

Sport development is dead, long live sport management?

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Sport policy track

The focus of this paper is to critically evaluate conceptions, perceptions and interpretations of sport development and sport management. In particular, and using the UK as a case study, the paper will aim to help shed light on the way that the policy contexts dictate the application of sport practices. The analysis, in this respect, concerns policy responses to conceptions of sport development and sport management as a counterpoint to the view that these two terms are often viewed as responses to policy. Whilst sport development is a common term in the UK, in mainland Europe, and further afield in the USA sport management is preferred as the sobriquet of choice in relation to the development of sport – in all its guises. The background to sport development in the UK is something of a paradox. Whilst many new sport facilities were developed from the 1970s onwards it wasn't until the Thatcherite era of the 1980s and 1990s that a 'field' began to emerge from the opportunistic and utilitarian presumption that the promotion of sport would have beneficial outcomes for social and civic order (Coghlan, 1990, Wicker et al 2009).

Certainly in the UK the concept of development can be interpreted in many different ways (Girginov, 2008). Allied to sport, development has often been taken to indicate a positive process of change or a means of progression. This affirmative relationship has been associated with sport performance and participation, community relations, health (e.g. smoking cessation), self confidence and crime reduction. In short, reflecting the development 'of' and

'through' sport dichotomy that tends to be accepted normatively in the UK (Houlihan and White, 2002).

It is unquestionably the case that in the UK (and perhaps in mainland Europe) sport development is under threat directly and indirectly from policy actors and the discourses to which they contribute. In the UK, a discourse of austerity, public sector retrenchment and espousal of the 'Big Society' (Cameron, 2010) has caused many to look anew at both sport resources and resources for sport.

Using an approach that blends semi-structured interview data from policy actors and sport practitioners with key document analysis, this paper will conceptually clarify the areas of sport development and sport management and identify limitations to both traditions. The analysis will help focus attention on a) how sport practitioners operate within particular policy contexts; b) whether debates over nomenclature help or hinder the promotion of sport and sporting practices; and c) whether the power of the rhetoric of austerity has shifted expectations and interpretations of the value of sporting practice. Moreover, in pursuing this line of interrogation this paper asserts that the opportunity structure for the organisation and development of sport has shifted from sport development to sport management in the UK and beyond.

References:

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