
IMPLEMENTATION OF SPORT ENGLAND'S CLUBMARK INTO COMMUNITY SPORT CLUBS: SWIMMING, RUGBY UNION AND BOXING

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All authors:
Alex Thurston (corresp)

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Synopsis:

Abstract:

1. Aim of abstract/paper

The aim of this study was to analyse the relationship of National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and community sport clubs in the process of policy implementation of Sport England's generic Clubmark framework (a quality mark accreditation). Within the overarching Clubmark framework, other policies (such as safeguarding) that must be adopted by clubs working towards the accreditation (or re-accreditation) standard were also examined.

2. Theoretical background or literature review

Policy makers are predominantly centrally located often a distance from the point of delivery where, it is argued, the environment is highly variable, pressured and political, often requiring negotiation and interpretation during the process of implementation. Historically, implementation analysis adopted two distinct approaches: bottom-up theorists (cf. Lipsky, 1980) suggested that the role of street-level bureaucrats (e.g. club officers at the point of delivery) should be the focus for analysis; top-down theorists (cf. Hogwood & Gunn, 1984), assume a perfect rational process as the starting point, although acknowledged as unattainable by the top-down theorists, with the focus being on the central policy-makers. Subsequently, theorists have developed a synthesis of the two approaches, such as Matland's (1995) ambiguity-conflict model. These models have established the theoretical framework that has guided this research.

3. Methodology, research design and data analysis

This research adopted a qualitative approach using case studies from three sports: swimming, rugby union and boxing. Data collection consisted of document analysis (from both clubs and NGBs) plus interviews with club officers and NGB officials. Two clubs from each sport were examined (one

urban, one rural) which, yielded interview data from between eight to twelve club officers per sport. Club officer selection was based on positions of authority within the committee who had knowledge of Clubmark. Three to four NGB officials from each sport provided data for the top-down perspective of policy implementation.

4. Results, discussion and implications/conclusions

The (preliminary) main findings from the research are: a) implementation is not straightforward; NGBs have to be flexible with their strategies and be willing to adapt certain Clubmark criteria due to the varying capacities of clubs; b) NGBs need to be aware of the constraints of a club's environment in an attempt to ensure successful implementation; c) accreditation prestige, hence a clubs' motivation, varied across sports; and d) the role of club officers (volunteers), as implementing agents, is fundamental in the policy process.

These findings are consistent with the implementation literature and application of the theories mentioned in section two, that guided the research, proves effective in developing the understanding of implementation in this particular context. Furthermore, this research has added to our knowledge by demonstrating how the complex and heterogeneous nature of clubs affects the implementation process in sport.

This is my current PhD research; further conclusions will be drawn prior to the conference in September.

References:

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