Transforming communities through sport? critical pedagogy and sport for development

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Transforming communities through sport? Critical pedagogy and sport for development

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Abstract

The value of sport as a vehicle for social development and progressive social change has been much debated, yet what tends to get missed in this debate is the way education may foster, enable or impede the transformative action that underpins the social outcomes to which the 'sport for development' (SDP) sector aspires. This article draws on the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire and his contemporaries to examine the nature of transformative action and how it may be fostered within SDP programs. Insights from critical pedagogy are applied to, and illustrated through, qualitative research undertaken with SDP programs located in Cameroon and Kenya. The findings show the complexities of designing and implementing critical pedagogy in a SDP context and, in particular, the challenges of creating and mobilizing for

transformative action. Opportunities and lessons for embedding critical pedagogy within SDP programs are also presented.

Introduction

The potential of sport for development (SDP) initiatives to achieve wider development outcomes and inspire progressive social change has been the subject of considerable academic scrutiny in recent years (Schulenkorf & Adair, 2014; Young & Okada, 2014). While some scholars have sought to identify the social benefits of SDP programs and the processes or mechanisms that (may) produce these benefits (e.g. Coalter, 2013; Schulenkorf, 2012; Spaaij & Schulenkorf, 2014), others articulate a critical perspective on sport as an interventionist tool that problematizes commonly held assumptions concerning SDP as a public good (Coakley, 2011; Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011; Darnell, 2012). A recent review by Cora Burnett (2015), a leading scholar in the field, highlights the tensions that often exist between these two approaches, which she describes as the 'tensions between donors who seek proof of how often limited focused programmes may have successfully addressed societal problems, and critical scholarship which may see such programmatic efforts too often aligned with hegemonic practices and neoliberal agendas' (p. 385). Burnett recommends that future research examine more closely how efforts aimed at development through sport may be understood in local communities and facilitate better the shared ownership of such efforts.

The tensions described by Burnett may be at the heart of SDP scholarship, but what tends to get missed in this debate is the connection between *education* and the various claims for SDP. The focus remains strongly on the question of whether and how the SDP sector meets its lofty promises in regard to social development. Within the SDP movement there has

been very little critical exploration of the pedagogies being utilized in SDP programs and whether these are appropriate for achieving the expected outcomes. In the same vein, within SDP research there has been scant regard for the question of what educational processes are best suited to support SDP objectives (Jeanes & Spaaij, in press). This is limiting because education is critical to most of the objectives SDP programs seek to achieve. For example, SDP practitioners have used sport to educate recipients regarding issues such as health, gender equality, employability and conflict transformation.

This article aims to address this lacuna by analyzing SDP programs through the lens of critical pedagogy, with a particular focus on transformative action and how it may be fostered. Recent research considers critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire and his contemporaries as an important framework for SDP (Spaaij & Jeanes, 2012; Jeanes & Spaaij, in press). Freirean pedagogy is 'vitally important for contemporary educators to revisit, to build upon, and to reinvent in the contextual specificity of today's sociopolitical context' (McLaren, 1999, p. 54). It helps us identify key questions that need to be addressed if more inclusive and transformative sporting practices are to be created (Macdonald, 2002; Spaaij, Magee & Jeanes, 2014). Elsewhere we have shown how Freire's work is significant for the SDP sector and use it to reveal the limitations of dominant pedagogies in the SDP field (Spaaij & Jeanes, 2012). This article builds on this work by exploring critical pedagogy with a particular focus on transformative action. These insights will be applied to case studies from SDP programs where we have conducted fieldwork.

Critical pedagogy and social change

Paulo Freire (1921-1997) was a Brazilian educator and philosopher whose critical pedagogy continues to inspire educators worldwide. Freire's ideas are rooted in his conviction that

'education, as an exercise of freedom, is an act of knowing, a critical approach to reality' (Freire, 1990, p. 5). Education, argued Freire, must include both social critique and transformation; it should aim both at 'examining the causes of unjust social relations and at strengthening collective efforts for democratic change' (Schugurensky, 2011, p. 8). Freire believed educational change should be accompanied by significant changes in the social and political structure in which education takes place. Traditional methods of education, he argued, perpetuate existing power relations. This occurs via a 'banking' approach (Freire, 1972a), whereby the teacher is considered the knowledgeable authority who deposits information for students to absorb uncritically.

Freire's work has its political origins in the Latin American liberation movement. His work with the poor in Brazil compelled him to develop novel educational ideals and practices that would serve to improve the lives of marginalized people. As a government official, Freire met groups of peasants across the country to discuss and implement adult literacy and popular education. While in exile following the 1964 coup, Freire advised on education reform and initiated popular education in different parts of the world, including the newly independent government of Guinea-Bissau in 1975-1978.

Freire's pedagogy is rooted in praxis. In Freire's (1972a) use of the term, praxis is the process of 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it' (p. 36). It entails a dialectical process in which people act on their material surroundings (their reality) and reflect upon these with a view to transforming them. For Freire, the starting point is always that of human beings in the here and now (Mayo, 2004). Through dialogical reflection among peers, they can gain some critical distance from their conditions, develop a critical analysis of reality, and consider how to transform it. In so doing, people can come to 'understand how the myths of dominant discourses are, precisely, myths which oppress and marginalize them – but which can be transcended through transformative action' (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993,

p. 44). To this end, education should seek to support people to develop 'critical consciousness' (Freire, 1973, 1990) and to work collectively to change their conditions on the basis of such critical insight.

Central to Freire's notion of praxis is the transition from critique to transformative action. Freire recognized that these two elements are inextricably intertwined: 'praxis implies no dichotomy by which praxis could be divided into a prior stage of reflection and a subsequent stage of action. Action and reflection occur simultaneously' (Freire, 1972b, p. 128). Any separation of the two would result in either mindless activism or empty theorizing (Gadotti & Torres, 2009). Still, Freire's early works have been critiqued for their emphasis on reflection over action, and for their suggestion that a critical reading of reality may automatically lead to its transformation (Schugurensky, 2011). Moreover, while Freire's formulations of critical pedagogy index important concerns, they do not specify how educators are to move from critical thought to transformative practice (McLaren, 1999). Freire's refusal to write a prescriptive, 'how-to' guide is consistent with his emphasis on the importance of contextualizing education, and with his critique of pre-packaged education programs (Freire, 2005).

Transformative action and SDP

Whilst recognizing the need to reinvent and adapt Freire's ideas to the specific contexts in which SDP programs operate, it is possible to identify a number of key elements that can inform pedagogical practice in SDP settings aimed at transformative action.

Firstly, transformative education is rooted in dialogue and problem posing. Educators should use a problem-posing approach that encourages education to be collectively owned, not the teacher's sole property. Within a problem-posing approach, educators work with

students to identify problems relevant to them and to encourage dialogue and critical reflection. Through this process, Freire contends, students not only develop a deeper understanding of their conditions but are in a better position to begin to take action to transform reality. The relationship between educator and student is reshaped with both working collaboratively to deconstruct knowledge and develop critical understanding.

Secondly, educators cannot simply run through a series of predetermined steps with students and expect this will lead to transformative action. Freire instead places the educator as emotionally and physically interwoven within the process, the broader context and the students. For Freire, any effort to challenge and reshape dominant power relations requires an ongoing commitment from educators. Meaningful change cannot occur through one-off or top-down encounters, but requires 'an ongoing commitment to live and work in solidarity with those that are oppressed' (Boyd, 2012, p. 773), including a desire to also facilitate the changes one is hoping to realize via education. The role of the educator is 'to provide the context in which shared problems can be critically questioned and analyzed. It is a mutual process founded on reciprocity and humility that gets beyond the power imbalance of the traditional teacher-student relationship' (Ledwith, 2011, p. 102).

Thirdly, Freirean pedagogy has important implications for the nature of education within SDP programs because it requires educators to move beyond the goal of seeking to allow students to participate in existing social, economic and political spheres. From a Freirean standpoint, such efforts ultimately constitute an attempt at control and conformity whereby SDP programs (inadvertently) reproduce the status quo and further dehumanize their participants. In contrast, SDP education should strive to promote social change by fostering critical consciousness and facilitating transformative action in order to challenge oppressive structures and power relations.

The political nature of critical pedagogy does not mean that the practical side of education should be neglected (Schugurensky, 2011). Freire asks: 'How is it possible *before* transforming society to deny students the knowledge they need to survive?' (Freire & Shor 1987, p. 69). However, critical pedagogy clearly goes beyond technical training alone. Freire insists that while the educator will try to be efficient in training, they will seek 'to *unveil* the ideology enveloped in the very expectations of the students' by raising critical questions about the very training they are giving (Freire & Shor 1987, p. 68). Below we examine how these key elements in Freire's critical pedagogy translate to SDP practice.

Case studies and methods

This article draws on cases studies of SDP programs located in Cameroon and Kenya. The case study method is particularly suited to studying critical pedagogy 'in action' because it allows exploration into real-life situations and tests views 'directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice' (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 235). Case studies have the ability to discover the sequences of processes leading to social change by focusing on the temporal and spatial dimensions in which the phenomenon occurs. Research was undertaken independently at each program site. The case studies are therefore not directly comparable but nonetheless provide valuable illustrations and 'testing' of Freirean concepts in different SDP programs and in different social contexts. Data from both program sites were analyzed using theoretically informed procedures, drawing on the key themes associated with critical pedagogy as our analytic lens. The following sections outline the country and SDP program contexts as well as the research that was undertaken in each setting.

The Cameroonian SDP program examined in this article is operated by a local NGO that concentrates on community development through locally-initiated programs and projects. The organization's SDP program invests in marginalized teenage girls as leaders, stating that they provide them with a safe platform and the social mechanisms necessary to be local change-makers. In the remote region of Adamawa Cameroon, women and girls have little autonomy. Customary law prohibits them from going outside their home without their husbands' or fathers' permission, leaving them isolated from their communities and from one another. It is not uncommon for girls as young as 15 to enter into arranged marriages or for girls far younger to take on major household responsibilities. Many girls never attend school or otherwise drop out when their work at home grows too burdensome.

The program envisioned by young women in 2007 offers three, eight-week football (soccer) seasons per year. Two of six coaches are female (the Program Director aspires all coaches to be female), and all referees are female. Participant numbers range from 60-100 young women per season. Weekend matches are organized at the local stadium; a location that was previously accessible to only male players. Tournaments proceed during school breaks, as well as team days, including annual participation in the March 8th International Women's Day parade. The program may be characterized as 'sport plus' (Coalter, 2007) in that the primary emphasis is on increasing female participation in football, although the ulterior objective is female emancipation in Cameroonian society more broadly. The program's educational components include sexual health and leadership, but this aspect of the program has been slow to develop, and extended resources for participants are scarce. Volunteer coaches lead all educational and sport-related activities. A few are physical education teachers and most have received training by an external coaching organization, but

beyond this, professional instruction is minimal. The organization is locally operated, but most funding comes from individual donors in the United States. The program receives in-kind operational donations from large-scale donors such as the US Soccer Foundation and One World Football. Infrastructure in this remote area is disproportionally lacking, resources are scarce, women are few in the public workforce, and culturally young women's sport is (largely) unwarranted.

The second author of this article assisted in the foundation of this program while volunteering for the NGO. Data stem from the second author's experiences in the field (e.g., organizing meetings, and observing and playing in practices and games) over a one-year period, from information provided by the NGO, and from interviews conducted since 2007 with players, the Program Director, and the Executive Director. This program's grassroots-driven inception as well as its isolation, slow development of educational curricula and limited support systems are discussed below.

Kenya

Kenya is at the heart of the SDP movement; numerous organizations share ideas, resources, and co-host tournaments. The three SDP organizations analyzed in this article were founded in the early 2000s: two outside of Nairobi and one in a rural coastal town. They aim to empower youth by addressing issues endemic in the community through play. Due to high rates of sexual violence in Kenya, young women's mobility in public spaces is significantly limited. Women can comfortably access public spaces like markets and health centers, but other spaces such as public parks are gendered and often unsafe (Brady, 2005). This restriction of space forces girls to remain within an area identified by their guardian as safe (i.e. their home and a small area within their neighborhood). As a result, young women lose

their individual freedom of expression and drop contact with their peer networks (Brady, 2005). Insufficient formal education coupled with limited options for employment results in young women's confinement to the domestic sphere and a continuation of the poverty cycle.

The combination of the above factors greatly affects young women's lives, especially as they reach puberty. A Program Officer of a young women's program noted that in her neighborhood parents even encourage girls, some as young as ten, to prostitute themselves to cover basic needs. The HIV rate in Nairobi's informal settlements is estimated at 12 percent, five percent higher than the national average (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). Moreover, the contraction rate for women is four percent higher than for men (UNAIDS, 2014). Beyond discernible poverty (68.5% of the population), the Coastal Province wrestles with gender power imbalances: 'Girls are less likely to be educated...less likely to access health care, less likely to control family finances or inherit land, and less likely to have a voice in the social and political systems that will shape her life' (Oliff, 2012).

Participants are mobilized through football, but a critical objective is addressing social issues such as sexual and reproductive health. As these organizations have developed over time, they have added activities and support systems, such as photography classes, libraries, and access to counselors and lawyers. They also offer incentives for participation such as book bursaries and educational scholarships. Leagues operate from March to November and weekend tournaments are held throughout the season. These organizations are locally managed and receive extensive funding from international agencies such as the British Council and Women Win. Although two of the organizations are co-educational, all programs addressed in this article specifically target young women. Cumulatively thousands (est. 10,000) of young women participate in these three programs. The community-focused organizations have similar operational designs, including a volunteer structure whereby players are trained to be peer-educators, coaches, referees, and first aid responders. Support

systems for players are well-organized. For example, the Kenya Association of Professional Counselors trained counselors working within these organizations. These counselors then teach the peer-counselors, preparing them to facilitate life skills program sessions on issues such as self-esteem, decision-making, girls' rights, and sexual violence. What makes one of the Nairobi-based organizations unique, however, is its professional and vocational training module whereby young women can seek skills and potential employment.

The second author of this article spent two months in Kenya in 2012 conducting qualitative research through methods such as document analysis, observation, and semi-structured interviews. She interviewed eight SDP staff members and volunteers from three Kenyan SDP NGOs: two located outside Nairobi and one on the coast. Observations were conducted during practices and at a regional tournament in Tanzania. This research was conducted through the University of Bradford and funded by the Rotary World Peace Fellowship.

Both case studies contain educational components that connect with concepts and principles from critical pedagogy. In the remainder of this article, we examine how educational approaches used within the projects align with Freirean pedagogy but also how these can be constrained in practice and the implications of this for transformative action.

Navigating and embedding critical pedagogy in SDP

The application of Freire's critical pedagogy in Kenyan and Cameroonian SDP programs reveals a number of key issues, questions and tensions. In this section, we analyze two areas where Freirean pedagogy appears to be applicable and beginning to transpire: first, the evident effort SDP organizations are making to move away from the type of 'banking' education that African educational systems commonly employ[1]; second, the occurrence of

critical reflection within these organizations that may encourage localized transformations of praxis.

Peer educators: a pathway to cultivating organizational culture

A critical component of pedagogical strategy and transformation within SDP is the educator (Jeanes & Spaaij, in press), but equally as important is an organizational culture that supports a nonconformist strategy. The Kenyan SDP organizations include volunteers trained as peer educators, coaches, referees, and first aid responders. Most of these volunteers were raised and live in the same neighborhoods as the participants. Many participated in the SDP program themselves, and their experience (past and continual) gives them critical insight into the participants' daily struggles and an understanding of realistic ways to mitigate them. It is common to hear peer educators state that their experience of growing up in difficult circumstances was the motivation to become a peer educator and local change-maker. This is evident in one peer educator's explanation:

> One day, when I sat among young people in my church, I realized that some of the seeds of hope will never germinate because young people lack information. Nobody is facilitating sessions about reproductive health to young people in church. At the end of the sermon I was sure that there was a need for reproductive health sessions because I saw that a number of 16 year olds had children. I'm interested in talking to young people about sexual reproductive health. I joined [the organization] in 2010 as a player. I was trained as a peer educator and started working as assistant health coordinator in 2012 (Kahindi, 2015).

An organizational culture that honors the localized experience and provides a platform for community members to recognize and respond to their community's problems aligns with at least some of the core principles of critical pedagogy (Nicholls, 2009). The peer education model aims to reach a social demographic of citizens through methods of respect, love, understanding, and relationship building. As trained youth become essential campaigners, traveling to schools, religious sanctuaries, and soccer fields to address issues and respond to questions, the adult-child power dynamic implemented in formal educational systems is minimized. Peer educators' age, personal experience, and local knowledge equip them with particular access into these communities and theoretically engenders a cultivation of trust and respect among their peers.

Freirean peer educators empathize and share, and allow themselves to be a part of the learning process. Although difficult to measure, they demonstrated these qualities through their actions and stories. A Nairobi-based Program Officer (who had previously worked as a peer leader) discussed her distinctive job demands, stating that young women regularly approach her to talk about sexual violence and economic need. They often directly ask her for help. Moreover, when the 2007-2008 post-electoral violence erupted in her neighborhood, many ran to her home for solace, advice, and security. She responded that she is honest with them noting that she is not all-knowing, does not always have resources, and especially during times of violence, feels fear. Many coaches in Cameroon who we interviewed or worked with demonstrated similar personal attributes that enabled them to connect with and develop a rapport necessary to facilitate critical awareness.

It can be argued that implementing and embedding Freirean critical pedagogy requires a unique peer educator style and personality and, in turn, an organization that prioritizes and supports the peer educator. In this context, Nicholls (2009) argues that maximizing the peer educational model relies on horizontal dialogue in the organization. Hierarchy and power

sharing is different within each organization researched. In one of the Kenyan organizations, participants are required to engage in community outreach, to organize matches, and to lead youth-run boards operating in collaboration with the adult Board of Directors. In each case, peer educators garner extensive responsibility for program operations. This alone does not allow us to gauge the extent of equality within each organization, but it does illuminate the application of Freire's pedagogy within the organizations' structures. And in all cases researched, Freire's approach contradicts the local hierarchical system whereby power is principally held by elder males (World Bank, 2007).

Critical reflection and the potential for transformative praxis

For Freire, key to transformative action is the process of 'conscientization' whereby individuals become critically aware of the conditions and contradictions that shape their lives. It is common for SDP organizations to operate in patriarchal environments where young women's participation is a social taboo (Meier, 2005). Hegemonic systems and the localized conceptualization of gender significantly define and constrain young women's opportunities (Saavedra, 2009). Below are examples of how critical reflection has led to normative thought being challenged, discussed, and potentially altered.

Collective discussion and outreach: A communal step towards transformation
Freire suggests that the first step towards transformation involves marginalized individuals developing an awareness of their current situation and the social, political and cultural structures that enforce this. All three Kenyan organizations regularly initiate activities to encourage collective discussion among community residents which can be interpreted as 'conscious raising'. For example, before teams are formed, the coastal based organization

works with teachers, government officials, and local leaders to sensitize parents about the program and the importance of girls' education. Once a team is created, the local leaders and parents meet monthly. The organization also facilitates co-educational movie nights to include young men in the educational process. All of the Kenyan organizations co-host weekend tournaments. At these events, information booths are available for community members to ask questions and receive resources. For example, at the HIV tournaments, people can be tested by a medical professional and receive counseling for free.

Select players from these organizations have the opportunity to gain international experience and meet other athletes from the Great Lakes Region at a regional tournament held in Tanzania. Nearly 1,000 youth hailing from Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, and Tanzania sleep in dorms with their teammates and participate in educational classes, sports games, and nightly cultural activities. Aged-out athletes (16 and over) and community members can participate in sport-related career programs such as journalism, refereeing, and first-aid. The inclusive event provides games for abled and disabled athletes (e.g. sitting volleyball) as well. This event provides participants with the experience of congregating and socializing with people from other ethnic groups, religious beliefs, and locations in a safe space (cf. Spaaij & Schulenkorf, 2014).

More developed organizations, with a stronger infrastructure and local support, such as those in Kenya, reveal the opportunity for an influence on praxis. For example, one teacher quoted by Forde (2009) discusses the importance of the program for female participants:

In schools like ours the girls have very little and they know very little. It puts them at a disadvantage, even they think they're not worth the same as boys. But this football has exposed them, it's made them realize that they can achieve, it's made them see

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further, to look beyond the homes from which they come. It's a very important programme in our school (p. 22).

Moreover, a Program Director noted how the professional Kenyan Football League now has female referees, stating that 'girls [in Kenya] have broken the barrier of football being male dominated.' She later noted that the girls in her program have changed over the years:

They are more responsible, more independent...More focused. I think they show qualities of leadership. When you play on a team there is togetherness, sisterhood, they feel responsible for the other person. They have a need to care for each other for [the] next match. And, respect.

This change is not extensive, however. Considerable numbers of young women are participating in these programs, but garnering parental and community approval remains a crucial element of participation. Moreover, ensuring safe access to playing spaces and hiring women remains a challenge (World Bank, 2007).

Initial action

Freire's approach indicates that once critical consciousness develops marginalized groups should seek to develop strategies to alter the situations they face. There was evidence of young women attempting to change their position and status in the community in our Cameroon based case study. The Cameroon-based SDP organization was created to address what its future participants declared a social problem. The inspiration for the league came from teenage girls sitting on the sideline of a men's soccer match, complaining of their culturally defined gender roles that they believed prohibited their participation. Before

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becoming an official league, the future participants walked door-to-door, crossing invisible social boundaries to address their interest in sport and to confront potential social stigma (Oxford, in press). The league, sanctioned by the girls' fathers and husbands and endorsed by local leaders, became controversial and popular. Below is a quote from the second author's journal discussing guardians' concerns with young women's participation:

In each home I faced obstacles such as language barriers, cultural issues, and health and transportation questions…The biggest parental concern was that their daughters use soccer as an excuse to run around town. The players come home two hours after practice has ended, often after dark. I explained to the husband of one fifteen-year-old player that his wife's responsibility is to return home immediately…The coach made it clear that practice is done at 5:30 giving her 30-minutes to walk home. As the girl begged her family to play, we explained to her that she has been given an opportunity and if she does not follow the rules, we will not come to her house and fight for her again. Her husband said she could play and the coach said that if there is a problem, he will pay for her moto ride (25 cents) home.

Although the league is still in operation, the original problem of gender discrimination still exists in the community (UN Human Rights Committee, 2010). The Program Director stated that the biggest hurdle the program faces today is '*refus des parents qui ne permettent pas à leurs filles de sortir*', or parents who do not allow their daughters to leave the house [to play]. Only a small group of women within this society is experiencing an alternative existence through participation in football. However, the creation of such a league does highlight that critical reflection and action has taken place, albeit on a small scale, with potential, at least in theory, to cascade into broader transformation in gender relations.

Concrete action

The Nairobi-based SDP organization continues to face the same obstacles as the other organizations' addressed above, but its structure has evolved to include a vocational program focused on employability. In 2012, it opened a three-month professional program that trains young women in hair and beauty, financial organization, and computer skills. In a newsletter, the program founder writes:

> For some of the girls we work with, social empowerment unfortunately has its limitations. Very needy girls can't even afford the basic essentials and too many turn to older partners, prostitution or settle for unhappy and abusive relationships. By giving these girls a skill and the means to make a living, they will be able to look after themselves. Coupled with our educational and confidence boosting program, this approach can make a significant impact (Waweru, 2013).

Again, although not extensive, young women's opportunities in the community are expanding. A participant in the vocational program who has now gained rightful employment demonstrates this:

> Having graduated from [the] program, and recruited into [a] salon for vocational training and finally landing a job is something that [I] am fully proud of and will never forget. I feel am fully equipped both socially and economically (Waweru, 2013).

Freire believed that social improvement is possible through an educational system that fosters transformative action. Above we illustrated how transformative action, although slight, is being encouraged in the SDP programs being studied. Below we will address the current limitations of applying Freire's pedagogy to the SDP practice.

Constraints to transformative action

The above sections offer several examples of (emerging) critical pedagogy within SDP organizations and operations. However, the operationalizing of Freirean critical pedagogy in the SDP programs is still challenging and only partial. Below we outline some of the key constraints that limit the capacity for critical pedagogy to support transformative action in and through SDP programs.

International development sector

As discussed, one of the key elements necessary for the successful adoption of critical pedagogy within SDP education is a supportive organizational culture and a commitment to utilizing local knowledge and approaches to underpin educational content. The increasing internationalization of the SDP sector, however, may compromise the capacity of local NGOs to respond wholeheartedly to community needs. International funding is often essential for the survival and extension of SDP projects. However, receiving international support forces local agencies to engage with a range of internal and external measurements, such as the Millennium Development Goals and key performance indicators imposed by international donors. Imposing narrow goals and performance indicators on a small, community-based organization may lead to a negative appearance or false representation. A Program Director

in Kenya addressed this challenge by stressing that 'Most of the funds we receive are restrictive and at times it is challenging to meet our operational cost since most donors restricts the cost to a small percentage.'

Furthermore, external funding agencies may not view success in the same terms as the organization. For example, the Cameroon-based program does not have an extensive support system or educational component but given its social context and circumstances it is thriving. Obtaining parental approval for young women to participate and having open discussions about their capabilities is meaningful progress in the eyes of the young women and local stakeholders. However, this often is not recognized as an achievement by external funding agencies who wish to see young women 'empowered' and a significant change in attitudes towards gender equality within the local community.

Freire refused to mandate a method of implementation as he strongly emphasized the importance of reinventing and translating his approach to suit local realities and needs. It appears that measuring success in these terms can lead to a crossroads as the donor or governing body may not accept progress in Freire's terms. This can lead NGOs and local agencies to feel pressured to produce results that are often judged by international agencies in relation to the number of participants involved. In a quest to meet the requirement for numbers, a Freirean approach may seem too slow and not obviously yielding the required results. Dialogical approaches and fluid curriculums, therefore, become replaced with educational activities that are quick and easy to implement and can be demonstrated to have considerable reach without necessarily providing an educational backdrop where change can be facilitated. This finding is consistent with previous research that suggests that the relationships between donors, SDP organizations agencies and recipients need to be reconfigured in order to facilitate transformative action (Kay, 2012).

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Wider backdrop: the challenges educators face

The logistics of working in the communities discussed in this article is challenging. Basic needs to operate programs are prioritized over critical pedagogy. For example, in Cameroon, the organization's main priority is getting young women to the field, followed by providing equipment. It is common for young women to show up for a match without having eaten sufficiently or without money to get home, requiring their coach (who is a volunteer) to lend them money. At this point, basic operation is more of a focus than engaging with critical pedagogy.

It is the coaches and peer educators who directly respond to the everyday challenges the players and community residents face, which is why they may face time contraints for considering or implementing critical pedagogy. The banking and anti-dialogue education derided by Freire is normative in Africa (see note 2). In the public system, teachers are not trained in Freirean techniques, and students are unaccustomed to open discussion. Implementing Freire's pedagogy would require training and cultural adaptation. Without adequate training, any attempt to engage in critical pedagogy is likely result in calculated conversations that stop short of in-depth discussion (Oxford, in press). Worse still, this pedagogical vacuum could lead peer educators to resort to the same type of didactic approach that Freire warned against. In practice, the use of the banking method in peer education can be observed, for instance, in the focus on the transference of factual information rather than encouraging peer educators to use and critically reflect on their own experiences and circumstances (Price & Knibbs 2009). In light of the pressures highlighted above, this can be compounded by the monitoring and evaluation pressures imposed on SDP organizations by international donor agencies.

More broadly, although we have illustrated new opportunities that have developed for participants, changes for individuals are not necessarily accompanied by broader social changes, as has been noted in other SDP contexts (Spaaij, 2012; Jeanes et al., 2013). The latter is often not forthcoming as SDP programs struggle to challenge the entrenched status quo. When change does occur, it happens slowly and usually in very slight ways. For example, young women in Cameroon convincing male community leaders to allow them to participate in football represents a shift in attitudes towards women but does not at this stage represent considerable changes to the position and status of women in the wider community.

Discussion and conclusion

This article has set out to examine the value of critical pedagogy within SDP educational programs. In examining the principles of Freirean critical pedagogy alongside 'real life' practice we are able to identify and illustrate the complexities of designing and implementing critical pedagogy in a SDP context. The examples provided reinforce that critical pedagogy cannot simply be delivered as a mechanistic series of stages that if followed correctly will lead to social change. Each aspect of the educative process involves ongoing challenges for educators and participants, and requires continued negotiation, denunciation of hegemonic beliefs and the annunciation of an alternate set of possibilities (Freire, 1985). As this article has sought to show, even when critical consciousness does develop amongst participants, attempts to initiate broader social change within their local communities can continue to be met with resistance.

The case studies offer learnings in understanding the potential of SDP-based education to promote transformative action. Previous work highlights the central role the educator plays in the delivery of critical pedagogy (Jeanes & Spaaij, in press). This article

develops this argument further by suggesting that the educator needs to be embedded within an organizational culture and context that is committed to flexible, fluid and iterative pedagogical approaches. The case studies demonstrate both the importance of responding to local needs and the time and skill it takes to develop a genuinely dialogical approach that approximates the critical pedagogy envisaged by Freire. Consequently, SDP programs committed to critical pedagogy are often slow to roll out and achieve noticeable impact. It takes a particular type of organization, notably those who are relatively independent and well resourced, to be able to embrace the intensity and complexity of educating via Freirean methods. In addition to the practicalities of conducting an SDP program, the delivery of critical pedagogy requires organizations to support and train educators to negate the dominance and familiarity of didactic methods. The reality is that agencies can consider this too challenging, particularly those that are under-resourced. It is important to acknowledge the harsh realities of everyday life that the educators in this study are working within. In these circumstances supporting participation becomes a first priority.

Delivering transformative education is not, however, simply a matter of organizational culture or dialogue. Current practice is further constrained by the discourse of critical pedagogy, which operates at a high level of abstraction and strips discussions of pedagogical practices of historical context and political position (Ellsworth, 1989). There is a need to problematize critical pedagogy itself, in particular its potentially 'repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination' (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 298). This would include a move away from prescriptive language of we should be and what should be happening in SDP settings, and into SDP practices that are context-specific and responsive to participants' own understandings of their social identities and situations.

Local agencies and NGOs are faced with an intriguing paradox. Generally, external funding is required to train educators effectively and to sustain programs for the longer

period of time it can take to facilitate change that transcends the level of individual participants. However, engaging with international development agendas and attempting to secure program funding frequently means that local agencies have to prioritize externally imposed expectations and to demonstrate that they are achieving 'results' in order to maintain levels of funding. Such results often involve large numbers of participants being 'sensitized' to particular health or social issues, but rarely consider processes of transformative action and social change and how these might be best supported from a local perspective (Jeanes & Lyndsey, 2014). NGOs may therefore be caught between the need for external funding to resource projects and invest in educators, and the risk that the attendant demands limit the opportunities available to fully develop and implement critical pedagogy within their programs.

As has been recognized elsewhere (Choules, 2007; Newman, 2012), broader social transformation can often remain elusive, even when participants experience considerable shifts in their perspectives and become critically aware of the social structures and processes constraining their lives. The examples of transformation discussed in this article are generally small-scale and typically occur at an individual or interpersonal level. Some young women in our Kenyan case study for example were able to secure paid employment from the educational opportunities they accessed on the project and this income enabled them to live independently. From a Freirean perspective, however, we could critique such opportunities as offering false generosity (Freire, 1972a). They enable young women to survive within the existing social and economic conditions rather than providing a setting in which these structures can be contested and transformed. Transformation in this context remains very much at the level of the individual and manifests in changes in their capacity to be able to survive and move forward within existing social hierarchies (Guest, 2009; Spaaij, 2011).

While we acknowledge that transforming social structures remains elusive, it is important not to under-value the smaller-scale changes that can, and do, result from SDP programs. The findings confirm Rossi and Rynne's (2014) conclusion that it is often the things that defy measurement that are in fact indicators of success. Within our case studies young women were able to take part in activities, access social spaces and be recognized within their communities in ways that would not have previously been possible. While at this stage this has not lead to considerable changes in the repressive gender hierarchies that dominate the communities in which the projects were located, we would argue that it does provide a foundation to build on to prompt further changes in gender relations in the future. Thus, when considering the transformative aspects of SDP programs it is important to consider transformation as an incremental process and one that we need to judge in relation to the restrictions that exist within local contexts (Newman, 2012). Allowing women to access and appropriate social spaces, such as football stadiums, that they had previously been unable or uncomfortable to enter may not constitute transformative action in the sense of deep social change. It does, however, illustrate some shift in attitudes has occurred and women are now accepted in a space that was previously prohibited.

Transformative action should not be understood merely as an outcome of critical pedagogy in SDP programs. The data presented in this article show key elements of critical pedagogy 'in action' rather than highlighting the outcomes of the educative process. The tournaments taking place in the Kenyan SDP case study may at this stage do little beyond connecting young people in novel ways. However, as one interviewee expressed, the contact with peers provides the opportunity for young women to (re-)imagine their lives and recognize possible alternatives. This is a major aspect of the development of critical consciousness. Fostering transformative action is an ongoing element of SDP education. This includes a need to recognize that small changes are important and may potentially contribute

to a ripple effect (Sugden, 2010) that can ultimately contribute to the broader changes SDP programs are seeking. Critical pedagogy provides the SDP sector with a framework that is well equipped to facilitate and inspire this process, as long as it also problematizes its own 'repressive myths' (Ellsworth, 1989).

Note

[1] Banking techniques instilled in the colonial educational system continue to be practiced across the continent (Dei, 2010). The post-colonial system described as "a gateway to cash employment and higher status within an increasingly monetized economy" (Wamahiu, 1996, p. 53) juxtaposes the pre-colonial educational system that focused on local contexts and life preparation through practical teachings and the sharing of local histories (Wamahiu, 1996).

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