

Barriers to Bridges: Fostering Collaboration in Community Sport

The Brock logo consists of the word "Brock" in a white, bold, sans-serif font. The letter "o" is replaced by a white circular icon containing a stylized red handprint. The logo is set against a solid red rectangular background.

Brock

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Purpose of the Research

- To identify the conditions that facilitated or hindered collaboration and integration in two community sports: basketball and swimming.



Collaboration

Benefits

- Attain resources
- Develop collective understanding of issues & challenges
- Knowledge transfer
- Joint problem solving
- Networking as a leadership and educational tool
- Ensure the strategic development of sport(s)
- Enhance pace of new program development & implementation

Barriers

- Under-management of partnerships
- Lack of an administrative structure to coordinate the roles and efforts among organizations
- Concerns about the longevity of partnerships
- Fear of commitment
- Power imbalances and pressures to comply with the conditions of partners

Why basketball & swimming?

These two sports were specifically chosen given a set of comparative criteria including:

- Systems of participation
- Level of competition
- Breadth of participants
- Accessibility
- Facility use
- Team vs. individual
- Institutional structure



Method: Qualitative Approach

- Interviews with leaders from local clubs, PSOs, NSOs
 - basketball – 11 interviews
 - swimming – 12 interviews
- Semi-structured interview guide.
- Each interview was recorded, transcribed verbatim, and member-checked by the interviewee for content accuracy.
- The analysis data consisted of open, axial, and selective coding with each member of the research team identifying codes, patterns, and relationships among words of the respondents.

Results

- Meaningful variations in the amount of collaboration in each of the two sports
- Providers of swimming having institutionalized several ways to foster cooperative activities on a continual basis
- Moving beyond sectoral explanations for variations in collaborative efforts



Facilitators

- Trigger event that necessitated collaborative action
- Use of brokers to negotiate linkages
- Development of managerial competencies to manage relationships
- Growing awareness of shared constraints
- Culture of collaboration that emerged over time
- Champion for collaboration
- Successful joint activities
- Adopt the managerial structures to accommodate inter-organizational relationships
- Institutionalize mechanisms for collaboration (e.g., committees, joint programs)

Barriers

- Lack of managerial structures (specialization, centralization, formalization) needed to effectively integrate inter-organizational activities.
- Power imbalances among potential partners.
- Lack of formal organizational structures to manage inter-organizational interdependence.
- Fear of longer-term resource commitments.
- Club's reliance on normative (informal) processes.
- Rivalry among clubs for resources such as athletes, facilities, and sponsors.
- Adherence to traditional practices and beliefs (“King of the castle” phenomena).



Policy Implications

- Establishing a regional framework for sport delivery to limit club rivalry among existing clubs and create barriers to entry for new clubs.
- Mandate strategic planning by local sport clubs to facilitate longer-term perspectives for decision-making.
- Establish a framework for long-term contracts or relationships with facility providers (municipal governments, schools).
- Create liaison mechanisms (staff, processes) that enable local sport clubs that use municipal facilities to manage their power/dependence, and to enhance communication.
- Provide incentives (funding) for collaborative structures, such as sport councils, to alter the power and dependence relationships between sport clubs and their key suppliers.



Questions