

## **SPORTS AS A MEDIUM FOR PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE**

**Alex Lyras, Andrew Yiannakis, & Mikos Karakalis**, University of Connecticut, USA

### **Context**

Given the pervasiveness of juvenile delinquency, the existence of discriminatory practices, drug and alcohol abuse, the youth of today's world are confronted with many problems and challenges. In the world of sport there is a growing trend for the increasing use of sport programs around the world to resolve many of the problems mentioned above. It is the purpose of this study to:

- identify and describe the major trends seen in the philosophies of programs and institutions around the world that use sports as "social medicine" (United Nations, European Commission, International Olympic Committee, Sports PLUS, Basketball Without Borders, Doves Olympic Movement, etc)
- describe and explain the application of a sport program that aims to provide social and personal development (Doves Olympic Movement, Lyras, 2003), and to
- provide suggestions for future research in this new field.

### **Methods**

A mixed method approach was employed, analyzing web sites, documents, and programme philosophies to discover and present the general themes and patterns of this new practice. During the summer of 2005, a sports initiative is planned in Cyprus that aims to use sport as a means for personal and cultural development. The sport initiative is called Doves Olympic Movement (Lyras, 2003; Lyras, Yiannakis & Kartakoullis, 2003, 2004, 2005). This initiative will bring together Greek and Turkish Cypriot youngsters for the purpose of playing together, learning together, and trying to develop friendships and collaborations. The purpose of this project will be to develop a week-long Olympic camp with 90 Greek and Turkish Cypriot children and 10 instructors. The programme will operate under the philosophy, values, and principles of the Olympic Movement. The four-month-long programme will also include five daily workshops for the camp instructors, recruiting participants, conferences with families and participants, and developing training and dissemination of material. Data collection and analysis will take place during summer 2005.

### **Results**

Included in the proposal is a systematic programme of scientific evaluation that will use personal interviews and questionnaires to measure the short-term and long-term impacts of the camp experience. The programme will be constantly evaluated by an onsite research team of experts from the University of Connecticut, USA, and Intercollege, Cyprus, who will develop the instruments, conduct the data collection and perform data entry and analysis. Both short-term and long-term effects of the project experience will be measured and analyzed (Instructors-children- community).

### **Discussion/ Implications**

This new educational perspective of sport has the potential to introduce, develop and disseminate new practices that would have beneficial effects on countries with multicultural populations (UN, 2003). Sport programmes with similar philosophies could facilitate the application of human rights, enhance understanding and respect for all peoples' cultures, enhance communication and problem-solving skills, and understand the necessity of international solidarity and cooperation. UNESCO (1974, 1994) suggested that educational policies for populations with diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds should aim to achieve the combination of learning, training, and action that facilitates the emotional and intellectual development of individuals. Therefore, activities that ensure transferability of knowledge should be the essential features of programmes aiming to resolve such social problems. Sports have the potential not only to teach a new generation with lifetime skills (Beedy, 1996; Shields & Bredmeier, 1994; UN, 2003) but can also become a tool for personal and cultural growth and development. Finally, moral development, justice and care, good communication, and problem solving skills not only facilitate friendship, understanding and cooperation, but also contribute to peace-building and knowledge about a non-violent resolution of conflict.

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Contact: Alexis.Lyras@uconn.edu