of practitioners working within these two areas.

Method

Ninety questionnaires were completed by sport practitioners working in two southern counties of England with nine semi-structured and iterative interviews that were each based on the results of the questionnaires, and drew on key themes arising from those questionnaires. The questionnaires were used to gain information on the current role of the sport practitioner and broad interpretations of sport development and sport management. The semi-structured interviews with sport management/development practitioners allowed this research to interrogate the key themes emerging from the quantitative phase of the research to understand how those at the 'street level' made sense of the work they do. The framework for analysis was divided into two parts; a) first SPSS and a one way ANOVA post hoc test were used to analyse the results of the questionnaires; second, a critical thematic analysis was developed based on part a, as well as from coding of the qualitative data collected.

Results

Broadly speaking the results suggest that sport management and sport development have separate and complementary ethos's that are clearly articulated by the subjects of the research. Interestingly over 80% of respondents suggest that whilst sport management and sport development are philosophically different, in practical terms they have to cohere and be articulated within coherent strategies and programmes for each to be successful.

References

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