INTERACT+ Theory of Action

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Summary

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Context

The prevalence of chronic diseases continues to rise in modern society (Harris 2019). It is now widely acknowledged that greater emphasis needs to be placed on a broader range of health determinants to address this public health issue (Lakerveld and Mackenbach 2017, Meldrum, Morris et al. 2017), and that systems approaches working on upstream determinants of health are an appropriate answer (Williams, Costa et al. 2008).

Over the last decade, policies like the White Paper on Sport (Commission 2007) and the Global Physical Activity Plan (Murray, Foster et al. 2019) have highlighted that the health and social potential of organised sport has been underexploited. With a 13% Sports Club membership rate across the European population and with 6% volunteering (European 2022 Sport and Physical Activity Eurobarometer), whose ages and socioeconomic status are diverse, the societal role which sports clubs can play by targeting social, health and environmental issues, beyond physical activity (Kokko, Martin et al. 2018), could be improved (Schulenkorf, Sherry et al. 2016). The missions placed on sports organizations to achieve non-sporting objectives (e.g. social inclusion) is not new (Zeimers, Lefebvre et al. 2021). However, the path to achieve this aim from passive settings providing physical activity opportunities to active organizations targeting wider health topics and determinants, especially health inequalities, is still long (Casey, Payne et al. 2012). Previous work showed that formalized and systematic efforts were needed in sport organizations to collaborate with health sectors, but that sport organizations lacked strategic focus and related communication and (social) marketing tactics to implement social or health promoting programs (Misener and Misener 2016), which are more complex than training programs (Coalter 2007), as they deal with cultural, economic, and organizational factors (Coalter 2007).

International Sports Organisations (ISOs) and National sports federations (NSFs) are responsible for planning and managing their sports at an international or national level respectively, through an organization based on membership of affiliated clubs. ISOs and NSFs organize and promote the practice of it(s) discipline(s), from leisure activities

to high level sports (https://www.insee.fr/fr/metadonnees/definition/c1258). These organisations have been described as exposed to a multitude of external pressures, related to government fundings and its associated political agendas, the implementation of good governance practices (Zintz, Gérard et al. 2019), and the search for attractiveness as commercial products (Pedras, Taylor et al. 2020). Their complexity is also based on internal levels, due to their federated operating model, they govern several regional affiliates and sports clubs at local level, where conflicts of interest can arise (Toubiana, Oliver et al. 2017). Previous work has investigated the organizational capacity of ISOs and NSFs and presented the challenges arising with the growing competition at top level sport, the democratization of Sport for All and the requested investment in sport as the answer to social problems (Nagel, Schlesinger et al. 2015, Nagel, Elmose-Østerlund et al. 2020, De Bock, Scheerder et al. 2022), where the problems have been clearly identified in terms of low levels of physical activity in the population and an underrepresentation of vulnerable groups in organized sport (Scheerder, Vandermeerschen et al. 2011, Vandermeerschen, Vos et al. 2015). Nevertheless, few studies have considered an in depth analysis of 'Sport for All' intervention implementation (Pedras, Taylor et al. 2020), as well as how change can theoretically be produced. The present study investigates how the INTERACT capacity building framework produces changes among international and national sports organisations to foster Sport for All implementation.

The INTERACT capacity building Framework

The INTERACT Capacity-Building Framework is designed to train, qualify, and empower International Sport Organisations, their Continental and National Federations, and local sport clubs to become Sport for All leaders worldwide. The framework provides ISO's, their continental, national, and local members with the tools to solve the challenges that the sport movement itself is facing and allows them to fulfil their societal role, while increasing sport participation and including a 2-day training delivered to participants in order to assist them in achieving these aims.

Introduction to the theory of action and logic models

A theory of action is a theory following the statement of “if we…”, “then….”, “so that….”, with the aim of organising one’s thought process into an actionable plan (Bartholomew, Parcel et al. 1998). A theory of action can be created through the use of a logic model which articulates the components necessary to actually achieve the outcomes related to the theory of action. “The practice of health education involves three major program planning activities: conducting a needs and capacity assessment, developing and implementing a program, and evaluating the program's effectiveness” (Bartholomew, Parcel et al. 1998).

A program logic model is a picture of how your program works – the theory and assumptions underlying the program. This model provides a road map of your program, highlighting how it is expected to work, what activities need to come before others, and how desired outcomes are achieved (Foundation 2004). “The core idea is that programmes are iterative sequences of theories: 'if we implement A this should achieve our initial intervention goal B, and when B is in place we will be in a position to attempt C, which will then enable the next output D, and so on...'”(Pawson, Tilley et al. 1997). Having a theory of action is important as it guides the evaluation process (testing of the theory) and provides a standard programme outline for all implementers to follow.

Essentially a logic model is a summary description of what we need to put into a project/programme (the inputs/resources), what we need to do during the project/programme (the activities/outputs), and what we need to achieve for the project/programme to succeed (the impact/outcomes). Each of these elements needs to be clearly defined and laid out by project/programme directors in order for everyone to understand the process required to achieve their goals. Logic models not only assist with planning and carrying out a project/programme, but also with aiding the design of the project/programme evaluation, and aiding with applications for funding (Foundation 2004).

A logic model is best laid out in a visual format, like this:

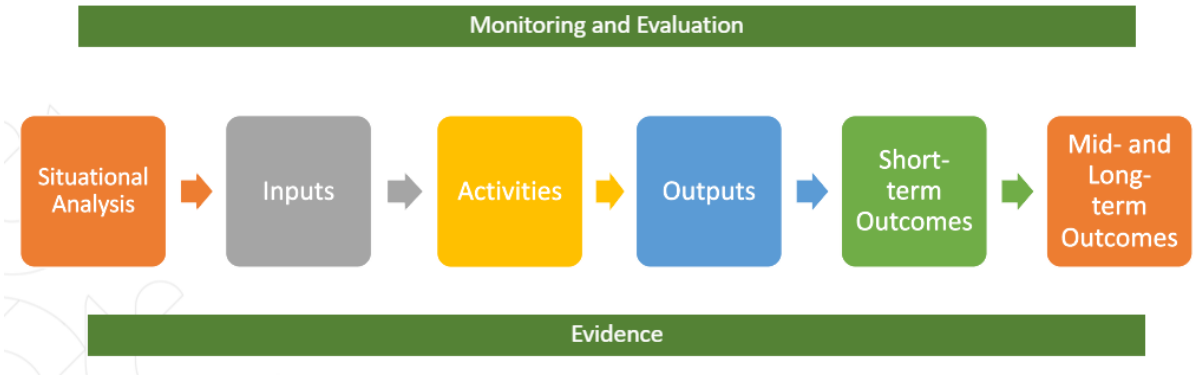

Figure 1: Description of a logic model

Input/Resources include the human, financial, organizational, and community resources a program has available to direct toward doing the work.

Activities are what the program does with the resources, including the processes, tools, events, technology, and actions that are an intentional part of the program implementation. These interventions are used to bring about the intended program changes or results.

Outputs are the direct products of program activities and may include types, levels, and targets of services to be delivered by the program.

Outcomes are the specific changes in program participants' behaviour, knowledge, skills, status, and level of functioning. Short-term outcomes should be attainable within 1 to 3 years, while longer-term outcomes should be achievable within a 4 to 6-year timeframe.

Impact is the fundamental intended or unintended change occurring in organizations, communities, or systems as a result of program activities within 7 to 10 years.

Creation of the logic model

Based on the presentation of the INTERACT Capacity Building, INTERACT+ advisory board and project members were invited by the University of Limerick to contribute to the definition of the logic model, through a series of webinars and surveys to compile perspectives and reach consensus.

Method

Procedure

An invitation was sent to the partners and advisory board of the INTERACT+ project, to invite them to four 1.5-hour webinars. Interviews with participants of the first pilot INTERACT training in Leipzig in 2022 and of the second pilot training online in June 2023 were undertaken in May and September 2023 respectively, to question the 1 year and direct lessons learnt from the training process. Observation of the online training (2 full days) and note taking has also nurtured the final theory of action. An online survey was used between meeting 3 and 4 to collect further inputs for participants that were not able to attend the meetings.

Meeting content and organisation

Three separate meetings were held with the sole aim of creating a theory of action logic model. The first meeting was held on the 21st of April 2023, the second meeting on the 11th of July 2023, the third meeting on the 15th of September 2023, and another was planned to occur on the 31st of October 2023 (the last meeting was deemed unnecessary and did not happen).

Online survey

A survey was sent out to collect perspectives from all stakeholders on inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impact in advance of the third meeting. This was decided to be the best course of action as it helped collect input from those who could not be present at the meetings and from those who did not have opportunities to share their thoughts.

The survey provided lists of inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impacts informed by previous discussions, interviews, and research literature. The survey requested stakeholders to separate each item within inputs, outputs, and outcomes into “necessary” and “complimentary” items and then to rank them from “most important” to “least important” within each category. The impacts were separated slightly differently, with the categories being “impacts at ISO’s and NSF’s level”, “impacts at sport clubs level,” and “impacts at sport participant’s level” with items within each

category still ranked from “most important” to “least important”. This helped guide discussion and made the third meeting as efficient and effective as possible.

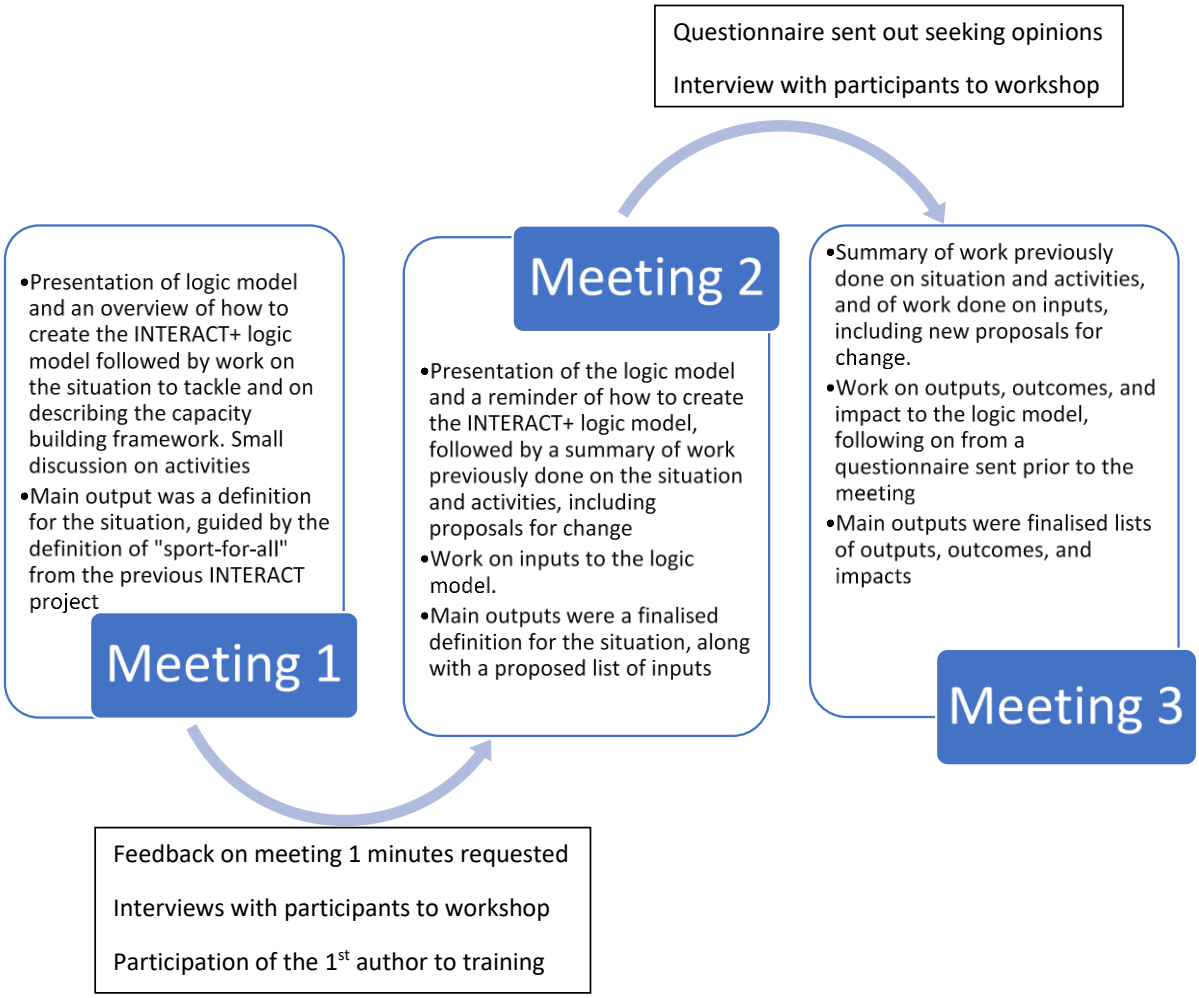

Figure 2: Data collection process

Data collection

Data were collected via feedback/notes from researchers during the meetings and the training structured by a logic model template on a word document, analysis of the minutes of each meeting, and full transcription of the different interviews. Due to the interactive nature of the production, as well as reflexions on the wording of each part of

the logic model, no full transcription of the meeting has been undertaken. Where possible, meetings online were also recorded, with consent from participants.

Data analysis

The full corpus was merged iteratively from meeting to meeting and was analysed using a deductive approach, based on the logic model structure. The data analysis was conducted by the first author and second authors between meetings, based on participants' answers. Processed results were sent to all participants via email for verification and feedback before the next meeting, contributing to iterative verification and validation of the results.

Results

Contribution of the meetings

The main discussion points of the first meeting included centring the logic model on ISOs and NSFs with potential to look at local sports clubs and participants later, and on the definition of "Sport for All". The main product of the meeting was a definition of the situation, with decisions also made on the definition of "Sport for All" and on the activities to be undertaken.

The second meeting raised lot of discussion about mandatory requirement as inputs, but also how to differentiate inputs and outputs during the training process, especially in line with mandatory requirement or an added value to foster activities and achievements, as well as the type of inputs (measurable/tangible or not). A list of inputs was the product of the meeting, but these were not finalized or clear.

The third meeting focused on further refinement of inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impact to the logic model, following on from an online survey sent prior to the meeting, and answered by 11 participants, especially defining the mandatory and complimentary requirements for each part of the logic model. Discussion helped to make final decision on what was a necessary requirement and what was a complimentary addition for the inputs, outputs, and outcomes, while impacts were discussed differently, with decision focusing on the level of impact. This meeting was

particularly successful, with inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impact all finalized allowing for the completion of a finalized logic model.

Contribution of the interviews

The results of the interviews conducted with two participants roughly one year after the training contributed a small amount, but in vital ways. Items were recorded under each category. For the first part of the model, defining the current problem or situation, “no proper infrastructure”, “lack of elite practitioners”, “resistance to change”, and “conflict with elite side of the organization” were mentioned. For resources, “participation” and “positive attitude” were mentioned with both included in the final model in different ways. For activities, “sharing experiences and lessons”, “establishing relationships”, and “social events” were recorded. Outputs included “policy papers and internal rules”, “changed constitution”, and “a strategy plan”, but, while “a clearly defined plan” was included in the final model, “a strategy plan” and “policy papers” were moved to the outcomes category.

Outcomes were “similar workshops within their own organizations”, “distribution of more equipment”, and “improved human rights insight”. Impacts included “developing Sport for All branch”, “increase in activities per year”, “regular contact with leaders of other ISO’s and NGB’s”, “increase in membership”, and “a paralympic committee”, with all of these included but some reworded slightly.

Contribution of the participation to training

The first author attended a number of the training sessions and recorded items which stood out under each category. There were many more items recorded during these sessions than during the interviews, but most items acted solely as inspiration and were not included in the final model. Some items were included but rephrased, such as “marketing strategies”, “internal empowerment to face changes”, “funding”, “policy”, “volunteers” (inputs), “policy papers” and “knowledge and experience” (outputs/outcomes) and “increased participation in sport-for-all among citizens” (impacts). Many of the items recorded have overlap with the survey’s responses and were considered “complimentary”.

Final model

The final model is presented in Figure 3 and described in this section.

Prior to the work, the problem that the INTERACT+ capacity building wanted to address was defined as population physical inactivity with two main goals:

a) Working on International sport organisation and national sports federation inadaptation to answer the need and address inequity and lack of inclusion in sport, fitness and active recreation, physical activity and physical education participation

b) Reducing unawareness and lack of know-how concerning shared responsibility to address physical inactivity pandemic

Secondly, the participants collectively defined sport-for-all, as lots of debate arouse on what the object of the capacity building framework was. The definition adopted by the group was issued by the INTERACT project.

"*Sport for All is a fundamental right that can be understood as the universal provision of access to, inspiration to join and involvement opportunities in casual or organised physical activities. Sport for All is open, inclusive and for everyone regardless of ability, age, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, culture, language, political, religious or other beliefs, geographical location, national or social origin or property. All supposes that as many people as possible should be involved, with special focus on the physically inactive, disadvantaged groups and minorities. It's a vision that can be implemented as a process of social change and planned on a large-scale bringing joy, health, social interaction, creativity, capacity of adaptation, integration and sustainable development to communities and citizens around the globe*." (INTERACT project)

Inputs

The inputs for the logic model included tangible items such as the ability to engage a budget for Sport for All and marketing strategies for Sport for All, along with less tangible items such as positive attitudes towards Sport for All from ISOs and NSFs and a commitment friendly culture for Sport for All among ISO's volunteers. Overall, the inputs include a mixture of organisational, community, human, and financial resources.

Activities

The required activities include an advocacy meeting to raise awareness, getting commitment and ownership from ISO's decision-makers, a diagnosis phase that evaluates where an ISO/NSF is currently at in terms of Sport for All and sets priorities and objectives for them, and a set of training days to equip them with the necessary knowledge.

Outputs

After completion of the activities, the outputs expected are items such as trained volunteers to foster Sport for All, a clearly defined plan to implement Sport for All activities, an enhanced positive attitude towards Sport for All among the ISO's and NSF's executives and volunteers, and an understanding of the benefits of Sport for All.

Outcomes

The outcomes can be viewed in light of the outputs, with items such as the capacity to organise INTERACT workshops among its own NSFs, a number of Sport for All activities being delivered, and a strategic plan for partnership and funding for Sport for All activities all being included within this section of the logic model.

Impacts

The impacts were discussed and added to the logic model slightly differently, being divided by the level of impact; impact at ISO's and NSF's level, impact at sports club level, and impact at sports participant's level. Items under the ISO's and NSF's level include an increase in participation in Sport for All among citizens, the presence of a committee dedicated to serving underrepresented communities in ISOs and NSFs, and recognition of a more integrated, diverse, and accessible sports opportunity. Items under the sports club level include an increase in participants membership and the presence of a Sport for All branch. Items under the sports participants level include improved mental, physical, and social health, better recognition of sport club's contribution to society, and decreased costs for healthcare. Some items, such as an increase in Sport for All activities ran per year, were included and considered impactful at all levels.

Conclusions

A logic model is a visual representation or a structured framework that outlines the components and relationships of a program, project, or initiative. It serves as a valuable tool for implementing a theory of action. Having a logic model provides many advantages to program implementers (especially those who will use the INTERACT+ logic model), such as providing a clear and concise representation of the programme's components which aids in communication between stakeholders and funders, helping to ensure alignment between the programme's activities and its intended outcomes, and providing key performance indicators that facilitate data collection and programme evaluation. The logic model also aids in resource planning and allocation and should allow for ongoing monitoring and assessment.

The process of creating the INTERACT+ logic model also brought with it many key learnings. For example, it helped to clarify the theory of action upon which it is designed, and highlighted many areas which were then further refined. The process of creating the logic model also demonstrated the difficulties and benefits involved in gathering key stakeholders and requesting them to work interactively together to build the model and voice their inputs. In line with this, another key learning was the process of analysing and carrying forward input from stakeholders from one meeting to the next, each of which were spaced a number of weeks/months apart, in which time the model also may have required several revisions based on feedback between meetings. Getting stakeholders to agree on core components also highlighted a very important issue, namely the reality of how much resources an organization can devote to each component based on the enormous variability in resource constraints and size among organizations.

Using a logic model carries with it many advantages, and many learnings from the process of its creation. The INTERACT+ project should benefit greatly from the creation of the logic model presented within this report and all stakeholders should utilize it to its full potential in order to achieve the project aims.

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Program logic model

Inputs

- Collective **decision to engage** in Sport for All from ISOs and NSFs
- Dedicated **human resources** to develop Sport for All
- **Positive attitude** for Sport for All from ISOs and NSFs executive members
- The ability to **engage a budget** for Sport for All
- **Positive attitude** for Sports for All from ISOs and NSFs volunteers
- **Engagement from partners** to promote and deliver Sport for All
- **Commitment friendly culture** for Sport for All among ISOs volunteers
- **Empowerment of volunteers** for Sport for All
- **Marketing strategies** for Sport for All
- Implementing **policy** as the basis for creating strategy

Activities

Advocacy meeting

1) **Raising awareness** of ISOs decision-makers
2) **Getting commitment** of ISOs decision-makers
3) **Getting ownership** from ISOs decision-makers

Diagnosis phase
1) Evaluating
a**) current "Sport for All" practices** in ISOs and NSF
b) **knowledge understanding** of "Sport for All" in ISOs and NSF and
c**) policy, governance** and **leadership** on "Sport for All" in ISOs and NSF
d) **needs, challenges** and **expectations** in ISOs and NSF

2) **Setting priorities and objectives** for "Sport for All" for ISOs and NSF

Training (2 days)
1) **Presenting the importance** of "Sport for All" to ISOs and NSFs decision makers and staffs
2) **Structuring** "Sport for All" for my ISO or NSF (know-how, policies, leadership)
3) **Designing** "Sport for All" **initiatives or programs** in my ISO or NSF
4) **Operationalising** "Sport for All" **promotion and development** (plan and do) in my ISO or NSF

Output

- **A clearly defined plan** to implement Sport for All activities
- A **trained volunteer** to foster Sport for All
- An **enhanced positive attitude** towards Sport for All among the ISOs and NSFs executive
- An **understanding of the benefits** of Sport for All
- An **analysis of the environment, opportunities and threats** regarding Sport for All development
- An **enhanced positive attitude** towards Sport for All among the ISOs and NSFs volunteers
- A demonstrable peer network to launch Sport for All project

Outcomes

- A **change to policy document** to integrate Sport for All in ISOs or NSFs
- The **capacity to organise INTERACT workshops** among its own NSFs
- A **strategic plan** for partnership and funding for Sport for All activities
- A number of **Sport for All activities being delivered**
- A **structured committee** responsible for Sport for All among the ISOs and NSFs

Impact at ISO's and NSF's level:

- **Increase in** Sport for All **Activities** ran per year
- **Increase in participation** in Sport for All among citizens
- Regular **contact with leaders** of other ISO's and NGB's
- **Better recognition** of ISO or NSF contribution to society
- **Presence of a committee** dedicated to serving underrepresented communities in ISOs and NSFs
- **Presence of a** Sport for All **branch**
- **Acknowledgment** of Sport for All **as a mechanism** to improve mental, physical and social health
- **Decrease in** managers and coaches **drop out**
- **Recognition** of a more integrated, diverse and accessible sports opportunity

Impacts at Sports Club Level

- **Improved** mental, physical and social **health**
- **Increase in** participants **membership**
- **Increase in** Sport for All **activities** ran per year
- **Presence of a** Sport for All **branch**
- **Decrease in** managers, coaches and volunteers **drop out**
- Regular **contact with leaders** of other ISO's and NGB's
- More integrated, diverse and accessible sports **opportunity**

Impacts at Sports Participant's Level

- **Better recognition** of sport club's contribution to society
- **Improved** mental, physical and social **health**
- **Increase in participation** in Sport for All among citizens
- **Increase in** Sport for All **activities** ran per year
- **Presence of a** Sport for All **branch**
- **Decreased costs** for healthcare treatment
- More integrated, diverse and accessible sports **opportunity**

Your Planned Work

Your Intended Results

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