

Summary

Rotterdam Sportsupport has been running the Challenge010 programme since September 2013. This programme is funded by Stichting de Verre Bergen (SDVB) and aims to increase sports participation of students enrolled in secondary education. Furthermore, the programme organises sports competitions (indoor soccer, basketball, dancing and boxing) between the participating secondary schools in order to contribute to a healthier lifestyle, to improve social behaviour and to enhance school reports of the students.

Challenge010 links students and sports clubs together. This mainly concerns students from pre-vocational secondary schools. Once the students are signed up for the programme and are actually participating, they are automatically made a member of the appropriate sports club. A coordinator delegates the activities organized in the sports clubs to the involved trainers and schoolteachers. This coordinator is tightly connected to the coaches of the sports clubs as well as the schoolteachers. At Rotterdam Sportsupport, didactic counsellors (pedagogues) are appointed to safeguard the pedagogic aspects of the programme.

Utrecht University's School of Governance (USBO) received funding from SDVB to examine the effects and efficacy of the Challenge010 mechanisms during the first season, in order to discover ways to optimise the program. During September 2013 and June 2014, the USBO performed 25 interviews with professionals from the field (coordinators, coaches, schoolteachers). Furthermore, the USBO organised six focus group sessions with professionals and eight focus group sessions with students. In addition, the USBO described 16 observations of trainings and matches and analysed 416 surveys. These surveys were filled out by the participants and had a response ratio of 87%.

Results

So far, the completed research shows that 555 students from 30 different secondary schools took part in Challenge010 during the school year 2013-2014. Among these students, 74% were boys and 26% girls, and over half of the students were in pre-vocational secondary education. Before participating in the programme, 67% of the students were not member of a sports club.

Despite the organisationally complex nature of the programme, Challenge010 has been able to energize its participants for sports on the long term. Additionally, the participants have developed and/or improved their skills in their specific sport. In summary, during the first season Challenge010 has laid the foundation for great results and already (partially) achieved its primary objectives.

Challenge010 has helped participants be more physically active, within the programme as well as outside the programme. One third of the participants who were previously not members of a sports club say that they want to become a member in the near future. Almost one third of the participants mentioned improving their behaviour at school. The professionals involved confirm this positive change. Considering the complex nature of the target group, these results can be interpreted as a positive result. However, previous research has shown that these results do not necessarily imply that the change in behaviour is permanent or applicable to different situations outside the Challenge010 context.

The promotion of a healthier lifestyle has least come forward during the implementation of the programme. The positive effects of Challenge010 on a healthier lifestyle are not directly visible in this part of the research. However, due to the programme, students became physically more active, which will most likely also have positive effects on their health (at least on the short term). In addition, almost half of the students mentioned that their school results have improved since their participation in Challenge010.

In general, variables independent of the program are nonetheless attributable to the long term social effects of Challenge010. The results directly attributable to Challenge010 are: improved discipline, increased sense of responsibility and improved communication skills with others (e.g. schoolteachers and teammates). Although these positive effects are not evident among all the participants, the way Challenge010 is implemented does create possibilities for long lasting behavioural change. Furthermore, the following results are applica-

ble to a significant number of participants: improved social skills and connecting with other groups, respect for others and increased self-esteem. All these variables are important for the construction of 'social capital'. "Social capital" is a form of capital which can be seen as a necessary condition for development.

Effective elements

Challenge010 has created an alternative social environment in which participants are able to develop themselves on a personal level in terms of discipline, self-esteem and responsibility. The role and involvement of professionals are vital for the achieved results of Challenge010. Coordinators and coaches are able to motivate students through their technical skill in sports or by setting an example through behaviour (which is compatible with the students' lives). The schoolteachers involved, as well as the methodical aspects of the programme, are to create a safe environment in order to increase the participation in sports. The engagement of schools, schoolteachers and other professionals are essential factors to encourage the students to participate in sports and to keep them motivated from time to time.

Other effective elements of Challenge010 are: adoption of strong rules during sports, usage of all possible strengths in every single sport, the reputation of Challenge010 at schools, and the accessible way sports are being offered. Furthermore, in terms of organisation, a couple of secondary conditions are relevant: the adoption of clear selection criteria and cut-offs prior to the start of the program, a variety of stimuli to participate, competition between schools, and the offering of a dynamic and a sufficient amount of exercise.

Recommendations

The research has led to the development of a 'theory of change of Challenge010'. This theory suggests the following recommendations to optimise the current programme and to preserve the results outside the Challenge010 context: invest in the quality, knowledge and exchange between professionals, raise public support within the schools, optimise several practical matters, adjust and adhere to the selection criteria for partici-

pants, specify the links with sport clubs, adopt a graduated contribution for subscription of sport clubs and engage parents in the program.

In addition, it is recommended that Challenge010 remains well-maintained and supported by research. The aim of this research is to contribute to the accountability of the program as well as the development of knowledge, in order to learn from experiences in the past. Both types of research should be implemented from the 'theory of change of Challenge010' point of view.