
TO WHAT EXTENT CAN SPORT DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS MONITOR AND EVALUATE THEIR OWN SPORT FOR GOOD PROJECTS?

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the field of Sport for Development (SFD) and the role of practitioners in Monitoring and Evaluation (M and E). The role practitioners play within M and E is crucial given their involvement in programme development and delivery, and how findings of M and E practice feed back into their practice. Opposed to M and E being situated within external and academic circles (Kay, 2012), at the heart of this paper is the argument that practitioners should be fully embedded and involved in the process. Drawing upon ongoing participatory research, the paper will reflect upon current findings of an ongoing study to date, which involves training and building the capacity of practitioners to carry out Monitoring and Evaluation.

The topic of M and E has drawn considerable interest in recent years within the context of sport for good (Coalter, 2007, 2010, 2013). In essence the interest and subsequent critique has focused on the issues facing sport for good projects in respects to scepticism and whether they are able to facilitate change, how they are monitored and evaluated (Levermore, 2011, Kay, 2012) and who should be involved in these processes. As a result a lack of evidence discourse (Nichols et al, 2010) has emerged which raises a series of issues around the capacity of sport for good projects. In order to move the field forward it has been suggested that a deeper understanding of what works for whom and why (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, Coalter, 2007) is required to make sense of the mechanisms that may lead to certain outcomes in programmes. On Against this backdrop, this study aims to move the debate forward by exploring the crucial role of practitioner involvement and accountability in the M and E process. This research draws upon a participatory approach, training a sample of student sport development practitioners in M and E techniques within their curriculum at Southampton Solent University. In particular, the production of an evaluation framework which embeds realistic evaluation techniques (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) is

currently being trialled with the practitioners who are monitoring and evaluating their own sport for good projects in the local community. Six workshops aligned with the principles of empowerment evaluation (Fetterman, 2005) are being implemented to train and work with the students to competently understand how and why their programmes achieved certain outcomes. A series of interviews with practitioners, and the examination of reflective blogs which explore the utility and impact of the framework are being carried out as part of the authors ongoing research.

In conclusion, this paper intends to uncover attitudes, developments and perceptions that practitioners have towards M and E and the approaches that are suitable for carrying out such tasks. The implementation of realistic techniques may also enable a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that facilitate positive or negative outcomes in sport for good programmes.

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