Editorial

Managing sport for social change: The state of play

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A B S T R A C T

Sport-for-development (SFD) provides a platform for sport to be used as a tool or "hook" to contribute to positive outcomes in areas including economic development, social inclusion, cultural cohesion, healthy lifestyles, education, gender equity, as well as reconciliation and peacebuilding. The area of sport for social change (SFSC) represents a sub-field of SFD that uses sport as a catalyst to build social capacity and develop socially and physically healthy communities. The Managing Sport for Social Change special issue of *Sport Management Review* brings together a collection of conceptual advances, empirical research papers and teaching case studies from a range of social and cultural perspectives, with a focus on managing sport for social change; aimed at engaging critically with sport management theory and praxis, and discussing associated practical and policy implications. Theoretical gaps and recommendations for future research, including: local engagement, innovative research methodology, and a broadening of the scope of research are also discussed.

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Over the past decade, the field of sport-for-development has received significant attention from government agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), sporting bodies and development agencies across the world. As a result of increasing political and institutional support, the number of sport-based projects aimed at contributing to positive outcomes in areas including economic development, social inclusion, cultural cohesion, healthy lifestyles, education, gender equity, as well as reconciliation and peacebuilding has grown exponentially (Levermore & Beacom, 2009; Schulenkorf & Adair, 2014). The popularity of sport-for-development stems from its ability to capture or "hook" a variety of people, particularly those interested in sport and physical activity, and use the momentum in and around sport as a strategic vehicle to achieve non-sport development goals.

The area of sport for social change (SFSC) represents a sub-field of sport-for-development that uses sport as a catalyst to build social capacity and develop socially and physically healthy communities. Where at the beginning of the 21st century it was difficult to find projects that used sport as a strategic vehicle for positive social change, the number of sport-related initiatives that aim to make a difference in at-risk or disadvantaged communities has since grown substantially. Today, SFSC programs are implemented in both developed and developing nations, and with varied aims and objectives. For example, in developed nations, SFSC programs are directed toward communities identified as marginalized or at-risk, or those communities requiring development and regeneration, including socially and economically disadvantaged groups, at-risk youth, indigenous communities, recently arrived refugees, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. In both developed and developing nations, SFSC aims to empower communities through capacity building initiatives and skill development, the promotion of healthy lifestyles including the combating of communicable and non-communicable diseases, and the enhancement of social capital and cohesion through sport. In socially, ethnically, or politically divided societies, SFSC also includes programs in the area of reconciliation and peacebuilding.

As an intriguing space for theoretical and empirically driven research, SFSC has started to receive increased attention from academics who have conducted sport-related studies in unique social and cultural contexts. However, there is still a dearth of research on the provision and actual *management* of these SFSC programs. While the management of SFSC projects (including tactics, strategies and implications) underpins much current research, scholars have yet to critically analyze and

discuss the specific management aspects of these projects. This special issue therefore set out to focus on managing sport for social change; it aimed at engaging critically with sport management theory and praxis, and discussing associated practical and policy implications. Moreover, in contrast to numerous NGO publications about SFSC that tend to feature idealistic accounts of sport as a panacea to solve the ills of humanity, this special issue was conceived to encourage questioning of, and critical engagement with, the taken for granted assumptions and practices underlying the SFSC space.

1. Papers in this issue

The Managing Sport for Social Change special issue of *Sport Management Review* brings together a collection of conceptual advances, empirical research papers and teaching case studies from a range of social and cultural perspectives. All manuscripts within this special issue provide unique contributions to the field of SFSC and they are categorized broadly under four themes: 1) health and physical activity, 2) social capital, 3) social capacity building, and 4) social inclusion. Moreover, a review article and a teaching case study are included to provide further context and application for scholars in the field.

2. Review article

The concept of SFSC is first addressed in a review article by Edwards (2015), who discusses the role of sport, and in particular sport-for-development initiatives, in community capacity building. Edward's review of the established sport-for-development literature encourages the reader to examine the efficacy of sport's contribution to achieving community health outcomes, and calls for sport-for-development to build a learning culture where researchers, practitioners and the community can learn with and from each other.

3. Health and physical activity

The inherent physical activity within sport provides a platform for the achievement of health outcomes for specific at-risk or marginalized populations within a sport-for-development context. In this special issue, the theme of health (both physical and mental) is discussed in the following four articles.

Berg, Warner, and Das (2015) examine the efficacy of organized sport versus physical activity head on in their paper, investigating how sport could be better positioned on the public health agenda. The authors argue that traditional approaches to promoting increases in physical activity through community sport, including improvements to physical health and personal appearance, are less effective than the promotion of hedonic (feel-good) rewards and social interaction with others. In other words, the opportunity for, and promotion of, social interaction is particularly relevant to community sport initiatives that provide an engaging social context for physical activity compared to more individualistic health and fitness activities.

Bullough, Davies, and Barrett (2015) investigate the opportunities, limitations and participant outcomes of a free of charge community swimming program for English youth. This article identified that although cost of participation is often cited as a reason for low participation numbers for marginalized or at-risk groups in the community, the removal of cost to participate was insufficient to increase participation in the target community. While health benefits were accrued to regular participants, this program did not result in an increase of new participants to the sport of swimming, nor did it provide value for money compared to a more targeted sport-for-development program. The authors suggest that structured sessions within a pathway and exit structure are more likely to result in engaged and ongoing participation than unstructured access to sport activities.

Gallant, Sherry, and Nicholson (2015) provide a unique setting for the development of health and wellbeing outcomes from a sport-for-development program conducted in a prison context. Four case studies of prison sport programs are outlined, with common themes of health and wellbeing outcomes, desistance, rehabilitation, and offender management being identified. The authors argue that while sport in the prison context appears to have a positive influence on prisoner health and behavior, the impact of these programs on desistance and rehabilitation of offenders remains uncertain and deserves further (longitudinal) research.

Dalton, Wilson, Evans, and Cochrane (2015) focus their study on the role of sport in contributing to health outcomes of Australian Indigenous youth. The authors found a positive relationship between sport participation and the participants' overall physical and mental health. The specific value of this research is the illustration of the utility of appropriate measures for health outcomes in targeted sport-for-development programs, particularly when conducted within a culturally appropriate community-led program.

4. Social capital

Bringing people together through sport and physical activity programs, including members from socially, culturally and geographically diverse communities, provides an opportunity for the development of social capital (Kobayashi, Nicholson, & Hoye, 2013; Skinner, Zakus, & Cowell, 2008). The following two articles discuss the opportunities and challenges in developing and leveraging social capital through SFSC programs in the United States.

Bruening et al. (2015) use the concept of sport-based service learning to investigate the impact of participation in sport-for-development outcomes on volunteers. A mixed method approach was used to investigate the development of social capital within alumni of a sport service learning experience, with clear design and structure components of the course facilitating social capital development. The authors provide both theoretical and practical outcomes, most importantly noting the importance of both quality and quantity of contact through bonding and bridging networks to develop social capital and enhance the effectiveness of the service learning process.

Welty Peachey, Borland, Lobpries, and Cohen (2015) extend the work of Chalip (2006), O'Brien and Chalip (O'Brien & Chalip, 2007; O'Brien & Chalip, 2008) and Schulenkorf and Edwards (2012) to examine social leverage of sport-for-development events, and in particular, the creation of *communitas* and social capital. Through explicit efforts by the event team, it was found that liminality was cultivated and a sense of community developed. It is suggested that sport-for-development event organizers should design both formal and informal opportunities for social interactions through a variety of sport and ancillary events to build *communitas* and create opportunities for social leverage.

5. Social capacity building

SFSC programs have been demonstrated to develop the social and managerial capacity of individuals and their communities (Spaaij, 2012; Wright, 2009). The following two articles present empirical case studies of a community in Indonesia and a sport-for-development alumni group from the United States to investigate social capacity building through sport.

Ponting and O'Brien (2015) provide a unique contribution to the SFSC literature through an investigation of sustainable surf tourism in Indonesia's Menawati Islands. A link between establishing culturally appropriate surf-tourism and the development of social capacity measures in the host community was identified as a managerial advantage for both government and local stakeholders. The authors argue that formal, long-term, coordinated planning incorporating limits to growth, development of opportunities for cross-cultural communication and local level sport development are key to ensure that sport tourism is an agent for positive social change.

Cohen and Peachey (2015) investigate the impact of the Street Soccer USA program on an individual participant and track her progress to becoming a 'cause champion' and social entrepreneur over time. A qualitative approach identified three key influences – sport, life and traumatic experience – which contributed to her personal and professional development. This study provides an interesting contribution to the growing link between the area of social entrepreneurship and sport-for-development theory.

6. Social inclusion

For individuals and groups from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, SFSC programs can provide an active and popular space to come together, engage (both physically and psychologically) and to enhance feelings of social inclusion (Rossi & Rynne, 2013; Sherry, 2010). In their study on a sport-based inclusion program for immigrants, Forde, Lee, Mills, and Frisby (2015) provide a unique management focus on the role of sport managers in engendering social inclusion in a Canadian context. In particular, this case study examines the staff perspectives on the roles, practices and challenges facing SFSC program practitioners. Multiple enabling practices and challenges are identified that can contribute to the success (or otherwise) of a sustainable sport-for-development program.

7. Teaching case

A practical and applied contribution to this special issue is the teaching case study that focuses on SFSC in an Australian Surf Lifesaving context. Responding to the call by Edwards for greater inclusion of evidence-based SFSC examples into sport management curricula, Maxwell, Foley, Taylor, and Burton (2015) provide an engaging and illustrative case study of the effectiveness and challenges of using sport (life-saving) to improve both safety and inclusion outcomes for a multicultural community. For sport management educators, the case study will allow for practical discussions around aspects of community development, inclusion and cultural change within a sport-for-development program in a classroom context.

8. Directions for future research

As evidenced by the hundreds of SFCC programs listed on the popular Sport for Development Platform of the Swiss Academy for Development (www.sportanddev.org), much of the work related to SFSC is conducted in a developing world context. With the exception of Ponting and O'Brien's article on surf tourism capacity building in Indonesia, studies from developing countries are not well-represented in this special issue. This is an unfortunate outcome, as clearly, there is much to be studied in relation to the management of SFSC projects in low- and middle-income countries, particularly if they are funded by international agencies yet delivered by local organizers and volunteers. For example, studies around power relationships, the management of international networks and local capacity building provide fascinating spaces for further exploration. We therefore encourage scholars to "get out there" and contribute to evidence-based SFSC management

knowledge that will benefit and empower sport organizations on the ground, as well as influence sport managers and policymakers in an increasingly 'glocalised' world (Swyngedouw, 2004).

At the same time, we suggest that as a contribution to researcher empowerment and research capacity building, academic studies around SFSC can and should be conducted jointly between scholars from high- as well as low- and middle-income countries. At present, academics from North America, Europe and Australia are dominating the research space in SFSC, and this is no different in the articles featured in our special issue. We are however hopeful that initiatives such as this special issue, and the recently established Journal of Sport for Development (an open access peer-reviewed journal that is freely available to practitioners and academics around the world), will encourage international partnerships and joint publications to be realized in the future.

Increased focus should also be placed on SFSC studies that are specifically targeting women and girls. In many social contexts, females still suffer from restricted opportunities to participate in, and benefit from, sporting initiatives. In this special issue, only one study focused specifically on women. Given the importance of women (and especially mothers) as enablers, supporters, and role models for their children (Meier & Saavedra, 2009; Sawrikar & Muir, 2010; Siefken, Schofield, & Schulenkorf, 2014), and the inherent disadvantage of females in many communities around the world, we argue that more work needs to be done in this area. Studies could, for example, investigate the management practices of targeted SFSC programs that provide women and girls with relevant and meaningful opportunities for social engagement and community leadership.

In general, working with diverse communities requires academics to apply locally acceptable, relevant and innovative research approaches. We therefore encourage researchers to work together with the "researched" to develop culturally and contextually appropriate research methodologies in their engagement with the field. This is particularly important as many of the traditional approaches in research design and data collection methods do not readily translate to the often distinct contexts of sport-for-development. We argue that the important researcher-practitioner link will only be strengthened through reciprocal engagement and the sharing of lessons from the field. This, in turn, should constantly challenge, develop and enhance research methodology and SFSC scholarship overall.

Finally, as a sub-field of the wider sport-for-development phenomenon, the work in SFSC is focused on the social and health-related wellbeing of participants and their communities. We believe that this special issue contributes nicely to the evidence base and academic discussions around concepts such as health and wellbeing, social capital, social inclusion, and capacity building. However, we encourage scholars to engage across the full breadth of social issues, including sport for education, socio-economic and socio-political development, as well as reconciliation and peacebuilding. These areas are likely to provide related yet different challenges to researchers, with complexities in measurement and challenges with access. However, as the field of sport-for-development becomes more sophisticated in its approach to design and delivery, so too should the management research and evaluation of SFSC initiatives.

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