

Evaluating the network leadership in elite sport

Authors: Jarmo Mäkinen, Jari Lämsä

Institution: Research Institute for Olympic Sports, Rautpohjankatu 6, FIN-40700 Jyväskylä, Finland

E-mails: Jarmo.makinen@kihu.fi , Jari.lamsa@kihu.fi

Aim

The aim of this conference paper is to evaluate the results of the elite sport reform, which was carried through in Finland in 2009-2012. The main outcome of this reform was the foundation of the High Performance Unit (HPU) under the Finnish Olympic committee, which started its operation in 2013. The conference paper will analyze how well the HPU have reached its own targets, which were linked more on administrative and operational arrangements than sporting success in this early phase of reform implementation. The most important arrangement was to structure HPU as a network driver for a larger High Performance Network (HPN).

Theoretical background

The evaluation framework follows four-level-model of policy deliberation (Fisher, F. 1995). First, the main concern is addressed to verify how the certain policy program objectives are fulfilled (technical analysis). Second, the findings of the evaluation are examined in relation to the overall development of the various sectors of society (contextual analysis). Third, the overall social significance of the policy program should be analyzed. Finally, the discursive analysis examines the conclusions drawn in evaluation process in relation to the public social policy debate.

The international environment and the development of the elite sport must be taken into account in contextual analysis of the evaluation. In principle, Finland had two options for the implementation of the 2009-2012 reform: the traditional 'Nordic path' led by the sport movement (Bergsgard et al, 2007; Andersen & Ronglan, 2012) and the governmentalisation of the elite sport in way or another like in United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Denmark (Green & Houlihan, 2005). Finland followed the 'Nordic path' but elite sport is still financed by the government to a large extent. In addition, in Finland the network approach is not limiting only to stakeholders but deep into its operational heart, which deviates remarkably from 'one-stop' -ideal of the elite sport operating unit (De Bosscher et al 2006).

Methodology, framework and material

The first step of the evaluation (technical analysis) was implemented in May 2016. It was based on the online-questionnaire sent to all (812) members of High Performance Network (HPN). The HPN includes independent high performance organizations and their personnel, coaches (N=181) and elite sport athletes (N=127). The questions are derived from the objectives of the HPU and the respondents were asked to answer Likert scaled options how well the HPU have reached these objectives in their opinion.

Results

The statistical technical analysis will be ready before the summer 2016. In the conference presentation, structural and leadership features of High Performance Network will be

discussed in the light of the statistical results. The preliminary results indicate that the respondents are satisfied with the policy and objectives set by the HPU. However, they are criticizing that these objectives are not met in athletes' everyday lives and economy so far.

References

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