An Urban Perspective On The Challenges of Sport For Development

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Sport for Development (SFD) has been a growing area of interest for the past 10 years (Schulenkorf, Sherry, & Rowe, 2016). Svensson and Woods (2017) reported there are 944 SFD organizations in 121 countries worldwide. With this high number of SFD programs operating worldwide, it is important to understand the perspectives of the practitioners of SFD programs in regards to the challenges associated with SFD (Svensson, Hancock, Hums, 2017). However, little research has focused on the perspectives of these practitioners within urban environments. SFD practitioners in urban areas likely face different challenges given their circumstances such as access to facilities, funding stipulations (Coalter, 2010), and urban issues related to youth development (Cohen & Ballouli, 2016). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand how SFD practitioners within an urban context perceive and respond to the challenges of implementing their SFD programs.

This study will use organizational capacity as the framework for the questions that will be asked of the practitioners. Organizational capacity provides a framework for examining how SFD organizations use financial, human resource, structural, external, and development capacity (Hall et al., 2003). This framework has been utilized to examine how SFD and community sport organizations use their capacity to achieve their goals (Misener & Doherty, 2009; Svensson, Hancock, Hums, 2017). The use of this framework will focus on discovering how practitioners utilize their external and internal capacity to address challenges specific to SFD.

Research Questions
1) What do practitioners perceive are the biggest challenges to successful implementation of their programs?
2) How do program organizers draw on their organizational capacity to overcome these challenges?

Method

This study will utilize criteria for identifying SFD programs from Svensson, Hancock, Hums, (2017), with a targeted sample of 10-15 programs within the Midwest region of the U.S. A qualitative study will be conducted using semi-structured interviews with program managers. Recruitment is currently in progress with data collection to conclude by February 2019. Interviews will be conducted in person or via phone/Skype. Participants will be asked to identify challenges faced by their programs and elaborate how they addressed each challenge. Each interview will be analyzed using open coding to address what the interviewees view as the prominent challenges facing their program (Creswell, 2013). The organizational capacity framework will be used to guide a priori/thematic coding to reveal how practitioners used their organizational capacities to address the challenges identified (Creswell, 2013). The credibility of qualitative analysis will be supported through peer examination provided by a colleague (Creswell, 2013).

Expected Findings

This study will contribute to the SFD literature by uncovering new perspectives of SFD practitioners in an understudied environment. This study has managerial implications as it will reveal insights into the strategies practitioners use to leverage organizational capacity to address the problems they face, along with the challenges that remain. The implications of this study are that it may inform effective program design for urban SFD organizations.