

Utilisation as Performance Measurement in Sports Facilities

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Introduction and Aim

This abstract is based on results from the research project ‘Sports facilities of the future’ – their operation and (public) management’, which aims to gain knowledge on what matters for the performance of sports facilities. To do so a number of performance measures will be developed. These will relate to the sports facilities economy, utilisation, which users they serve, how satisfied the users are and the physical condition of the sports facilities. On the basis of these measurements of performance it will be possible to analyse in depth, which significance variables such as the type of management and organisation of sports facilities have for the performance of sports facilities. However, this abstract will focus only on the performance measurement of utilization, and what characteristics of the facilities and their management, which are important for a high utilisation.

Theoretical Background and Literature Review

Performance measurement is intensively used across the public sector in the western world. This widespread use is driven by a belief in performance measurement as a vital instrument for improving the performance of public sector organisations (Bruijn 2007). In Denmark (as well in many other Scandinavian and European countries) most sports facilities are supported by the local municipalities. In fact, the majority of the public spending on sport and leisure activities in Denmark (about 6.3 billion. Dkr. per year) goes to financing and subsidizing the operation of both public and private sports facilities. Thus, there is a growing interest in also measuring the performance of sports facilities in line with other public organizations (Alexandris, 2010). Measuring the performance of sports facilities is important for a number of reasons. First, it helps managers to achieve better results by enabling them to understand the drivers of performance and how to influence them. Second, performance measurement can be used as an outset for discussions and debates between managers, staff (and users), which can foster organisational learning, cultural changes and better performance. Third, if managers of sports facilities use performance measurement as a tool to document their value creation to the public and responsible use public resources, they will be rewarded with accountability and external support from politicians and the public (Moore 2013).

As stated, this research project looks at several different measures of performance of sports facilities. In this abstract though, we focus on utilisation as a performance measurement, which is based on the argument that utilisation can be argued to be one particularly relevant government policy area (Iversen & Cuskelly, 2015).

Research Design and Data Analysis

The research project ‘Sports facilities of the future’ – their operation and (public) management’ is carried out in 2015-2019 and consists of three phases. Phase one is carried out in 2016 and consists of a survey to municipalities (n=50) and sports facilities (n=874) about the management of sports facilities. During phase two in 2017 performance measurement data of utilisation, user satisfaction and the physical condition of the sports facility is collected (n=291 sports facilities). Phase three in 2018 consist of 10 in depth case studies of sports facilities.

In this research project, measurement of utilisation specifically involves facility types like multifunctional sports halls, indoor swimming pools and artificial turf soccer pitches during March 2017, approximately 19.000 registrations of activities have been collected in 291 facilities in 23 municipalities representative for the municipalities in Denmark.

The data collection on utilisation was based on the methodology developed by Iversen (2015) and further developed and applied in measuring performance in a number of Danish municipalities (Forsberg & Høyer-Kruse, 2013; Høyer-Kruse, 2013). The registrations were done manually by impartial observers in each facility with the assistance of an online app developed for this task, providing detailed information on the time the activity started and ended, type of activity, number of active persons, type of organization offering the activity, registering no-shows, as well as the age and gender distribution of the participants. Data was subsequently validated and analyzed using the software Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS.

Findings and Implications

Across the sports facilities in the participating municipalities, results shows that multifunctional sports halls are booked 82 percent but only used in 61 percent of the available time. For indoor swimming pools, the numbers are higher, where they are booked 87 percent and used 75 percent of the time. However, the figures cover large regional disparities, such as urban municipalities have somewhat higher both booking and usage than rural municipalities. Looking at different management types, we see a slightly better usage in sports facilities with area management. However, there is no significant difference between the usage of different sizes of sports facilities.

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