Presentation

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The Perspective of Flemish National Governing Bodies on Qualitative Youth Sports.

INFORMATION

Aim

This research attempts to identify how National Governing Bodies (NGBs or Federations) in Flanders (i.e. the Northern, Dutch speaking part of Flanders) define, develop and aim at improving quality in their youth sports clubs in order to increase youth sport participation.

Theoretical background and literature review

During the past decades, quality of sports organizations and projects have become a heavily discussed subject. The decree for subsidisation of NGBs is an evidence of the aim of the Flemish government to improve the quality of sport offer. Moreover, particular attention is given to the quality of youth sport projects in sports clubs through the policy focus 'youth sports'. In the literature, quality is argued to be important for sports clubs and the quality of youth sports is determined as essential when fostering lifelong sport participation as it can prevent drop-out (De Knop & Buisman, 1998). Therefore, a youth sport fund is raised to incentivize sports federations and clubs for promoting qualitative youth sports activities and events with the goal to increase youth sport participation. (Vlaamse Overheid, 2016) However, undertaking activities does not guarantee success. Mechanisms are studied to reveal success factors behind certain activities and/or initiatives, taking into account specific context factors (Brand et al., 2019). Also, quality has no unique definition and the difficulty is embedded in its subjectivity and intangibility as different stakeholders can have different interpretations about their understanding of quality (Chelladurai & Chang, 2000). Therefore, literature is studied to find a quality framework explaining the perspective on qualitative youth sports of the Flemish NGBs as well as their sporting clubs, youth members, parents and coaches.

Methodology

This research provides an overview of what the National Sports Association in Flanders (NSA) and the NGB, i.e. the supply side of sport offer, have already been doing to support development of youth sport quality and quantity in their sports clubs, using a programme theory logic (Brand et al., 2019). Therefore, for each Flemish federation with an approved youth sport project (41 NGBs), a logic map is established. This logic map graphically represents how Flemish sport federations use their inputs (youth sport subsidies) to initiate activities and/or initiatives that contribute to quantitative and qualitative youth sports (output) in their affiliated sporting clubs considering the specific context of each federation and the working mechanisms behind each initiative (Chen et al., 2008; Brand et al., 2019). Data for the logic map is collected with information available in the submitted youth sport projects, the policy plans and the website of the federation under consideration. Next, using a thematic content analysis, a general logic map explains the main activities and initiatives Flemish NGBs undertake in order to improve the quality of youth sport (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In addition, focus groups and interviews will be organized with different federations to validate these logic maps and to discover the working mechanisms behind activities. These mechanisms should provide an answer to the following question: what makes a certain initiative/activity successful? (Brand et al., 2019).

Results