

Successful Achievement of Social Integration for Disabled People Through Neighbourhood Sport Coaches in The Netherlands

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Background

Since 2008 the Dutch government has been stimulating local sport participation by co-funding the employment of so called Neighbourhood Sport Coaches (NSC) as part of a policy called *Brede Impuls Combinatiefuncties* (BIC). These NSC encourage different target groups to participate in sport and make a connection between sport and other professional sectors such as education and healthcare. NSC are employed by local government or a related executive organisation and can focus on more than one target group. Since 2008 €433,7 million has been invested in BIC. Members of parliament have requested the Secretary of Health, Welfare and Sport to evaluate the nationwide impact of this policy (Lindert, Brandsema, Scholten, Poel, 2017). The study described in this abstract is part of the general evaluation following the theoretical model of evaluation by Jolley (2014) in which 1. The implementation of BIC was evaluated at the level of local government by conducting a policy analysis and 2. The reach of different target groups by the NSC was evaluated. The results of the general evaluation have been described in detail elsewhere (Lindert, Brandsema, Scholten, Poel, 2017).

Aim

The general evaluation identified seven target groups, differing from children in elementary school to vulnerable people such as refugees and senior citizens (Lindert & Brandsema, 2017). This abstract focuses on NSC targeting disabled people. The research questions were: 1. Which methods do NSC use to reach and activate disabled people? and 2. What is the output and outcome of these methods?

Design and Methodology

The study was conducted by a wide consortium consisting of Mulier Institute and eight Sport Management departments within universities of applied sciences, whose students (>30) participated in the local data collection. The students were trained prior to the data-collection and guided during the process by a researcher. A researcher from each university analysed the data collected for one target group of the NSC. In total, almost 300 semi-structured interviews of about one hour were held with NSC, of which 33 were conducted with NSC mainly focusing on disabled people. The students transcribed the interviews literally and entered the transcriptions by topic in a developed online tool. Out of those 33 interviews a randomized sample was used for data-analysis using Excel. The analysis of 19 interviews (12 women and 7 men from 26 to 62 years old) led to information satiation.

Results

NSC for disabled people support a broad target group, ranging from people with an inborn physical or mental (multiple) disability and autism to people with disabilities that occurred during lifetime. The majority of NSC experiences a certain level of freedom to determine tasks and goals of their work. This freedom is perceived as necessary to reach the goals of their work. An overall goal that is mentioned by many NSC is to reach inclusion in sport and society. In general, specific goals are formulated on three levels:

- Sport as a goal in itself, for example to motivate disabled people to participate permanently in sport.
- Sport as a means to reach other goals, for example to achieve social participation by partaking in a sport event.
- Organisational goals, for example achieving cooperation between organisations involved in caretaking for disabled people.

NSC operate in two different roles connecting and executing to reach the above mentioned goals. The ‘connecting’ NSC tries to connect organisations to guide a client to participate in sport. The NSC can make use of existing opportunities or create new opportunities in cooperation with the organisations involved. In the executing role the NSC organises activities and events for educational organisations or institution in healthcare. In both roles the NSC uses a demand-orientated method in which the needs of the client are taken as a starting point. This approach appears to be essential in order to reach inclusion in sport and society. A crucial aspect of reaching inclusion in sport and society is the experience of joy by disabled people during sport activities. Joy is enlarged by the NSC through freedom to act as deemed necessary.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the NSC can be defined as a frontline professional, whose job is twofold: 1. to apply the policy of BIC in a local setting and 2. to create local policy by identifying the needs of target groups (Lindert, Brandsema, Scholten, Poel, 2017). Because of the chosen research method, no hard numbers are available. Nevertheless, the results show that NSC play an important role in achieving participation in sport (output) and inclusion in society (outcome) for disabled people. Many of the given examples by NSC show a situation in which people with a disability can only participate in sport (and society) with the effort of the NSC.

References

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