

UK Sports Volunteering Research Network

- Seminar on 19th March 2015
- Presentation from Alex Thurston, Loughborough University.
- All material in these slides belongs to the author.
- For more information about the SVRN please see the website <http://svrn.group.shef.ac.uk> or contact the secretary at Fiona.Reid@gcu.ac.uk.



IMPLEMENTATION OF SPORT ENGLAND'S CLUBMARK INTO SELECTED COMMUNITY SPORT CLUBS

By Alex Thurston

PhD Candidate, Loughborough University

Supervisor: Professor Barrie Houlihan

a.j.thurston@lboro.ac.uk

SVRN 19th March 2015




Rationale

- Policy-makers are predominantly centrally located, often at a distance from the point of delivery
 - Unfortunately, majority agenda setting (identification) have tended to focus on the stages
- 
- Consequently, there is a comparative shortfall of studies of the important implementation stages
- It is argued, with this distance, the local environment is highly variable, pressured and political, often requiring negotiation and interpretation during the process of implementation.

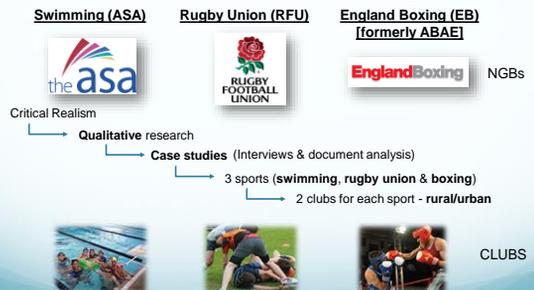
Implementation

- Describes the process of putting a proposal into effect
- **Top-down analysis**
 - Derived from 'Scientific Management' literature (cf. Taylor, 1911)
 - Rational model (Homogenous/monolithic)
 - Hogwood & Gunn (1984) 10 preconditions=perfect implementation
 - Adequate resources, based on valid theory, understanding/agreement of objectives, perfect communication/coordination, obtaining perfect compliance etc.
- **Bottom-up analysis**
 - Individuals at point of delivery (grassroots) should be the focus
 - Lipsky's (1980) Street-level bureaucrats
- **Synthesis**
 - Matland (1995) ambiguity-conflict matrix

Policies

- **Clubmark** – Sport England's nationwide cross sport accreditation quality mark for community sports clubs
 - Swimming – swim21
 - Boxing – Clubmark
 - Rugby Union – Seal of Approval (replaced with RFU's Club Accreditation)
 - **Safeguarding** policies
 - Increasing participation (membership?)
- 

Method/Methodology



(Initial) Key Findings

1. Implementation is **not straightforward**; NGBs have had to be **flexible** with their **strategies** and be willing to **negotiate** and **adapt** certain Clubmark criteria due to the varying **capacities** of clubs
2. NGBs needed to be aware of the **constraints** of a club's local **environment** in an attempt to ensure successful implementation
3. Accreditation **prestige**, hence a clubs' **motivation**, varied across sports
4. The role of club officers (**volunteers**), as implementing agents, is **fundamental** in the policy process.



Alex Thurston, PhD Candidate

@7hrain

Boxing Implementation

- **Clubmark**
 - Promotion/Marketing
 - **Benefits** of accreditation for clubs ("just want to box")
 - Overcoming the "Ivory tower" criticism
 - Capacity building
 - EB attempting to dispense with "one man bands"
 - **Support** offered by CSOs
 - Improving the understanding of policy documentation (**up skilling**)
- **Safeguarding**
 - No issues accepting policy conformity
- **Membership (Participation?)**
 - No real interest
 - Unique geographical location – gangs



Alex Thurston, PhD Candidate

@7hrain

Rugby Implementation

- **Clubmark**
 - SoA became a **cumbersome** process
 - Based on Clubmark but went beyond criteria
 - **Club Accreditation**: Core purpose + 6 key drivers
 - Far simpler process
 - RDOs offer guidance/**support** (capacity building)
- **Safeguarding**
 - No issues with policy conformity
- **Membership (Participation?)**
 - Interest for their own clubs – fill more teams



Alex Thurston, PhD Candidate

@7hrain

Swimming Implementation

- **Clubmark**
 - Promotion/Marketing
 - **Benefits** of accreditation for swimming clubs
 - More than just financial gains (course discounts, grants etc.)
 - (**Lack of**) **capacity** of small clubs
 - **diverse** nature of clubs (different aspirations)
 - **geographical location** (attending courses/cancelled courses)
- **Safeguarding**
 - No issues accepting policy
- **Membership (Participation?)**
 - No real interest
 - Difficult to balance pool time allocation with club members of wide range of abilities



Alex Thurston, PhD Candidate

@7hrain

ASA: Hogwood & Gunn's (1984) Pre-Conditions for Perfect Implementation

Pre-conditions to satisfy	Examples of the ASA's strategies
1 The circumstances external to the implementing agency do not impose crippling constraints	The ASA negotiate with SE on behalf of the clubs
2 That adequate time and sufficient resources are made available to the programme	Choice of hard copy/ electronic evidence submission for a period of time
3 That the required combination of resources is actually available	Online portal – upload evidence as soon as ready – minimised evidence submission/review bottleneck
4 That the policy to be implemented is based upon a valid theory of cause and effect	Informatics department established
5 That the relationship between cause and effect is direct and that there are few if any, intervening links	CDO direct contact to help ensure implementation is not badly executed
6 That dependency relationships are minimal	Single implementing agency ASA (CDO)
7 That there is understanding of, and agreement on, objectives	Ensure adequate T-D communication – online portal & CDOs main lines of communication are 'raked'
8 That tasks are fully specified in correct sequence	Online portal – control technique
9 That there is perfect communication and co-ordination	Online portal
10 That those in authority can demand and obtain perfect compliance	Major departure from previous practices often met with resistance/conflict – CDOs help reassure/guide clubs through the process



Alex Thurston, PhD Candidate

@7hrain

Implementation Assessment

	Clubmark/Other	Safeguarding	Participation (membership)
ASA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 major revisions - Flexible • Developed online version • Continuously learning best implementation approach • Created 8 CDO roles (capacity) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important for ASA • NSPCC reinforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No KPIs for Clubs Team • Guide clubs if interested • Aquatic Officers (different department) focus on participation
Clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial resistance to conform • Was an Arduous process • Now increasing acceptance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instant acceptance/compliance of policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No real interest – pool allocation capacity
RFU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible implementation • Created Club Accreditation • Established RDOs (capacity) • Situational discretion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important for RFU • Safeguarding policy is a bolt-on to CA (mini/girls) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide clubs if interested
Clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was an onerous process • CA vastly more manageable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No resistance • Perfect compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some interest – field teams
EB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware of club constraints • Identify 'capable' clubs to implement Clubmark/elements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important for EB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different approach for each club
Clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only willing if have capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No resistance • Perfect compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No real interest • Club location factor



Alex Thurston, PhD Candidate

@7hrain

Role of Volunteers in Implementation

- Selecting the most suitable Clubmark **implementation strategy** is **complicated** for NGBs
 - **Disparate** nature of clubs
 - Size / capacity / local constraints / aspirations / relevance
- NGBs have had to **adapt/refine** accreditation criteria over time (primarily as a result of club feedback from **volunteers**)
 - Accreditations were **onerous / arduous / laborious** for volunteers
 - NGBs have had to **negotiate** with volunteers to find a **mutually acceptable** process
 - Shown **flexibility** but still within Clubmark limits
 - What are the boundaries set by Sport England? How rigid does Clubmark have to be? Is any **movement** seen as **implementation failure**? **Compromise** for success?
- NGBs must **support volunteers** (capacity building) to achieve successful implementation
 - **Development Officers** are **crucial**
- Further **education** for club volunteers is still required (benefits)



Buy-in' from volunteers (street-level policy actors) is **critical** for success

Alex Thurston, PhD Candidate

@Thrsn

Further Clubmark Research

- This research is **consistent** with other research (that Geoff kindly passed onto me last month!)
- **Nichols & Faulkner** (2013) 'The impact of gaining Clubmark accreditation on sports club volunteers – a pilot study'
 - **Reassurance** (for parents) that **correct procedures are in place**
 - **Time, amount of work, burden clubs, deter volunteers**
- **mruk** (2014) 'Clubmark Accreditation Evaluation' [concluding remarks]
 - Criteria needs to be more **flexible** to allow for **club differences**
 - Clubmark (re)accreditation needs to be **simplified** and/or implement a tiered system. [Although, the ASA have purposely moved away from a tiered system]
- Drastic **alteration** introduced by RFU – is it seen as a simplification or dilution of policy?
 - Are Sport England happy with this? Or is this a compromise to achieve successful Clubmark implementation?



Alex Thurston, PhD Candidate

@Thrsn

Thank You For Listening

Do you have any **questions** or **feedback**?

a.j.thurston@lboro.ac.uk



Alex Thurston, PhD Candidate

@Thrsn