Sport for Development

What game are we playing?

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ROUTLEDGE

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SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT

Sport is increasingly regarded as a powerful tool in international development. In this comprehensive introduction to the area of 'sport-for-development', leading researcher Fred Coalter critically evaluates the strengths and weaknesses and successes and failures of sport-for-development policies and programmes.

Beginning with an outline of the historical development of policies of sport-for-development, this book explores the objectives that remain central to international sport-for-development initiatives, including issues of defining and measuring impacts and outcomes, the development of self-efficacy and leadership skills, female empowerment, HIV/AIDS awareness and social capital. Drawing on a wealth of fieldwork experience and empirical data from the most extensive monitoring and evaluation project ever undertaken with sport-for-development organisations, this is an unparalleled and fully integrated assessment of theory, policy and practice in international sport-for-development.

Sport for Development: what game are we playing? is essential reading for any student or practitioner with an interest in sport-for-development, sports policy or international development.

Fred Coalter is Professor of Sports Policy at Leeds Metropolitan University, UK. Prior to this he was Professor of Sports Policy at the University of Stirling, UK (2003–2010), Director of the Centre for Leisure Research at the University of Edinburgh, UK (1990–2003) and Director of the Centre for Leisure and Tourism Studies at the then Polytechnic of North London, UK (1986–1990).

Dedication
To the optimists of the will: Alka S, Bob M, David T, Henry M, Manna B, Matthew S, Priyanka S, Sheetal S, Trevor P and Vicki.

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In a book that reflects on my experiences over the past six years and visits to sport-for-development programmes in 11 countries and three continents it is not possible to acknowledge all those who have contributed to my learning and development.

However, starting close to home, I would like to thank Annemarie Elsom for her constancy and support throughout a difficult but rewarding journey of discovery. Thanks are also due to Peter Argall for commissioning the work reported in Chapter 7 and for his patience, support and lunch. John Taylor for his invaluable contribution to the design and implementation of the surveys reported in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 and for his unstinting work on our statistical journey. Steve Dowers for his belt and braces advice and support on many aspects of statistics, interpretation and computer repairs. (Thanks to Derek Casey, who knows the nature of his contribution.) Thanks also to Simon Whitmore and Joshua Wells at Routledge for their support and patience.

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I am also grateful to Sage for permission to include material from '"There's loads of relationships here". Developing a programme theory for sport-for-change programme', International Review for the Sociology of Sport. June 5, 2012 as doi:10.1177/1012690212446143.

CONTENTS

1

INTRODUCTION

'Fred ... you have not spoken for a long time'

The comment was made by Alka Sesha, one of the founders of Magic Bus. My uncharacteristic silence was caused by the shock of my first visit to Dharavi, the Mumbai slum that subsequently featured in the film *Slumdog Millionaire*. As part of a project to develop a monitoring and evaluation manual I had arrived in India having visited the Mathare slum in Nairobi – one of the largest and poorest slums in Africa, with a population of about 500,000 people living in an area of two kilometres by 300 metres (1.2 miles by 0.2 miles). It is a maze of low, rusted iron-sheeting roofs with mud walls. Housing is wholly inadequate, with most houses measuring about eight feet by six feet and holding up to ten people. Few houses have running water, open gutters of sewage run throughout, the road infrastructure is extremely poor, refuse and litter dominate the area and the local authority provides few services. My visit to Mathare shocked me deeply, but it did not prepare me for Dharavi. In my report to my funders (UK Sport) I stated:

> My expression when we visited Dharavi was that we had 'descended into hell' – it was like the last stages of the journey up the river in the film *Apocalypse Now*. The people live in indescribable conditions, with an average household of five in 15–20 square metres, they are packed extremely close together with very narrow pathways providing access. These pathways are so close there is little light and no privacy, or space for children to play. It is estimated that 25 to 35 per cent of children work six–seven hours per day in zari factories/ garbage picking/selling utensils.

The day before I had visited an illegal settlement called Bombay Port Trust (BPT) where Magic Bus also works. I reported that

> ... it is almost impossible to describe the conditions in these areas – the closest I can get is that BPT is like a post-holocaust environment, dominated by metal salvaging, metal dust and extremely polluted water, in which children swim. It has few public health and educational facilities and it is estimated that about 20 per cent of the children work five–eight hours per day in leather factories, garages and stealing iron/steel/scrap materials from disused factories and old ships, sometimes being killed in the process. There is little open space and the children mostly 'play' in narrow lanes between a dense collection of tiny huts, made of a mixture of cardboard, corrugated iron, tarpaulin and plastic. The lanes are not wide enough for two people to pass easily and the huts are so close together there is very little light – the images of Dickensian England appear luxurious compared to this.

In such circumstances my concerns with finding ways to measure the impact on individuals of participation in sport-for-development programmes seemed utterly trivial. Perhaps it was a failure of my imagination, but I was unable to understand how participation in such programmes would lead to what is so casually and loosely termed 'development'. This term is promulgated by sports evangelists and conceptual entrepreneurs, usually with little consideration given to its inherently ambiguous, contentious and contested character (Black, 2010), or the moral implications of the promises implied via the loose use of the term.

These experiences and others in a camp for internally displaced people in Northern Uganda, the Kamwokya slum in Kampala with very high rates of HIV infection, a post-conflict sports programme in Liberia, a programme in rural Senegal, a programme for street children in Malawi, an organisation working with railway children in Kolkata and a refuge for battered children in Cape Town all served to raise a concern about *displacement of scope* (Wagner, 1964). This refers to the process of wrongly generalising potential micro level effects to the meso and macro levels. In part it relates to long-standing debates within social science about the relationship between structure and action, between the individual and the social or even between values, attitudes, intentions and behaviour. Or more politically, Weiss' (1993: 105) concern that:

> We mount limited-focus programs to cope with broad-gauge problems. We devote limited resources to long-standing and stubborn problems. Above all we concentrate attention on changing the attitudes and behaviour of target groups without concomitant attention to the institutional structures and social arrangements that tend to keep them "target groups".

The issues relating to the meaning of 'development' and displacement of scope – to what extent do any sporting impacts on individuals go beyond the touchline? – underpin the concerns of this book. However, before we can address such issues, a more basic issue remains unresolved – do such programmes lead to changes in individuals and, if so, how and to what extent? For some time I have been concerned to 'de-reify' sport (Crabbe, 2000; Coalter, 2006, 2007) and the monitoring and evaluation manual was

developed to support a collaborative and *process-oriented* approach. It was based on the important distinction between necessary conditions (i.e. participation in a sports programme) and *sufficient conditions* – what type of sports, social relationships, processes and experiences lead to what type of impacts for whom, in what contexts and to what extent can these meaningfully be regarded as 'development'? It proposed a broad typology of programmes – sport, plus sport and sport plus – to suggest that 'sport', however defined, was usually only one component of such programmes and its contribution to the impact of programmes varied widely. Rather than families of programmes – sport-for-development – the concerns should be with *families of mechanisms* (Coalter, 2007). Coakley (1998) and others contend that sport is a site for, but not cause of, socialisation experiences (Witt and Crompton, 1997; Crabbe, 2000; Fox, 2000; Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011). This perspective, combined with Pawson's (2006) realist perspective, leads to a concentration on middle-range mechanisms and the development of programme theories – the components, mechanisms, relationships and sequences of cause and effect that are *presumed* to lead to desired impacts – the issue of subsequent *outcomes* raises much more complex issues (see Chapters 3 and 7).

However, in the research reported in this book (Coalter and Taylor, 2010) a more fundamental issue emerged – the dangers of an environmental determinism that assumes that deprived communities inevitably produce deficient people who can be perceived, via a deficit model, to be in need of 'development' through sport. This seems to be a necessary legitimating for much sports evangelism but, as we will see in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, such assumptions may need to be reconsidered.

The issues of the nature of 'development', assumptions about participants and their 'development needs', sufficient conditions and programme mechanisms, the nature of impacts, their relationship with outcomes and issues of displacement of scope inform this book and are dealt with in detail in various chapters. I make no claims to the resolution of such issues, but simply wish to contribute to, or provoke, a debate. Sadly such a debate seems not to be welcomed at many of the conferences, or congregations, of sports evangelists that seem to be dominated by forms of 'incestuous amplification' in which sceptics are barely tolerated and agnostics and atheists banished. A policy area that cannot accept sceptics and agnostics is doomed to remain undeveloped, even in its apparent attempts to contribute to 'development'.

While I have tendencies towards atheism, I remain a sceptic for reasons outlined in the next section.

Sport-for-development: pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will

This is the title that I wanted for this book but the publishers refused, feeling that it would not attract sufficient customers on Amazon – too obtuse or overly intellectual. It is a paraphrase of Gramsci's advice to radicals. He argued that the challenge of modernity was to live without illusions and without becoming disillusioned and in that context he stated that 'I'm a pessimist because of intelligence, but an optimist

because of will' (Letter from Prison, 19 December 1929, in Gramsci, 1994). This represents a succinct summary of the dilemmas that I have faced since my visits to Mathare, Dharavi and Bombay Port Trust and I am privileged to continue to work closely with the Mathare Youth Sport Association and Magic Bus. As I have said, my view of the complexity and depth of the social, cultural and economic problems that characterised these communities was that they were not only beyond comprehension – certainly beyond my ability to describe accurately to someone who has not experienced them – but also beyond solution.

In this context I have strong intellectual and moral reservations about many of the claims made by sport-for-development evangelists and conceptual entrepreneurs. First, I regard scepticism as a core element of academic practice (Portes, 2000) and to view research simply as an ideological partner that proves 'success' (Koss in van Kampen, 2003) is to reduce the role of social science to confirming what we already think that we know to be the case. Such attitudes towards the nature and role of research contain substantial dangers for young academics seeking to establish an academic career in this area. In this regard I agree with Emler (2001a: 3) that 'we should be suspicious of any convenient convergence of self-serving interests with the greater good'. Second, many of the claims of the conceptual entrepreneurs of sport-for-development are not supported by robust research evidence, or even coherent theory-based explanations. In fact, despite rather odd claims that sport-for-development is a 'new field' in its 'formative stage' (Kay, 2009: 1177; Woodcock et al, 2012), substantial bodies of research evidence exist that raise significant questions about many of the claims made for the presumed impact of sports participation on individuals, with even more fundamental questions asked about subsequent behavioural outcomes (Coalter, 2007; Value of Sport Monitor, nd). It seems contradictory, or at least paradoxical, to claim that this is a new area of research, yet base its claims for legitimacy on long-standing ideologies of, and assertions about, sport. Third, there are few areas of social intervention that can claim anything approaching total success in all contexts with all participants and there are few areas of social science where research findings are unproblematically supportive of the type of generalisations found in sport-for-development rhetoric (Coalter, 2007). (These issues are explored in Chapter 3.)

However, Kruse (2006: 8) refers to the widespread existence of strong beliefs 'based on an intuitive certainty and experience that there is a positive link between sport and development'. Such faith provides impressive motivation – an optimism of the will – for many *practitioners* who deliver programmes. I have been privileged to meet some of the most committed, selfless and optimistic people that I have ever met, working in unimaginably difficult circumstances with limited resources. My reactions are succinctly summarised by Black (2010: 121) who states that

> there is much to admire about the enthusiasm, idealism and 'can-do' zeal of many of those caught up in it. Their preoccupation with development practice – with the imperative of 'making a difference' in the lives of poor, marginalized and often conflict-affected communities globally – is also both admirable and inevitable ... development as a field of study indissolubly links theoretical

reflection on issues of justice, equity and social change with the imperative of action.

Craib (1984) argues that social theorists are working in three dimensions simultaneously: the *cognitive dimension* seeks to establish objective knowledge about the social world; the *affective dimension* is one in which elements of theories embody the experience and feeling of the theorist; the *normative dimension* refers to the fact that any theory of the way that the world is, is also based on assumptions about the way the world ought to be. It seems to me that too often the cognitive element is greatly compromised in sport-for-development.

Consequently, it is the intellectual and emotional tension between the essential requirement for academic scepticism and the practitioners' optimism of the will that informs this book and is the source of the personal tensions that I felt when writing it. While I follow my academic training and personal intellectual preferences by expressing substantial scepticism about the grandiose claims of the self-interested conceptual entrepreneurs, I am constantly aware of the enormous optimism of the will of the many admirable practitioners with whom I have the privilege to continue to work.

The sport-for-development impact study

The empirical data that forms the basis of Chapters 4, 5 and some of 6 are derived from a major research project funded by Comic Relief and UK Sport and managed by International Development through Sport (IDS) (Coalter and Taylor, 2010). It sought to test the hypothesis that 'sport contributes to the personal development and well-being of disadvantaged children and young people and brings wider benefits to the community'. Because of resource constraints and conceptual and logistical issues, it was decided not to address the complex and vague issue of 'wider community benefits'. In addition, it sought to:

- build a body of evidence and good practice around the use of sport and development;
- enable participating organisations to develop their M&E methodology.

Comic Relief and UK Sport each chose five projects – loosely divided into *plus sport* and *sport plus*, although the choice was largely pragmatic and based on availability. Plus sport organisations are defined as social development organisations whose core concerns are with issues such as conflict resolution, homelessness and children at risk. Sport was either part of their programme, or they were encouraged to introduce it as part of this project – a relatively unsuccessful tactic based on a rather superficial view of sport. Sport plus organisations are those whose core activity is sport, which is used and adapted in various ways to achieve certain 'development' objectives, such as HIV and AIDS education or female 'empowerment'. Subsequently, after initial visits, four organisations were omitted for a variety of reasons and the research collected data from six organisations (more detail can be found in Coalter and Taylor, 2010):

- The Kids' League. A sport plus organisation working with internally displaced young people in northern Uganda and providing mixed-sex, open-access, six–seven week football/netball programmes for 12–15 year olds. A before-and-after survey of participants was undertaken.
- Praajak. A plus sport social development agency based in Kolkata (India) working with 'railway children' – young people who run away from home to work on the railways. It held three all-male outdoor physical activity camps over 20 months and a before-and-after survey of participants was undertaken.
- Magic Bus. A sport plus organisation working in the slums of Mumbai (India), providing a range of age-related programmes, including the Voyager programme for 14–16 year olds. Two before-and-after surveys were conducted: (i) with participants in the Voyager programme; (ii) with participants in the peer-leader training programme.
- Elimu, Michezo na Mazoezi (EMIMA) in Dar-es-salaam (Tanzania). A sport plus organisation providing an after-school and weekend programme that uses sport and other activities to develop life skills and raise awareness of HIV and AIDS. Two sets of data were collected: (i) a survey of participants and non-participants; (ii) a before-and-after survey of participants in the Girls' Empowerment Programme, although respondents had been taking part in the programme for at least four months.
- Kamwokya Christian Caring Community (KCCC). A sport plus organisation in Kampala that is a faith and community-based NGO seeking to improve the quality of life in an impoverished area and deal with issues of HIV and AIDS. A before-and-after survey was undertaken with participants in the All Star Sports Academy (which holds weekend soccer clinics) and the Treasure Life Centre, which provides recreational and competitive netball plus education and training activities, although participants had been taking part in the programmes for some time. In addition, a survey of non-participants was undertaken to enable comparisons with the KCCC data.
- Sport Coaches Outreach (SCORE) is a South African NGO that aims to empower individuals and develop communities through sport and recreation. In-depth interviews were undertaken with female and male community sports leaders to explore the impact of their training and aspects of their work.

Surveys: a neo-colonialist conspiracy?

As we will see in Chapter 3, the survey method is subject to radical criticism by a number of liberation methodologists in sport-for-development, who view the approach as part of a neo-colonialist epistemological conspiracy to marginalise local voices. However, I accept Hammersley's (1995: 19) position that research is a practical activity and that 'philosophy must be not be seen as superordinate to empirical research [which] cannot be governed in any strict way by methodological theory'. The need for pragmatism in often very difficult circumstances is illustrated by the work of Burnett (2001) in South Africa and Woodcock, Cronin and Forde (2012) in Kenya, which will be referred to later.

Both self-completion and interviewer-administered questionnaires were used for the majority of the data collection for several practical reasons:

- Unashamedly we wanted to quantify the nature and distribution of the impacts of participation in the programmes, rather than rely on inevitably selective and non-representative ad hominem stories and case studies, which tend to represent 'evidence' for the conceptual entrepreneurs – what Hartmann and Kwauk (2011: 286) refer to as 'heartfelt narratives'. The before-and-after and, in two cases, comparative approaches make an original, if admittedly limited, contribution to the evaluation of the impact of participation in such programmes.
- The use of questionnaires and the collection of quantitative data permitted some degree of inter-programme comparability, a central part of the project and one that would have been extremely difficult to achieve via qualitative data.
- The project aimed to contribute to the development of organisational M&E expertise. This was best achieved by attempting to develop the intellectual and technical aspects of questionnaire and survey design, survey implementation and subsequent quantitative data analysis and reporting, as each organisation produced its own report to the clients. However, as anyone who has taught research methods will understand, developing such expertise in such a short period of time with people with widely differing experience via limited workshops proved to be challenging.
- Such an approach reduced greatly the strong possibility of social desirability bias related to qualitative data collection by programme providers. However, we were not able wholly to avoid this.
- The need to provide technical support and assistance via email over approximately 18 months meant that the design of questionnaires and the implementation of surveys was the optimal logistical approach.
- The lack of research expertise and a lack of understanding of the programme theories underpinning programmes meant that qualitative data gathering via in-depth interviews was impractical. Where this was attempted, via the training of inexperienced personnel, the results were limited, with little in-depth exploration of meaning or process and indications of social desirability bias (Coalter and Taylor, 2010).

Types of surveys

There are three possible approaches:

(i) The 'gold standard' is randomly allocated participant and non-participant groups in which before-and-after surveys are conducted to assess the relative impact of sports participation. For logistical and resource reasons this was not possible.

(ii) The main method adopted for this project was a before-and-after survey of participants in a sport-for-development programme, with any changes assumed to be a function of participation in the programme, if not 'sport'. However, in