Political Involvement in Childhood Obesity Prevention

Message of cooperation for Local Authorities in Childhood Obesity Prevention

Jo Van Assche, Ghent University
Let us have a look at local political involvement in...

- Selection of household waste
- Road safety
- Affordable housing, etc.

→ Awareness rose in towns and cities
→ Growing ‘sense of urgency’
→ And then there is … political response
→ Same will happen in the field of COP!
Research hypothesis

IF there is a growing awareness about the problems with obesity throughout society,

THEN political response will also take place in the field of COP!
Research approach

✔ A multiple case study approach in two Flemish cities, city A and City B

✔ Sampling Flemish cities with explorative questionnaire

✔ Method of qualitative interviews with a dozen of key respondents
Political commitment in city A

External factors: higher regulations - public mentality – media attention

POLiticians

MAN-team

Relevant department(s)

Leading civil servant:
- vision,
- strategy building,
- monitoring,
...

Change manager

Project manager:
- who, what, how, when, ...

Frontline workers

Managerial &
public support:

Existing collaboration

- Attitude of stakeholders
  (openness to cooperation, trust, consensus, involvement, ...)
- Their actions
  (concertation, communication, division of tasks, conflict resolution, ...)
- Their relations
  (of power, ...)

Direct context:

- Attitude and collaboration of target group(s)
- Input of higher authorities (policy instruments)
- Involvement of like-minded movements
- Research resources (evidence base)
Political commitment in city B

External factors: higher regulations - public mentality – media attention

Managerial & public support:
- Ad hoc collaboration
- Attitude of stakeholders (openness to cooperation, trust, consensus, involvement, ...)
  - Their actions (concertation, communication, division of tasks, conflict resolution, ...)
  - Their relations (of power, ...)

Direct context:
- Attitude and collaboration of target group(s)
- Input of higher authorities (policy instruments)
- Involvement of like-minded movements
- Research resources (evidence base)
Inspiring politicians?

✓ Charisma can help
✓ But there are other factors:
  ▪ Electoral competition
  ▪ Power of political party
  ▪ Expertise of leading civil servants
  ▪ Company culture in city organisation
  ▪ Involvement of public health networks
  ▪ Etc.
Conclusions

✓ Political leadership in both cases
✓ Do we have a model case?
✓ Sorry, no blueprint
✓ Politicians respond to the context
  ▪ Sensible and accountable persons
  ▪ Rational behaviour according to different contexts
  ▪ **Cooperation** with stakeholders
Main advice

✓ Prepare the start of a CBI in every town or city by interviewing most important key persons or stakeholders on the relevant factors in the implementation context.
Challenge

- To have to disappoint you: there is no blueprint model to be used
- To communicate this message of complexity
- Every local politicians can be inspired by CBI → develop ‘learning networks’ on national and international scale
I only presented two case studies from a political science background

EEN-workshops to explore leadership in CBI’s in England, France and Spain

There is a need for more implementation studies of CBI’s:
- In other countries
- In more towns and cities