Exploring the Complexities of Managing Local Sport for Development

Kyle Rich, Western University
Laura Misener (Advisor), Western University

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Introduction

Recently, there has been increasing interest and consequently a growing body of literature pertaining to international sport for development (S4D) programs; that is, those focused on ‘international development’ or those which are organized and managed outside of the country (or by individuals hailing from outside of the country) where the program is implemented (Levermore & Beacom, 2012). Typically, these initiatives have been developed by external agents (e.g. NGO’s) in response to a particular crisis situation (e.g. Coalter, 2013; Schulenkorf, 2012). However, limited research has attended to programs and initiatives that are developed and implemented locally, which face their own unique circumstances. As these programs have scarcely been discussed in the literature, we have a weaker understanding of the management structures and processes of these locally developed and implemented programs. Thus, in this paper, I discuss some of the diverse management implications of locally developed S4D programs, specifically in the context of a developed nation. The case that I will discuss is the Community Cup. Based in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, the Community Cup Program seeks to facilitate the adaptation of newcomers (recent immigrants and refugees) by facilitating the creation of social networks and providing volunteer experiences through community sport events.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to examine how and why locally developed and implemented S4D programs are realized. Specifically, I seek to describe the management structures and practices that are employed and how they adhere to and/or disrupt current frameworks for understanding international S4D programs.

Theory

There are few frameworks available for for examining S4D initiatives including those proposed by Schulenkorf (2009; 2012) and Lytras and Welty Peachy (2011). In this paper, I utilize Lyras and Welty Peachy’s theory for sport for development to discuss a case study of the Community Cup Program. Lyras and Welty Peachy (2011) describe five components of their S4D theory that can be applied to understand how sport can be used as a tool for social change. These components are impacts assessments, organizational approach, the use of sport, educational framework, and cultural enrichment (or other non-sporting activities).

Methodology

In this paper, I employ a case study methodology (Yin, 2009) to examine the Community Cup Program. Data were collected through multiple methods including participant observation, document analysis, focus groups with program participants (n=9), and semi-structured interviews with program administrators (n=2).

The Case

Operating in its tenth year in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, the Community Cup is a participatory sport and volunteer program that seeks to promote the adaptation of newcomers (recent immigrant and refugees) by fostering networks and friendships (social capital) and community and participant engagement in the planning and execution processes. While there are several aspects of the program that may be considered (corporate challenges, skill development workshops, as well as single and multi-sport events), my discussion will focus on the two largest events: the Community Cup Soccer Tournament and the Community Cup Chase (urban adventure race) events.

Results and Discussion

In this section, I briefly trace the development of the Community Cup Program up to its current operation in 2013. Through the data collected, I explore the understandings of the Community Cup Program by newcomer participants...
as well as the management practices that are engaged in order to animate the event. In the discussion, I focus on the central concepts of shared leadership, organizational structure, and evaluation measures to discuss the operation of the Community Cup Program. I present the ways that the Community Cup attempts to navigate an ostensibly multicultural context, as well as how it both perpetuates and resists neoliberal understandings of sport and the practice of sport. I argue that while programs such as the Community Cup face issues of operating across cultures and worldviews (similar to those presented in discussions of international S4D programs), their focus on a multicultural population within a neoliberal space warrants specific attention and further discussion. Furthermore, I argue that through creative management practices the Community Cup creates a space that may promote understanding and community building in a diasporic community context.

In conclusion, I provide recommendations for managers of local/intra-national S4D programs. Among others, these recommendations include the engagement of participants in the conceptualization, planning, and execution of sport programs and events as well as focusing monitoring and evaluation practices on specific social outcomes rather than broad participation and satisfaction parameters. While these programs operate in increasingly complex cultural contexts, through creative and innovative sport and management practices, they hold potential to foster a variety of positive social outcomes. By engaging in this discussion with the specific intention of informing management practices, this work will open the dialogue on just one of the many S4D programs that are managed and implemented within Canada and other developed countries. While these programs align with some aspects of S4D theory (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011) I will illustrate how they also face unique circumstances that managers must account for in order to effectively utilize sport as a tool for social change.

References