

Original Research

Humanistic sports coaching and the Marist organization: A multi-case study in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This multi-case study involved coaches who are academics from New Zealand visiting the Philippines on an annual basis and implementing sports coaching programmes underpinned by a humanistic coaching philosophy. The study aimed to gain insight into how sport can be used by the Marist organization in the Philippines to (a) enhance their ability to effectively engage and build relationships within the communities they serve, and (b) to enhance the self-esteem and confidence of pupils in a school set up for children at risk and/or in conflict with the law. A primary objective was for the sports coaching initiative to be self-sustaining and ultimately delivered by graduates from a Marist institute of higher education. For many participants, this experience has been their very first engagement with sport at any level. Individual and focus group interviews revealed that the experience, for many participants and stakeholders, has been ‘transformative’ and ‘inspiring’. The notion of sport-for-all challenged traditional thinking about the role of sport as primarily a competitive enterprise. At the school, pupils adopted a more inclusive model of sport and the programme appeared to provide institute graduates with the confidence, skill and desire to engage through sport with young people in their communities.

BACKGROUND

Recent decades have seen a major increase in sport-for-development (SFD) programmes or sport initiatives claiming to provide social, economic and community benefits.^{1,2} SFD is defined as the ‘intentional use of sport,

physical activity and play to attain specific development objectives in low- and middle-income countries and disadvantaged communities in high-income settings’.³ Many initiatives have been justified by the seemingly unquestioned assumption that sports participation results in enhanced wellbeing, psychological, social, and mental health. However, a review of literature conducted by Sport for Development and Peace (SDP)⁴ suggested these benefits were attributable more to the personal and social interactions that can occur in sporting environments, as opposed to simply through playing sports. Initiatives that had involved community interaction and had demonstrated cultural awareness, provided robust evidence to suggest that the well-being, health and education of participants can be enhanced through SFD.⁵ However, there would also appear to be an abundance of programmes that are largely unregulated and poorly coordinated with little evidence of any rigorous evaluation³ and any claims made of programme efficacy over-reaching the evidence.⁵

The complexity of SFD is illustrated by a proliferation of programmes at a micro, meso and macro-level, and a lack of understanding of the interplay of relations and processes between these levels.⁶ However, it is suggested by Hartmann and Kwauk that it is at the micro-level where the development of normative, commonly accepted ‘character building’ traits are believed to naturally occur simply through the playing of sport and the adoption of commonly accepted sporting values.⁷ (p. 287) What appears to be absent is the understanding that any values emerging are attributable to the pedagogical approaches adopted and the interactions occurring within the sporting environment

created.⁸ Acknowledging this, it is important to provide an overview of the philosophical and pedagogical approaches underpinning the design of the sports coaching initiatives implemented in the current study.

Humanistic Coaching

This study involved sports-coaching academics from New Zealand visiting the Philippines on an annual basis and implementing a sports initiative underpinned by Lombardo's⁹ notion of humanistic coaching. Humanistically designed sport requires a leadership style that acknowledges and meets athletes' needs, where athletes are empowered to reach their own goals, encouraged to become self-aware and self-sufficient, and the emphasis is on individual personal growth.¹⁰ If the sporting experience is constructed in a way that meets the needs of children, sport can be playful and play has been defined as something that is joyous, offering a sense of escapism from the routines of everyday life.¹¹ A humanistic sport initiative requires an approach that encourages conventional coaching behaviours to move away from an over-riding focus on performance, and focus more on the development of the athlete as a human being. Lombardo⁹ (p. 19) was critical of other coaching methodologies that encouraged 'mindless conformism and a sense of pessimism related to the possibilities for (creative) play in the sport setting'.

In our university, our sports-coaching teaching is underpinned by a humanistic coaching philosophy. As educators, we aim to facilitate an environment that encourages our students to be coaches who acknowledge the holistic needs of their athletes. In practice, we draw upon the pedagogical models of a constraints-led approach to skill acquisition,¹² Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU)^{13, 14} and 'Play Practice'.^{15, 16} Of relevance to this current study is Play Practice, which was designed with an underpinning philosophy that every child is important and aims to provide beginners with sporting experiences that are enjoyable, largely free to experiment and make mistakes without adult criticism, and enable them to become competent enough to continue with a sport if they so wished.¹⁶ Coaches are encouraged to turn practice into play through the use of challenging, relevant games that create enjoyable learning activities. This focus on process instead of outcomes is encapsulated by Launder and Pilitz¹⁵ (p. viii) as encouraging:

... youngsters to focus on the struggle and not the result, to treat their opponents in any sport as the surfer treats the big wave, as the skier approaches the mountain, as the kayaker views the turbulent river: as challenges not as

adversaries.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

The sports coaching initiative began in 2012, and stemmed from the initial desire of a retired colleague from our university to work with the Marist organisation based in an institute of higher education (hereafter referred to as *the institute*) in a large city in the Philippines. Prospective Marist Brothers complete an undergraduate degree in secondary education, majoring in religious education at the institute before they move into under-privileged communities where they work predominantly with young people, often based in a school. Our retired colleague has been a Marist brother, an international-level age-group rugby coach, and a university sports lecturer. During these varied life experiences he witnessed and valued how sport unites people together around common goals (i.e., play, fun) to create close-knit and supportive communities. As a consequence, in 2012 our colleague travelled to the institute with another lecturer from our university to lead a sports coaching initiative for the Marist students.

The initiative was well received and was subsequently extended to be delivered in two other cities based in a southern island of the Philippines. One of the cities operates as an initial training centre (*the centre*) for a large number of Catholic religious orders, the Marist Brothers being only one of these. Young people who consider entering the church as brothers, sisters or priests attend from countries in the Asia-Pacific region for their first year of formative training with their respective orders. The other city hosts a Marist school (*the school*) set up for children at risk and children in conflict with the law.

Between 2013 and 2016 (four trips) a team of academics from two New Zealand tertiary institutions travelled to the Philippines to deliver the sports initiatives in the three communities. A long-term aim of the project has been for these modules to be self-sustaining. Consequently, a number of graduating brothers who have shown an interest, a belief in the humanistic approach and a talent in coaching have been mentored and trained as the future facilitators.

It was initially important for us, as members of the sports coaching team who held varying degrees of religious beliefs, to marry our principles with the Marist philosophy. Discussions with Marist representatives indicated that their key tenets and values related to the importance of education for all people (especially those from underprivileged backgrounds), not chasing fame or possessions, building community, making people from all cultures and

backgrounds feel at home, and working for peace and unity (Marist Brothers, personal communication, July, 2013). Visiting the Philippines in the first year of the project and witnessing the work conducted in impoverished communities made us comfortable with the notion that we were philosophically aligned with the work being conducted. It should also be acknowledged that, as a team, we were united in a belief that a more humanistic approach to sports coaching can nurture an environment more conducive to a sport-for-all approach than one focused on performance and outcomes. This project provided an opportunity to advocate for this approach with non-traditional sporting communities.

RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The study aimed to gain insight into how sport can be used by the Marist organization in the Philippines to (a) enhance their ability to effectively engage and build relationships within the communities they serve, and (b) to enhance the self-esteem and confidence of pupils in a school set up for children at risk and/or in conflict with the law.

METHODOLOGY

This current study is a multi-case project¹⁷ where several cases are bound by an overarching issue—referred to by Stake as a *quintain*—being explored through the specific individual cases. The study adopts Stake's instrumental case study approach¹⁷ (p. 2) the purpose of which is to gain deeper insight into an issue where the 'qualitative understanding of cases requires experiencing the activity of the case as it occurs in its context and in its particular situation'. The boundaries of case studies typically relate to time, place, context and activity.¹⁸ The cases studied in this research relate to three different sites where the principles of humanistic coaching are drawn upon to underpin the delivery of three sports initiatives.

The quintain that binds the cases relates to our interest in whether (or not) the application of humanistic coaching principles can encourage a paradigm shift in thinking about the role of sport in providing social and community benefits. At an individual case level, we were specifically interested in examining: (a) participants' awareness of the potential of sport as a vehicle to connect with other human beings (*all three sites*); (b) how equipped participants from non-traditional sporting backgrounds felt they were to deliver games-based activities to children (*institute and centre*); and (c) how sport can be used as a vehicle to enhance feelings of self-esteem and confidence (*school*).

Positioning Self

Carolan, Forbat, and Smith recommend that case study researchers identify their philosophical approach and that the positioning of self is made overt.¹⁹ This study aligns itself with a social constructivist paradigm where we acknowledge our view of the world as constructed by our perceptions of our environment, alongside cultural and social practices.²⁰ The study drew upon our expertise in sports coaching, but was situated within a context working with a religious order. As outlined previously, there appeared to be clear philosophical alignment between the Marist organisation and the sports coaching team.

Methods

Overview

Qualitative case study research is characterised by researchers spending time on site, remaining in touch with the activities of the case and continuously reflecting on and interpreting events.²¹ Throughout the study, researchers recorded their observations through reflections and asked others for their observations, normally through interviewing. During the five years of this project and aligning with recommendations for qualitative case study research, multiple data collection methods were utilised.¹⁸ See Table 1 for details.

Participants and Data Collection

Members of the research team delivered the sport modules. Working conditions were difficult, and the theory and practical modules were often delivered in extremely hot outdoor covered settings (basketball courts). Participant recruitment and data collection (detailed below) therefore reflects a pragmatic approach driven by on-site constraints of climate, time and place. Focus group and interview questions primarily focused on participants' perspectives of the modules, their perceived value of an approach to sport underpinned by a humanistic philosophy, and the perceived value that these modules could add to their community-based work.

Semi-structured Interviews

These were conducted with identified key stakeholders of the project (see Table 1).

Focus Group Interviews

Twelve focus group interviews (see Table 1) were conducted over a three-year period.

Table 1. Data Collection Methods and Participants

Method	Venue	Participants	Number of Participants
Focus groups	Institute	Four groups of 1 st -year students	Between 6 and 8
	Institute	Four groups of 2 nd year students	Between 6 and 7
	Institute	Four groups of 3 rd year students	Between 6 and 8
Interviews	Institute	Rector	
	Institute	Dean of Studies	
	Institute	Graduates	3
	Institute	Marist teacher	
	Centre	Marist brothers mentored to run future programmes	5
	Centre	Lead Marist brother	
	School	Colleague who initiated programme	
Reflective journals	Centre	Marist coordinator of modules	
	All	Research team members	4
	Varied	Research team members	4
Research team reviews			

Reflective Journals

These journals were maintained on-site by four members of the research team throughout the project.

On-site Research Team Reflective Meetings

These were conducted at the end of each annual programme.

Data Analysis

Case study research requires an integrated interpretation of the case data.¹⁷ All interview, focus group and reflective meeting data were recorded, transcribed and reviewed by members of the research team. Analysis was ongoing throughout the project. Thematic analysis of the data was conducted drawing upon guidelines from Braun and Clarke²² and—specifically in relation to case study—from Stake.¹⁷ In concurrence with Stake,²¹ as qualitative researchers we are interested in a diversity of perspectives, and a process of triangulation of a broad range of data enabled us to clarify meaning by looking at the cases through different lenses. Annual meetings were conducted to capture thoughts and reflections on the data. Acknowledging that our interrogation of the data is influenced by awareness of the research questions that underpin the study, the approach to the analysis was data-

driven and initially inductive. The software package *Weft QDA* was utilised to systematically code data of interest. On completion of the project, the coded data was revisited and codes were collated into identified themes related to each case. Subsequent meetings discussed these themes and the final dominant themes and sub-themes were confirmed and agreed upon. The final stage of the analysis involved the examination of themes in relation to how they addressed the quintain that binds the three cases. The primary author then wrote the synthesis obtaining critique from the research team and a faculty colleague experienced in case study research.¹⁷

Ethics

Full ethical approval for this study was received from our university's ethics committee. Pseudonyms are used throughout the presentation of results.

RESULTS

The Case Studies

According to Stake, there are a number of possible approaches to a multi-case study.¹⁷ We present a qualitative multi-case approach, paying particular attention to the situational uniqueness of each case.¹⁷ The findings of each case are offered here and the discussion section examines

how the collective cases contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the quintain.²³ In this section, each case is reported separately with representative excerpts presented for each theme. Stake²¹ (p. 456) advises caution against the oft-claimed notion that one should let the 'case tell its own story'. The findings here represent our interpretation of 'the story', however the larger participant excerpts presented are representative of times when we felt that participants' words told the story far more powerfully than we could, and these vignettes represent an insight into how they constructed meaning for themselves from their experiences.

Case Study One: The Institute

The male students studying at the institute complete their teaching and religious studies over three years. The majority of these students are Filipino, although smaller numbers of students are from other countries within the Asia Pacific region, including for example, Papua New Guinea, Vietnam, Solomon Islands, India and Indonesia. Upon graduation, the Filipino Marist brothers will often initially work as religious teachers within Marist schools in the Philippines. The other graduating Marist brothers will return to work in schools or under-privileged communities within their own countries or other areas of the world.

Members of the project team deliver two concurrent one-week modules at the institute. Prior to the introduction of the modules, students participated in weekly physical activity sessions taken by a senior brother. These adhered to a command-centred coaching style²⁴ very instructional and heavily reliant on drills and repetitive practice activities. The module delivered to first-year students is an introduction to sports coaching where the underpinning humanistic philosophy is outlined. The second module is for second and third-year students, and builds on the principles introduced in the introductory course. This final-year module has a greater focus on theory, discussion and reflection in order to provide the students with deeper understandings of the coaching approach they have been introduced to. All students are given practical coaching opportunities working with children from a local Marist school to develop the skills and confidence to design and implement games-based sessions, based on the principles of Play Practice. Although numbers vary, approximately 10 students attend the introductory module, and up to 15 students attend the final-year module. Ages of participants range from mid-20s to late 30s with the majority being in the mid to late-20s age group.

Our analysis of participant interviews, focus groups and reflective journals identified three major themes. These related to: blended philosophies, transformative experiences, and the benefits of humanistic coaching (sub-themes were personal development and applied benefits).

Theme 1: Blended Philosophies

An important consideration for the research team was an alignment of the philosophy of humanistic coaching with the aims of the Marist order. Interviews with key stakeholders from the institute revealed this was a shared consideration. As the Rector states,

From the beginning when [name removed] started to approach us, there was a wonderful synchronicity on what you could offer and what we needed.

This synchronicity was seen at two levels: at a philosophical level and at a level of the relationship between humanistic coaching and teaching. The following excerpt represents a typical comment, this time from the Marist brother responsible for the coordination of the module at the institute:

The psycho-spiritual approach, the spiritual side is implemented into everything [students at the institute] do, and this [module] is no different, what I have seen is that this subject has a very strong spiritual pastoral component and that's what attracts me, it makes them a better teacher but [also] makes them a better brother and . . . grow as human beings.

Strong correlations were made by all participants interviewed between education (a key Marist driving principle) and humanistic coaching as witnessed or experienced in this module. As an Institute graduate noted:

I remember the famous saying of our founder that in order to educate children you must love them and love them all equally. You need to see children as human beings in terms of this module, you are dealing with human beings who have their own experience, their own background, their own story, their own feeling. You should not have favouritism in the classroom, and those people who felt they are not being loved or not being focussed on [are] left behind, they are not going to learn. I mean that's how I see the philosophy in this [coaching] module, and in terms of what the Marist philosophy is trying to tell us.

Theme 2: Transformative Experiences

Although a small number of the students were clearly interested in sport, the majority of participants had no significant interest. Their perceptions of sport and what sports coaching entailed conformed to what is commonly regarded as a traditional command-centred approach to coaching.²⁴ The Dean of Studies stated, “From what I have seen coaches can be hostile, they can be very harsh, because they want to win. You can always forget that players can be sensitive.”

The pre-eminent theme to emerge from all data related to the transformative impact the introduction of a humanistic approach to sport—a radically different approach than they had been exposed to before—had on participants. Participants used terms such as ‘transformative’, ‘conversion’, ‘a 360-degree turn around’ to refer to their experiences. An extended extract from an Institute Graduate encapsulates these observations:

This course turned all of my perceptions upside down, I realised that I looked at sports just in competition, we need to play to win something, to prove that we are better than other people, to be more manly, to have status. I’ve realised especially something I cannot forget [this week], the focus is really the child, their development. We want to produce athletes who can think critically who are not just there for us to win the game. Sometimes I observe that coaches are just using athletes to win a specific game, and it’s all the self-actualisation of a coach. Who cares about if this athlete will learn anything, [once] he’s not playing with me, who cares? I have realised that the athlete-centred approach is more of the athlete’s development from the moment he or she can play up to the time when they are old but can have an active life. So it’s not just the end product to win a competition or become famous, but it’s more on the aspect of being human, you produce a person not just a scoring machine that will benefit you. So you are really producing a formed human being, that’s what I have realised.

Theme 3: The Benefits of humanistic Coaching

The benefits of this coaching approach were seen at two levels: personal development of the students and for children in an applied setting, as the rector notes:

We have a very cultural and Marist understanding of education, our whole philosophy of education is that it’s not just in the classroom, it’s about presence with young people. If you are with them outside of the classroom, sitting on the side coaching then you’re going to get closer

on the side-line than you’ll ever get teaching him. He’ll say things and share things with you at football training that he will never tell you in the classroom, so it’s giving [the students] the skill to be close to kids in an informal setting, where they can talk to you about whatever they want to talk to you about. Now to do that they need to have some sort of skill, something to facilitate the kids, so it sits with our philosophy. I’ve said many aren’t interested in sport, so they move it through to the fact that they get confidence in themselves and therefore that spills over into a lot of things. The significant part of the holistic thing of the programme you’re doing, and that’s why we’re pleased with it, it’s helped with all these different elements.

There were accounts that provided evidence of this personal development and acquired confidence in an applied setting, as the local teacher points out:

I observe some brothers [in the school], they built a relationship with some of the [pupils] through sports, they join with them playing basketball, soccer. Then after that they have this kind of bonding, they have a relationship.

Additionally a first-year student maintains:

Sport is a universal language of expression. I believe this project is meant to help us as people to teach children how to love sports and express themselves through the love of sports. It is also very important to bring this into the social context, the Filipinos are sports loving people who love to be with [a] group, so I believe it will gather people together in all aspects and all perspectives of life, sports can bring them unity.

Case Study Two: The Centre

The one-week module in the city that acts as the centre for initial training for religious orders is delivered by two members of the project team. The focus of this programme is on introducing the philosophy that underpins our approach to coaching, to show through practical examples and participant experiences that sport can be fun, inclusive, and the skills learnt in a practical setting in this module can be used to help them connect with young people in the communities they serve. Over the four years of the project, numbers have varied each year with between 50 and 100 participants attending. Participants, both male and female, are drawn from a large number of religious orders (up to 15 orders) based on a southern island in the Philippines. The age range is between 17 years of age and the late 40s, with the majority of participants aged between 17 and 25. Participants are predominantly Filipino, but a significant

number are also from a range of countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Although these participants are just beginning their long (five to seven years) journey to become brothers, sisters, or priests alongside their studies they are all actively working in severely under-privileged communities.

The dominant theme identified from our analysis of interviews with stakeholders based at the centre and from research team reflections related once more to a transformative experience in regards to the understanding of what sport is, and what sport can be. A second theme was related to the broader implications for the use of sport in the communities they worked in.

Theme One: Transformative Experiences

This theme is, from our perspective, encapsulated by the perspective that Pedro shared during an interview. Pedro is a graduate of the institute who is now a Marist brother working as a teacher on the island where the centre is located, and one of the graduates being mentored to take over the responsibility for the running of these programmes from 2018. During the week of the module in 2016, he spoke powerfully to the participants about his negative experiences as a child in relation to sport. Pedro said,

I feel that in this role [being mentored to run the programmes] that I would be able to utilise what I had learnt through three years at [the institute] and this [module] interests me a lot and for me the module here is inspiring those seminarians and sisters who have apprehensions about sports and I think I am possibly able to share my experiences with them as a non-sport thinking person, I think I can possibly inspire them to change their perspectives about sports. Also because teaching and coaching are related, then I think that perhaps I can draw upon my experiences as a teacher to help me prepare people as coaches. As a child I was not really that kind of sports-active person because of my physique and it kept me in the house playing non-physical games and non-physical sports. When I grew up I had this apprehension about sports—it was very difficult for me—but after the coaching module at [the institute] I was able to change my perspective and disposition about sports. For me coaching now does not mean you will have the acquisition of very complex skills. I think now that coaching is more about how you manage people. For me it is confidence in leading and helping the participants build their confidence in leading groups, how you communicate and develop planning skills. Another thing I have learned is the importance of being creative as a coach. This module has encouraged me to

develop my creativity—you have to be very creative to make games which are fun—and to develop social skills of our players. These are skills coaches have to develop. And the critical thinking – why are we giving this activity to our players? What is the purpose of having this type of activity? When I was a child I thought sport was not for me, but sport is for everyone, sport is for everyone. We just have to change the way our people look at sports. So that is why we as a coach have to be infectious of our energy, to empower everybody that sports is fun, is simple. It was very rewarding this week, when I spoke [in front of all the participants] about my childhood, my physique, and that I felt I could not participate. My skills were not good enough and I did not feel I could participate so I did not. One of the participants came up to me after and said that he could relate as that was his story also. And he could now see how sport could be for everybody. It had changed his perspective.

Theme Two: Broader Implications of Sport

Interview data revealed to us that the influence of the coaching modules on the young participants had resulted in reflection from a number of senior Marist brothers about the wider benefits that sport could have in their communities. In the region where this second case study was situated, a history of marginalisation has resulted in a long conflict between government troops and Muslim rebel groups. The lead Marist brother in the centre stated:

It is not just about sport. I am thinking about implications for peace. As you know we have problems here. I see that we can use sport as a tool to promote inclusivity and participation and bring our communities together.

These sentiments were echoed by a Marist brother based at the institute, who saw opportunities in this region for sport to bring communities together:

Some of the existing projects [in the area where the centre is located] are breaking down barriers between Muslim and Christians, so through doing basketball as well they can go beyond that by doing lots of other worthwhile activities to harmonise their relationship with other parts of the communities and in the slums as well.

Case Study Three: The School

This aspect of the project had a different focus. One member of the project team visits the school annually and runs a sports module for the boys at the school. The participants in this module are 30-plus boys aged between 10 and 20 years

who have been ‘street kids’ and/or in significant trouble with the authorities. The staff who facilitated sport at the school previously utilised an approach that saw the boys mostly simply playing basketball for their designated physical education (PE) time. Prior to the researcher’s visit, there was little awareness of the holistic potential of sport for young people. The module drew upon the ‘five Cs’ model of positive youth development (PYD): competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring.²⁵ PYD is a strength-based approach, aimed at helping youth achieve their full potential. In conjunction with working directly with the boys at the school, a secondary objective was to upskill the staff in the use of physical activity and sport to achieve holistic outcomes through professional development sessions and the modelling of facilitation methods.

Conducting interviews was difficult in this environment due to scheduling constraints and language barriers, and the data collected is predominantly represented by the research team member’s reflective journals and her recorded informal observations and conversations at the school. These are supplemented by an interview conducted with her at the end of the fourth year of the module alongside an interview conducted with our New Zealand colleague who initiated the entire Philippines project based on his observations and interactions with staff at the school.

Theme One: Blended Philosophies

The research team member reflected upon her experience at the school:

A humanistic approach was reflected in most other aspects of the work at the school except in their sport. In one regard this made the idea of humanistic coaching natural, as the philosophy of the sport programme—based on the 5 Cs—aligned with the philosophy of the school. However, it was also very challenging changing the engrained traditional perception the staff held of the role of sport so that PE could move away from just traditional basketball games and more towards purposeful activities grounded by a holistic curriculum, and implemented with a humanistic coaching approach.

Although the staff clearly saw the potential of sport, there was a clear lack of confidence primarily through their lack of knowledge of sport and of their ability to implement the sports programmes themselves.

Theme Two: Transformative Perspectives

Another dominant theme identified in this case study was a transformative perspective once again related to sport,

leading on to an identified sub-theme—changes in behaviour of the boys—that resulted in the development of increased self-confidence and a more inclusive approach to sport. Over the four years of visiting the school, the research team member who delivered these modules witnessed significant changes in perspectives and resultant behaviours. She reflects:

The school wanted me to develop a sport programme that taught the boys broader life and social skills. [Physical education] sessions for them up to this point had just been about playing basketball and if you are good at basketball you play and if you are bad or younger you don’t play. So trying to teach them new activities and games they have never tried before, encouraging them to communicate, to lead each other, where they get acknowledged for how well they work as a team, how well they run their coaching sessions, through doing that they started seeing their own leadership potential and ability to be a good team member. One example is a boy—and he was a street kid for many years before he was found and put in this school—he started off really shy but he saw his leadership potential and by the third year I visited he was probably one of the most influential people in the group, looking out for the younger ones, and incorporating everyone where previously you never saw those older ones looking out for the younger ones. All of the activities recognise their need to work together, and this is encouraged all through the games that we play. We then talk about the kind of social skills they have developed through the games, how they have been given an opportunity to contribute and to have a go and work together and help each other. Through being exposed to small-sided inclusive games they start to see that it is not fun when you leave people on the side, when you are not participating, they now scale activities to cater for different ability and confidence levels, everybody is included and the challenge level is right so people are able to enjoy the activities.

Furthermore, a New Zealand colleague added that, “I visited three times and the changes I witnessed in the boys’ attitude was amazing. How inclusive they had now become. It was inspirational to see.”

DISCUSSION

The single case studies presented above have unique contextual purposes and situations. They are studied, however, as manifestations of the quintain, as it is the quintain that we seek to understand.²³ Restated, the quintain in this study relates to our interest in examining if the application of humanistic coaching principles can encourage a paradigm shift in traditional thinking about the role of

sport. The dominant common theme identified across all three cases related to a change in thinking about sport, which a number of participants referred to as 'transformative'. It is important, however, that we as researchers acknowledge a critique of SFD programmes that 'as it is likely that *any* social interventions will produce individual successes, such testimonies tell us little about *how* various programmes operate and why they have differential and contingent impacts for the wider sample of participants'.⁶ The multi-case study approach adopted in this study enables us to provide information about the 'how', but an analysis of the 'why' is a more complex undertaking.

It would seem clear from the findings of this study that a humanistic approach to sport coaching can transform thinking about the role and purpose of sport. The change in thinking witnessed in this study was evident at a range of levels, from the stakeholders who have traditionally not engaged with sport, through to the participants. Further, this transformation in thinking was evident for both those participants who enjoyed sport and those who perceived that sport was not for them. At the school however, although the staff recognised the potential holistic value of sport, the transformation was predominantly visible through the changed behaviour of the boys who have adopted a more inclusive model of sport. In the Philippines—as in New Zealand²⁶—the dominant discourse pertaining to sport would appear to conform more to the notion that sport is an outcome-focused enterprise driven by a win-at-all-costs attitude. For the group, who up until this point in time had mainly negative perceptions of sport and of their ability to participate, it is perhaps not unsurprising that a radically different approach to sport—an approach that aligned with their core humanistic principles—would engage them. The fact that the other group, the sports enthusiasts, also engaged so readily with these new concepts is possibly of greater interest.

There was a parallel here with the work we conducted in New Zealand. In a similar approach to the one adopted in the Philippines, our New Zealand students are exposed to a coaching degree that is underpinned by humanistic coaching principles. However, there is resistance from many of these students to move away from more traditional methods of coaching and adopt more athlete-centred approaches. One potential explanation for this is that these students in New Zealand have subscribed to what has been referred to as the 'sport ethic'.²⁷ It is suggested that the vast majority of people involved with sport—the fans, coaches, and players—unquestioningly accept the norms of what sport is and should be. This includes for example, an over-riding focus on performance, striving to win, playing on through

pain, and stereotypes of what it means to be an athlete, which are reinforced through the media who seem to uncritically laud these qualities.²⁸ As a result, in societies including New Zealand and apparently the Philippines and other Asia Pacific countries, unless you conform to the norms of sport, people like Pedro will continue to consider sport as something 'not for me'.

Based on the findings of this study compared to our experiences running similar courses in New Zealand, it would appear that the relatively unchallenged transformation in thinking that occurred at all three case sites was a result of an alignment between the humanistic coaching principles introduced by us and the philosophy of the Marist organisation. This is perhaps best summed up in a research team review meeting at the end of the modules in 2014, where one member stated:

You don't need to teach them about athlete-centred principles. They already get it. When you ask them in session one, what qualities does a coach need? They respond with 'integrity', 'humility', 'considering all people'. In New Zealand I ask the same question and the answers are 'good communication skills', 'knowledge of the game', 'confidence'. In the Philippines it is easy to teach, you just shift their thinking a little from thinking they are coaching sport, to thinking that they are connecting with people. It is humanistic.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of an instrumental case study is not to produce findings that are generalized to other situations, rather it is to use the case to provide insight into an issue.²¹ The issue here relates to examining if sport could be used in non-traditional settings to help organisations build relationships and engage with the under-privileged communities they work within. Using humanistic coaching principles and drawing specifically upon the principles of Play Practice, this study suggests there is potential for people's commonly held notions about sport to be challenged. In doing so, a recognition that sport can be more than simply a competitive enterprise predominantly for the talented and the competent, and instead can be something that is inclusive, fun and community-oriented has immense potential for humanistic organisations working with young people. Readers of this multi-case study will ascertain if the findings of this study are applicable to their own situations.

The findings of this study appear to confirm the ideas presented by SDP⁴ that sport can be an effective mechanism to create a space for positive social interactions and the

building of relationships where holistic benefits can accrue. In presenting these findings, we also attempt to address a critique of SFD studies conducted to date; a lack of acknowledgement that these holistic benefits are attributable to the pedagogical approaches adopted.⁸ A further critique of SFD programmes has been related to a lack of rigorous evaluation. We plan to support the Marist order as they continue to facilitate these initiatives and we will continue to visit to monitor, evaluate and support their progress in this regard. A further aim is to capture the experiences of graduated Marist brothers as they begin their work in their schools and communities.

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