

U Volunteer sport coaches as community assets ? B

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Background - AHRC Connected Communities



Examining increasingly inter-connected communities to enhance self-reliance, regeneration, sustainability and health & well-being

Community sport as a form of social engagement, and the role of volunteer coaches as facilitators of change?

Context

35 million Europeans volunteer in sport each year

European Commission White Paper on Sport (2007) - volunteering in sport - significant economic and social value for society

London 2012 mass sports participation legacy

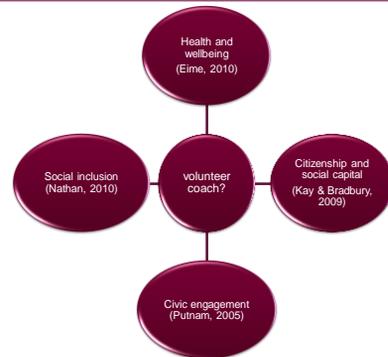
Hub Clubs

Article 165 of the Lisbon Treaty - sport's structures and the importance of volunteering in sport towards social function

1.1 million active sports coaches – three quarters of whom are volunteers (Sportcoach, UK, 2011)

UK - 8 million people engage in sports activities in their communities each week

What's the evidence?



Methodology

Research question:

What is the strength of the evidence, nationally and internationally, to support claims made for sport and sports coach volunteering to be major community assets

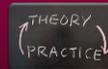
Inclusion Criteria

- Theory is explicitly acknowledged in underpinning the generative role of volunteer coaches
- Captured perceptions of impact from participants
- Acknowledged contextual factors (e.g. community sport)

Results – 19 papers identified



Australia (3); Finland (1); Germany (1); North American (11); South Africa (1); United Kingdom (2)



Social capital (2); Social positioning (3); Motivation (3); Health settings (1); Professional Development (8); Organisational capacity (1); Olympic values (1)



Survey (9); Interviews/focus groups (10)

Findings

1. Facilitating connectedness

- Finland/Australia/UK – community sports clubs were ideally positioned to deliver positive health pedagogies, particularly in partnership with health advocacy organizations
- The generative role of community coaches – 'linking capital by facilitating access to resources that are highly valued in the community' (Burnett 2006, p. 292)



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Findings

2. Coaches as pedagogues

- Coaches creating positive experiences for participants was clearly acknowledged
- Changing youth behaviours is the outcome of multiple influences (e.g. culture and organisational structures, parents)
- Issue – transient nature of volunteer coaching?
- Effectiveness of CPD in supporting volunteer coaches?



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Findings

3. Coaching for positive youth development

- Volunteer coaches describe their role in developing participants' social competences, life skills and building meaningful relationships
- However capturing evidence of change – difficult
- There is not a strong empirical or conceptual base to suggest that volunteer coaches have the training, support or role clarification to achieve what is increasingly expected



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Findings

4. Coaching for health

PA engagement in childhood can lead to improved CV health, positive mental health, improved body composition and reduced risk of obesity in adulthood

Local sports clubs offer structured (organized and competitive) and unstructured (social) opportunities for participation, with *potential* for a range of health and social inclusion benefits.

Bergeron (2007) and Fraser-Thomas *et al.* (2005) have suggested that inadequately trained volunteer coaches are simply not in a position to realize the health benefits of physical activity



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Conclusions

- Some research evidence to support claims made for the potential for sport participation to make a positive impact on participants' physical, mental and social health.
- Less evidence to suggest that volunteer coaches can deliver sports participation legacy, with attendant community benefits, that have been claimed

Why?

- Lack of large-scale and long-term evaluation programmes
- Difficulty of capturing sport impact beyond the 'pure happenstance' of sports participation
- Tinning (2010) - the 'unfashionable' nature of community sport as a research topic

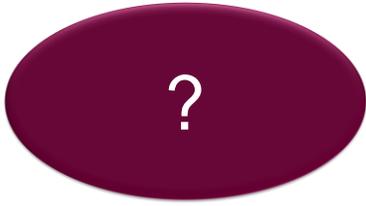
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Further thoughts.....

- Organisations need to consider supporting volunteer coaches in terms of personal development/growth opportunities
- The pedagogical role of the volunteer coach in shaping and influencing health/social well-being
- Claims to community action through sport seem to identify the volunteer coach as a curiously passive actor in changing behaviour, as a mere organizer
- Consider the connections between community sport and school sport in developing positive health behaviours among young people

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Thank you



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