
WITH RANDOM ACTIONS TOWARDS INEFFICIENCY – THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NORWEGIAN YOUTH SPORT POLICY THROUGH THE 2016 LILLEHAMMER YOUTH OLYMPIC GAMES

Abstract ID: EASM-2015-113/R1 - (627)

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Date submitted: 2015-03-19

Date accepted: 2015-04-14

Type: Scientific

Keywords: Policy Implementation, Institutional Theory, Bricolage, Translation, Youth Sport Events

Category: 12: Sport Policy

Synopsis:

This paper scrutinizes how the Norwegian youth sport policy is practically implemented in connection to the 2016 Lillehammer Winter Youth Olympic Games.

Abstract:

AIM OF THE PAPER

Mega and major sport events, especially the Olympics, are often assigned to be part of a national sport political agenda. In that respect, the 2016 Lillehammer Winter Youth Olympic Games (YOG) is defined as a part of the national youth sport policy defined by the Norwegian Olympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF). NIF's current policy is called "the youth campaign" and aims at increasing young people's participation, regarding athletes, leaders and coaches (NIF 2014): The YOG is supposed to be the driving force to implement the youth sport policy. This paper scrutinizes how NIF's objectives are practically pursued. The research question therefore is: How is the Norwegian youth sport policy implemented in connection with the YOG?

THEORY

Theoretically, the paper is based on the neo-institutional concepts of isomorphism and (institutional) change (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, Campbell 2004). Analysing institutional change on central sport policy, Skille (2008) showed how the mechanisms of 'bricolage' and 'translation' (Campbell 2004, p.8) are suitable for explaining implementation process. Bricolage implies that new institutional solutions are created by 'recombining elements in an innovative process by bricolage' (Campbell, 2004, p. 69). Translation means that the new element is actively imported and treated in order to fit into the receiving context (Campbell, 2004). With the help of institutional theory, we aim to define the elements that characterize the structural components of the organizations of

NIF and Lillehammer Youth Olympic Games Organizing Committee (LYOGOC) with regard to implementing the youth campaign.

METHODS

We conducted seven semi-structured interviews with key persons relevant for the operationalization of the youth sport policy through the YOG. The interviewees represent a range of hierarchy in NIF, LYOGOC and the Lillehammer region. The interview guide was based on the above named theoretical framework including questions about the tasks in the implementation process, if they are forced to act in a certain way (coercive pressure), adapt ideas from other organizations (mimetic isomorphism), use existing programs where they translate their own ideas (translation) with or without the help of experts (normative isomorphism). Further, we asked who came up with certain programs, if they were new innovated (bricolage) by themselves (entrepreneurship). In order to unravel the chain of policy-implementation we further asked about the administrative layers that were to, or not to, overcome. Further, field notes were generated through observations of 54 hours of gatherings, courses and presentations that concerned the youth campaign in regard of the YOG. In the analysis, we followed the tactics by Miles and Huberman (1994) identifying common patterns in the data in two steps: first via inductively coding, which corresponds to a descriptive and open observation of data, followed by second, a theoretical analysis under the framework presented above.

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Tentative results show that the implementation of the youth campaign is influenced by entrepreneurship of the key sport policy implementers, a small group of five persons actual operationalizing the campaign. The policy implementers are employees of NIF, as well as LYOGOC which was assigned by NIF to contribute to the youth campaign. The only actions taken work towards the recruitment of young leaders by offering courses that have existed in NIF before the YOG came into the scene. In that respect, there are normative elements flowing from the established NIF system into the more youth focused event. The YOG as an external element was translated into already existing practices. Other innovative projects are set up through entrepreneurs and implemented by network building in the Lillehammer region. The implementation though runs from a top-down initiative without asking the bottom up demands and lacks efficiency. Besides the actions taken, there remain actions not taken. While the courses for young leaders are in line with the goals of NIF's youth campaign to recruit more young leaders into Norwegian sport, the other pillars involving young athletes and young coaches do not exist. The biggest achievement of the implementation through the YOG will be to have educated 200 young leaders; a quite small number compared to that young people have 327 000 memberships in NIF. Important stakeholders of the Norwegian sports systems, the clubs and sports federation in which actual sport activity is happening are hardly involved in these initiatives. That NIF sets up the courses and initiatives by itself and not works it through its own structure leads to an observable inefficiency of the policy implementation and leaves a remaining impact on the youth sport development to be doubted. While there are a number of studies looking into policy-making process in regard of sports events, this paper contributes to literature by exploring the implementation

processes of such policies. Moreover, it adds a contribution to the study of how general sport policies and major sport events are related.

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