

Sport For All In Brazil: The Evolution Of Discourse And Its Impact On Social Inclusion

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Aim of the research

The primary aim of the paper is to examine how the discourses associated with the Sport For All (SFA) efforts evolved in Brazil since the 1970s to present days and analyze their impact on social inclusion of Brazilians with impairments. Although there is a lack of consensus as to what constitutes social inclusion, I draw on Cobigo et al.'s (2012) understanding of it as "the result of complex interactions between personal and environmental factors which increases an individual's opportunities to contribute to society" (p. 81).

The analysis will focus on four historical milestones in the development of SFA movement in Brazil: first, it will examine the launch of the SFA program in Brazil under the military dictatorship, with intent to democratize physical activities and sports (Teixeira, 2009). Subsequently, the paper will examine the adoption of the 1988 Constitution that framed access to sport as a social right and an obligation of the State to guarantee it. The Constitution brought institutional legitimization to what was before a non-institutionalized manifestation of the population's cultural diversity (Valente, 1996).

Third, the paper will focus on the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that highlighted the transformative power of sport to help people with impairments realize their full potential and ensure their access to sport and recreational venues. Brazil ratified the Convention in 2009, which prompted many state- and municipal-level governments launch sports and recreational efforts targeting people with impairments under the SFA umbrella.

Finally, the paper will analyze Rio 2016 Candidature File along with available reports, with a specific focus on the Paralympics and sports participation legacy for the population with impairments. This section will evaluate how the efforts related to planning and delivering sports participation legacy contributed to increased opportunities for people with impairments to participate in sports in their communities and interact with others.

Literature review

Several Brazilian authors (Pazin, 2015; Teixeira, 2009; Valente, 1996) published historical analyses of the SFA Movement in Brazil. Motivated by international developments, the military dictatorship launched SFA in Brazil to involve the population in physical activities as part of the mechanism of social control. Pazin (2015) argued that from 1974 onwards, public policies for Physical Education and sports, especially the SFA campaign, were built on the assumption that Brazilians were in poor physical condition and thus had to adhere to new behaviors and a new ethos of happiness and optimism. The idea of a solidary Brazilian nation united around common goals ran through the entire SFA campaign that was used as a community mobilization strategy around sports (Menezes & Marcelino, 2011).

Teixeira (2009) has argued that the main objective of the SFA initiative, as envisioned by the military regime, was population surveillance through efforts to penetrate communities and promote a spirit of solidarity, family participation, social harmony and nationalism. The military government tried to instill a belief in the popular imagination that a collective practice of physical activities would bring benefits to the lives of individuals and provide a successful sporting performance to the nation in the international arena. However, the regime made no significant investments in Brazil's competitive standing internationally, instead relying on the discourse of massive participation bringing good results.

Methodology

In this paper, I employ critical discourse analysis (CDA), as it draws attention to power imbalances, non-democratic practices and social and political inequalities within the specific context of Brazil. Fairclough (2003) suggested CDA must be considered a form of analytical social research, which asks questions to gain a better understanding of both beneficial and detrimental effects that societies can produce to affect the lives of human beings as well as how such harmful effects as may be produced can be mitigated or eliminated. More specifically, I will analyze the official documents of Rio 2016 Organizing Committee (Candidature Files and Interim report), as well as special reports prepared by other groups.

Discussion and implications/conclusions

The published works analyzed distinct historical periods when the SFA developed in Brazil, but there has been no research that traced how the underlying discourse evolved across past decades and how it impacted social inclusion in the Brazilian society. The paper will conclude by examining the overall impact of the SFA policies on social inclusion in Brazil, with a particular focus on people with impairments. Access to sports practice and facilities was considered as one of the legacies of the Rio 2016 Paralympics, and the paper will analyze this claim from the perspective of the SFA programs.

References

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