

Sport Clubs Engagement with Schools: Current Practice in New Zealand

Cindy Wiersma (Auckland University of Technology), Linden Moore (Auckland University of Technology), & Michael Naylor (Auckland University of Technology)

As the nature and scope of the sport industry have changed around the world, the role of interorganisational relationships (IORs) has become central to the operations of a variety of sport organisations (Babiak, Thibault & Willem, 2018).

The nature and benefits of partnerships has been studied in the context of community sport (Misener & Doherty, 2012; Baker, Ansari & Crone, 2017; MacLean, Cousens & Barnes, 2011; Parent & Harvey, 2009; Harris & Houlihan, 2014, 2016; Phillpots & Grix, 2014), and in the broader sport management context by Babiak (2007, 2009); Babiak & Thibault (2008, 2009), with various foci including IOR determinants, effectiveness, and challenges, but with limited insights into the specific sport clubs-schools nexus.

The National Sport Club Survey (NSCS) provides an annual snapshot of the management and operation of New Zealand's sport clubs. Club representatives including administrators and board members respond to an online questionnaire on behalf of their club. Data collection for the 2023 NSCS is taking place from 17 -29 August and a sample of 1000 clubs is likely, based on uptake in previous years. The sample will comprise clubs from at least 75 sports and represent all 16 regions of New Zealand. Engagement of these clubs with their local schools is a supplemental theme of the 2023 NSCS, with three types of data generated and analysed.

Firstly, items covering the specific nature of the clubs' current engagement with their local schools, have been added to the 2023 survey to establish a baseline of descriptive quantitative data in this area that does not yet exist. Secondly, analysis of current practice alongside club size, type of sport, region, urban/rural, membership growth, financial performance and more, will uncover correlates of engagement with local schools. Thirdly, thematic analysis (Braun, Clarke & Terry, 2014) of open ended questions on perceived value and importance, barriers and challenges they have experienced through these IORs, and any future intentions to engage, will present a deeper understanding of clubs' engagement with schools.

The inclusion of the school engagement component in this year's survey addresses Babiak, Thibault & Willem's (2018) call to further examine how the interconnected nature of IORs affect the success or failure of sport organisations. By collecting baseline data from the NZ club-school context, correlating with club growth and performance data, and examining perceived value and challenge dimensions, we will be able to share this knowledge to assist sports clubs to generate effective strategies for school engagement that benefits performance.