

(SP) MANAGING GLOBAL SPORTS DEVELOPMENT: SIX CHALLENGES TO AN EMERGING ORDER OF GOVERNANCE

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Introduction

Recently there has been a burgeoning amount of literature and academic and political forums dealing with global sports development. Two high profile international conferences on sport and development held in Magglingen in 2003 and 2005 stressed the contribution that sport could make to meet the Millennium Development Goals (UN, 2000). A process of institutionalisation of sport development involving a set of legal and policy instruments and formal organisations has accompanied those initiatives. An ever-increasing number of sports development programmes offered by six main groups of providers including international organisations, government agencies, sports federations, NGOs, research institutes and consultancies and sporting goods industry started to emerge. The Sport and Development International Platform (SDIP) web site lists 152 such programmes (www.sportanddev.org). These programmes represent a powerful mechanism for influencing local practices in all parts of the world. Various providers also become integrated in networks of international organisations to form a part of an emerging system of global sports development governance. The role of this new global system has received very little attention in academic and policy circles. This paper sets out to fill this void by addressing the key management challenges presented by the global governance of sports development. It is argued that any model of sports development, which fails to address those challenges is bound to produce very limited results if not failures. This is because the framing of sports development constitutes an essential part of the power relations fostered by the globalisation of its governance. The practical implications of those challenges are real and concern the day-to-day operations of sport managers.

Methods

Sports development policies and practices of three main international providers, including the IOC, FIFA and SDIP have been examined. These were selected because of their prominent position and involvement in global sports development. Data were collected from IOC, FIFA and SIPO official reports, archive documents, academic literature on development and selected interviews with three key officials from IOC and FIFA. A content analysis (Palys, 1997) was employed to determine common themes and concepts used by those organisations.

Results

Two findings deserve particular attention. Firstly, sport has been framed as a tool for development and as an essential element of the programmes and policies of various agencies. This is used to urge national governments and civil society to commit to a universal view of sport. Secondly, there has been a growing homogenisation of the language of sports development underpinning those policies. While this hyper-political activity has put sport on the agenda of many agencies, it presents policy-makers, practitioners and academics with a number of challenges. These include: (i) Understanding the meta-language of global sports development; (ii) Cultural relevance of global sports development models; (iii) Complying with the global expansion of sports development; (iv) Global versus indigenous sports development knowledge production; (v) Global sports development models as a barrier to

engagement, learning and growth of local sports leaders; (vi) Change in sport does not equate development. These are discussed in turn in the next section.

Discussion

First, increasingly sport development has been couched in terms uncritically borrowed from the tenets of the New Public Management (NPM). Its vocabulary abounds with ‘accountability, auditing culture, advocacy, business plan, partnership, democracy, sustainability, impact, enabling frameworks and capacity building’. Contrary to the belief that the NPM represents a neutral and technical set of activities, performed by neutral technical experts, as Flynn (1997, p.41) argued, “management techniques and styles are themselves political”, and that “they form the core of ‘managerialism’ as an ideology. This ideology... is a normative system concerning what counts as valuable knowledge, who knows it, and who is empowered to act in what ways as a consequence”. Thus, it represents a meta-language. The tool kit for sport development promoted by an international group of thirty-three partner organisations illustrates the point. *Second*, the cultural relevance of the concept of development has been questioned by a number of commentators. Wynter (1996, p.299) referred to development as a culture-systemic *telos*, and suggested that “the goal of development, together with its related subgoal of “economic growth”, functions to lay down the prescriptive behavioural pathways instituting our present world. Mintzberg (2006) saw globalisation as an antithesis of local development and the importation of techniques, controls and beliefs from outside agencies and experts as the very problem of development. *Third*, from a development management point of view the question then becomes what is the cost of compliance with global sport development visions. Models promoted by the IOC, FIFA and other NGOs, require beneficiaries to commit themselves to certain management standards including a culture of reporting and good governance. This implies that they have to divert attention and resources from what they do to process of accounting for what they do. *Fourth*, the global model of sports development shows little regard to indigenous sports development knowledge production. This is in sharp contrast with the Kampala Declaration on Indigenous Knowledge for Sustainable Development (1999) which encourages national and international development institutions to understand and internalize the increasing value of indigenous knowledge and to promote its application as a key instrument for the empowerment of local communities. *Fifth*, Universal models of development expect local sport leaders to use frameworks and logic alien to their culture and serve as a barrier to engagement, learning and growth. Local leaders’ participation in sports development has been reduced to successfully copying and reporting on what has been prescribed. Thus, imitating does not stimulate learning and leads to profound transformations of sports leaders in line with the ideology of managerialism and not development. In this respect the transnational sports development community has shown little interest in background documents produced by ‘developing’ countries. One illuminating example is the 1990 Arusha African Charter on Popular Participation in Development calling on the international community to support indigenous efforts and people’s effective participation and empowerment in the political life of their countries. *Sixth*, the global model of sports development tends to count ‘measurable’ progress and equates change with development. As Powell (1995, p. 200) argued “Change can be positive or negative. Development is supposed to equal progress, to lead to improvements. Improvement is a subjective concept, and subjectivity is determined by identity and culture”. This comment highlights the inadequacy of the position advocated by external NGOs when determining change and wider developmental effects.

References

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