

**(PP) DEVELOPING CREATIVE ACTIONS TO INCREASE
OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH THROUGH SPORT:
CASE STUDIES IN KENYA AND ZAMBIA**

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Introduction

The main goal of the (research)project on Sport & Development at the Department of Leisure Management at NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences is to evaluate how the introduction and stimulation of sport can give different target groups, especially children and youth, more opportunities in life. For example, do integrated sport activities contribute to the social acceptance of children with a disability by other children? Does sport enhance the self esteem of street children, or does it influence the social behaviour of children and youth (cooperation and building friendships)?

The projects are carried out (under supervision) by graduate students in sport management (bachelor level). These students participate in a special research training program for graduates, called IRCALT (International Research & Consultancy Academy Leisure and Tourism). The projects are carried out by making use of **creative action methodology**. This methodology is developed within NHTV and is based on the analytic-empirical research tradition on the one hand and that of action research (based on Lewin) on the other hand (Boog e.a. 2005). The focus within this method is on action, creativity and dialogue. In this presentation, the underlying basics of doing research in this way will be explained. This will be illustrated by 4 different case studies.

Project/Plan

Students who participate in this program search for innovative solutions for practical problems in a specific context, in this case, in the field of sport & development. The research projects are community based, which implies that the projects are carried out in cooperation with the local community or NGO. Furthermore, they are oriented to problem-solving aiming to develop practical instruments.

In the first stage of the research, instruments/solutions are developed using the best combination of theories and existing practical experiences. In the second stage, they are tested in a micro-setting by using experimental research (pre and post measurements). At a later stage, the objective is to test the general effectiveness of these instruments within several contextual frames and to contribute to the empowerment of the local community and/or NGO. From a theoretical point of view, the aim is to explain why the instruments are effective (building theories, using induction).

Results

In 2005, two research projects have been carried out in Kenya (Kitale). Students cooperated with a local NGO, called Tysa. One of these projects was aimed at stimulating the social acceptance and integration of handicapped children by making use of sport (De Vugt, 2005). The other project was aimed at increasing the self esteem of street children through sport (Assink, 2005).

In 2006 two projects have been carried out in Zambia (Lusaka) in cooperation with the Kalusha Foundation. One of these projects focused on the use of sport to stimulate social behaviour with children (Van Straaten, 2006). The other focused on the use of cooperative games to stimulate cooperation and building friendships amongst girls (Van der Kolk, 2006). The results are reported and seem positive. In the paper, the methodological background and results of these projects will be presented in more detail.

Students carried out the first stage of their research in the Netherlands (defining the rationale, discussion and selection of theories and actions, selection of intervention). As far as possible, students interacted with key persons in the field. The second stage of the research was carried out in Kenya and Zambia (field research and experiment), where dialogue with local NGO's and target groups formed a major element in the research projects. In Kenya, for instance the students set up a project with Tysa and selected 2 different target groups (18 children with and without handicap and 20 street children) to carry out their research project. The sport projects took place at the public stadium of Kitale. Every weekday, during 8 weeks the different target groups participated in sport activities. Parents and social workers were involved in the projects. To measure the effectiveness of the actions, different research methods were used, such as observations during sport activities and interviews with children before and after the project (pre and post measurement).

The project focused on handicapped children was based on the notion that handicapped children in developing countries live in underprivileged circumstances. In Kenya, pre-assumptions about handicapped still are very vivid, mostly because of the fact that there is no knowledge about handicaps. That leads to stereotypes and exclusion (De Boer, 2002, Aghesa, 2004). In this project it was tested if peer education about handicaps combined with integrated sport participation of handicapped and non handicapped children helped to change negative attitudes of non handicapped children towards handicapped children. The underlying idea was that a handicapped person can display through sport what he is able to do instead of what he is not able to do. The outside world can observe this and this could be a means to gain acceptance and appreciation by non handicapped people. Direct contact and frequent interaction between handicapped and non-handicapped people can contribute to develop positive attitudes of healthy people towards handicapped. Projects of NEBAS-NSG (the Dutch sport organization of people with a disability) are based on this principle. The results, which will be presented in more detail, make clear that the actions had a positive effect on the acceptance and integration of handicapped children by non-handicapped children in the test-project. More knowledge about handicaps was gained and most of the children in the project developed a more positive attitude towards handicapped children.

Discussion

The projects indicate that the approach of creative action methodology is positive. Testing actions in a micro-setting seems to work, although it is time consuming and difficult for the students involved. Students set up a plan in advance. Once they are in the field, unexpected circumstances occur and flexibility is needed to carry on with the research project. Working with a control group is wanted, but in real practice this is not the case. So the results are true for their specific target groups. Setting up an experiment to measure the effectiveness of the use of sport for development is not always possible. This was the case for the student who wanted to evaluate how sport contributed to development of social behaviour of children ("shall

I do something for you?”). Nevertheless, creative action methodology is a useful method to teach students to develop a critical attitude and be creative and to develop practical instruments for solving problems. Local NGO’s can gain a lot from these projects, since knowledge is exchanged and local projects are set up with a minimum of investment. In future, it is necessary to test the actions in different contextual frames to evaluate the general effectiveness of these actions. A key aspect is cooperation with professionals and target groups in the field to gain and pass through knowledge and instruments.

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