

## **Raising the Organizational Capacity of Voluntary Sport Clubs: a Process Consultation Approach**

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### **Aim of the research**

Aim of this study is to understand which approach (expert or process orientated) sport club consultants use in successfully raising the organizational capacity of voluntary sport clubs in the northern part of the Netherlands. Around 130 professional sport club consultants are active in the northern part of the Netherlands, but it is not clear which approach they use in raising the organizational capacity of the clubs within a specific context and if this approach is effective.

### **Theoretical background**

A sport club with great organizational capacity has the ability to offer their sport, now and in the future, in a sustainable and socially responsible way to (potential) members. Dutch voluntary sport clubs (VSCs) are facing several challenges in perceived consumerist behavior by members (Van der Roest, 2015), demands by the government to attribute to the social policy agenda (Coalter, 2007) and declining number of members in complex contexts (Wollebæk, 2009). Between 300-500 sport club consultants, mostly funded by local governments or sport associations, are tasked to raise the organizational capacity of these VSCs in the Netherlands. Most consultants play an expert role delivering generic interventions on specific topics as recruiting volunteers, sponsorships or positive behavior support. The other consultants play a process consultation role in which a holistic strategic change approach is used for more sustainable organizational development (Schein, 1999). The context of the organizations (VSC's) is determining which approach is the best in developing the organizational capacity. But most of the time consultants use the same, mostly expert role, in consulting the organizations (Boonstra & Elving, 2009). Therefore it is not clear which approach (expert or process orientated) sport club consultants in the Netherlands use in raising the organizational capacity of VSC's in different contexts.

### **Methodology, research design, and data analysis**

The study will be conducted from March 2017 till the end of July 2017 in the northern part of the Netherlands. In March we have started with identifying successful sport club consultants in three steps: these steps show a qualitative description of the current competences, approaches and interventions (repertoire) as seen by the sport club consultants in our target group:

- 1) A group of experts have been gathered to formulate criteria for the competences, approaches and interventions of a successful process orientated sport club consultant.

- 2) The criteria from step 1 are validated by theory about organizational development and consulting of organizations. Thereafter the criteria are processed into a digital survey
- 3) The survey has been send to n=130 sport club consultants in the northern part of the Netherlands.
- 4) Based on the output of the survey, profiles will be developed of different types sport club consultants (process orientated, mediator, supporter, coach, expert) and the approaches per type of consultant. For each profile a ranking will be made based on which criteria (from step 1) the consultants meet. This ranking will be used to make a selection of successful sport club consultants to conduct research in five multiple case studies.

From June on multiple case studies will be conducted in which five process consultants are working with a VSC. A case study protocol will be developed that observe the consultant in three sessions at the club. In addition interviews will be conducted with the consultant, the board of the club, and other relevant stakeholders. With a cross-case synthesis patterns will be developed in the way the consultants worked and how these approaches were interpreted and valued by the various stakeholders.

### **Results, discussion, and implications/conclusions**

In the expected results both approaches and interventions (repertoire) of the consultant as their competences and qualities are analyzed which will result in the profiling of the active sport club consultants. We also gain insights in which approach of the sport club consultants is the most effective in raising the organizational capacity of a VSC in a given context. New insights on how consultants can successfully contribute to the sustainable organizational development of VSCs will be presented.

### **References**

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