

Barriers to Implementing a Sport Policy Framework: An Evaluation of Sri Lankan National Sport Policy

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Aim

In 2012, the national sports policy paper was presented to the Sri Lankan parliament to mitigate mismanagement in sports and direct the sports sector to long term progress. However, the Sri Lankan policy framework has not been evaluated. The purpose of the research was to evaluate and identify the mitigating factors of achieving targets of the strategic goals in the Sri Lankan sport policy framework. The advocacy coalition framework (Sabatier, 1999) and quantitative approach were used to analyse and investigate the sport policy framework. Goals of the national policy framework have been taken as deep core beliefs and the government's normative commitments were taken as the policy core (Houlihan, 2005). Resource allocation, political involvement and organisations structural issues have been identified as secondary policy core beliefs.

Method

A questionnaire (N=120) was utilised to gather the data from public regardless of their involvement in sport to evaluate the level of achievement of the strategic goals. Then interviews (N=05) were conducted selecting administrative persons of the policy delivery organisations during in August 2016 to identify the barriers of achieving targets of the strategic goals. The questionnaire consisted of three parts; the first part covered the bio data of the participants; the second part was consisted with evaluation questions of the present situation of the strategic goals and in the third part questions identified people's suggestions for achieving strategic goals efficiently. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of 32 items which were divided into eight major parts of the national policy themes. These questions were in five scale Likert Scale rating. Respondents were requested to evaluate and rate the questions in which their opinion may be favourable and unfavourable. If there is a problem with achieving the strategic goals of the national policy framework, possible solutions were identified by final stage questions. The questionnaire was analysed using simple descriptive statistical tools in SPSS. The interviews were transcribed and made into coding sheet. The coding was done manually with a base of pre-determined board categories before identifying new concepts and codes within the pre-determined codes.

Results and Discussion

In findings, although, the Ministry of Sport has invested a considerable amount of money on development of sports, the goals (deep core beliefs) of the policy framework have not yet been achieved. In particular, the present neo-liberal government involvement has been questioned by several policy delivery organisations. The goal of 'providing sport education knowledge to everyone' is the most successfully achieved goal of the policy framework. The Department of Sport Development (DSD) and National Institute of Sport Science (NISS) have introduced several educational, infrastructure development and career development programs to fulfil the goals of the national policy framework. The role of NISS and government universities have helped to achieve the target of 'providing knowledge to everyone'. The attitude of the of the policy delivery individuals and the attitude of the target groups are main barriers for the implementation and achievement of the targets. The research suggested

that the research findings of Green's (2006) negative attitudes of policy delivery individuals and targets groups will negatively affect policy outcomes. Due to negative attitudes, coaches' and athletes' participation in sport education programmes have declined. Further, children's participation in sport considerably low level due to parents' and teachers' attitudes towards sport.

Conclusion and Implications

Lack of resources is another barrier to the implementation of the national sport policy framework around the country. There are no sport development officers in some divisional secretariat areas. Most of the divisional secretaries have not received sufficient monetary support to develop sports and to identify talented athletes. On the other hand, most of the resources are centralised into urban area. Policy delivery organisations such as the NISS and the DSD do not have sufficient staff to deliver the policy. Most of the people in the National Sport Federations do not have appropriate managerial knowledge to deliver the national policy.

The research suggested a central sport authority including all the independent institutions such as the NISS and the Institute of Sport Medicine. Weak interconnections between the Ministry of Sport and the Ministry of Education has negatively affected the policy delivery process. A pyramid-style organisational structure (Houlihan & Green, 2007) would help to implement a sport policy framework effectively. The government should provide more resources for policy delivery organisations and try to develop a program to change the attitude of the target groups in the policy delivery institutions. Furthermore, there should be a cooperation between Ministry of Sport and Ministry of Education at the policy process. Finally, this research will construct a dialectical sport policy discourse in Sri Lanka and more generally the research will contribute to understand the constraints of sport policy implementation.

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