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Human resource development for community development: lessons from a sport-for-development program in rural India

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This article aims to contribute to the application of human resources systems and practices in a sport-for-development program for community development. Using a qualitative research approach, this study collected a series of data over a period of 24 months in a rural community setting in India. This article reveals that inputs such as soccer peer-coaching knowledge and opportunities for training not only develop coaching and playing skills and abilities but also can create a socially cohesive space to foster individual, group and community capacity building for improved sport-for-development program outcomes. Using social movement theory, this article illustrates that soccer peer-coaching knowledge can be an enabler in recruiting, training and incentivising participants and volunteer coaches for social action. This article provides a practical and theoretical understanding of using knowledge, skills and abilities to mobilise individuals and assist in the delivery of a sustainable sport-for-development program in a community setting.

Keywords: community development, human resource development, India, sport-for-development, well-being

Key points

- 1 Knowledge, skills and ability development were effective in recruitment, training and incentivisation of volunteers.
- 2 Human resource development systems and practices can be enablers for community development initiatives.
- 3 Opportunities for regular coaching and training created social space for meaningful social interaction.
- 4 Human resource development systems and practices can be enablers in sustainable sport-for-development delivery.

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[Correction added on 07 October 2022 after the first publication: The citation, ‘Author (2021)’ has been replaced with ‘Philip, Hoye and Sherry (2021)’ throughout the text.]

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Introduction

This qualitative study uses a human resource development (HRD) lens to explore the potential of a sport-for-development (SFD) program to enhance volunteer coaches' development. HRD is about knowledge creation, learning and skilling to develop human potential to improve or maximise effectiveness and performance at either the individual, group and community or organisational levels (Hamlin and Stewart 2011; McLean and Laird 2001; Wang et al. 2017). Contemporary sporting practice has always had developmental objectives (Levermore and Beacom 2009). Since 2000, sport activities have increasingly been included by the United Nations agencies, sporting bodies, governments and non-governmental organisations within community development programs to address a variety of social and economic problems such as education, health, social cohesion and poverty eradication, although researchers question the objectives of social or community development investments made by providers from high-income countries in SFD initiatives in low- and middle-income countries (Levermore 2010; Newell and Frynas 2007; Smith and Westerbeek 2007). Kidd (2008) identified that conducting SFD projects in a responsible and culturally appropriate manner can improve the education, health and well-being of participants. Past research identified that a sport program could be a vehicle for social development if social development outcomes, and in this instance HRD outcomes, are included in the SFD initiative (Armour and Sandford 2012; Philip, Hoye and Sherry 2021; Hartmann and Kwauk 2011; Kay 2010; Kunz 2009; Sherry 2010; Smith et al. 2015; Spaaij and Schulenkorf 2014). According to Jones et al. (2020), the effectiveness of SFD programs can be improved by adopting community capacity-building initiatives. Therefore, community capacity building must be an integral part of any SFD initiative.

Community capacity building is a process that increases assets and attributes in a community to improve people's lives (Gibbon, Labonte and Laverack 2002). According to Chaskin (2001), human capital is a primary component of community capacity. Human capital consists of the knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics of an individual to perform a task (Kramar et al. 2015). Past research acknowledged that SFD programs can facilitate a positive environment for human capital development (Lawson 2005). According to Edwards (2015), purpose-built SFD programs can foster knowledge, skills and abilities. Researchers consider that peer-led SFD programs may be useful for community capacity building (Jeanes 2013; Spaaij and Jeanes 2012). Spaaij and Jeanes (2012) argued that a number of SFD practitioners successfully implemented peer education programs for empowerment and community capacity building. According to Wang et al. (2017, 1175), HRD is 'a mechanism in shaping individual and group values and beliefs and skilling through learning-related activities to support the desired performance of the host system'. Therefore, SFD programs apply elements of HRD systems and practices. This article considers HRD systems and practices in SFD processes as the planned activities included in an SFD program to maximise individual, group and community capacity building through knowledge creation, learning and skilling for improved

outcomes. Even though SFD programs often involve the development of knowledge, skills and abilities, SFD studies have yet to fully consider HRD systems and practices in the SFD process.

To attend to this, our research sits at the nexus of SFD, HRD and community capacity building; we will now outline these connections in more detail and why this has implications for researchers and practitioners working in both fields. Using HRD fosters an understanding of what resources can help contribute to the successful implementation and sustainability of an SFD program. Many SFD programs rely on volunteers, so it is important to view this through an HRD lens as building volunteer capacity and engagement is crucial for program success and subsequent individual- and community-level outcomes. In relation to the HRD field, the program was developed and delivered in rural India. Emerging insights can add to current understandings about how volunteer-led programs can be more efficaciously implemented in such culturally diverse contexts and how community development outcomes can be fostered. It also considers the role of HRD systems and practices in an SFD program aiming for community development.

At the individual and community level, to better comprehend how knowledge creation, learning and skilling in an SFD initiative resulted in the creation of a social space (space for social interaction), we have drawn on the concept of social movement theory (Diani 1992; Maton 2000; Turner and Killian 1972). Social space and meaningful social interaction can lead to social cohesion and overall well-being of the participants (García López and Kirk 2021; Lawson 2005). We believe this is important to consider because of the traditional nature of interactions between different Adivasi (Indigenous people) groups in rural Southern India and how the SFD program was able to disrupt these and foster greater social cohesion among those involved. Past research identified workplace learning as a social process (Illeris 2003) and highlighted the importance of social space in the context of intercultural workplace learning (Philip et al. 2019). However, more insights concerning the process of developing knowledge, skills and abilities in an intercultural community context by creating social space and interaction are important areas for HRD literature in both profit and non-profit contexts. Therefore, the following three research questions guided our study:

- 1 What HRD systems and practices were developed in the SFD initiative?
- 2 How did HRD systems and practices applied in an SFD initiative contribute to creating social space and social interaction for community development?
- 3 What implications does this have for the development of volunteers in culturally diverse contexts?

Having provided an overview of our research and how it connects to HRD and SFD, we will now outline the research context. Past SFD research acknowledges the importance of culturally and contextually relevant SFD program design to achieve overarching objectives (Kidd 2008; Lyras and Peachey 2011; Schulenkorf 2010); therefore, this article first discusses the research context. We then draw connections between HRD and SFD

literature and apply social movement theory (Diani 1992; Maton 2000; Turner and Kilian 1972) to explore new insights in an SFD capacity-building context. Later sections of this article detail the methodology-SFD action research project, data collection process, results and discussion; finally, we conclude with how this research can be useful for both HRD and SFD researchers and practitioners.

Research context

The research discussed in this article was conducted in Ambalamoola in Pandalur Taluk, The Nilgiris District in India. As discussed in Philip, Hoye and Sherry (2021), four Adivasi groups (Kathunayaka, Mullakurumba, Bettekurumba and Paniya) and non-Adivasi (non-Indigenous people) groups live in this location, and there were observable disparities between Adivasi and non-Adivasi communities residing there. Further, Adivasi are lower caste compared with most non-Adivasi in the region and consequently experience stigma and ostracism by non-Adivasi people (Philip, Hoye and Sherry 2021; Bros 2014).

Caste is a significant determinant of social inclusion and exclusion in India. The caste system is the division of Indian society into social groups. The high-caste groups are the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas and the low-caste are the Sudras and Dalits. According to Davey and Gordon (2017), social inclusion facilitates the unconditional opportunity for members in a society to participate in key activities. In a socially inclusive society, members will be included in the decision-making and development process, where everybody has equal rights and access to social services (Correll and Chai 2009). However, the caste system creates *cultural*, *systemic* and *structural* barriers in India and limits opportunities for social inclusion between different social groups (Philip, Hoye and Sherry 2021). In this diversified social context, social cohesion efforts are useful to bring communities together. The Nilgiris-Wynaad Tribal Welfare Society is a non-governmental organisation which was established in 1979 to provide support to the Adivasi people (NWTWS 2012). This organisation initiated the implementation of a soccer peer-coaching program in the community to encourage social inclusion efforts and improve social cohesion within Adivasi groups and between Adivasi and non-Adivasi communities.

HRD in sport-for-development

Research in the field of SFD has burgeoned in recent years. Based on a literature review of peer-reviewed SFD publications, Schulenkorf, Sherry and Rowe (2016) demonstrate that academic interest in the field of SFD has significantly increased. Although the amount of scholarly research and analysis in the field of SFD has increased, researchers have questioned the theory-building process or theories used in past studies (Coalter 2017; Jones et al. 2017; Schulenkorf, Sherry and Rowe 2016; Schulenkorf and Spaaij 2016; Svensson and Levine 2017). It has been argued that the current trend in SFD research is to overuse the same theories to explore and explain practices and outcomes (Schulenkorf, Sherry and Rowe 2016; Schulenkorf and Spaaij 2016). Overusing the same theoretical concept to understand a multifaceted SFD development context may provide minimal theoretical or

practical value to the SFD discipline. Consequently, Schulenkorf and Spaaij (2016) asserted that an expansion on the theoretical frameworks and approaches applied in SFD studies should occur. There is a clear need for further culturally relevant research underpinning program theory for better evaluation methodologies, better determination of the need for such programs and to foster a greater understanding of the nature of issues that are expected to be addressed through the sport program (Coalter 2013; Coalter and Taylor 2010; Kay 2010; Kidd 2008; Levermore 2008).

Past researchers acknowledge and recommend that the application of human resources functions such as recruitment, training and development may result in human capital development and the sustainable development of SFD programs. For example, based on a case-study method approach consisting of 35 semi-structured interviews conducted with 26 community members and nine external agencies of a hockey-for-development program in Canada, MacIntosh, Arellano and Forneris (2016) argued that human resources constraints limit the sustainable development of any SFD program. According to MacIntosh, Arellano and Forneris (2016), a lack of qualified community coaches was a challenge to continue the SFD program. The implication is that investing in and fostering the development of human resources will help attract and retain volunteers to continue delivering SFD programs for a longer period. Ultimately, without coaches or agents on the ground to run a program, it will cease to be delivered and become unsustainable. Similarly, a qualitative study using 23 in-depth interviews and focus groups from 33 participants representing relevant organisations and government departments in the areas of sport, education and community development conducted in Papua New Guinea to assess the education impacts of an SFD program identified that capacity building and skills development within the community can result in sustainable SFD implementation (Sherry and Schulenkorf 2016). It was highlighted that the delivery of the SFD program by local staff was a way to develop peer coaches. Furthermore, teacher training provided through the SFD program helped to facilitate individual-level capacity building (Sherry and Schulenkorf 2016). Even though SFD researchers acknowledge and recommend the use of HRD to help deliver sustainable SFD programs (MacIntosh, Arellano and Forneris 2016; Sherry and Schulenkorf 2016), HRD theories are rarely used for SFD program evaluation. The SFD study reported in this article was conducted in a rural context in India and used an action research methodology to transfer soccer coaching knowledge and mobilise internal change agents. The soccer peer-coaching program recruited, trained and positioned the community peer coaches to continue the soccer coaching in the community and was specifically targeted at developing this volunteer knowledge and capacity to help facilitate ongoing program delivery.

HRD contributions in knowledge, skills and abilities development of SFD

HRD is a contested term, and there are several definitions that have evolved in the past. Although multiple HRD interpretations have emerged, learning and development for improved performance is a common theme. For example, Hamlin and Stewart (2011) argued that HRD includes the planned activities, processes and interventions designed for

individual learning and to develop human potential to improve or maximise effectiveness and performance at the individual, group, community or organisational level. Similarly, McLean and Laird (2001) argued that HRD is a process of developing knowledge, expertise, productivity and satisfaction of individuals, groups and communities. According to Moy (1992), HRD focuses on learning and development of an individual, group or organisation. A more recent definition by Wang et al. (2017) described HRD as skilling through learning-related activities to influence individual and group values and beliefs to achieve a desired outcome. These definitions clearly indicate that HRD contributes to the development of knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals, groups and communities and thus can result in capacity building. For example, training and education programs influence knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals to perform a task (Stevens and Champion 1994). Knowledge refers to factual assertions and procedures about performing a task; skill is the proficiency and ability is the power to perform a task (Gunnells, Hale and Hale 2006). However, it is noted that HRD practices vary based on the size, sector and industry in which an organisation operates (Peretz and McGraw 2011).

Although human resources have traditionally been focused on paid and formalised employment contexts (Bartram, Cavanagh and Hoye 2017; Cavanagh, McNeil and Bartram 2013), both scholars and practitioners are increasingly interested to learn more about the design and implementation of human resources practices to enhance volunteers' development in the non-profit sector (Alfes, Antunes and Shantz 2017). Based on a nationwide survey completed by board members of 13,068 non-profit sport clubs in Germany, Wicker and Breuer (2011) identified that human resources (volunteers) are scarce in the non-profit sport sector. As a large number of SFD organisations belong to the non-profit sector (Svensson and Woods 2017) and volunteers are considered critical to achieving the organisational objectives of most sporting organisations (Cuskelly 1998; Hoye et al. 2020), this finding is applicable to SFD organisations. According to Willis (2000), the success of an SFD program requires the development of many critical human resource elements such as knowledge, skills and abilities; however, SFD organisations underscore the importance of HRD. According to Lawson (2005), sport, exercise and physical education professionals may be able to design sport programs that contribute to human capital development. Researchers argue that the localisation of human knowledge is essential to create sustainable SFD programs (Lindsey 2008; Schulenkorf, Sugden and Burdsey 2014; Wicker and Breuer 2011). Similarly, Lindsey (2008) argued that skill development among local community members is essential for the development of long-term and sustainable SFD programs. MacIntosh, Arellano and Forneris (2016) are of the view that the development of knowledge, skills and abilities has the potential to nurture new community stakeholders to sustain a sport program.

Bryan (2017) identified that individual-level learning efforts in a non-profit organisational context may result in organisational-level capacity building. According to Edwards (2015), SFD programs may lead to capacity building where such programs facilitate and support the development of community and human development components. Although past research clearly indicates that HRD components are critical for the success

of any SFD program, not many SFD research projects in the past have used HRD theories to evaluate SFD programs. As the peer coaches and players of this SFD program were volunteers, mobilising and sustaining the participants was critical for the success of this program. It is also important to understand more about the social and relational aspects of volunteer development in the Asia-Pacific (Yea, Sin and Griffiths 2018). Therefore, we are applying social movement theory to understand and examine how interactions between individuals and groups can foster this type of social change and action.

Social movement theory

Social movement can be defined as a collective behaviour that happens in a recurring fashion to promote or resist social change in a community (Turner and Killian 1972). Social movement is a societal-level collective force; it is not an individual action (Maton 2000). We are applying social movement theory to our research because the community soccer coaching program was an organic, bottom-up initiative and required collective efforts to sustain program implementation (Turner and Killian 1972). Therefore, it provides a framing to allow us to conceptualise how participants were mobilised and what HRD-related factors led to their ongoing motivation and engagement.

There are different theoretical approaches to understanding social movements, such as class conflict theory, collective behaviour theory, value-added theory, political process theory, resources mobilisation theory and framing theory (Tremblay et al. 2017). However, the members are the defining element of any social movement, and therefore, mobilising human resources is fundamental to the success of any movement (Horn 2013; Tremblay et al. 2017). Due to their focus on individual-level mobilisation and capacity, we are applying Klandermans and Oegema's (1987) conceptualisation of a social movement to understand and discuss our data.

Klandermans and Oegema (1987) argue that mobilising individuals for a social movement is a sequential process. It starts with becoming part of the mobilisation potential and becoming the (recruiting) target of mobilisation attempts. The first two steps, becoming part and becoming a target of the mobilisation process, are fundamental to move into the third step, motivation (incentivising) of individuals to participate in the social movement; and the final step of this process is overcoming the barriers (training) for participation (Klandermans and Oegema 1987). Each step in this process requires different activities to create social mobilisation potential. For example, recruitment through inter-individual and inter-organisational social ties are effective in involving members to become a part and target of the social movement (Wilson and Orum 1976). Therefore, mobilising influential people and organisations in a community is necessary for the success of any social movement campaign (Klandermans and Oegema 1987). Similarly, nonmaterial, social incentives motivate individuals to become involved in social movement initiatives (Klandermans 1984; Klandermans and Oegema 1987; McAdam 1986), and therefore, members must receive some social incentives to get motivated to participate (Klandermans and Oegema 1987). The members must also receive training and support in overcoming the barriers to participation in the social movement (Klandermans and Oegema 1987). As

learning and knowledge acquisition are integral components of any social movement (Sisco, Valesano and Collins 2019), members may get motivated to participate by new knowledge and opportunities for learning. Moreover, training and support received by the members may help them to overcome any barriers for participation (Klandermans and Oegema 1987). Therefore, the concept of a social movement is an important lens through which to view and comprehend the outcomes of this research, as it can foster an understanding of how individuals and different community groups can be brought together, how initiatives can be sustained and what factors help to facilitate this. Such outcomes are particularly pertinent in settings such as the context for our research because of ongoing issues with social inclusion in relation to India's caste system, as previously described. We will now provide more details of the methodology and data collection process.

Methodology – SFD action research project

The methodological approach of this study is qualitative, interpretive action research (McNiff and Whitehead 2011). The interpretive form of action research was adopted to include different stakeholders such as soccer players and coaches, community leaders, the Nilgiris-Wynaad Tribal Welfare Society, schools and the researcher to work together to implement the soccer peer-coaching program and conduct the research. During the first step of the initiative, the researcher entered a formal partnership with the Nilgiris-Wynaad Tribal Welfare Society to initiate a soccer peer-coaching program in the community and selected schools. Past research acknowledges the importance of the sport at the centre of the SFD program to be culturally acceptable and relevant for the community (MacIntosh, Arellano and Forneris 2016). Soccer has a strong history within the Adivasi community; playing soccer is a favourite pastime for many Adivasi men at the location (Philip, Hoyer and Sherry 2021). The Nilgiris-Wynaad Tribal Welfare Society had also established an annual interschool soccer competition for Adivasi schoolchildren (NWTWS 2012). However, the community had limited or no soccer coaching knowledge. The soccer peer-coaching program aimed to build coaching capacity within the community for the sustainable delivery of the SFD project. As Spaaij (2012) highlighted, sustainable SFD programs are essential for the continued delivery of developmental objectives. According to Sherry and Schulenkorf (2016), bottom-up SFD initiatives such as local partnerships, capacity building and engagement are more sustainable than top-down and outside-in approaches.

Coakley (2002) suggested that individual developmental outcomes are generally dependent on the social and community contexts within which the sport is developed and managed. Therefore, it was important that the research approach incorporate the social and community contexts. Action research combines action and reflection, and it takes social and cultural contexts into consideration (Reason and Bradbury 2001). Action research is a bottom-up initiative in which the researcher and participants work together to empower communities for social change. Action research is focused on empowering and liberating people through partnerships and engagements between the researcher and

the participants (Ritchie 1996). As such, an action research approach was ideal in this context for community capacity building. Although the interpretive form of action research (McNiff and Whitehead 2011) approach provided opportunities for the participants to contribute to the project and make important contributions to the research process through their local knowledge, most of the data collection and all of the data analysis functions were conducted by the first author. The first author is of Indian origin and could communicate in local languages such as Malayalam and Tamil. He is also a licenced junior soccer and athletics coach in Australia. Cultural understanding and language and sport coaching abilities were advantageous in working with participants to implement the soccer peer-coaching program and conduct the research.

This SFD action research project was implemented in four phases. Phase 0 was conducted during a residential community soccer coaching camp for three days organised by the Nilgiris-Wynaad Tribal Welfare Society. Eighty-eight players representing all four Adivasi groups and five male community leaders representing Adivasi and non-Adivasi communities attended Phase 0. Girls and female teachers participated in non-soccer-related activities during Phase 0. As such, gender balance was not achieved in Phase 0. Coaching was conducted in a train-the-trainer style model to maximise knowledge transfer and ensure localisation of knowledge and skills. As part of building coaching capacity in the community, in Phase 0 the researcher conducted three practical and two in-class theory train-the-trainer coaching sessions. These sessions provided the opportunity for senior players and community leaders to be soccer coaches.

As such, this SFD action research project recruited and trained institutional and individual change agents to conduct a soccer peer-coaching program in primary school and community contexts in Phases 1, 2 and 3. Human resource practices in an organisation focus on recruiting people and providing training and development opportunities to achieve individual and organisational goals (Hoye et al. 2015). Recruiting players and coaches from different cultural backgrounds fostered meaningful social interaction opportunities through training and development and helped to develop social inclusion (Philip, Hoye and Sherry 2021). Implementation of HRD practices enabled some of the participants to acquire knowledge, skills and abilities and successfully implement the SFD program in their communities in Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the project.

Data collection

Individual participants such as soccer players and peer coaches were recruited through institutional participants (Nilgiris-Wynaad Tribal Welfare Society and three schools). Written consent from institutional and individual research participants was obtained before data collection commenced. This study received ethics approval from the first author's institution. The action research approach consisted of four phases of data collection over a period of 24 months and, thus, critically evaluated the long-term effects of the SFD program.

Although the soccer peer-coaching program was implemented in community and school contexts, this article focuses solely on the soccer peer-coaching program

implemented in the community. The data were collected from community coaches and community leaders (adults aged 18 years and over) using methods such as observation and semi-structured interviews. Five separate observation sessions in two locations (two observation sessions in two days during Phase 0 and one observation each of community coaching in Phases 1, 2 and 3) consisting of approximately 150 participants and 18 interviews form the basis of the data for this article. As the participants' cultural, social and educational competencies were dissimilar and some of the participants from Adivasi communities had limited verbal expression, semi-structured interviews and observations were used to gather meaningful data for the study. The semi-structured interview method allowed the first author to seek clarity by rewording or reordering the questions (Tong, Sainsbury and Craig 2007). The semi-structured interview questions were set to gather experiences of coaches and the wider community on the impacts of the soccer program at the individual, group and community level. Notes and video and audio recordings were used to collect data, and interview duration varied significantly.

As discussed in Philip, Hoye and Sherry (2021), the participants were multilingual; therefore, the interviews and observations were in different languages, and some were in mixed languages. The electronic data (video and audio recordings) in English were transcribed, and non-English data were translated and transcribed verbatim by the first author. The transcribed data and field notes were imported into NVIVO 10, and initial and axial coding was implemented for data analysis (Liamputtong 2013). The data were organised using categories and subcategories to evaluate participants' experiences and shared feelings. Abbreviations were assigned during the initial coding for common themes and sub-themes; a reasoning and rationalisation process was used to address any difference of opinion, and then axial coding was used to connect the common themes and sub-themes (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall and McCulloch 2011; Minichiello, Aroni and Hays 2008). Having discussed the background, theoretical approach and methodology adopted for this study, we will now outline the results.

Results

We will now discuss our results and demonstrate how the soccer peer-coaching program was able to facilitate HRD outcomes to help foster community development. This section is organised by three main themes that emerged from the observations and interviews, which are 1) soccer coaching and playing knowledge, 2) soccer coaching and playing skills and abilities and 3) social space for interaction.

Soccer coaching and playing knowledge

The feedback from the Soccer Camp indicated that the new knowledge, equipment and opportunities provided by the program were unique and attractive to the community (Phase 0 – Observation). One of the community coaches also supported the observation that the knowledge, equipment and experience provided to participants was a special opportunity:

The program is our luck, we [Adivasi] never get this opportunity anywhere else. This is a God-sent project. This type of training is available in cities and it is for rich people. Adivasi children never had this opportunity. (Phase 1 – Interviewee 6)

A community coach also said that ‘I haven’t had any coaching knowledge at all. Our soccer camp . . . introduced me to coaching’ (Phase 3 – Interviewee 10).

The process of peer-coaching helped to transfer the coaching knowledge to the community. A participant noted that ‘even children in the plains [non-Adivasi] do not know how to play soccer [purposeful and tactical], but Adivasi children got this knowledge through the program’ (Phase 1 – Interviewee 10).

The feedback from the Phase 0 Soccer Camp indicated that the new knowledge and equipment and the opportunities provided by the program were useful in building individual-level capacity in playing and coaching soccer (Phase 0 – Observation). A community coach also stated that

I personally like playing soccer and I wanted to coach others. It was my dream to coach our juniors [but he hadn’t had any coaching knowledge]. This program further helped me to learn soccer; and also as a coach, I can help others to learn soccer [He started a coaching program for Adivasi children in his neighbourhood and also visited local schools to conduct soccer training]. (Phase 1 – Interviewee 1)

The peer-coaching process allowed the coaches to implement their newly acquired knowledge and gain mastery through real-life coaching experience. Therefore, the coaching program introduced a process of learning in which coaches were able to observe, conceptualise and experiment with new information (Phase 0 – Observation). The soccer coaching and playing knowledge, combined with coaching and playing regularly, developed soccer coaching and playing skills and abilities in participants. A community coach said that ‘when we ran the first camp, I had an overall idea of coaching . . . and later, coaching practice deepened my coaching and playing knowledge’ (Phase 3 – Interviewee 10).

The soccer peer-coaching program was able to initiate HRD by facilitating soccer coaching and soccer playing knowledge in the community. The soccer peer-coaching program was a bottom-up knowledge partnership which was intended to be a sustainable SFD program in the community; therefore, soccer coaching and playing equipment were provided to the coaches. The coaches were also encouraged to initiate soccer coaching and training in their local communities. The coaches had an opportunity to learn theoretical aspects of coaching through in-class sessions, and they also had the chance to conduct practical coaching sessions. Many participants reported being excited by the experience of learning new skills and the opportunity to use soccer equipment for tactical skills development. The coaches were also awarded grassroots soccer coaching certificates, which were issued by the Sport4all Foundation Inc., based in Melbourne. These were deliberate efforts made by the key stakeholders to encourage and support coaches to initiate coaching in their local communities.

Soccer coaching and playing skills and abilities

The individual-level capacity in coaching and playing resulted in collective action in the communities and is an HRD outcome. The community coaches were able to initiate soccer coaching and playing opportunities in their communities, which helped the youths and adults improve their skills to the point where some received an invitation to play for their local sports club. Furthermore, the coaches were instrumental in forming an inter-community soccer league (Phase 3 – Interviewee 10).

The soccer peer-coaching program provided a context in which the community coaches were able to establish a soccer league at Ambalamoola. The inception of the idea was from a community coach in the Kathunayaka community who started Sunday soccer coaching and games for children and youth in the Kathunayaka community. A community coach, a Kathunayaka elder, said,

Our coaching program made some influence in Kathunayaka people. Our elders discussed about our soccer program a couple of times in our community leaders meeting and we would like all our children to play football. Kathunayaka children started playing football in remote villages. They bought balls and other playing strips with their own money and started playing. I have provided them some coaching based on what I have learned through the program. (Phase 2 – Interviewee 10)

Gradually, the Sunday coaching and games expanded to include children and youth from the Paniya community. The elder said that ‘we also conduct matches on Sundays with Paniya children . . . The players also watch matches on TV’ (Phase 2 – Interviewee 10). The Sunday matches evolved and broadened into weekly games for players from different locations (different Adivasi communities). Later, inspired by the Indian Super League, the weekly matches were formalised and organised into a soccer competition. A feature of this competition is that the teams included a mix of players from different people groups and locations to avoid any rivalry between communities.

Social space for interaction

Peer coaching was also a viable strategy to recruit and educate internal change agents to conduct sustainable soccer coaching in schools and communities. The community coaches’ involvement with the soccer peer-coaching program helped them initiate three soccer coaching programs in their villages. These initiatives brought children and youths from different Adivasi groups together (Phase 2 – Interviewee 10) and created a social space for interaction. This research has found that community soccer coaching is the main reason youth from different Adivasi groups came together in a social setting and developed social connections. A community coach stated, ‘we have around thirty youths . . . we meet on Sundays and play soccer with other Adivasi groups . . . After the game, we sit together and just talk as a community. Previously, we . . . had issues . . . now because of Sunday soccer . . . we are in good terms’ (Phase 2 – Interviewee 10).

Coaching and playing together has helped participants stay connected and support each other in various ways, including by providing transport for coaching and playing. A community coach noted that

It is very difficult for different Adivasi groups to work together, football coaching is a major reason for us to come together. Now we have mixed Adivasi teams playing in competitions ... We train and play together; we have to communicate to organise the games and help with transport ... Thus, our social relationship and friendship increased. (Phase 3 – Interviewee 11)

The above results revealed that working together to acquire and advance soccer coaching and playing knowledge, skills and abilities not only resulted in HRD and community capacity building but also provided social space for the players and coaches to interact.

Discussion

The results demonstrated that HRD systems and practices such as knowledge, skills and abilities developed through the soccer peer-coaching program helped to recruit participants and build individual-level coaching capacity. Knowledge and skill building were effective for recruiting and incentivising participants to join the program. Individual capacity building of coaches through a train-the-trainer approach facilitated the localisation of knowledge, skills and capacity and contributed to ongoing sustainability through building community capacity. Individual-level capacity and opportunities for regular coaching and training created social space for meaningful social interaction leading to collective action, initiating an inter-community soccer league. These outcomes align with Klandermans and Oegema's (1987) views that mobilising individuals for a social movement involves recruitment, training and incentivising.

A significant outcome resulting from the initiation of the inter-community soccer league was the formation of teams comprising a mix of different Adivasi groups, leading to the facilitation of inter-Adivasi networks, friendships and cooperation. These outcomes highlight the impacts of the soccer peer-coaching program on community development and the ability to improve people's lives (Gibbon, Labonte and Laverack 2002). Furthermore, meaningful social interaction created through the program can lead to improvements in social cohesion and consequently can positively impact the well-being of participants (García López and Kirk 2021; Lawson 2005). The application of HRD in an SFD context creating individual well-being outcomes is an important finding of this research.

This soccer peer-coaching program was able to apply planned HRD activities (Hamlin and Stewart 2011) such as recruitment and training to support participants in implementing community development initiatives (Wang et al. 2017). Soccer coaching and playing knowledge were enablers to recruit both volunteer coaches and players to participate in the soccer peer-coaching program. Knowledge development being an enabler to recruit volunteers is an important area for volunteer development in the Asia-Pacific region (Yea,

Sin and Griffiths 2018). Furthermore, opportunities for regular coaching and playing incentivised ongoing participation and resulted in knowledge, skills and abilities development for improved performance (Stevens and Campion 1994) at the individual and group levels. HRD is about fostering the knowledge and expertise of individuals, groups and communities (McLean and Laird 2001). Therefore, this research demonstrated that knowledge, skill and ability development through a soccer peer-coaching program in a community setting can mobilise individuals for community development initiatives.

This soccer peer-coaching program was able to recruit and train volunteer soccer coaches. As past research indicates (Lawson 2005; MacIntosh, Arellano and Forneris 2016), and this research supports, purpose-designed sport programs can train and develop volunteers for a sustainable implementation model. As the availability of volunteers is limited (Wicker and Breuer 2011) and scholars and practitioners are increasingly interested to learn about volunteer development in the non-profit sector (Alfes, Antunes and Shantz 2017; Yea, Sin and Griffiths 2018), the outcomes reported here are important for the HRD and SFD literature and the non-profit sector to support the recruitment and training of volunteers.

Study contribution

From theoretical and practical perspectives, HRD and SFD contributions can be drawn from this research. For HRD this research demonstrated how social space and social connections can be created while developing knowledge, skills and abilities. The results identified that inputs such as soccer coaching and playing knowledge, combined with opportunities for regular coaching and training, not only resulted in improved soccer playing and coaching skills and abilities but also was a way to create social space for participants to have more meaningful social interactions. Social space and meaningful social interaction created social networks among participants and solidarity for collective action, which resulted in improved program outcomes. Social networks, a shared sense of purpose and solidarity are some of the domains of social cohesion (Forrest and Kearns 2001). This research highlighted that inputs such as knowledge and opportunities can recruit participants and create social interaction and cohesion among participants while developing knowledge, skills and abilities for improved program outcomes. As social interaction and cohesion may result in improved individual well-being (García López and Kirk 2021; Lawson 2005) and because they are important aspects of intercultural workplace learning (Philip et al. 2019), this finding is important for HRD in both the volunteer and non-profit sectors. Particularly in multicultural contexts where teams are built up of actors from different cultural backgrounds, creating social space and social connections while developing knowledge, skills and abilities could result in enhanced program outcomes.

Similarly, the soccer peer-coaching program was able to recruit, incentivise and train the participants. As such, the soccer peer-coaching program delivery resulted in human capital development. As human capital is a primary component of community capacity (Chaskin 2001), it can be argued that the implementation of this soccer peer-coaching program resulted in community capacity development. Therefore, this research supports

the findings of past research (Jeanes 2013; Spaaij and Jeanes 2012) that peer-led sport programs can result in community capacity building. Moreover, the process of human capital development and community capacity building resulted in the localisation of human knowledge and improved program outcomes. Through coaching and training in their communities, the community coaches were able to bring different Adivasi groups together and initiate a soccer league. Localisation of human knowledge and skill development are essential for long-term and sustainable SFD program development (Lindsey 2008; Schulenkorf, Sugden and Burdsey 2014; Wicker and Breuer 2011). Therefore, it is recommended that future SFD programs must include individual, group and community capacity development initiatives to enhance knowledge creation and help facilitate long-term and sustainable SFD programs.

Conclusion

This article clearly showed that the application of HRD systems and practices such as soccer peer-coaching knowledge and developing playing and coaching skills and abilities functioned as effective enablers to recruit soccer players and volunteer coaches for community development among Adivasi participants in a rural setting in India. This article demonstrates that opportunities for regular coaching and training created social space for meaningful social interaction after initiating an inter-community soccer league. Starting the inter-community soccer league was an organic outcome. As such, creating social space and social connections while developing knowledge, skills and abilities in an SFD program can result in enhanced program outcomes.

Using social movement theory, this article illustrates how inputs such as knowledge and opportunities for soccer coaching and training provided through an SFD program can recruit volunteer coaches for community development initiatives. This is an important area of consideration for the engagement and development of volunteers in the Asia-Pacific region. Although the soccer peer-coaching program was intended to improve social inclusion and social cohesion within and outside Adivasi groups, as well as between Adivasi and non-Adivasi communities, the community coaching program was initiated by Adivasi coaches and most of the soccer players were people from an Adivasi background. Even though good representation among the different Adivasi groups was achieved, the participation of non-Adivasis was minimal and was a limitation of this study. Therefore, this study recommends that future research targets equal representation of Adivasi and non-Adivasi community groups to measure outcomes in this context. This study was conducted in a non-profit rural community setting; therefore, future research must aim to include for-profit and non-profit organisational settings, for example, by focusing on participants from intercultural backgrounds in a metro/city context to understand the impacts of social space and social cohesion in this type of organisational setting.

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