

Sport for development Cross Sector Collaborations: A review of collaborations in Sport for Development.

In an ever-changing global environment sport and physical activity are promoted as a medium for engaging hard to reach groups and in turn developing social inclusion and building cohesion.

This resource reviews learning from the Joint Northern Ireland and Netherlands working group programme which brought together researchers, policy makers and practitioners in sport for development and the subsequent implementation of the research outcomes within the management of the Sport for Peace Project in Northern Ireland to promote inclusion, engagement and learning.

Essentially a number of sports projects which tackle social issues were identified in each country; the joint working group collaboratively assessed these good practice case studies leading to the development of a list of 12 working principles.

The resultant working principles have been designed as key elements for sport for development projects across the three sectors, with supporting guidance. The principles were used as a basis for the implementation of the North East Sport for Peace Project in Northern Ireland, a review of the results are included as a practical example of the contextual complexities and potential impact. The language adopted within the principles was specifically selected as common for all three sectors within each country.

The main objective of the project was to establish and provide some grounded evidence through the development of key criterion as guiding principles for sport for development projects.

Following identification and presentation of case study examples from both countries on how sport is being used to tackle social issues, the working groups examined the common themes and barriers to use sport for building social inclusion, from a practice, policy and scientific point of view. This led to the development of a list of 12 working principles to aid the use of sport for development projects across the three themes, while promoting understanding across each area, together with guidance for researchers, policy makers and grassroots practitioners of how to use these principles.

1. Collaborative Approach

Principle: Establish a working relationship between theory, practice and application. A bottom up and top down approach to meet the needs of all to ensure a coordinated approach for a positive impact towards social inclusion for all people.

2. Knowledge and information

Principle: Use interventions that have been validated and evaluated. (Learn from these good practices for designing, implementing and evaluating your interventions/programmes/activities)

3. Build Capacity

Principle: Build the capacity of the workforce – programme developers and practitioners, Educate the educators.

4. Representation

Principle: Organisations engaged in sport based social intervention work should have a significant representation of under represented groups in their organization.

5. Reduce Restriction

Principle: Take away restrictions that hinder the development of an otherwise successful intervention/programme/activity.

6. Engagement Principle

Principle: Use the various participants motivating factors for involvement, continued engagement or drop out in all aspects of the intervention/programme/activity.

7. Communication

Principle: Marketing and Promotion of intervention/programme/activity; use images to target hard to reach groups to maximise impact. Connect with groups through the choice of images that best portray the needs of the target groups.

8. Language

Principle: Formulate language to portray a positive message to influence the wider public perception of social inclusion through sport and physical activity.

9. Embedding – Sustainability

Principle: Embed the good practice from the interventions/programmes/activities into existing infrastructure, partnerships, and resources to make the project sustainable.

10. Multi Faceted Approach

Principle: Adopt a multi-faceted approach (e.g. health, education and sport) through the development and maintenance of multiple partnerships to address the wider social problems participants may have to deal with (shared sense of responsibility within and throughout interventions/programmes/activities).

11. Measurement

Principle: Adopt a multi-faceted approach (e.g. health, education and sport) through the development and maintenance of multiple partnerships to address the wider social problems participants may have to deal with (shared sense of responsibility within and throughout interventions/programmes/activities).

12. Safe Spaces

Principle: Establish engagement through safe, shared spaces adapting a stepped approach to meet community needs and/or target group needs

Having established these principles, a regional sport for peace project was designed to test the theory in practice.

About the author:



Kyle Ferguson works in the School of Sport at Ulster University, responsible for the Centre for Sports Enterprise. He was Project Manager for the North East Sport for Peace Project and is currently a Board Member of Sport NI. His research focuses on the role of sport in the community and he brings sporting experience across grassroots, community development and performance to the Board, as well as financial oversight skills. Kyle is a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute and Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He has managed a range of European wide project across sports innovation, sport and social inclusion and physical activity.