

Education for Social Change? A Freirean Critique of Sport for Development and Peace

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Abstract

Background: The previous two decades have witnessed an increasing number of policymakers and practitioners using sport programs to achieve broader social development aims, particularly in countries in the Global South. A core element of these programs has been the use of sport as a context to provide young people with social, personal and health education. However, despite the educative focus of the 'Sport for Development and Peace' (SDP) movement there has been limited analysis within existing literature of the pedagogies used and whether these are appropriate for achieving the ambitious social aims of SDP. This article seeks to review and critique the core pedagogical strategies used in SDP.

Theoretical Framework: The article draws on Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy as a theoretical framework to examine education through sport in the Global South. The authors consider Freire's work provides a number of aspects that are relevant to SDP education. Freire has long been established as the standard bearer of critical pedagogy globally including contexts relevant to where SDP education takes place. His work offers a conceptual framework that challenges the status quo and offers marginalised groups the opportunity to enhance their agency, outcomes that are at the heart of the SDP movement. The article outlines key themes associated with Freirean pedagogy including the politicization of education, the possibility of transformation through education and the importance of dialogical education for creating 'critically transitive consciousness'.

Discussion: We use these core foundational concepts to critique existing pedagogical strategies in SDP and outlines how they currently do not go far enough in providing a truly transformative educational experience for participants. The discussion considers the use of traditional didactic, peer education and relationship building pedagogies in SDP and analyses the limitations of each of these using the critical lens of Freire's pedagogy.

Conclusion: We conclude by outlining how Freirean pedagogy could be better utilised within SDP education and outlines some of the practical implications of doing so. The need for flexibility in SDP curriculum development is highlighted and the importance of ensuring this is grounded within local context, dealing with specific local issues. This is at odds with the current movement within SDP to standardise the education that takes place within this context. We also consider the implications for recruiting and training educators to deliver a more critical pedagogy, outlining some of the qualities such individuals should be seeking to develop in order to engage in a more transformative education process through sport.

Keywords: Paulo Freire; critical pedagogy; Sport for Development and Peace; social change

Introduction

Policymakers and practitioners have long advocated the value of sport as an educative context capable of facilitating the development of positive social values, life skills and pro-social behaviour amongst young people (Benson et al. 1998; Bailey 2006; Gould and Carson 2008). Sport is believed to have the potential to engage young people in culturally and physically relevant ways, including those who may be hard to reach through other social institutions (Sandford et al. 2008; Crabbe 2008). As a consequence, sport is increasingly used in intervention programmes aimed at achieving social development objectives such as health or economic participation, particularly (but not exclusively) in the Global South as part of the 'sport for development and peace' (SDP) movement (Kidd 2008).¹ However, within existing literature there is a consensus that sport does not automatically teach young people life skills or particular pro-social behaviours; rather, such skills must be intentionally taught and fostered throughout the sport experience (Gould and Carson 2008; Mwaanga 2010). The overriding message from this body of research is that for sport to encourage particular positive attitudes, values and behaviour amongst young people it is essential that appropriate pedagogical strategies are adopted that reflect the broader outcomes sport is hoping to

achieve. Coaches and other educators are seen to play a key role in this (Lyle 2008; Rutten et al. 2007).

Within the SDP movement there has been very little exploration of the merit and weaknesses of the current pedagogical approaches being utilized in education through sport in the Global South and whether these are appropriate for achieving the complex outcomes we are expecting from sport in this setting. As Coalter (2007) suggests, the overriding assumption within SDP initiatives that ‘sport works’ has perhaps restricted critical discussion of how it works (or can work) when considering the educational properties that we frequently attribute to sport. In this paper, we draw on the pedagogical theory developed by the late Brazilian educator Paulo Freire to critically examine the nature of education in SDP programmes, with an emphasis on the uses and limitations of the pedagogical approaches currently being utilized in SDP programmes. As will be seen, Freire’s critical pedagogy offers the intellectual tools necessary to inform conceptually sound SDP programmes. We are aware, however, that there are competing educational philosophies within the SDP sector, some of which are more receptive to a Freirean critique than others. Giulianotti (2011) identifies three ideal-type models of SDP project: a technical, a dialogical and a critical model. The pedagogical philosophies and methods of these three models differ markedly, ranging from directive pedagogy to andragogy. Most SDP projects feature different mixtures of the first two models, while the critical model has been less apparent (Giulianotti 2011). By adopting a Freirean lens, our analysis advocates critical, reflexive educational projects with explicit social transformative objectives. In so doing, it resonates mostly with the critical model, and responds to Giulianotti’s (2011, 224) call for ‘embracing the critical model more wholeheartedly and putting greater focus on social justice’.

This paper first discusses Freirean pedagogy and its relevance to current pedagogical approaches to SDP work. We then examine the contemporary significance and practical application of Freire’s radical education for the SDP sector. Although we cannot report on our own empirical studies of SDP programmes in Zambia and Brazil at length within the space of this paper (see e.g. Jeanes 2011; Spaaij 2011, 2012), we will use specific examples from these studies to illustrate our arguments. In brief, the SDP initiative studied in Brazil involved a program aimed at improving the skills and employability prospects of disadvantaged young people; in Zambia the programs focused on using sport as a context in which to educate young people about HIV/AIDS. We seek to understand SDP projects in their specific local contexts, grounded in our recognition that such projects are clearly not

homogenous across space and time. When considering the relevance of Freire to SDP programmes we therefore do so with an understanding of how specific initiatives are currently operationalized within particular communities in the Global South.

Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and its relevance to SDP

In considering the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire as an analytical lens through which to examine the nature of education in SDP initiatives, the question emerges, 'Why Freire?' There are at least four reasons why Freire's work is significant for SDP education. First, Paulo Freire has come to be known as the standard-bearer of critical pedagogy and his work continues to inspire progressive educators around the globe (McLaren and Giroux 1994; Schugurensky 2011), yet it remains virtually unexplored in SDP policy, practice and research. Second, Freirean pedagogy has acquired a universal meaning since the relationships of domination and oppression which he analyzes occur worldwide and his theories have been informed by the most varied experiences from a wide range of cultural contexts (Gadotti 1994). Although a large part of Freire's (1972, 1973, 2005) pedagogical theory is based on his experiences in Brazil and other Latin American countries, it has been enriched by his work in several African countries. In his later work he also sought to apply his pedagogy to North American and European contexts. As Schugurensky (2011, 208-209) notes, the topics addressed by Freire 'are general in nature and appeal to readers in different parts of the world, regardless of their particular circumstances.'

Third, Freire's critical pedagogy is arguably more relevant than ever before in the context of contemporary neoliberal capitalism (Dale and Hyslop-Margison 2010). The issue of colonialism in its different forms is a central theme in Freire's (1972) work and he views the struggle for decolonization to be an ongoing one. For Freire (2005), the form colonialism is assuming at present is predicated on neoliberalism with its concomitant ideology of the free market (Mayo 2004: 89). The 'fatalism' of neoliberalism is an important theme in Freire's later work and reflects a wider social critique that seeks to recapture the vital role that critical pedagogy might play as a language of both critique and possibility by addressing the growing threat of free market fundamentalism (Giroux and Searls Giroux 2006; Darder and Mirón 2006). Freire offers a conceptual and ethical framework that not only challenges the status quo (through what he calls 'denunciation') but also articulates a language of possibility ('annunciation'), a framework that brings together education and politics for humanization as a viable alternative to domination and oppression. This framework, which is profoundly

postcolonial and anti-colonial, is highly relevant for SDP programmes operating in the Global South and resonates with postcolonial critiques of SDP approaches, as shown in a later part of this paper.

Fourth, Freire's thinking encompasses and can be applied to a variety of contemporary institutional and non-institutional educational settings (Mayo 2004), including extra-curricular sport-based education. In Freire's view, pedagogy is a cultural practice that takes place not only in schools but in any educational and cultural space, such as adult education, community education and social movements (Freire and Shor 1987; Giroux, 1993). Recent research shows how Freire's ideas can also inform physical education and sport pedagogy (Pascual 2006).

Freirean pedagogy: key themes

For Paulo Freire, education is never neutral and always political. Education is a site of social conflict that reflects broader struggles between forces of reproduction and forces of transformation. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to serve the interests of dominant social groups and reproduce structures of domination, or it sides with the interests of the oppressed to become the practice of freedom and social change. Freire criticizes what he calls the 'banking concept' of education, in which knowledge is 'a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing' (Freire 1972, 46). Banking education is an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. In this form of education, the teacher teaches and the students are taught; the teacher talks and the students listen. The teacher chooses the programme content without consulting the students, while the students comply. Freire (1972, 45) dismisses banking education as suffering from 'narration sickness', turning students into 'containers', into 'receptacles to be filled by the teacher.' He argues that such education 'castrates' people's curiosity (Freire and Faundez 1989, 35), undermines their ability to develop critical awareness, and forces them to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them. Thus, within a banking education framework, people are not encouraged to develop their rational, imaginative or creative capabilities. Instead of teaching learners to dialectically engage the world as Freire proposes, banking education operates to naturalize reality and 'domesticate' learners (Dale and Hyslop-Margison 2010). In short, it reproduces structures of domination by integrating learners into the logic of the present system and by bringing about conformity to it.

Freire believes that every human being is capable of looking critically at his or her world in a dialogical encounter with others. He argues that educators ‘must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of men [sic] in their relations with the world’ (Freire 1972, 52). Through problem-posing, students learn to question answers rather than merely to answer questions. In this pedagogy, learners experience education as something they do, not as something done to them (Shor 1993, 26). For Freire, the development of critical consciousness facilitates people’s reflexive intervention in the historical process. Problem-posing education helps learners to develop a critical understanding of the larger contexts of power in society that shape their conditions and to recognize that they have the ability, through praxis, to transform these conditions. Thus, they come to see the world ‘not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation’ (Freire 1972, 56). Put differently, Freirean pedagogy educates learners that human beings ‘exist within culturally constructed contexts that are altered by consciously directed action’ (Dale and Hyslop-Margison 2010, 147).

The basis for transformative education lies in an active, dialogical and critical education that is to be forged *with*, not *for*, learners. Dialogue is a horizontal relationship between persons that is nourished by love, humility, hope and trust (Freire 1973, 45). Through dialogue, learners are transformed from objects into subjects. The traditional teacher and student roles cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher and the students teach each other in dialogue and ‘become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow’ (Freire 1972, 53). This requires the creation of a new attitude – that of dialogue: ‘The coordinators must be converted to dialogue in order to carry out education rather than domestication’ (Freire 1973, 52). In their mutual search for knowledge, the teacher and students develop ‘co-intentionality’, that is, ‘mutual intentions, which make the study collectively owned, not the teacher’s sole property’ (Shor 1993, 26).

Liberating dialogue should not be understood as a question of mere techniques and methods. Rather, it constructs a different relationship to knowledge and society that involves ‘illumination’ by the teacher and students together. Freire explains this as follows:

On the contrary, dialogue must be understood as something taking part in the very historical nature of human beings. ... Dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it. ... Through dialogue, reflecting together on

what we know and don't know, we can then act critically to transform reality (Freire, in Freire and Shor 1987, 98-9).

Dialogical education, then, seeks to bridge the gap between 'reading the words' and 'reading the world' (Freire and Macedo 1987), that is, it connects reading texts with understanding and, ultimately, changing reality (i.e. critical literacy).

Where should dialogical, problem-posing education commence? Freirean pedagogy is concerned with the relationship between knowledge and one's material existence. The starting point for critical pedagogy is 'the present, existential, concrete situations, reflecting the aspirations of the people', which provides the opportunity both to discover generative themes from daily life and to stimulate people's awareness in regard to these themes (Freire 1972, 68). The curriculum is built around the themes and conditions of people's lives, allowing learners to reflect on the lives they lead and to ask questions to discover their meaning and value. With dialogic reflection among their peers, they gain some critical distance on their conditions and can consider how to transform them (Shor 1993, 31). This dialectical process which relates action and reflection to theory can be summarized as one of action-reflection-transformative action. Crucially, it is group knowledge that emerges from this experience, which highlights the collective dimensions of learning and of action for social change (Mayo 2004, 51).

Freirean education is an ongoing, continuing process in which learners move through different stages. The first stage is 'naïve transitivity' (Freire 1973, 18), which is characterized by a lack of insight into the way in which people's social conditions undermine their well-being. The final stage is that of 'critically transitive consciousness', which features depth in the interpretation of problems, a profound curiosity, and the rejection of passive positions. A critically transitive thinker is 'empowered to critically reflect on the conditions that shape his or her life, and to work collectively to change these conditions on the basis of such critical insight' (Campbell and MacPhail 2002, 334). However, Freire warns that several obstacles stand in the way of critical transitivity. As a consequence of exposure to many years of conditioning by banking education, the oppressed have internalized oppressive structures and remain passive, immersed in what Freire (1973) calls a 'culture of silence' and 'democratic inexperience'. This results in general feelings of alienation, fatalism and cynicism and even in student resistance of dialogical education (Freire and Shor 1987). To overcome students' democratic inexperience, Freirean education seeks to de-socialize students from passivity in

the classroom and challenges their learned anti-intellectualism and authority-dependence (i.e. waiting to be told what to do and what things mean). It also de-socializes teachers, transforming them into problem-posers and dialogue-leaders instead of domineering narrators (Shor 1993, 33). However, Freire recognizes that in such difficult circumstances tact and prudence are required when engaging in a dialogical approach, and that dialogue may need to be introduced gradually (Mayo 2004, 51).

In the remainder of this paper, it will be shown that Freirean pedagogy provides many of the intellectual tools necessary to inform sound SDP programmes aimed at promoting social change. The challenge for SDP initiatives, we argue, is to engage in a critical (re)reading of Freire's work, adapting creatively those ideas to the particular social contexts in which they operate. This is what Freire means when he says that people should not blindly follow his ideas, but reinvent them (Schugurensky 2011). However, as we will show, to date the theoretical orientation and pedagogical tools provided by Freire remain largely unexplored both in the SDP sector and in research.

Dominant pedagogical approaches to sport for development and peace

Within the SDP field, practitioners have used sport to educate young people regarding a variety of topics, especially in the areas of health promotion (e.g. HIV/AIDS awareness) and core life skills (e.g. communication skills, cooperation, responsibility, discipline, leadership) (e.g. Jeanes 2011; Spaaij 2012). The pedagogical approaches used to deliver this broad 'curriculum' through sport have varied greatly, yet it is possible to distinguish three dominant types of pedagogical approach in SDP work: the traditional didactic pedagogy; peer education; and relationship building.

Traditional didactic pedagogies

The SDP sector has traditionally drawn on didactic teaching pedagogies, using volunteers from the Global North to impart their knowledge to marginalized young people in Global South countries. Global North agencies determine the curriculum and translate it into practice via volunteers, many of whom have extensive sport development knowledge but limited experience of youth and international development work (Guest 2009; Darnell 2007). This approach assumes that Northern volunteers have superior knowledge and that sport can provide a valuable setting to express this information.

This approach has been evident at various points in our research (Jeanes 2011). Within Zambia, the use of UK volunteers to undertake placements with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and work in communities delivering activities has been increasingly common within recent years. Whilst these volunteers typically bring a large amount of enthusiasm and a desire to ‘make a difference’, their skills often lie in sports coaching rather than in education or supporting youth development. Particularly when volunteers were first formally arriving in Zambia it was evident that they had limited knowledge of the wider cultural and political context they would be working in and a very limited understanding of the specific local issues affecting communities. In addition, few felt they had detailed knowledge of HIV/AIDS which, in this specific context, they were expected to educate young people about.

It is now recognized that this didactic model, which tends to be highly technocratic, is problematic not only because it is underpinned by a positivistic, utilitarian philosophy and a hierarchical structure, but also because it favours externally imposed agendas and programme content (Giulianotti 2011). In so far as SDP programmes are heavily dominated by external actors and under-value the local knowledge and lived experience of ‘recipients’, they can be characterized as donor-biased or neo-colonial. We have witnessed this during our research when Global North volunteers have entered communities and tried to establish sport for development activities using sports that have limited relevance or meaning at a local level and inevitably cease when the volunteer placement ends. Within Zambia, one specific example of this was volunteers attempting to establish cricket, despite the limited cultural relevance of this sport to young people. The neo-colonial elements of the didactic SDP approach have been strongly criticized, especially with regard to the practical and ethical problems associated with foreign educators or volunteers providing sport-based education without knowledge of local cultural communities (Guest 2009). The didactic SDP model has also been accused of operating within a neoliberal philosophy. As Darnell (2010, 70) demonstrates, SDP programmes ‘may support, even inadvertently, sociopolitical processes that respond to the material limit of capitalist relations by focusing on the (failed) conduct of marginalized groups’. The didactic model tends to understand social disadvantage and marginalization as a logical outcome of individual failure instead of a result of the socio-historical workings of power in society, and sport is thus used as a tool to help persons overcome such failures (i.e., moving from being ‘dysfunctional’ to being ‘functional’) rather than to challenge relations of domination and oppression.

A Freirean reading of the traditional didactic pedagogy would reject the banking concept of education that is central to this approach and the fact that it fails to take as its starting point the lived experiences and local knowledge of learners. A Freirean critique would also reject the ‘false generosity’ that manifests itself in SDP programmes that seek to make ‘marginal’ people ‘functional’. False generosity refers to (paternalistic) forms of treatment bestowed on the oppressed with a view to ameliorating their condition a little, or of softening the effects of oppression, but which actually leave the causes of the conditions experienced by the oppressed unchanged (Lankshear 1993, 102). For Freire such ‘aid’, even when it is well intentioned, (unwittingly) abets dehumanization by perpetuating the structures and routines within which oppression is practiced. True generosity, on the other hand, ‘lies in striving so that those hands – whether of individuals or entire peoples – need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, by working, transform the world’ (Freire 1972, 21-2). This critique was raised during our fieldwork in Brazil, where a local activist argued that despite their laudable objective of social development, SDP programmes in his local community run the risk of being a ‘bandaid solution’, leaving unchanged the root causes of deprivation and marginalization. This respondent also warned that such programmes may amount to little more than a political instrument for regulating the poor, with the purpose of moving workless young people into the dominant capitalist order, rather than contesting this order and opening up alternative realities.

Alternative pedagogical approaches in SDP initiatives have sought to address some of the above criticisms. For example, it is increasingly recognized that positive programme impact is more likely to be sustained when projects work closely with participants to choose activities and when positive social relationships are established between teachers/mentors and students (e.g. Sandford et al. 2008). These principles have also been highlighted as important within Global North based literature examining how sports participation can contribute to positive youth development (Gould and Carson, 2008; Petitpas, Cornelius and Van Raalte, 2008). Two alternative pedagogical approaches have gained particular prominence in this regard: peer education and relationship building.

Peer education

Peer education has gained growing popularity in the SDP sector and has been utilized by indigenous NGOs such as EduSport and Sport in Action in Zambia from their inception. In

the last decade there has been an increasing formalization of peer education within the SDP sector spearheaded by the 'Kicking AIDS Out' network. Peer education assumes that learning occurs when young people have the opportunity to interact, receive information and debate and discuss the knowledge they are acquiring (Backett-Milburn and Wilson 2000). Nicholls (2009, 168) suggests peer education should foster 'horizontal dialogue that enables participants to plan as equals and to take a course of action that is contextually and culturally sound'. Within a sports context NGO staff recruit young people and train them to deliver sports and life skills education within their communities. Peer leaders engage young people initially through sports opportunities and use these to deliver core educational messages. Young people are encouraged to share and discuss their collective views on issues affecting their lives (e.g. unprotected sex; alcohol and drug use) and attempt to devise solutions and strategies to navigate these within their everyday lives (Mwaanga 2010).

Whilst analysis of peer education within SDP programmes has been very limited, broader development studies have begun to debate whether it is an effective pedagogical strategy for fostering positive social change (Price and Knibbs 2009; Svenson and Burke 2005). Such research has questioned some of the principles of peer education, for example, whether young people do find their peers a more credible and approachable source of information than adults (Price and Knibbs 2009). Other literature has questioned whether peer education can realistically support young people to develop sufficient agency to challenge broader social structures and power dynamics within communities (Campbell and MacPhail 2002). During our own research (Jeanes 2011), we have spoken with young people in Zambia regarding the ability of peer-led programs to significantly change aspects of their community. Young people felt that whilst they had developed their knowledge and awareness through peer education programs, their capacity to transform their situations was limited due to wider social and political discourses that privileged adult voices and limited the capacity of young people to exert influence within their communities. As one young person commented:

It is important that you understand the problem first: that you know about HIV and how you can get it and why you may be at risk. It is good to have that knowledge but that is no good if you cannot do the things you are taught... for those who may have no choice over what they do, sport may not help if they cannot have a say over what they do.

Research also suggests that once delivered on the ground, peer education may not be that different from traditional teacher-focused, didactic pedagogies (Warwick and Aggleton 2004; Campbell and MacPhail 2002). Campbell (2004) has shown how peer leaders, when teaching in communities, would return to familiar methods that reflected how they were educated within schools. This usually involved peer leaders talking at young people who would sit quietly and absorb information provided to them. Peer educators rarely encouraged them to consider how they could use this new knowledge or the problems of doing so. We have seen this in Zambia where peer leader training in SDP programmes has involved NGO staff providing young people with content-specific information on HIV/AIDS and particular sports and games, but rarely discussed how facilitation should take place and what is required from peer education in this context. When observing peer leaders working in local communities it was evident that some used didactic approaches. Whilst epistemologically peer education draws on principles of collective debate and the fostering of critical consciousness, in development work this has not necessarily translated into the pedagogical methods used in delivery. Instead, from some of the examples of peer education in practice that we have witnessed, it would seem to be used as a didactic method in disguise where ‘factual knowledge is highly prized, rote learning is emphasized, questioning authority is frowned upon, and teachers are accorded high respect’ (Price and Knibbs 2009, 45).

Part of the problem seems to lie in the training of peer educators which, as illustrated in the example above, often focuses on the transference of factual information rather than encouraging them to use or reflect on their own experiences and circumstances (Price and Knibbs 2009). Furthermore, due to peer leader training often being developed either solely or at least in partnership with Global North agencies, individual outcomes are frequently prioritized at the expense of collective mobilisation opportunities, resulting in training and delivery that focuses on supporting young people to gain individual benefits such as increased self-awareness and self-confidence (Campbell and MacPhail 2002). Within Zambia, peer education often focuses on encouraging participants to develop their self-esteem and to ‘believe in themselves’ and ‘know their rights’. As one girl expressed, ‘we talk much about women’s rights and child’s rights. I know my rights’. However, there was limited discussion of why young women may struggle to exert ‘their rights’ within the broader Zambian patriarchal cultural context. The focus in SDP projects on concepts deemed important by Global North agencies, such as self-esteem, often has little meaning or relevance within a Global South context (Guest 2009), and tends to fall short on the ideal of

fostering critical consciousness and collective knowledge in a Freirean sense. Within SDP programmes, peer education usually does not allow learners to determine what is relevant and helpful to their own life circumstances, nor does it involve a genuine transfer of decision-making. For Freire, education for positive social change should start from the problems of the community, use active and dialogical learning methods, and engage participants in collectively determining their own needs and priorities. Moreover, education ultimately needs to be taken beyond the sports field or classroom by integrating problem-posing dialogue with collective action on the ground to transform participants' social reality (Wallerstein and Bernstein 1988).

Relationship building

Several SDP programmes adopt some kind of relationship strategy to engage and educate young people through sport, founded on the belief that establishing and maintaining positive relationships between young people and educators is a critical factor in maximizing the impact of SDP initiatives on youth development. The relationship building approach draws on models from different fields including youth work, sports development and coaching, and social work. Although this approach has been most comprehensively conceptualized in the Global North (especially in the UK-based programme Positive Futures), it is also explicitly used in some SDP programmes in the Global South. A key feature of the relationship building approach is the development of meaningful, sustainable contact between programme staff and participants based on respect for the cultural contexts in which the young people live, while also striving to open access to social worlds and opportunities which are not currently accessible to them in order that they are 'in a stronger position to make positive life choices from a wider range of options' (Crabbe et al. 2006, 15). Through fostering such positive relationships, this pedagogical approach seeks to move participants from disengagement to curiosity and involvement, through to achievement and autonomy (Crabbe 2008).

The relationship building approach sensitizes practitioners to the importance of sustained, positive engagement between programme participants and between educators and participants. Within Brazil, we have noted the key role that educators are seen to play in the relationship building process (Spaij 2012). For example, an SDP programme coordinator explains: 'We always say to the teachers and mentors that the most important thing is not the

subject they are going to learn with you ... Sure that's important too, but you must create relationships with them'. Another educator states:

The relationship between the participant and facilitator is really important because it's more of a 'coaching' relationship than a traditional teacher-to-student relationship. During the facilitator trainings, we really try to emphasize that the facilitator must be on the same level as the participant in order to gain trust and that the learning experience is mutual, not unilateral (quoted in Spaaij 2011, 77).

These Brazilian SDP educators thus seek to engender non-hierarchical, dialogical encounters between educators and participants. Their programme's focus on mutual trust and respect, dialogue and non-authoritarian approaches clearly resonates with elements of Freire's critical pedagogy. However, this teaching strategy still seems to favour 'empowerment' at the individual level over more collective forms of learning and acting, and the programme content and aims are largely designed 'from above'. Furthermore, the model operates on a far more pragmatic and contained basis than Freirean pedagogy in that it seeks to allow its recipients to actively participate in wider social, economic and political spheres, rather than to durably transform these spheres (Spaaij 2011). It has been argued, however, that the relationship building approach has the potential to be mobilized as a force for progressive social change, and that the imperative is to identify theoretical orientations which advocate sport's role in wider community development strategies that are concerned with transformative agendas (Crabbe 2008, 35). Freire's critical pedagogy, we argue, offers such a theoretical orientation. In the next section, we demonstrate how this critical pedagogy can inform SDP programmes in practice.

Discussion: examining SDP using a Freirean lens

SDP programmes typically aim to engage and educate disadvantaged or disengaged young people. From a Freirean viewpoint, however, the existing pedagogical approaches utilized in SDP initiatives often do not go far enough: they provide at best raised levels of knowledge and skills for individual participants, but as presently designed they are often not capable of initiating profound social transformation at any (localized) structural or community level. This is illustrated in the above examples drawn from our own studies of specific projects where didactic teaching strategies reliant on 'depositing information' remain common

practice. As we have sought to show in this paper, Freire's critical pedagogy provides a key theoretical lens to critique and strengthen existing practice in SDP. Applying Freire's theoretical orientation to SDP programmes raises a series of important questions: what can SDP programmes learn from Freire? How can a Freirean pedagogy be operationalized in practice so that it helps to achieve SDP projects' aims? What are the implications for educators and for the training of educators? In this section we will address these questions in an attempt to take SDP education a stage further.

One of the key themes to be gleaned from Freire is that education is not neutral: it either reproduces structures of domination, or it is used to promote freedom and social change. This political view of education has important implications for SDP programmes and their curricula because it requires them to move beyond the goal of seeking to allow their recipients to actively participate in existing social, economic and political spheres, a goal which is variably defined as making participants 'functional' or '(re)engaging' them. From a Freirean standpoint, such efforts ultimately constitute an attempt at control and conformity, as well as false generosity. In so doing, SDP programmes (inadvertently) reproduce the social status quo and further dehumanize the participants. In contrast, liberating SDP education should strive to promote authentic and lasting social change by fostering critical consciousness and facilitating transformative action in order to challenge broader social structures and power dynamics. This critique of many current SDP initiatives as reproducing the status quo resonates with recent research that distinguishes a dominant vision of sport and development, in which sport essentially reproduces established social relations, and an interventionist approach, in which sport is intended to contribute to more fundamental change (Hartmann and Kwauk 2011). A Freirean reading of SDP critiques the former and advocates the latter, showing that practitioners interested in education through sport must develop appropriate pedagogical philosophies that translate into appropriate methods if their stated objectives (e.g. of 'empowerment', economic/social participation) are to be achieved.

Whilst the majority of examples given from our own research suggest that such translation has not been achieved in the context of the SDP projects we were analyzing, there were some examples of where this was taking place. Both the relationship building approach and peer education provide a framework through which a Freirean pedagogy could be delivered. In some communities in Zambia and Brazil young peer leaders talked about mobilizing other young people and adults in their community, coming together to undertake vibrant, critical debates about issues that were important to them. These debates focused on

issues such as how to generate income for themselves and their families. In a Zambian community this led to the development of a knitting group that sold their products at a local market, while in Brazil a financial assistance scheme was established which allowed some young people to work together to establish a small business in their local community. Within Brazil, SDP educators also emphasized the significance of a form of education which empowers young people to develop critical awareness and reflection vis-à-vis the world around them. For example, they engaged in collective discussions about the problems they faced in their daily lives and in their local communities. However, as noted earlier, in most cases their teaching strategy prioritized skill development at the individual level over collective, problem-posing education. We are therefore not suggesting that a Freirean approach requires a complete transformation away from existing practice but rather advocate it as an essential philosophy that should underpin education in this context.

Developing and implementing a radical interventionist approach to SDP will not be easy and is likely to encounter significant obstacles. At an organizational or strategic level, the approach may be seen by key donor institutions as less legitimate because of its more radical objective. The relationship between donors and recipients in SDP initiatives is often hierarchical; externally imposed agendas and interests (e.g. to reduce welfare dependency or risky behaviours) along with issues of accountability and control tend to dominate. This is the wider political context in which much of education through sport occurs and which must be recognized and problematized if a more critical delivery is to be adopted. The relationship between donors and recipients limits the possibilities for authentic dialogue, transfer of decision-making and democratic action within SDP programmes. Instead, the emphasis is on spending funding in a manner and timeframe that suits the donor agency. The pressure to spend money quickly prevents the development of critical pedagogies. Those in the field simply do not have time to do this within the constraints of donors demanding impact within their particular timeframes. It can thus be argued that the relationships between donors, SDP agencies and recipients ought to be transformed towards sustained relationships of trust and co-intentionality to work towards changing the reality of people's lives. For local agencies to engage with critical pedagogies donors also need to assume some responsibility to alter the mechanisms through which they provide support. Idealistically, where such a relationship is absent or where it imposes unfair priorities or conditionalities, it may be preferable to reject funding from a donor institution. However, the challenges for local NGOs to reject funding and potentially reduce their organization's chances of survival must be acknowledged. The

emphasis has to be on the holder of power, in this context the donor agencies, to provide funding in a way that better supports the development of appropriate pedagogies for change at local level. The critical issue here is that donor agencies not only advocate the use of particular critical pedagogies but also align to the critical philosophies underpinning these various methods. As we have seen within the Zambian context, whilst peer education should sit within a critical pedagogical philosophy, it is possible to deliver it in practice using methods that align much more closely to authoritarian, technocratic underpinnings.

It would be pessimistic to assume that a radical interventionist approach will necessarily be unappealing to those donor institutions that subscribe to the dominant vision of sport and development. Indeed, the political nature of education does not mean that the more practical, instrumental side of education should be neglected (Schugurensky 2011). Freire recognizes that liberating educators cannot deny the technical aspects of education and have to be competent in their ability to educate learners around skills needed for participation in wider economic, political and social spheres. He asks: ‘How is it possible *before* transforming society to deny students the knowledge they need to survive?’ (Freire, in Freire and Shor 1987, 69). As the quote from the Zambian young person (in the section, ‘Peer education’) suggests, ‘it is important to know the problem first’. Therefore, basic information on HIV/AIDS and how it is contracted still remains important knowledge. By attending to these demands, critical SDP education can be promoted as a legitimate and authentic approach to development. However, critical SDP education clearly goes beyond technical training. Freire (in Freire and Shor 1987, 68) insists that ‘the liberating educator will try to be efficient in training, in forming the educatees scientifically and technically, but he or she will try to *unveil* the ideology enveloped in the *very* expectations of the students’ by raising critical questions about the very training he/she is giving. As noted earlier, Freirean pedagogy absorbs the technical aspect of education into its critique of the whole system by combining the reading of words (comprehending text) with reading the world (critical reflection on the relationship between the text and lived experience).

Key principles for critical SDP education

Building on Freirean pedagogy, it is possible to outline a series of general principles with regard to the practical implementation of critical SDP education. Here we will discuss three key principles. The first principle is that the curriculum is to be built around the themes and conditions of people’s lives. It is of vital import that participants define their own needs and

set goals for SDP programmes, in collaboration with educators. Our own fieldwork points to the diversity of issues affecting neighbouring communities illustrating the need for a curriculum that emerges from the specific community in which delivery is intended (Jeanes 2011; Spaaij 2011). Whilst there are increasing attempts to standardize and provide frameworks for individuals and agencies seeking to educate through sport (e.g. Kicking Aids Out, UK Sport's International Community Coach Education System), a critical pedagogy perspective suggests that this is unlikely to achieve critical consciousness and broader social transformation.² Instead, educators working in the field of SDP, including programme directors and coordinators, should not arrive with a pre-packaged curriculum that assumes every new group of participants only needs to learn certain core life skills or competencies. Rather, they are prepared to share this kind of information, if participants name these concerns as areas of need in their own lives (Akinyela 2006). We recognize that whilst the suggestion of co-creating development projects is not new, there has been a tendency within SDP initiatives to exercise a top-down approach. Within the wider sport development context, however, there has been increasing call for the use of more bottom-up community development approaches to be used to philosophically underpin sport and development work (Jeanes and Magee 2011).

One way in which SDP programmes can facilitate an authentically dialogical process is by introducing a preliminary phase during which educators spend time in the community in question to research the knowledge, social situations and vocabulary of the groups with which they are working. Again, establishing such 'local knowledge' has been advocated in wider sport for development work as essential before attempting to critically engage disadvantaged young people (Crabbe et al. 2006). This research can be carried out during informal encounters with local residents (Freire 1973), which constitute the initial phase of an ongoing dialogical cycle that involves naming, reflecting and ongoing questioning of issues and solutions raised. As illustrated earlier, when initiatives are funded by external bodies, to successfully develop the critical approach we are advocating they have to be prepared to enable the local community to set the development agenda and provide the time to allow the discovery, dialogically, of exactly what this is. Through this approach, participants are encouraged to take responsibility in defining their own lives and to name with others their own perceptions of the world (Akinyela 2006). The teacher encourages participants to question, affirm, and even challenge one another. In this way, participants experience the process of collectively looking at a problem in order to better understand their world, while

the teacher (re-)learns the objects of study through listening to, and studying with, the participants.

As a second general principle, when developing a critical pedagogy it is necessary to consider what are likely to be the most effective methods to increase awareness and develop a sense of agency. There is a need to move away from didactic pedagogies imposed during colonization that educators now recognize as being disempowering as well as ineffective for promoting learning (Campbell 2004). Instead, SDP practitioners and educators may need to return to traditional methods of learning that have served the communities they are working in for many centuries. In the projects we studied in Zambia, for example, this would likely focus on oral knowledge conveyed through storytelling, poems, dances and oral information passed and debated between different generations (Schlyter 1999). Whilst in the field such educational strategies were evident, particularly in initiatives led by indigenous NGOs, in other settings we observed they were often an ‘add on’ to the core games and information transmission approaches that tend to dominate SDP work.

A third key principle for critical SDP education is that the educational process can be directive without being authoritarian or manipulative. Freire points out that the educator needs to create an open, democratic atmosphere, but never one of *laissez faire*. The educator assumes the necessary authority which he or she has by virtue of his/her intellectual development and training in critical scrutiny, but never transforms authority into authoritarianism. For Freire, directiveness can be compatible with dialogue and respect for differences in ideas and opinions. While the educator continues to be different from the participants, he or she cannot permit these differences to become antagonistic or undemocratic. In fact, Freire argues, those very differences make the liberatory project possible, a project in which the educator is neither neutral nor passive in working with participants, but rather actively and critically engaged. This approach resonates with the relationship building strategy discussed earlier, as shown in the Brazilian examples, and can build on the positive youth development (PYD) approach which promotes strengths-based youth development and recognizes young people’s attributes and skills (e.g. Lerner et al. 2006; Holt 2008). At the same time, a critical pedagogical approach can inform the latter by offering practitioners both a pedagogical philosophy and a teaching strategy in which youth are active agents working together to promote transformative action.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have drawn on Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy as a theoretical framework to examine education through sport in the Global South. We have used his central concepts as well as specific examples from our research in Zambia and Brazil to illustrate how SDP initiatives often do not go far enough in providing a truly transformative educational experience for participants. We have also outlined how Freirean pedagogy could be better utilized within SDP programmes. We should reiterate, however, that Freire's intention was never to advance a fixed set of principles or procedures to apply in critical pedagogy. His main goal was to help educators recognize and link the moral, ethical and political dimensions of education to their teaching and learning practices (Schugurensky 2011). Freire's ideas should thus not be blindly transplanted but creatively adapted to the specificities of each context, that is, be engaged dialogically. Reinventing his theoretical proposals within the context of education through sport can enhance the capacity of the SDP sector to contribute to a more democratic and socially just society.

Notes

¹ In this paper, the Global South refers to the countries south of the equator in the Southern Hemisphere. With some significant exceptions (e.g. Australia), most of the developing countries are in the Global South. The Global North, on the other hand, refers to countries north of the equator in the Northern Hemisphere, where most of the developed countries are.

² The Kicking AIDS Out network, established in 2001, brings together partners from Global North and South countries to develop a collaborative approach to the use of sport to make positive change within communities. Kicking AIDS Out develops programs to train practitioners to deliver sport to achieve broader social benefits. UK Sport's International Community Coach Education scheme is a platform which aims to support the education and training of community sports coaches around the world.

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