

Editorial

Sport Volunteering, Educational Leadership and Social Transformation

Special Issue in *Sport, Education and Society*

Nicholas Wise

Arizona State University, School of Community Resources and Development

Contact Author Email: Nick.Wise@asu.edu

ORCID: 0000-0002-4154-8932

Geoffery Z. Kohe

University of Kent, School of Sport and Exercise Sciences

ORCID: 0000-0001-6683-6669

Niki Koutrou

Bournemouth University, Department of Sport and Event Management

ORCID: 0000-0002-6382-036X

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Volunteerism is considered an innately altruistic and meaningful act (see Benson & Wise, 2017; Gellweiler et al., 2018; Hoyer et al., 2019; Nichols, 2003). In light of prevailing public health, wellbeing and educational discourses, volunteerism has been afforded greater value as an area of global concern; particularly in relation to creating and sustaining opportunities for people to engage in sport, physical activity and leisure. Against this backdrop, the interrelated area of sport, physical activity, physical education, and leisure-related volunteering represent a vibrant landscape of ideas, activities, and enterprise. From local community and grassroots ventures, regional development projects, to large scale sport mega-events, volunteerism within this space offers a means for substantial individual and collective interaction, personal and professional skill development, knowledge transfer, capacity building and sector transformation. Yet, while advantageous aspects of volunteerism are well-founded, they may rarely be guaranteed. Rather, sustaining volunteerism (both in and beyond the sport sector) requires considerable foresight, investment, resourcing, and goodwill. Moreover, while volunteerism may provide considerable benefits for those involved, and official organisation rhetoric continue to pronounce volunteerism as means to/of 'mobility', 'change', 'action' and 'empowerment', such characteristics and benefits are not always inherent, evident or shared equally among participants. Moreover, nor do they necessarily contribute to the growth and sustainability of the sector more generally. Accordingly, it remains of value to interrogate volunteerism and sport-volunteerism as a site of collaborative social interaction, experience, and opportunities.

As this special issue considers, what needs attention is how contemporary features of volunteering shape social development, especially aspects concerning who benefits (the volunteers and/or the communities they serve), and the wider implications for social inclusion/exclusion, equality of opportunity, access and one's ability to participate (Cuskelly et al., 2006). When considering leadership legacy initiatives and intended strategies of/for volunteering, such questions also challenge critical considerations vis-à-vis: who reaps volunteer legacies (e.g., either the country where the volunteering took place or the country the volunteers return to); To what extent do relationships, social transformative and leadership actions continue after volunteers return home?; and, do episodic volunteers become long-term volunteers that help sustain and future-proof the sport sector and wider community? (see Burton & Leberman, 2017; Hayday et al., 2019; Koutrou, 2018; O'Boyle et al., 2015). As noted by several papers in this special issue, in response to some of the enduring questions above - and to fulfil other varied political, economic, and social agendas, - international, state and domestic agencies have turned substantially toward the volunteer sector to deliver, maintain and develop an increasingly wide array of services to individual, groups and local communities. Such services include community-building projects, informal and formal education training services, health and welfare support, social care, physical activity provision, technological and infrastructure, capacity building, economic aid and political advocacy and activism opportunities. Aided by the popularity of physical cultures, volunteerism within sport, physical activity and leisure has, variously, served as an economical labour resource and been instrumental in engaging and mobilising large cohorts of the population toward physical health and wellbeing (and by proxy, productivity) ends.

Beyond participation and health imperatives, scholars have also noted the educational, social and cultural value of volunteerism for individual and collective identity formation and community development (Coalter, 2007; Holmes, 2009; Morgan, 2013; Plante, Moreau, Jaimes & Turbide, 2016). Yet, congruent with critique of the connections between genuine humanitarianism and State and public policy interventions, scholars advocate more rigorous critique of assumptions and connections between sport/physical activity-based volunteerism, educational development and community leadership, and

collaboration and engagement as means toward improving social citizenship (Garratt & Piper, 2016; Storr & Spaaij, 2017). Encouraged to advance these interrogations, the aim of this Special issue is to bring together an international and interdisciplinary collection of papers focusing on sport volunteering and leadership, and the emphasis therein on pedagogies of social justice, citizenship, and experiential learning.

This collection, in particular, critically appraises how sport volunteerism helps us understand the role of sport, social transformation and the acquisition of social capital (see Benson & Wise, 2017; Whittaker & Holland-Smith, 2014). As illustrated within the collection, the emphasis on the social and educational dimensions of sport volunteerism can be two-fold. First, we acknowledge the entrenched role of volunteerism within sport development and sport-for-development. In doing so, the collection illuminates the varied ways volunteering has been instrumental in delivering initiatives around the world that have used sport/physical activity as a pedagogical tool to promote physical activity participation and key social and civic values and behaviours (as well as also serving the ideological and/or political agendas of the supporting organisations) (see also, Kohe & Collison, 2019). Concomitant research has also evidenced the varied ways in which volunteering at events (sport-related or otherwise) provide leadership and mentorship opportunities that align individual professional and personal skill acquisition, and enable people to build new confidence through social interactions. In both regards, there are notable educational gains that accrue from volunteering and the social transformation that transpires via training and the *in situ* volunteer experience (Hayton, 2016; Parker et. al., 2019; Gornostaeva & McGurk, 2013).

To these ends, substantive scholarship has aligned with and informed public policies highlighting the 'transformative' potential and utility of sport/physical education-based volunteerism for improving personal and professional skills, educational attainment, identity construction, community development, social cohesion, empowerment and emancipation, political agency, and cultural awareness (Eley & Krik, 2002; Jaitner, 2019; Kay & Bradbury, 2009; Plante, Moreau, Jaimes & Turbide, 2016). Adding to this have been sustained challenges to state, private and third-sector financial systems that have altered funding arrangements and fueled opportunities for new partnerships and allied services within sport, physical activity/education and health that promote volunteering opportunities (Baker et al., 2020). Here we acknowledge also that these issues have distinct spatial/geographic/geo-political components that manifest at the ideological, production and action levels within educational realms (both formal schooling and informal learning communities (see, for example, Buelen et. al, 2015; Reid & Tattersall, 2017). That sport has an inherent educational quality may be well recognised. However, there is a need to further evaluate how educational opportunities and techniques through sport might embed and galvanise wider social qualities (e.g., morality, ethical responsibility, and leadership). This is where sports volunteering becomes an important focal point. It is widely acknowledged that the provision of sport (most often to young people) is a universally acceptable altruistic exercise that warrants our collective time, energy, investment and commitment. Yet, educational opportunities aligned with sport, volunteering and leadership are complex and the delivery of sport and the integration (or incongruence) of leadership results in concerns over 'sustainability', 'value' and 'meaning' are considered important when we evaluate the education impacts of volunteering. The collection of papers we put forth in this Special issue will, we envisage, serve as a challenge for critically considering how volunteering contributes to pedagogy and new education attainment aligned with participants' desires to acquire leadership experience.

Beyond this, providing leadership opportunities through sport-related volunteering has also become an increasingly prominent feature in formal (e.g., Tertiary/Higher) education programmes. Within which, there is a notable emphasis on the idea that taught skills gained through volunteering not only fulfil motives surrounding altruism, but also provide professional and personal development opportunities that are perceived essential in order to compete in an increasingly competitive job market (Bush et. al., 2016;

Hayton, 2018). As such, there is a need to address research on volunteering and social transformations aligned with educational issues and implications. We also note here, and are encouraged by, the considerable work that has already highlighted the educational realm as a space in which prevailing regimes of knowledge and practice can be challenged, and critical pedagogies of social action, transformation and advocacy may be advanced (Alhadeff-Jones, 2016; Brown, 2017; Giroux, 2020; Gulson & Symes, 2007; Middleton, 2017)

Alongside, and in conjunction with, formal education contexts, sport organisations, event organising entities and charitable bodies have also utilised the draw/allure of 'leadership'/leadership training as a means of enticing recruits. Part of this agenda has seen volunteerism linked to a broad set of professional and personal skills, training opportunities and career development pathways. For instance, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and related Olympic organising committees frequently espouse the tangible and intangible social and professional benefits that accrue from engagement in their volunteer programmes (for example, via the much-lauded 'Olympic Values Education Programme'). The IOC's recent Young Sport Leaders initiative, for instance, has also been effective in providing opportunities to upskill youth, develop their sport industry knowledge and expertise, and accelerate entry (for some) into longer-term/paid employment positions. Participant experiences within, and the sustainability of, these programmes, remain debatable. Such ventures are, however, grounded in a set of assumptions, namely, that:

- Volunteerism and leadership are intertwined and it is believed that the latter will transpire easily from the former
- Costs are always naturally offset by the 'free' nature of the labour
- Volunteerism can be manufactured/produced following similar practices and approaches of paid-employment
- Conditions of volunteerism may differ from paid employment and thus beget different responses vis-à-vis contractual obligations, welfare responsibilities and ethical considerations.

While volunteerism and sport volunteerism scholars have interrogated these issues, there remains substantial scope for further inquiry. Interrogations are yet needed, for instance, that uncover where new events, organisational practices, labour and employment laws and stakeholder connections have challenged and changed conventional understandings and practices of volunteerism and what experiences accrue to individuals and groups as a result. Moreover, the continued altruistic motives of sport organisations and commercial entities have also, in some corners of the globe, aided the popularity of sport volunteering and provided more individuals the chance to gain international experience or integrate with a community. Yet, the complex arrangements of corporate and philanthropic foundations of sport volunteering remain not well understood. To these areas of focus are a long list of other critical challenges, and this includes the need to focus on educational development, social capital and leadership opportunities that result from volunteering, or during volunteering (Jaitner, 2019).

Mindful of, and buoyed by, the above issues and concerns, this special issue seeks to explore a range of education themes surrounding sports volunteering. Papers in this collection each focus on understanding sport volunteering from different international and educational leadership contexts (with insight on who is the volunteer in regards to their behaviour, motivation, experience, gender, contribution, impact?) (see also, Gellweiler et al., 2019; Koutrou & Pappous, 2016). Papers also address intercultural perspectives on sport volunteering and the influence on social transformations. Addressing the supply side of volunteering and the formation of new partnerships offers perspective into the development of leadership and

collaboration opportunities (this includes management and interactions volunteers have with and network with key stakeholders in the formal and informal education sector). Contributions of sport volunteering to social citizenship, democracy, justice and/or community building initiatives help us understand the extent of different impacts (social, economic, environmental, and is it sustainable?) upon people and places (host communities, volunteers, cities, townships and beyond). The papers also prompt consideration of global disparities within the sport volunteering sector and leadership opportunities that result. (e.g. are host communities in western cities less impacted than host communities in developing countries where international sport volunteering takes place?).

With these points of focus and considerations outlined in this editorial, this special issue on sport volunteering, educational leadership and social transformation includes six papers. The first article in this special issue by Richard Giulianotti, Holly Collison and Simon Darnell, titled *Volunteers in the Sport for Development and Peace Sector: Antinomies, Liminality, and Structural Relations*, contributes new insights for the sport for development and peace sector—focusing on the impact of volunteering in low- and middle-income countries. Concentrating on the volunteers, the authors focus on what they refer to as ‘in-between’ experiences that volunteers take on, which can differ based on socio-demography, status within a non-governmental organization, and their relationship with a community. Empowering and disempowering aspects of development can socially impact on volunteers abilities and the sustainability of the programmes volunteers are involved with. The study is based on interviews with local and international volunteers in Jamaica, Kosovo, Rwanda and Sri Lanka. The next article by Eric Legg and Erika Karner focuses on meanings of inclusion. In *Development of a Model of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for Sport Volunteers: An Examination of the Experiences of Diverse Volunteers for a National Sport Governing Body*, the authors explore inclusion among Black, Brown and Indigenous Persons of Color and LGBTQI+ volunteers. The contribution of this paper is it focuses on experiences of minoritized volunteers and uses this insight to address hindrances and enables of inclusion. Diversity, equity and inclusion needs more attention in sport volunteering research, especially with underrepresented populations. The authors use semi-structured interviews and narrative inquiry to collect data and looked at results across a four layer system that looks at personal, interpersonal, organizational and community impacts; the paper offers guidelines for organizations to help work towards developing more inclusive volunteering environments for underrepresented populations.

Conceptualising Landscapes of Learning in the United Kingdom’s Volunteer Football Sector by Niki Koutrou and Geoffery Z. Kohe examines volunteer cultures within the context of the United Kingdom’s regional grassroots football communities. Guided by spatial theory, and drawing data from questionnaires and focus groups with a variety of sector stakeholders, their interrogation focuses on connections between the shared ideas that help build volunteerism, educational opportunities and capacities for volunteer action. Identity also key points of tension and inequity, they argue that while the grassroots football comprises a valuable site for learning and social transformation, such outcomes are not always inherent, shared or desired by volunteers and wider stakeholders. Moreover, day-to-day realities and austerities of maintaining clubs and competitions call in to question the viability and sustainability of sector commitments to educational training and investment. In the next article, titled *Transforming whose lives? The portrayal of international sport for development volunteering by UK Higher Education Institutions*, Joanne Clarke and Vicky Norman continue discussing of the impact of volunteering by focusing on international volunteering opportunities to the global south offered by higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. Taking a sport for development focus, complemented with discussions supported by the literature on volunteer tourism, the authors are critical of how cross-cultural understanding is facilitated among volunteers and host communities. The authors argue there is a lack of research that looks at how higher education institutions portray volunteering and volunteer opportunities; this paper

considers 13 institutions and examines how they discursively frame sport for development volunteering internationally.

Hebe Schailleé, Inge Derom, Oskar Solenes, Solveig Straume, Beth Burgess, Vanessa Jones and Gillian Renfree are the authors of *Gender Inequality in sport: Perceptions and Experiences of Generation Z*. In this paper, the authors focus Generation Z's perceptions and awareness of gender equity in sport. The study includes 54 participants from four countries in Europe (Belgium, Norway, Netherlands, and England) all born after 1995 and are current students in university-level sport programmes. The authors do find that intercultural differences exist, and that participants do demonstrate an awareness of gender inequality – that they observe through the media and in sport settings. The authors argue that awareness of gender inequality needs increased in higher education, as this impacts on whether someone decides to participate or even volunteer. The final article in this special issue addresses three-sided football. Benjin Pollock's article, *Three-Sided Football: DIY Football and Social Transformationalism*, is the final paper that makes up this special issue. Playing three-sided football has gained in popularity and has expanded about the world. Taking an ethnographic approach, the author also draws on interviews and interactions with players, coaches, curators and activists who are playing a role in shaping the future of the sport. The author builds their conceptual focus around social transformationalism to understand the how participation is driving new experiences for those involved to be leaders and educators of not just sport, but considers all this in light of political meanings embedded in the history of the sport and the social investments gained and achieved by those involved.

The links between sport volunteering, leadership and social transformation makes a unique contribution to the literature on sport, education and society. These connections concern both theory and practice as this aligns with government initiatives and policies to encourage volunteering for social development (read also 'social good') and sustainability. In addition, development, planning and sport-led change can potentially have long-term impacts on communities and have a transformational impact on people who seek to become leaders and promote sports activity. We now turn to the papers outlined above that follow in this issue of *Sport, Education and Society*.

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