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backgrounds*

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**Sensitivity, shared purpose, and learning community: A case study of a
Brazilian sport program with children and young people from socially
vulnerable backgrounds**

Eduardo Roberto Uhle

School of Applied Sciences and Faculty of Physical Education, University of Campinas,
Brazil; Sports and Physical Activities Management, Serviço Social do Comércio, Sao Paulo,
Brazil

Email: eduardo.uhle@gmail.com

Bartira Pereira Palma*

School of Applied Sciences and Faculty of Physical Education, University of Campinas,
Brazil

Email: bartirapalma@gmail.com

Carla Luguetti

Institute for Health and Sport, Victoria University, Australia

Email: Carla.NascimentoLuguetti@vu.edu.au

Larissa Rafaela Galatti

School of Applied Sciences and Faculty of Physical Education, University of Campinas,
Brazil.

Email: lgalatti@unicamp.br

*Corresponding author. Email: bartirapalma@gmail.com

Background: Several studies demonstrate the educational benefits of sport-based intervention programs with/for children and young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds. This body of research argues that sport programs can strengthen relationships, emphasize community building, and create spaces for young people's empowerment. While there is an increase in sport-based intervention programs addressing the complexities of socially vulnerable communities, the literature has focused either on the experiences of participants or on the experiences of coaches and coordinators. There is much to learn from the quality of sport-based interventions in order to improve the sport experience for young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds. *Purpose:* This article draws on the Long-Term Program Development framework (Siwik et al. 2015) to examine the strategies employed by a Brazilian sport program to address complex issues faced by children and young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds. *Participants and settings:* This study took place in a non-governmental organization (NGO) sport program in Brazil. Participants included the founder of the sport program, a manager, two coordinators, five coaches, and a social worker. In addition, parents participated in a focus group. *Research design:* This research adopted a case study design. Data collection included: (a) individual interviews with program employees; (b) focus group interviews with parents; (c) lead researcher observations collected as field notes; and (d) document analysis. *Findings:* The findings highlighted three distinct themes. First, the program employees showed sensitivity to the specific characteristics of the socially vulnerable context, understanding that violence and lack of access were the main issues children and young people faced in their communities. Second, the program management team and the coaches recognized and agreed on a shared purpose for the sport program. They collaboratively reflected on a shared purpose, moving from focusing on teaching sport-techniques to include developing socio-emotional learning that would contribute to success in different aspects of life. Finally, a learning community had a central role in the program's functioning. The learning community was the reason why there was a shared purpose among providers and a recognition and sensitivity of the specific characteristics of the socially vulnerable context. *Implications:* The Long-Term Program Development framework provided a unique insight into the strategies employed by the NGO to achieve its goals and the key points that helped the

NGO to succeed in its actions. This framework stressed the intricate parts of program managing, from the need to establish and share a purpose, to the context where one will be acting, to the importance of supporting these two parts with a learning environment and a sense of community.

Keywords: sport; youth; socially vulnerable context; sport pedagogy; learning communities.

Introduction

There is a growing interest in developing interventions to diminish problems arising from social vulnerability by offering access to sport (Coalter 2005; Nols et al. 2018). Over the past forty years, scholars (Hellison 2010; Hellison 1978; Holt et al. 2012; Luguetti et al. 2017b) have worked in sport contexts to create spaces for children and young people to develop positive attitudes and behaviors that fortify them against many of the challenges and risk factors they encounter in their own contexts such as drug trafficking, violence, family breakdown, poor health, and poverty. It is suggested that sport-based interventions can help strengthen relationships, promote life skills, increase the perception of self-efficacy, create spaces for empowerment, and address social problems (Luguetti et al. 2017a; Luguetti et al. 2017b; Nols et al. 2018; Spaaij and Jeanes 2013; Walsh et al. 2010).

One of the internationally recognized approaches to diminish problems arising from social vulnerability is the Positive Youth Development (PYD) (Holt 2008). PYD is a holistic perspective based on the understanding that every young person has the potential for healthy and positive development, and that this can be fostered in the sport context (Vierimaa et al. 2012; Gill and Hemphill 2020). The 5Cs of PYD (competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion), proposed by Lerner et al. (2005), are constructs that, together, represent the PYD. In sports, Côté et al. (2010) suggest that caring/compassion should be integrated into the character due to lack of differentiation among them in the sport

development literature and, therefore, a 4Cs framework would be used in the sport context. The 4Cs are considered desirable outcomes that sport programs should foster in order to nurture long term positive holistic development (Vierimaa et al. 2012).

While PYD in sport and other sports-based interventions can have a positive impact in socially vulnerable communities, there is a lack of evidence about the positive impact of those interventions in which social vulnerability is prominent (Haudenhuyse et al. 2013; Luguetti et al. 2017a), as well as about the strategies the sport programs use to achieve the positive impact. For instance, few programs designed for children and youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds align a theoretical basis with a pedagogical practice (Luguetti et al. 2017a). There is a gap between sport-based program formulation and actual practice (Spaaij and Jeanes 2013), and this might be related to the lack of strategies and practical tools to help sports programs putting theory into practice.

In addition, some programs display a traditional vision of sport as sport-techniques, without paying attention to the challenging structures in which the children and young people live (Haudenhuyse et al. 2012). It might be argued that many sport-based interventions highlight individual deficits and emphasize structural inequalities (Luguetti et al. 2017b; Spaaij and Jeanes, 2013), as opposed to creating spaces for social change through community engagement (Luguetti et al. 2017ab; Nols et al. 2018; Spaaij and Jeanes 2013). The PYD literature argues that sport programs should pay attention to relational characteristics and teaching approaches to guarantee that the environment is prone to foster PYD. For example, the practice should target to meet the needs of the participants, to nurture positive relationships among young people and among youth and adults and use teaching approaches focused on the development of skills and positive characteristics (Holt 2008).

~~Although there is an increasing body of research on sport-based intervention programs that address the needs of socially vulnerable communities, there is much to learn from the~~

~~effectiveness of the educational sport programs in this context.~~ Effective educational sport programs should consider the gap between program formulation and actual practice. It is argued that effective educational programs with children and young people need to ‘clarify, affirm, and align values, set goals, articulate a vision and chart a course of action to achieve that vision’ (Siwik et al. 2015, 309). For example, the managers and coordinators of sport-based interventions programs should design sports programs with clear objectives, intentionality, and an evaluation strategy. Even though the effectiveness of sports programs should consider the real results it causes in its target audience (e.g., children and young people), understanding the strategies employed to achieve these results might help sports programs to analyze their own context and make sure their actions are in accordance with their plan, that is, that the activities and they are offering were in line with the purpose stated by the program and its stakeholders (Siwik et al. 2015).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the strategies employed by a Brazilian sport program to address complex issues faced by children and young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds. This paper focuses on the design and implementation of a sport program from adults’ perspectives. This study happened in an NGO. NGOs have increased in Brazil aimed at dealing with the social problems faced by children and young people in socially vulnerable contexts (Hassenpflug 2004). NGOs offer educational sport outside of school and are linked with local communities. In that sense, educational sport occurs in schools (physical education classes), but also outside of school (e.g., NGOs) with the aim to promote holistic development (Galatti et al 2019; Brazil 1993a, 1998b). This research emphasizes the importance of considering the quality of sport-based interventions in order to improve the sport experience for young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds. From this, we reinforce that pedagogical principles as context-based proposes, and integral human development must support the sport program. We suggest that the sport programs managed by

NGOs should consider three aspects described in the Siwik et al. (2015) LTPD framework (a) shared purpose; (b) context; and (c) learning community.

The Long-Term Development Framework as an analytical lens

The Long-Term Program Development (LTPD) framework is an evidence-based interdisciplinary framework designed by a nonprofit corporation dedicated to advancing the science of teaching children and young people through sport (Siwik et al. 2015). The LTPD framework was developed to support organizations, policymakers, and sports leaders in the development and management of sport programs targeting educational outcomes. This LTPD framework approach proposes the continuous systematic development of programs, their leadership, and management strategies. Sport programs targeted by this framework are complex organizational processes involving directors, managers, coordinators, coaches, parents, children, and young people.

The LTPD framework is based on USA Hockey's American Development Model (ADM) that was created to counteract the decline in hockey participants which was compromising the future of this sport. Thus, the ADM's objectives in this context were to increase young people's hockey participation, elite athlete development, and people's interest in hockey. However, this was not a scenario exclusive to hockey in the USA; young people's participation in sport was declining in all sports, and the LTPD was intended to integrate existent and tested frameworks into a replicable method for developing sustainable sport programs for educational purposes (Siwik et al. 2015).

The LTPD framework proposes three aspects every manager and/or coordinator should consider when developing quality sport programs (Siwik et al. 2015): (a) shared purpose; (b) context; and (c) learning community. Shared purpose refers to the core purposes of the sport program and the degree to which is aligned among every provider, parent, and

participant of the program. In the context of sport, the 4Cs of PYD is recommended as core intentions: competence (skills and fitness), confidence (positive self-worth), connection (relationships), and character (respect and integrity) (Côté et al. 2010). Context means considering the environment and the context where participants of the program live, as well as the type of sports offered (Siwik et al. 2015). The context includes the local culture, community-specific characteristics or demographics, and the purposes of the practice offered (e.g., participation vs. performance sport). Learning community refers to the need to establish a learning community, in which collaborators can learn from each other and work as a team. In this sense, an effective sports program necessitates a group of people working together to meet the program's purposes (Siwik et al. 2015).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the strategies employed by a Brazilian sport program to address complex issues faced by children and young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds. This research emphasizes the importance of considering the quality of sport-based interventions in order to improve the sport experience for young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds.

Methods

This study took place in a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)'s sport program in Brazil. To maintain the anonymity of the sport program, we use the pseudonym Orange Ball. The study was a qualitative case study, which allowed for the investigation of the phenomenon within its context (Yin 2014). This methodology helped us to examine the strategies employed by a Brazilian sport program with children and young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds, understanding the quality of its work and the real-world complex issues they all experienced.

Context of NGOs in Brazil

Currently, sport in Brazil is understood as a social right, and it manifests itself in a diversity of contexts and forms. This relates to the promulgation of the Brazilian Federal Constitution in 1988, article 217, which determines that it is the duty of the State to promote formal and non-formal sports practices, as it is the right of every individual (Brazil 1988). Therefore, the understanding of the meaning and forms of participation in sport was expanded beyond an elite-based perspective, including the so-called participation sports and educational sports. This new scenario promoted the emergence of NGO's aiming at offering sports for young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds (Hassenpflug 2004). In 2006, a Federal sport incentive law was approved in Brazil, allowing NGOs working with sports to apply for funding. In 2015, the Brazilian government regulated the service offered by these NGOs (Brazil 2015). Due to their characteristics, history of creation, and sources of financing, NGOs, in general, have as their target audience the portion of the population that least practices sports and physical activities. Thus, unlike other scenarios in which international NGOs are established in developed countries, the Brazilian organizations operate in the national territory in a close relationship between public and private sectors, offering activities outside of school time (Galatti et al. 2019).

The NGO chosen for this study, Orange Ball, is one of the first programs in the Brazilian scenario to use public funding to develop a sport-based intervention program focused on the development of social-emotional learning in children and young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds. An internationally recognized former Brazilian athlete founded the Orange Ball in 2004 with the intention of contributing to human development through sport, strengthening community bonds, and promoting wellbeing. During the course of this research, the Orange Ball had seven sites in three different cities in the state of Sao Paulo (five in the Sao Paulo metropolitan area, and two outside of the city). The NGO had a general manager and one social worker to meet the demand of all sites. There were two main

work teams, one with professionals working in the metropolitan area, and a second one in the countryside, each one with a coordinator and a team of coaches. Approximately 1000 children and young people (6 to 17 years old) were actively participating in the NGO's activities at the time of data collection.

The Orange Ball is part of the Sport for Social Change Network (SCN), founded in 2007 by a group of civil society organizations, with the sponsorship of Nike and promotion by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The SCN currently gathers 161 Brazilian institutions working with sports for social transformation, giving direct assistance, promoting meetings and opportunities for exchanging experiences. Therefore, the stakeholders are in close contact with other organizations in the same field, which gives them support in their actions as well.

Participants

Orange Ball stakeholders were invited to participate in this study. Those who accepted were included and, therefore, composed a convenience sample. Participants included the founder of the Orange Ball, the manager, two coordinators (metropolitan area and countryside area), five coaches, and the social worker (see Table 1). In addition, eight parents of one of the countryside sites participated in the study (7 females and 1 male). These parents were selected due to easy access to them after a parents' meeting in one of the countryside sites. Ethical approval for this study was received from the local Ethics Committee. All participants signed an informed consent form before participation and had their names changed in this document to maintain confidentiality.

Table 1. Description of the founder, manager, coordinators and coaches.

Name	Gender	Degree	Age	Job position	Years working at the Orange Ball
Laura	female	Physical Education	56	Founder	15

Carlos	male	Social Work	40	Manager	11
Francine	female	Social Work	36	Social worker	4
Maria	female	Physical Education	33	Coordinator	10
Clara	female	Physical Education	33	Coordinator	9
Ana	female	Physical Education	38	Coach	13
Julia	female	Physical Education	35	Coach	12
Michele	female	Physical Education	42	Coach	7
Vitoria	female	Physical Education	54	Coach	4
Joana	female	Physical Education	25	Coach	3
Paulo	male	Physical Education	34	Coach	9
Leandro	male	Physical Education	32	Coach	3

Data collection sources

Data collection occurred between November 2017 and October 2018. The interview scripts were based on the LTPD framework and were, therefore, deductive. The data collection included:

(a) Individual interviews with the program's foundress, manager, coordinators, and coaches. The Orange Ball founder, the manager, the social worker, the coordinators, and the coaches were interviewed via Skype, face-to-face, and telephone. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted 50 to 60 minutes each. The interviewer followed a guide that included questions about the interviewee's background and role at the NGO, the work developed and the NGO's purposes, as well as about the communities served by the NGO. The interviews were recorded, fully transcribed, and returned to the interviewees to review for accuracy before analysis (a total of 144 single-spaced pages). None of the participants suggested corrections on the transcriptions.

(b) Focus group interviews with parents. A focus group was conducted with the parents of the children and young people of one of the Orange Ball's countryside sites. The guide for this focus group included questions about the parents' perceptions and understanding of the NGO's purposes and strategies, as well as the effects the program had on their children. The focus group lasted approximately 30 minutes (six single-spaced pages). All interviews were conducted by the lead author, tape-recorded, and transcribed verbatim.

(c) Lead researcher observations collected as field notes. The lead researcher wrote field notes during the period of data collection about the strategies used by the work team in order to achieve their goals (6 entries and 17 single-spaced pages). A pedagogical training course, as well as meetings by the work team in the metropolitan area and by the work team in the countryside, were observed. The focus of the researcher was to observe group dynamics, the content of the discussions about the course, and the way they planned their actions, exchanged information and solved issues that appeared.

(d) Document analysis. In this study, documents were selected for analysis based on their relevance to understanding the Orange Ball's functioning. The following documents were included in the analysis: the NGO's bylaws, the project documents submitted to the Brazilian government to apply for funding, the last three annual reports (2015, 2016, and 2017), and 12 monthly reports from both work teams (metropolitan and countryside).

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved deductive and iterative analysis using thematic analysis methods (Braun, Clarke and Weate 2016). Through deep and prolonged data immersion, thoughtfulness, and reflection, themes were produced. The Long-Term Program Development framework (Siwik et al. 2015) was used as a lens to analyze the data. The data were organized chronologically and filed by session date, and the thematic analysis was accomplished in several steps. First, the lead author read all data (interviews, focus groups, observations, and

documents) and engaged in the process of coding, where statements and ideas were developed as data were read and re-read. The second step included the second and third authors, who engaged in a process of checking the interpretations. The last step involved the LTPD framework (Siwik et al. 2015). The authors organized the generated themes into the LTDP categories (shared purpose, context, and learning community) while staying sensitive to themes that could not fit within this framework and therefore could be related to specific characteristics of this group of people or/and context. Thus, the researchers responsible for analyzing and categorizing the themes were instructed to take notes of recurrent subjects in the transcripts that did not quite fit within the themes suggested by the LTPD framework. Indeed, we have observed this with the sensitivity that the stakeholders showed towards the children and adolescents participating in the program, for example.

Trustworthiness

Different trustworthiness criteria were adopted in this study: triangulation of the data sources, member checking, and classification analysis based on similarities in the text. Triangulation of the data sources (interviews, focus groups, observations, and documents) was intended to describe the phenomena from different perspectives. Member checking occurred when the interview transcriptions were returned to participants to review for accuracy before analysis. In addition, the second and third authors checked the codes produced in the thematic analysis: second member-checking (Braun, Clarke and Weate 2016). The classification analysis was conducted by using IRAMUTEQ software version 0.7 alpha. This analysis was aligned with the themes that were developed in the inductive analysis (first and second steps) and the classes were in accordance with the LTPD categories (shared purpose, context, and learning community).

Results

The purpose of this paper is to examine the strategies employed by a Brazilian sport program to address complex issues faced by children and young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds. By applying the LTPD framework, three themes were developed: (a) sensitivity to the specific characteristics of the socially vulnerable context; (b) recognizing and agreeing with a shared purpose; and (c) working together to cultivate a learning community.

Sensitivity to the specific characteristics of the socially vulnerable context

The coaches and coordinators showed more than just knowledge about the context where the participants of the program lived, they demonstrated sensitivity to the specific characteristics of the socially vulnerable context, understanding the cultural and physical characteristics of the environment where the activities promoted by the Orange Ball took place, as well as of the type of sport offered. The coaches' and the coordinators' knowledge and sensitivity about the young people's backgrounds and community issues are highlighted by coach Julia when she mentioned that 'it's a community where the violence is very present, where drug trafficking with the participation of adolescents is gigantic', and by coach Ana, who demonstrated sensitivity when stating that 'we are in a neighborhood that needs many things, we see that some demands come from the family, from students that have unstructured families'. Similar issues were stated by one of the coordinators:

Another thing that we observe, which is very present in the NGO sites, is the issue of violence, and when I talk about violence, it's not just violence against women or sexual violence, but violence between them [young people], in their everyday behavior (...) there is a lot of bullying, there is physical violence. (Maria - Coordinator).

Violence and lack of access to many basic services emerged as the main issues children and young people faced in socially vulnerable areas. The environment where some of the activities took place lacked many basic services, where children, young people, and the coaches and coordinators had to deal with situations that hindered the development of the

activities on a daily basis. Thus, the fact that the NGO sites were in socially vulnerable areas enabled the coaches and the social worker to have closer contact with those issues faced by the children and young people participating in the program:

When they [the coaches] started there, I wasn't there yet, but they told me that drug dealers used the space [the court] to do their activities, and the kids were having their class in the same space where the drug dealers were, and we had to negotiate with them [to use the court]. (Francine - Coach)

The important thing of going to this community was to be within the community. You see what the child goes through, and then you understand completely his/her behavior in the training session. (Julia - Coach)

Francine describes how she learned from her colleagues the challenges she would have to face to coach in the Orange Ball, which demonstrates the importance of a learning community as well. Julia describes how knowing the context helped her to understand and, possibly, deal better with the children and young people's behavior during classes.

Another vital point was that some coaches and coordinators came from similar, socially vulnerable backgrounds as the young people, which means that they have a more profound understanding of the struggles young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds face. Coaches explained this relationship:

I grew up in an area of social vulnerability. And then sport appeared in my life. At school, I started playing basketball on the school team, I went to audition on a sports project. And since then, I can only find good things. (Julia - Coach)

I come from a very poor family, with an unstructured nucleus [...] The southern area [of the city where he lived] was a place of much dispute, banal death, it was a very difficult territory [...] One part of my family got involved with crime, and this was difficult because I lost an uncle, a very close uncle, he was murdered, and another

uncle got involved with drugs, so this was a very visceral context for me. (Carlos - Coach)

Like Julia, Carlos went on to describe the importance of sport opportunities in negotiating some of the challenges of living in a socially vulnerable area. However, this work environment was not always easily accepted by the coaches, as stated by the manager, 'once there was a coach who, when he saw an armed man crossing the sports court, he left and never came back'. The coaches had to deal with issues that, although not directly linked to sports, would compromise the participants' safety, and therefore, prevent the development of a quality sports program.

Furthermore, the NGO offered opportunities for the stakeholders to improve their sensitivity to the issues faced by the participants of the program such as (a) putting stakeholders in close contact with the environment and the community; (b) hiring people with similar backgrounds; and (c) offering courses to share tools to work with young people like a non-violent communication course. Coach Paulo explained how the non-violent communication course helped the team to work better together and understand their objectives:

We attended a course about non-violent communication. In the beginning, I did not put much faith in it, but it improved our communication as a group, it helped us to narrow down our goals as a group. We do not argue anymore as before. For example, we try to see the points, we look at the necessity, we try to understand what the feeling involved is in that situation. So, today it became easier to solve the problems, we have unity. (Paulo - Coach)

One of the strategies employed by the Orange Ball was the sensitivity to the specific characteristics of the socially vulnerable context. The coaches and the coordinators understood the cultural and physical characteristics of the children and young people, as well

as of the type of sport offered. The fact that some of the coaches and coordinators had similar socially vulnerable backgrounds helped to create empathy and sensitivity.

Recognizing and agreeing on a shared purpose

The coaches and the management team (the foundress, the manager, and the coordinators) recognized and agreed on a shared purpose for the Orange Ball program. The general purpose of the Orange Ball stated in the work plan was to, 'contribute to human development through sports culture, to strengthen community ties, and to promote wellbeing'. This purpose was born with the creation of the Orange Ball, conceived by the foundress. However, the NGO was able to implement it only after hiring a manager who shared the same vision and adopted strategies towards it. The manager made an effort so that the professionals in the group of coaches and coordinators were aligned with this vision by hiring people who understood the context and through meetings and debates with the work team. Although the development of the main purpose of the NGO was not teamwork, the specific objectives, and strategies to achieve them were developed collectively in meetings and training courses over the years and this enabled stakeholders to recognize and agree on the shared purpose.

The management team and the coaches shared the concept of sport as having an important role beyond teaching sports techniques, which is to foster the development of socio-emotional learning that will contribute to success in different aspects of life. They worked towards such learning:

We did not want to be one more institution training athletes because we know how difficult this is [...] Each one of them [the children and young people] will follow their own path, [...] carrying the values learned while playing. (Laura -Foundress)

We work with the four pillars of education, which are learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, learning to be¹. We work with human development through basketball, so all the activities have the intention to bring some reflection to the learner at the end of the activity, in a dialogical circle. (Ana - Coach)

Our concern is to prepare them to seek their own opportunities, in sports or not, mainly out of sports [...], to prepare them to have a life project based on their dreams. (Vitória - Coach)

There were experienced coaches (more than 13 years) and less experienced coaches (less than 3 years) in the Orange Ball program. Thus, one of the strategies employed to guarantee that the coaches with less experience learn and work towards the NGO's purpose was to put them to work with more experienced coaches. Although less experienced and more experienced coaches working in pairs was a valued strategy employed to guarantee that stakeholders understood the purpose of the NGO, this also represented a challenge in terms of power relations. We acknowledged that less experienced coaches sometimes did not have their own ideas recognized, having their pair as a mentor to guide them.

In addition, the coordinators worked very closely to facilitate collaboration between coaches. This dynamic showed to be very important to recognize and negotiate the Orange Ball's purpose. Additionally, this dynamic created spaces for coaches to discuss the purpose of the NGO. For example, Foundress Laura mentioned that 'our methodology was built with the work team, considering the philosophy we believe'. Thus, collaborative space seemed to be an important aspect to guarantee that providers in the organization were aware of its purposes.

¹ The four pillars of education or learning were suggested by the UNESCO's Commission of Education for the Twenty-first Century: learning to know (by developing tools to master knowledge throughout life), learning to do (by acquiring professional and learning competencies), learning to live together (learning to understand other people by acquiring competencies that would help to live in community), learning to be (by exercising the freedom of thought, judgement, feeling and imagination) (Lawale and Bory-Adams, 2010).

Discussing and agreeing with the NGO's purposes was also an important strategy employed by the organization, as demonstrated by the manager when he mentioned that 'the big question we always ask to the team [of coaches] is how can we foster human development in children living in vulnerable contexts?'. Ensuring spaces for exchanging ideas and experiences, such as weekly meetings, educational training courses, and promoting close contact among coaches, are strategies used to make it possible to keep the NGO's purpose always present in their activities. It is important to highlight that in those spaces of exchanging ideas (e.g. weekly meetings), coaches/staff were paid. This strengthened the valuing of these spaces by the coaches. This excerpt from the NGO's manager illustrates this category: 'I remember that every beginning of the year we sat together for three days to align our goals, our objectives, and we were always studying'.

There were obstacles to developing the shared purpose. For example, the manager noted that the people responsible for making decisions in the organization were not always present. In fact, each one of them worked in different sites. According to him, this made it more difficult to build a shared purpose, as demonstrated by his statement, 'the decision is faster when everybody is in the same place, more aligned as well. There is the construction of an alignment, a world vision'. Furthermore, when challenges in the NGO emerged, having a group of people sharing the same objectives helped to overcome those issues. For example, the project's financing sources included private companies and the sports incentive law, which comprised a large part of the Orange Ball's total income. However, the program must apply for this public income source every year since 2007, and it is always an overly bureaucratic process, often with delayed results. This then causes a delay in the start of the NGO's activities in some years, which causes anxiety in parents and their children due to the lack of activities; in coaches, because they do not receive payment during this period; and in the whole work team, due to uncertainty concerning the continuity of the project. To deal with

this issue, the management team found an NGO in the same industry to partner with. Thus, the coaches worked for these two NGOs, and when the Orange Ball was unable to act due to lack of budget, the coaches received part of their salaries from the partner NGO. This is explained by the foundress:

So, this is annual, every year we live this situation of not knowing what is going to happen in the next year. We had a gap now between the approval of the projects [by the Government], and the release of funds. We're at this place now. Parents keep calling, [...] so, there's already pressure from the community, from the youth, from parents participating in the project for a long time now. This gap that commonly happens during the year is hard because I can't keep the professionals working if I don't have the resources. Thus, sometimes we have no activities for two, three, four months because we are waiting for the bureaucracy demanded by the law. (Laura - Foundress)

In addition to coaches and coordinators recognizing and agreeing with a shared purpose, parents also demonstrated understanding of the Orange Ball's purpose. This was evidenced when they talked about the things their children have learned during participation in the project:

My son doesn't like to lose. I even took him to a psychologist due to that, and the psychologist told me that he needed to practice sports so he could learn to lose. [...] He needed to learn, but Ana (the handball coach) didn't teach that [...] She yelled a lot. Children don't need yelling. If you're dealing with children, they need affection.

Mary managed to get the best out of my son. (Father 1)

In these meetings, we discuss some issues [with the parents]. For example, we've been receiving a lot of complaints of domestic violence against women and drug abuse.

Thus, our social worker will find a way to discuss such a serious issue with the

families. Not for exposing anyone, but to bring awareness to the importance of talking about this, and the care we must have with how it will reach the children. (Amanda - Coach)

This parent demonstrated understanding of the difference between the work developed by the Orange Ball and other NGO projects concerned only with teaching technical skills which did not clearly recognize the possibility of developing socio-emotional learning.

The LTPD framework (Siwik et al. 2015) states that it is important that the families of the children and young people participating in a sports program be aware of the programs' purposes. This awareness would allow parents to contribute to the programs' development. However, most of the parents were not necessarily engaged in the discussion of and in agreement with the shared purpose. Thus, although the Orange Ball program was listening to the parents and concerned about disseminating the Orange Ball's purposes, we could not find evidence supporting parents' contribution to the program's purpose.

Coaches and coordinators shared the purpose of sport moving from teaching sports techniques to foster the development of socio-emotional learning that will contribute to success in different aspects of life. The discussion and agreement of the shared purpose happened when coaches and coordinators exchanged ideas and experiences in weekly meetings. They were open to share their perceptions and collaboratively reflect on the shared purpose.

Working together to cultivate a learning community

The management team developed strategies to cultivate a learning community, which had an important role in the Orange Ball's functioning while maintaining the purpose and acknowledging the specific characteristics of the socially vulnerable context. The team contributed to this purpose by valuing the weekly meetings with the coaches, attempting to ensure job security (e.g., coaches' salary increases), mentoring, and team preparation through

ongoing training. Thus, the planned actions by the Orange Ball's employees, be it administrative or pedagogical, towards the achievement of the organization's purpose were characterized by efforts to cultivate a learning community, by knowledge sharing or improving the interpersonal relationship of their peers. The Orange Ball's dynamics involved formal meetings and informal conversations that created spaces for the establishment of strong communication that allowed problems solving and constant alignment:

Because they [the coaches] need to be aligned with our vision, we have learned this along the way, and the technical operational part needs to agree [with the NGO's vision] ... Thus, the evaluation and monitoring processes suffered so many changes because we were always listening to the coaches... This quite worked in meetings, through dialogue, a construction process. (Carlos - Manager)

From time to time we have, I wouldn't say training, how can I say? We always have a theme to discuss. We are always learning new things, like, we've been taking the non-violent communication course for a year and a half, learning. So, this is our Mondays. (Michele - Coach)

Another strategy that helped to maintain a learning community was coaches working in pairs (coaches and assistant coaches). Thus, more experienced coaches were concerned with guiding the less experienced assistants' coaches towards a more profound understanding of the program purpose, and how to put this into practice. In addition, more experienced coaches were able to share experiences on a daily basis, learning with each other, as demonstrated by coach Paulo when he said, 'I believe that our differential is to work in pairs. I didn't see like this before, but today I believe that it makes all the difference. What a coach observes, another coach comes with a different counterpoint, it's complementary'. Therefore, a less experienced coach also had a role in the pairs. Furthermore, the Orange Ball's coordinators,

the manager, and the social worker were paying attention to make themselves always present and open to interactions, as stated by one of the coaches:

I believe it's a good relationship. If we're going to talk to Carlos [manager], or with Maria [coordinator], or with other coaches, they are always there to help, to guide us, especially the newbie. Thus, they give tips [...] we are always trying to be aligned.

(Joana - Coach)

Another aspect of the learning community, evident in the documents collected, was the systematization of planning and evaluation. There were standardized forms for the coaches' training sessions planning, for the evaluation reports, and for learners' individual assessments. The work team produced monthly, semi-annual, and annual reports. This shows concern with the quality of the activities offered, in achieving the Orange Ball's purpose, as well as in sharing information with all stakeholders. These documents also were based on the accountability of funds received from the government and private companies.

One important way learning occurs is by interacting with other people (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and fostering this interaction was one of the strategies used by the Orange Ball as an institution to guarantee that every supervisor, coach, and manager understood the purposes of the NGO, in the teaching strategies and the context characteristics. For example, coach Ana explained her experience of understanding the difference of coaching young people in an educational context and the elite context, from where she came from, and how it came to make sense to her:

I grew up in elite sports [...] and it was from elite sports that I got my achievements [...] but elite sport is very hard. It doesn't matter if you're feeling well or not, you have to win [...] When I came to the educational sport context, I remember that in the beginning, I had to 'undress from elite sport' [...] I was there to deal with human

beings, so the process was important and not the end result and, with time, this took over my life (sport in this context). (Ana - coach)

The learning community had a central role in the program's functioning. It was the reason why there was a shared purpose among the management team and the coaches as well as a recognition and sensitivity of the specific characteristics of the socially vulnerable context. The efforts to cultivate a learning community resulted from administrative or pedagogical discussions, co-creating knowledge, and improving the interpersonal relationship of the providers.

Discussion and conclusion

The LTPD framework provided a distinctive insight into the strategies employed by the NGO to achieve its goals, and what were the key points that helped them to succeed in their actions. It helped us understand the intricate parts of the program managing, from the need to establish and share a purpose, to consider the context where one will be acting and to notice the importance to support those two with a learning environment and a sense of community. In this section, we discuss: (a) moving from understanding the context of vulnerability to be sensible with participants; and (b) cultivating learning communities to assure the effectiveness of an educational sport program.

Moving from understanding the context of vulnerability to be sensitive with participants

The socially vulnerable context the participants of the program lived in had specific characteristics that should be considered in planning the sport program. More than understanding the context, the coaches and coordinators showed sensitivity to the participants. For example, they established relationships with them, which considered their characteristics, and promoted sensitivity with participants in order to negotiate some of the social injustices they face (Luguetti et al 2017b; Hellison 2010; Spaaij and Jeanes 2013). The Orange Ball's coaches and coordinators showed sensitivity to the specific characteristics of the socially

vulnerable context, understanding that violence and lack of access were the main issues the young people faced in their communities. In addition, the coaches tried to counteract this socially vulnerable context by offering a safe learning environment, both at the level of practice itself and at the level of the external environment, negotiating with traffickers and the community in general about the need for children to have that space at that time. They also tried to ensure continuous practice, even working without pay to guarantee children's access to sport.

The adverse experiences children and young people have while growing up (e.g. emotional neglect, domestic violence, racism, living in an unsafe neighborhood) may negatively impact the way they engage in sport practices and their social interactions in other contexts, depending on the resources they show to cope with these situations (Quarmby et al. 2021; Felitti et al. 1998; Smith 2018). Children and young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds are often exposed to these adverse experiences (Lugueti et al. 2015), and the discourses of the management team and of the coaches showed that the participants lived in places with high levels of social vulnerability. In view of this, the management team used strategies to make sure that the coaches and coordinators understood this context and collectively developed strategies for a sensitive professional practice.

In fact, the management team always had coaches who had a deep understanding of the context. For example, some of the coaches came from similar backgrounds as the young people, which might contribute to a better understanding of the context, and for them to demonstrate empathy for the young people. In this direction, Kunz (2009) discusses the experiences gained from a sport program for children and young people offered in an Iranian city after an earthquake that devastated the city. The author believes that the success of the program was related to selecting the project's coaches and managers among professionals of the local community, in addition to respecting the traditional values of the community and

considering them in planning activities. This allowed the fostering of a supportive and safe environment for the children and young people to play, as well as allowing them to gain the trust of the parents so they would support their daughters to participate. Similarly, Luguetti and McDonald (2020) observed pre-service physical education teachers engaged in an activist sport program approach, and who had had similar experiences as their students with a social vulnerability background, developing empathy for their students.

However, the authors believe it is not mandatory that teachers or coaches have similar backgrounds to the sports program participants, but it is crucial that they develop skills to work in this environment, which takes time and effort. Therefore, although understanding the context is an important first step, we should create spaces for coaches and coordinators to be sensitive to those conditions. In the Orange Ball case, not all coaches had socially vulnerable backgrounds, thus they used strategies so they could share their experiences with other coaches, which made a difference for all to develop sensitivity to the children's and young people's realities. For example, coaches and coordinators shared their own experiences with their colleagues in meetings and participated in a training course about non-violent communication. The fact that some of the sites were situated in public spaces in socially vulnerable areas also contributed to the critical awareness of the issues in program contexts by bringing the coaches close to some of the problems faced by the program participants.

It is recognized a deficit view of young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds in sport programs, blaming the children and young people for the problems they face (Luguetti et al. 2015, 2017). Many of these programs are based on the premise that sports have inherent characteristics that naturally contribute to youth development by 'saving them' by teaching them values (Coakley 2011; Haudenhuyse et al. 2012; Jones et al. 2017). However, literature shows that sport is a potential environment for youth development as long as coaches and programs managers have the intention and specific education to plan and lead

practices that provide such a positive environment (Haudenhuyse et al. 2013). In fact, PYD through sports literature is based on the understanding that young people have resources to be developed that ultimately will increase their chance of living a better life and contributing to their communities (Côté et al 2010). Thus, those charged with offering sporting activities in this context must focus on fostering opportunities and possibilities this type of context fail to offer for young people. In addition, coaches' long-term presence in a community is also a key issue in promoting positive competence effects in the youth participation in sporting activities (Luguetti and McDonald 2020).

PYD in sports entails quality relationships, and the coach-athlete relationship displays an important role by influencing athletes' outcomes. Some of the important features of this relationship are that coaches should be caring, consider individual feelings and opinions. In the present study we observed that, when working with youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds, coaches should work on their sensitivity towards athletes' environmental conditions, and this can contribute to PYD through sports in that specific context, since coaches would be considering the realities of the athletes, and the issues they face on a daily basis.

Previous research suggests that positive coach-athlete relationships are 6 characterized by coaches who display care and concern for their athletes, include their athletes in 7 decision-making processes, promote interactive discussions, acknowledge individual athlete's 8 feelings and perspectives, and behave in a clear and consistent manner (e.g., Becker, 2013; 9 Erickson, Côté, Hollenstein, & Deakin, 2011, Mageau & Vallerand, 2003).

Meantime, most sport programs fail to bring theory and practice together (Luguetti et al 2015) and one of the reasons may be that, in addition to team members knowing the theoretical basics, it is important to ensure that the entire work team knows the strategies to do delivery a quality program. This can be achieved by adopting strategies for the team to

develop and share these tools, such as training courses, where the coaches and coordinators would have the opportunity to deepen knowledge about the program's objectives and foster a learning community, with the opportunity to learn from each other (Siwik et al. 2015).

Although it was obvious that the Orange Ball used those strategies to address complex issues faced by children and young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds, the common notion that sports are a natural solution to children's behavior deviation was still present in some coaches' and coordinators' discourses, despite not being a view disseminated by the organization.

Sport programs that do not recognize sports as an educational environment often fail to pay attention to and be sensitive about the characteristics of the environment where the youth participating in their activities live, and this tends to restrict the scope of the effects of these programs, which otherwise would be able to promote profound changes in youth lives (Haudenhuyse et al. 2012; Luguetti et al 2015). In the case of Orange Ball, we believe that the profound knowledge of and sensitivity to the youths' context increased the meaning of the team's work with the youth and for the work team, which showed deep commitment to the work developed at the NGO. Furthermore, we understand that it is important for these sport programs to foster the development of empathy for the participants with socially vulnerable backgrounds and an understanding of the effects of the issues faced by these children and young people. These programs may increase the meaning and effects of program participation on the participants' lives.

Cultivating learning communities as a way to assure an educational sport program

A learning community is composed of people who share an interest and meet frequently with the intention of increasing their expertise in the area. Learning in this context occurs with social interaction, which although is often neglected in formal coaching courses, is gaining increasing importance in the coaching literature (Wenger et al. 2002; Bertram et al.

2017). In this sense, the Orange Ball work team functioned as a community of practice, using strategies to maintain constant communication, as demonstrated by the foundress' statement when she said, 'on Mondays, the team of coaches meet to discuss what was done on this week and what it is going to be done on the next week [...] I think a lot is built there'. In this case, the organization had this role of supporting a community of practice by guaranteeing weekly meetings, proposing topics of discussion, training courses, and promoting a safe environment for the exchange of information.

In contrast, Palheta et al. (2020) investigated the alignment between the guidelines of a Brazilian sport program and the program delivery. The authors observed that even though the program had guidelines highlighting its educational and developmental goals, the coaches and technical directors were not aware of them, indicating a lack of communication. The authors suggest some strategies that might help to overcome this issue, such as offering workshops and organizing learning communities to foster social learning. These were strategies the Orange Ball successfully used, and that was translated into alignment between the coaches' and coordinators' practices and the purposes of the NGO.

Most of the coach development programs in Brazil follow a top-down approach, based on the traditional premise that coaches' learning should occur through content transmission (Milistetd et al. 2016). Furthermore, these programs are mostly focused on professional knowledge, while coaching development literature suggests that coach education should consider addressing inter-and intra-personal knowledge as well (Lugueti and McDonald 2020; Côtè and Gilbert 2009). In addition, despite the focus on professional knowledge in coach development programs, the literature suggests that learning occurs in formal (e.g. institutionalized learning situations), non-formal (e.g. workshops and short-term courses), and informal (e.g. unstructured learning situations) contexts (Nelson et al. 2006). Therefore, it is

important that different strategies are employed in coach education, and research shows that learning communities are effective in informal contexts (Lugueti and McDonald 2020).

In Brazil, sport coaching has been a regulated profession since the legal regulation of Physical Education (PE) in 1998 (Brazil, 1998b). Since then, except for soccer (Brazil 1993b) and martial arts, a PE degree is mandatory for those who aspire to work as coaches in any sport environment (e.g. NGOs) (Galatti et al. 2019). Sport programs designed for children and young people with socially vulnerable backgrounds show peculiar characteristics (Galatti et al. 2019), which demands deep inter-and intra-personal knowledge from coaches. Therefore, it is important that coach education programs in Brazil undergo a restructuring and that other forms of learning are considered in order to meet the demands of sport programs for children and young people with socially vulnerable backgrounds.

Lave and Wenger (1991) understand learning as a social practice that occurs in a given situation and context. A key characteristic of situated learning is that the process of becoming an expert in something involves being part of a learning community, where the learner will establish relationships and learn from them. In this context, learning requires engaging in sociocultural practices of a community. In the Orange Ball case, the results showed that the coordinators and coaches learned with each other, in the process of coaching, and with the participants of the project and their families. For example, Coach Vitoria explains how interaction with the participants over the years helped her to understand a common characteristic of children coming to the Orange Ball for the very first time, saying that ‘they have a rage inside them. When you look at them, you can see this anger in their eyes’.

The role of a professional learning community is to provide space for co-workers to share information, understand the shared goals, and outline strategies to accomplish them (Saunders and Goldenberg 2005). In this direction, Gilbert, Gallimore, and Trudel (2009) propose some elements that should be present for a learning community to be effective in the

context of youth sport, such as to have stable settings dedicated to improving instruction and learning, as well as trained peer facilitators. Koh et al. (2016) studied the implementation of a values training program in physical education and sport and concluded that, to be effective, the program's coaches should be aware of the values they had to teach, receive appropriate training to incorporate the values into their practice, and have a support structure to achieve these goals. In the case of the Orange Ball, the strategies adopted, such as coaches working in experience pairs, frequent meetings and training courses, and fostering an open line of communication, worked as a strong foundation for the cultivation of a learning community. This structure was essential to ensure that the program purposes were shared among the manager, coaches, and coordinators, and that there was sensitivity to the socially vulnerable context.

Moreover, document analysis shows that the NGO was concerned with listening to the children's parents. Parent meeting reports identify topics that need to be discussed with parents and their children in order to promote the development of social skills in youth, which could positively influence social relationships with their families and in other social contexts. Yet, there was no evidence that young people's voices were considered when discussing and planning program activities. Literature suggests that sport programs for children and young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds should consider the active participation of them and the community in a collaborative effort to achieve the program's goals (Haudenhuyse et al. 2012; Luguetti et al. 2017a).

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the strategies used by a Brazilian non-governmental organization to achieve its goals of contributing to the human development of the socially vulnerable through sports culture, strengthening community ties, and promoting quality of life. We used the LTPD framework as a lens to interpret the results and the Orange Ball, as an organization. An important strategy was to put the coaches in close contact with

the environment where the young project participants lived, either by putting them in contact with the environment itself or with co-workers who also lived in that context. Although the Orange Ball also offered training courses for the coaches, the life stories and beliefs of the coaches showed to be more important than professional knowledge. The learning community was the most important strategy used by the NGO; it allowed more in-depth knowledge of the purposes of the NGO and of the context where the young people lived, and the educational opportunities of the program offered by the Orange Ball.

Literature shows that sport programs with human development purposes should know their objectives and their public and should plan activities with intentionality if they want to be effective. Sports programs provide an educational environment, as long as there are adequate structural and human resources committed to the institution's purpose. However, a sport program may have adequate resources and yet struggle to achieve its objectives if attention is not paid to the need for a good management team, with tools that help to translate theory into practice. We believe that the managing strategies employed by the Orange Ball represent one of the reasons for its success. However, although the Orange Ball was concerned about listening to the coaches', coordinators' and parents' opinions, the organization still followed a hierarchical managing style. The organization's guiding documents, objectives, and action plan were presented to the coaches and coordinators, not constructed with them, and then, they were offered training courses and strategies to make sure they would understand the plan and put it into practice. In this regard, we believe that co-construction of programs can benefit other sport programs in this area, as would listening to the participants' voices. These strategies could increase the chances of the program to attend to the participants' social needs, as well as their level of engagement in the activities.

These conclusions are based on data obtained from one NGO, and therefore, should not be generalized. Notwithstanding, young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds are

often the target audience of NGO's and sport programs, which may use the results of this study while considering the particularities of the contexts in which they are inserted. We believe that sharing the purpose of the program, considering the context of the program's participants and establishing a learning community are useful strategies for the program to achieve its goals. In addition, having team members with similar backgrounds to the young participants of the program can help the managing team and the other stakeholders to increase their knowledge about the context and develop empathy and sensitivity.

This study has some limitations that must be highlighted, such as the fact that young people's voices were not heard and the outcomes aimed by the Orange Ball were not assessed in the target audience, therefore, quality and effectiveness were discussed based on the voices of those in charge of offering the activities. Therefore, although important, our findings are partial and, therefore, we encourage future studies to address these issues.

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