
LEGACY, LEVERAGE AND COMMUNITY SPORT – A CASE STUDY OF PRE GAMES TRAINING CAMPS IN NORTH WEST ENGLAND

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Abstract

Introduction and Background

This research was undertaken as part of a consortium approach between the Local Authority and the University, referred to as the MMU/CE LEAP programme (Legacy Evaluation and Action Plan), to the hosting of Pre-Games Training Camps (PGTC) for visiting Oceania teams to the Olympics in 2012. This paper seeks to analyse the impacts of the hosting of Pre-Games Training Camps in the NW of England, as part of the attempts by Regional agencies and organisations to leverage a legacy in community sport.

Literature review

There is growing literature on mega-events and their diverse legacies, including the potential for sport development (Girginov and Hills, 2009). Kellett, Hede and Chalip (2008) have proposed a leverage approach to developing social benefits from Mega Events related to the teams from other nations. Despite a limited support in the literature for the assumed boost to community sport (Coalter, 2004), the London 2012 Games had clear imperative to extend the impacts of the Games across the UK. In community sport there is also some question regarding the future impacts on sport organisations and structures for sustainable changes (Girginov and Hills, 2009). The leverage of benefits, for example using Pre-Games Training Camps (PGTC) as part of a planned approach to Legacy building, in communities in the North West region was a clear strategic approach by development agencies (NW Steering Group, 2012) but gaps remain in the literature on mega-events. Specifically there remains a gap in understanding the Community Sport Development (CSD) opportunities provided through hosting training camps in communities and the related social impacts of such work. Thus, this paper focuses on the pre-Olympic training camps in 2012, which included small numbers of athletes, from smaller Oceania teams with very limited experience of international events and elite level sport

performance preparation and larger camps including the Australian Swimming team hosted in Manchester. (Additional interviews in Manchester are planned for the summer of 2014 will add the NW dimension and give some updating on current relationships).

Methodology, research design and data analysis

A case study methodology, with qualitative, interpretive approach has been applied to the Cheshire East based training camps specifically, using diverse sources and data types (Yin, 2009) to examine the methods and approaches used and the impacts of the leverage of benefits for community sport. An outline logic model of assumed benefits and aspirations was developed from initial documents and plans. Burwitz et al (2012) have previously reported on the immediate outputs and activities focusing on soft legacy of human and social capital. The primary data for this paper has been collected via interviews with stakeholders from the Consortium and participants in UK camps, clubs, and additional analysis of documents and observations of PGTC activities and community events. Secondary data has included analysis of video interviews of athletes and reports compiled by the NW Nations and Regions in 2012 records of the Oceania team visit, documented by the Reporters Academy on behalf of the Oceania NOC's (Hargreaves, 2013). This follow up study adds to the review of immediate impacts regarding more lasting impacts and sustainability of the relationships established. A deeper analysis of the impacts and processes involved in the PGTC activities in the NW can therefore add to the emerging literature on the leverage of social impacts and benefits of mega events beyond the host city.

Results, discussion and implications/conclusions

Key findings in the thematic analysis of the interviews with those directly involved in hosting the camps have highlighted the development of relationships between visiting and hosting clubs and organisations, enhanced perceptions of Olympic links and 'inspirational' effects of the Games, engagement in international collaborations, increased experience for volunteers, participants and sport management professionals at various levels. Those involved in the camps in community sport in LA, schools and Clubs have clearly gained. Clubs have enabled young people to develop understanding of elite athlete preparations, cultural differences and considered their clubs to have been enriched by their involvement. International visitors were enthusiastically received by local schools and some enhanced cultural exchanges ensued, though few were sustained beyond 2012. However, it was difficult to see any longer term changes, attributable to the PGTC activity. The presentation will refer to the results of follow-up interviews with hosting agency representatives in Cheshire and Manchester to determine if and how longer term relationships have been maintained. Though there were limited specific benefits identified in 2012, e.g. in sporting structures, there was little direct involvement from the camps to University students and the wider community beyond the clubs or

members. Some personal contacts and individual relationships have been developed beyond professional links for the Camps, but the follow up interviews will test their sustainability. Apparently, ongoing relationships, e.g. for Commonwealth Games Camps have been difficult to sustain without LOCOG / NOCOC support for teams. The wider implications of this small case study are related to extending our understanding of the limits to leverage through PGTC linked to the Olympics and or other mega events. This study can also help build a logic model of leverage benefits from hosting similar camps. Beyond relationship building and cross cultural exchange of ideas, such Camps can provide useful development of young scientists, coaches or inspirational examples for young athletes – but the impacts are relatively short lived and the longer more sustained efforts to extend or develop community sport in hosts or visitors clearly require greater resource and strategic commitment by sporting authorities.

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