

Book Review

Localizing global sport for development

Lindsey, I., Kay, T., Jeanes, R., & Banda, D. (2017). *Localizing global sport for development*. Altrincham Street, Manchester: Manchester University Press 219pp., £78 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-7849-9406-8

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As studies continue to proliferate in a variety of areas within the sport-for-development (SFD) sector, the need for analysis of the circumstances and nuances within which SFD programming takes place remains crucial. As the field has recognised the context-specificity of SFD programmes and the communities in which they operate, the importance of understanding the views of those individuals at the local level and empirical studies that explicate and explore such perspectives have been emphasized.¹ In their book, *Localizing Global Sport for Development*, Iain Lindsey, Tess Kay, Ruth Jeanes, and Davies Banda have responded to the call for deeper examinations of SFD by offering a profound exploration and extensive analysis of local, national and international influences on Zambian contexts of SFD and its related components.

Based on multiple studies that range in areas of focus and have been conducted over a number of years since 2006, the authors explore and address a variety of development issues, including HIV/AIDS, gender inequality, and the involvement of non-state actors in relation to SFD in Zambia. The 12 studies used to ground the discussion feature a variety of topics such as: research with SFD NGOs, examinations of health education and sport, evaluations of local SFD partnerships in community development, and collaborative research exploring gender-focused SFD. An assortment of data collection methods

such as in-depth interviews with SFD NGOs and programme participants, focus-group discussions, document analysis, and archival analysis amongst other methods, displays the wide-ranging and thoughtful use of a variety of research methods to support their analysis and findings. Importantly, as the book title suggests, the authors situate their local analysis of Zambian SFD contexts in relation to SFD as a global phenomenon.

In Chapter 1, the authors review the current evidence base of SFD, the critiques and potential benefits of SFD that have been outlined by scholars, the national and international SFD ‘movement’, and the development of the field itself – sketching out how the field of SFD has been somewhat limited in extensive, long-term, local, and empirical studies of SFD. Notably, the authors outline and provide support for the actor-oriented approach they utilize,² (p. 46) stressing that a ‘wide-lens’ approach allows for an examination of the various actors involved in SFD contexts within Zambia such as NGOs, communities, families, the government, and sport officials – as well as the often overlooked participants of programming. In Chapter 2, the authors offer an overview of the country of Zambia in relation to sport and SFD. This provides a strong historical background of how SFD programming has emerged within Zambia and its association to broader socio-political developments in the country. This includes

the neo-liberal undertones impressed upon the country from national and international governing bodies and other governments that contributed to a decreased role of government in public provision (including sport) and the emergence of non-state actors in Zambian society, such as SFD NGOs. Chapter 3 builds on the foundation of the second chapter by examining policies and partnerships in relation to HIV/AIDs in Zambia. Taking an international, national, and local approach, the chapter discusses relationships between NGOs in SFD, international donors, and a number of other organizations within the HIV/AIDs sector. In these chapters and throughout the book, the authors relate their SFD studies to that of the development literature, responding to a call by scholars³ who argued this to be a limitation of the SFD field. In doing so, the authors analyze how broader development policies and structures within Zambia influence the role of SFD at the local level, and provide an explicit example of the complex, multi-layered environment of sports use for development.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 delve into various dimensions of SFD implementation, programming, and understandings from the perspectives of individuals including practitioners and participants. In Chapter 4, the authors explore how young people and adults view their personal and everyday lives from the standpoint of the issues that penetrate their social contexts (i.e., HIV/AIDs, poverty, and gender relations), which regards locals as ‘insider experts’ --

a necessary element for the production of knowledge in the field of SFD. Chapter 5 turns to how SFD is delivered in a Zambian community, Lusaka, comprising a discussion around the facilitation of sport activities and the community relations involved in such implementation. A focus on SFD peer leaders and their experiences in the delivery of programming, which includes the benefits and challenges they associate with SFD is emphasized – a particularly important contribution due to the limited insights of peer leaders in the contemporary knowledge of SFD. Chapter 6 is perhaps one of the most significant contributions the book provides. A critique of the field is that there is a lack of SFD participants’ views and experiences of SFD initiatives; this chapter offers an in-depth examination of young people’s experiences as participants in SFD programming. The authors discuss the everyday experiences of how young people take up and experience sport itself, not only just specific SFD initiatives, highlighting how sport participants may benefit simply from opportunities in sport and the social connectedness that is garnered from such participation. A great strength of Chapters 4-6 and the book overall is the inclusion of young women’s perspectives who are involved in SFD whether through participation or peer leadership. The authors

discuss how empowerment is defined by young women and is influenced by structures of gender inequality within Zambia that underlie females’ experiences of SFD while also highlighting how resistance to such structures may take place.

Chapter 7, the conclusion, is an examination of the themes that have emerged and been identified by the authors as prominent over the course of their 12 studies since 2006, including the diverse subjective experiences of those involved in SFD and associations between SFD and ‘mainstream development’, which assists in sketching out the local to global of SFD.^{2 (p.181)} They also augment these themes with discussions of their research approach, the impact their research findings may have for scholars and the field – such as the need for examinations of the intricate and multifaceted nuances of local SFD contexts – as well as conversation about knowledge-production approaches in SFD. The localized contexts illuminate the ongoing tensions that have been highlighted by other scholars about sport-for-development and development of sport, discussing how it is hard to detach the two concepts, and in many cases, may simply be better not to delineate and separate the two from one another. Unique insights are offered about how ‘formalized’ management of SFD programmes and their implementation (or overarching approaches) may potentially be detrimental to local contexts, such as in the case of the Zambia Lusaka community, whose informal approach seemed more appropriate in many cases. The exploration of peer leaders and participants’ understandings and experiences in SFD, especially perspectives from young women, and the authors’ continuous connection of SFD to the broader development policy sector of Zambia are of particular significance for the SFD field.

Nonetheless, as with any undertaking of such an extensive exploration of SFD contexts, there remains some challenges and limitations of the book. Although the authors are careful not to provide any specific recommendations of alternative approaches to SFD (due to, as the authors note, display the context-specificity of their findings and adherence to their research approach), this limits the applicability and resonance of their findings to other organizations and scholars. It would be interesting to see further how their various studies may be practical for certain organizations or may lead to program changes that potentially benefits those research participants they worked with in Zambia. Additionally, the study adds a variety of insights into the field of SFD and builds on previous findings by other scholars. However, due to the particular focus on certain

communities in Zambia, it is difficult to suggest that these findings, while beneficial and admirable, are transferable and representative of all Zambian SFD contexts nationwide or other contexts of SFD – a provision of the book that the authors do not strive for given the often overgeneralization of SFD ‘outcomes’ or benefits that may be misaligned with local interests.

As the authors recognize themselves, it is a difficult task to connect a number of different studies as they did within the text, while explicitly showing the connection of themes and findings. Yet, despite this challenge the book itself and the themes are supported well and provide clear connections between studies. Practitioners, policymakers, and scholars would benefit from this detailed account of local SFD contexts in Zambia due to the need to recognize and illuminate how SFD programs are taken up and experienced while influenced by global and national actors and the relevant implications. This book would also provide undergraduate students a strong exemplar of the complexity, challenges, and overall phenomenon of SFD, in a context that is detailed and identifies the various components and actors within programming and implementation. Despite the minor limitations mentioned above, Lindsey, Kay, Jeanes, and Banda’s book offers a timely and in-depth examination of the particularities and nuances of SFD in the Zambian context, and advances necessary understandings of SFD. As the field of SFD continues to proliferate, this book delivers a careful, well thought out, and strong approach of connecting the local to global in Zambian sport for development contexts for scholars, practitioners, and policy makers. This task is by no means easy, and yet, their text tackles this challenge while also providing resonance and unique empirical knowledge throughout each chapter.

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