Quantitative Assessment of Organizational Capacity and Organizational Life Stages in Sport for Development and Peace

Per Svensson, Louisiana State University
Fredrik Andersson, University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee

Thursday, June 1, 2017
1:20 PM
Room: Torrey's Peak

Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) is increasingly drawing attention from a broad range of stakeholders during recent years. Organizations involved in this domain are using sport as a means for achieving a broad range of development and peace-building outcomes (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011; Schulenkorf, 2012). These initiatives are found in underserved areas of low-, middle-, and high-income countries (Coalter, 2013; Kidd, 2008). To date, research has primarily examined program outcomes of SDP initiatives, yet research focused on the structures and processes of the organizations implementing these programs remains scarce (Giulianotti, 2011; Schulenkorf, Sherry, & Rowe, 2015; Schulenkorf, Burdsey, & Sugden, 2014). The concepts of organizational capacity and organizational life cycle provide two frameworks that can help contribute to closing this gap in the SDP literature. Examining the life stage of an organization adds a valuable perspective since it allows for the identification of nuances in capacity across different stages of the organizational life cycle (Andersson, 2011). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the nature of organizational capacity in SDP. Specifically, the authors are guided by the following research questions: (1) what is the underlying structure of capacity in SDP? and (2) what is the association between organizational life stage and capacity levels among SDP organizations?

For the purpose of this study, organizational capacity is defined as the ability of an organization to draw on internal and external resources for achieving its desired social mission (Christensen & Gazley, 2008; Doherty, Misener, & Cuskelly, 2014). This concept has primarily been used in sport management to examine community sport clubs—a type of membership association where individuals pay a fee to be part of the organization (Balduck, Lucidarme, Marlier, & Willem, 2015; Doherty et al., 2014; Misener & Doherty, 2009; Sharpe, 2006; Wicker & Breuer, 2011, 2013). These researchers have primarily relied on Hall et al.’s (2003, 2004) multi-dimensional conceptualization of capacity. Specifically, Hall et al.’s framework proposes capacity to consist of dimensions related to human, financial, process and infrastructure, relationships and network, and planning and development capacities. To date, a few researchers have begun to examine capacity in SDP using this framework (e.g., Svensson & Hambrick, 2016). Findings from these qualitative studies provide exploratory evidence of the nuances of capacity in SDP compared to other contexts (sport clubs, national governing bodies, non-sport nonprofits). However, no prior studies have quantitatively examined the nature of capacity in SDP with an international sample or through a quantitative methodology.

To address the purpose of this study, the researchers developed a 58-item questionnaire based on prior nonprofit capacity literature. These items were related to the five dimensions of Hall et al.’s capacity framework: human, financial, process and infrastructure, relationship and network, and planning and development capacities. This included the adaptation of items from prior literature on capacity elements among community sport clubs (Doherty et al., 2014; Misener & Doherty, 2009; Wicker & Breuer, 2011) and from prior literature on SDP organizations (Svensson & Hambrick, 2016). Furthermore, additional items were also adapted from the capacity instrument and organizational life stage assessment previously used in the study of capacity among human service nonprofits (Andersson, Faulk, & Stewart, 2015; Andersson, 2011).

A sampling frame was established by reviewing all known online directories of SDP organizations including the International Sport for Development and Peace Platform, the Beyond Sport Network, streetfootballworld, Kicking Aids Out! Network, Sport for Social Change Network, and the Action Sport for Development and Peace Network. This resulted in a list of 3,338 entities. The researchers then excluded any entries that were not related to organizations involved in the implementation of grassroots SDP programs. This reduced the sample size to 991 organizations. Of these, contact information was identified for 797 organizations. An electronic invitation to
complete the capacity survey was recently sent to these entities. A total of 71 invitations were undelivered. Thus, a total of 726 organizations received the invitation to participate in this study. Data collection is currently underway and will be finalized in November 2016. At this time, more than a 175 survey responses have been recorded. To validate the dimensions of organizational capacity in SDP, factor analysis will be used to examine the underlying structure of capacity once data collection is completed (DeVellis, 2003). Cronbach’s alpha will also be used to examine the scale reliability. In addition, regression analysis will be employed to examine the relationships between organizational life stages and dimensions of capacity (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Similar approaches have been used in studies on capacity and life stages of human service nonprofits (Andersson et al., 2015).

Findings from this study contribute to the body of knowledge on capacity of sport organizations (e.g., Balduck et al., 2015; Doherty et al., 2014; Sharpe, 2006; Wicker & Breuer, 2011, 2013) by examining an international sample of SDP entities. The results of this quantitative assessment allows for a more comprehensive understanding of nuances in the capacity of SDP organizations around the world since many entities within SDP operate within complex environments in low- and middle-income countries (Svensson & Hambrick, 2016; Sherry & Schulenkorf, 2016). Scholars are also calling for increased emphasis on the development and application of theory in SDP (Welty Peachey, 2016). The results from this study will help in theorizing the nature of organizational capacity in SDP. Furthermore, the results of the factor analysis will also provide insight regarding the underlying dimensions of capacity. Based on these findings, we will discuss whether the often-cited framework by Hall et al. (2003, 2004) is the most appropriate for examining capacity among SDP organizations or if other nonprofit capacity models (Brown, Andersson, & Jo, 2015; Christensen & Gazley, 2008; Eisinger, 2002; Fredericksen & London, 2000; Germann & Wilson, 2004; Schuh & Leviton, 2006) may be better suited. Findings from this study will also indicate current capacity needs and strengths across organizational life stages (Andersson et al., 2015). This will allow for the development of more targeted and effective capacity building initiatives. Practical and theoretical implications will be discussed. A research agenda will also be outlined based on the results of this study for future SDP scholarship.