Sport for development and peace: problems and prospects

Sunday July 10th, 2016
Tsukuba Summer Institute, Tsukuba University

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Outline

- Conceptualising sport for development and peace (SDP)
- Tracing the development of SDP
- Theoretical approaches to SDP
- Case study
- Recommendations
Conceptualising SDP

In a development context the definition of sport usually includes a broad and inclusive spectrum of activities suitable to people of all ages and abilities, with an emphasis on the positive values of sport.
“All forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction, such as play, recreation, organized or competitive sport, and indigenous sports and games”
Conceptualising SDP

- ISDP uses sport as a tool to achieve goals relating to broader development and peace, especially in (what the World Bank refers to as) low-income countries (Levermore and Beacom, 2009)

- The field is based on the concept that sport is not just an end in itself, but also an effective tool to help improve the lives of children, families and communities (Network for Sport & Development, 2009)
Conceptualising SDP

The contribution of sport & play to the MDG
Conceptualising SDP

- 255 projects, 93% formed since 2000 (Levermore & Beacom, 2009)

- The typology highlights six key project types

  1. Conflict resolution and intercultural understanding
  2. Building physical, social, sport and community infrastructure
  3. Raising awareness particularly through education
  4. Empowerment
  5. Direct impact on physical and psychological wellbeing (welfare)
  6. Economic development/poverty alleviation
Tracing the development of SDP

Guillianotti’s (2010) three phases of development:

- **Sport/Global society 1.0**: Sport as a potent element within colonization – sports used as civilizing instruments
- **Sport/Global society 2.0**: from the 1940s to the 1980s sport was a highly contested field in colonial and post-colonial contexts with colonized populations fighting for control
- **Sport/Global society 3.0**: The initial growth and expansion of international SDP partnerships focused on ‘delivering’ sport to specific populations
  - **Sport/Global society 3.1**: This first period also featured the establishment of many short-term SDP projects with relatively little focus on sustainability, monitoring and evaluation of work, international coordination, or knowledge transfer
  - **Sport/Global society 3.2**: The formalisation and professionalisation of the SDP sector addressing issues such as sustainability, monitoring and evaluation and knowledge transfer
Tracing the development of SDP
The primary theoretical approaches to SDP

- **Critical theories** (e.g. postmodern, postcolonial, feminist, hegemony): These group of theories generally argue that developmental practices are based on and reproduce Eurocentric knowledge and reinforce hegemonic power relations and first world authority rather than international benevolence or a commitment to social justice (see Darnell, 2010; Guilliannotti, 2011; Levermore & Beacom, 2009).

- **Decentered Governance** (Bevir & Rhodes, 2003): This theory focuses on the social construction of a practice through the ability of individuals to create and act on meanings. It is to give a practical meaning from the viewpoint of those involved in the practice (see Lindsey & Gratton, 2012).

- **Realist evaluation** (Pawson & Tilley, 1997): A focus on the scientific evaluation of programme context, mechanisms and outcomes (see Coalter, 2014).
Case study

"I met the President of Eritrea and said, 'You need food and I have brought sports equipment. I made a mistake. I'm sorry.' He looked at me and said, 'This is the greatest gift we have ever received. For the first time, we are being treated like human beings—not just something to be kept alive. For the first time, my children can play like any child.'
Case study

**RTP** is a global organisation, using the transformative power of play to educate and empower children and youth.

**The RTP vision** is to create a healthy and safe world for kids.

**The RTP mission** is to use the power of sport and play to educate and empower children to overcome the effects of poverty, conflict and disease in disadvantaged communities.
Case study

• Central to the RTP approach is the theory: children learn best when they are experiencing lessons through play.

• Therefore, each project focuses on developing a range of games that are specifically designed to provide kids with the knowledge and skills they need to overcome adversity and to tackle the challenges affecting their communities.

• RTP tailor their programs to each locale’s context and need, whether it’s health concerns, lack of education, a need for peace or all three.
Case study

RTP key facts and figures
- Projects in 23 countries
- Over 60 programs worldwide
- 12,000 coaches worldwide
- 5,000 junior leaders
- 835,000 children involved in weekly sport/play
- 300 elite athlete ambassadors
Case study

RTP Delivery

HQ, Toronto

Worldwide offices

Regional support teams

Volunteer project coordinators

Development of local coaches/volunteers
Case study

How RTP Delivers to Children

100s of PROJECT COORDINATORS
10,000s of LOCAL COACHES
100,000s of CHILDREN
Case study

RTP Impacts

Education

Health awareness

Conflict resolution
Case study

RTP Partners
Case Study

RTP Strategy in Uganda

• Projects delivered in areas of greatest need

• Five projects in total – one in Kampala, one in east, one in south west, and two in north west
Case Study

RTP Strategy in Uganda

- The settlements in north-west are heavily populated with South Sudanese and Congolese refugees
- Settlement 1 (Rhino) population = 20,000; Settlement 2 (Imvepi) population = 5,000
- The settlements are located close to River Nile and in close proximity to existing communities
Case Study

The Rhino Project

**Project priorities:** use sport and play as a tool to (1) to raise awareness of health issues and (2) to resolve conflict and promote peace between local populations in the Rhino area

**Budget:** $200,000 per annum / 5 year funding

**Major work areas:** (1) build capacity through training of coach educators; (2) evaluate delivery; (3) organise school play days; (4) maintain equipment boxes; (5) support key sport/play structures (Rhino Sports Council), (6) maintain partnerships with key agencies

**Project team:** Four project coordinators (3 from US, 1 from UK)

**Key partners:** UNHCR, Rhino Refugee Council, Local Government
Case Study

Insights from a critical theory perspective:

- **The practical problem of physiological needs**: food, shelter and weather
- **Deeply embedded cultural hegemony**: project management decisions, values underpinning the work, responses to value-related problems
- **Global north volunteers**: culture, capability, and competence
- **Unintentionally creating dependence**: primarily through creation/support of a secondary economy
- **The problem of unrestricted autonomy**: limited training, no guidance, freedom to decide strategic direction and day-to-day work
- **Corporate priorities**: greater focus on external image and maintaining donor satisfaction than resolving operational problems
Case Study

Decentred governance perspectives

Skills: “Gives us the skills so that we can help our communities”

Education: “It educates our children about health and illnesses”

Career development: “The programme provides us with important volunteering experience that will be helpful in securing future careers”

But ... important to note:

(1) the project tended to engage the same people as other UN projects – thus reinforcing existing social structures and widening the gap between those able and those unable to engage, and
(2) the reasons for engagement were not solely (or even primarily for many) about sport/play but about other basic needs
Case Study

Realist evaluation perspective

• Structural arrangements → not possible to undertake independent evaluation of the project

• Evaluation efforts relied on data collated/reported by the head coaches

• No attempt to independently measure context, mechanisms or outputs

• But often times demands to report anecdotal numbers/observations of impact for quarterly reports to donors

• Frequent demands for ‘sustainability’ with limited evaluation to review whether methods were sustainable
Recommendations

• Sport for development is completely unregulated, poorly planned, poorly coordinated and largely isolated from mainstream development efforts. **Those involved must plan sensitively, improve coordination efforts and dovetail with state programmes**

• Many NGOs will only work in areas of greatest need (as many donors will only fund highest priority areas). Thus, some sports-based programs are being delivered in areas where people do not have basic needs met. **Projects should be delivered in areas where the potential value of sport education can be maximized**

• What SDP providers offer is often coloured by their experiences in their home country and is insufficiently adapted to the local context. **Projects should be designed based on local needs, context and culture.**
Recommendations

• There is also a need for more research to focus on the specific mechanisms by, and conditions under, which sport can and does make a positive contribution to development and peace. **SDP organisations must commit to an ongoing programme of monitoring and evaluation in order to capture this intelligence.**

• The long term sustainability of SDP projects is questionable (particularly with regards to difficulties in securing donor funding). **It is important that providers plan to avoid creating a culture of dependency and ensure that local communities are equipped to provide their own sports development opportunities.**
Summing up

• When poorly executed, it reinforces the idea of the top down way is the right way and imposes the values of the first-world middle class on people living in a completely different context.

However ...

• When conducted in a responsible, culturally appropriate way, with community support, participants’ experiences and anecdotes have suggested that sport for development can enhance the health, education and well-being of participants...
Further reading


References