Managing and Developing Community Sport


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Sport development continues to receive widespread interest from academics, and rightfully so. With the increase in pay-for-play programs worldwide, more people rely on government funding and nonprofit clubs for an opportunity to play and exercise. Managing and Developing Community Sport is a timely book, as it addresses the link between community sport and the business sector by reviewing how physical activity, sport development, health promotions, coaching, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and enterprise and innovation all connect. In the editors’ own words, “More and more conversations appear to be occurring between those of us who teach and research in the areas of Sport Development, Sport and Society, and Sport Business Management” (p. xii). Their goal was to create a resource that “helps a student develop his or her understanding of the synergy between these areas or a single resource that accurately provides a hands-on guide to becoming a multiskilled leader in the sport and physical activity sector, particularly one that provides solutions at the community level” (p. xiv). The editors’ aim and hope is that readers will be both equipped and inspired to improve the sector. The authors of the chapters focus predominantly on policies that affect community sport in the United Kingdom, but the examples can be applied to programs in most Western countries. Each chapter in the book provides helpful case studies showcasing the practical aspect of the theories and frameworks presented. The book comprises 14 chapters organized in three main sections. The first section focuses on contextualizing community sport and physical activity, the second portrays contemporary issues in community sport and physical activity, and the third looks at functions and operations in community sport and physical activity.

Written by one of the editors, Platts, Chapter 1 dives deep into the meaning of community and gives an extensive overview of the historical development of sport and physical activity programs. He gives a critical overview of “sport for sport,” sport for the sake of sport, and “sport for good,” or programs designed to bring communities together. Platts challenges the notion of sport programs’ being inherently good, inclusive, and beneficial, which continues to be discussed by other authors throughout the book. This chapter also lays the foundation for the rest of the text by showing how political climates influence sport. In Chapter 2, Cutforth provides an extensive overview of community sport management and operations in England, tracing the role of government and local authorities at the national, regional, district, and local levels.

Woodhouse and Cherrington use “the sociological imagination as a tool for understanding the strengths and weaknesses of sport and physical activity in
bringing about social good” in Chapter 3 (p. 30). They both evidently love sport but “do not buy into the idea that it is a miracle cure for social problems” (p. 31). The chapter is designed to equip students to question the aims and implementation of sport-for-social-change programs as they move beyond the idea that sport experiences are inherently good and positive for all participants and can alleviate just about every problem in society. The authors also stress that there may be other more appropriate programs and activities, rather than sport, when it comes to creating spaces for social inclusion.

Chapter 4 moves on to the health benefits of physical activity and sport. Unfortunately it points to the decline in participation and the increase in non-communicable diseases like cardiovascular disease and diabetes that can be reduced by regular physical activity. What I appreciated most is that the authors provide excellent case-study examples with marketing materials from various community initiatives aimed to encourage different groups of people to become more active. Students can learn to design their own community initiatives using these resources.

Chapter 5 is another very notable chapter in the book. It shows a balanced overview of the advantages and disadvantages of using sport and physical activity as a tool in social-inclusion programs. I applaud the author for his genuine ability to portray the negative aspects of sport participation and its power to cause social exclusion. Community sport managers will profit greatly from this transparent account of the numerous benefits of sport and the honest discussion about its downfalls:

For an individual, these can include issues around injury, mental health problems or negative feelings around self-worth. Likewise, there are negative consequences for society including increased cost of injury treatment, feelings of exclusion for those uncomfortable with sport and physical activity or issues with abuse that have come to characterize competitive sports. (p. 73)

Plumley and Wilson provide an extensive account of CSR and its importance to community sport management in Chapter 6. They discuss the various dimensions of CSR initiatives in sport organizations, such as philanthropic activities, community involvement, and environmental initiatives; youth educational initiatives; health initiatives; financial responsibility; and stakeholder management. They drive home the point that there is an increase in the number of corporations who view sport organizations as viable “vehicles to achieve their own social and commercial ends” and illustrate it through examples of team and individual sport fans’ emotional attachments (p. 91).

Chapters 8, “Community Sport Event Management”; 10, “Managing Community Sport and Physical Activity”; 11, “Finance and Budgeting for Community Sport and Physical Activity”; 12, “Leadership and Management in Community Sport Organizations”; and 14, “Monitoring and Evaluation,” all provide excellent theoretical and practical overviews of how to successfully run community sport organizations. The authors provide numerous examples and case studies to assist aspiring young sport managers in their quest for success in the industry.

One of my favorite parts of the book is Chapter 13, as it not only gives an excellent introduction to entrepreneurship and its application in the sport industry