

1 Introduction to sport development

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INTRODUCTION

Sport development is an area of exponential growth in the international sport industry. The significance of sport development is felt on the sporting fields around the world where professional sport managers, development officers, program coordinators, coaches and volunteers are focusing on growing the potential of athletes and their sport communities to affect positive development outcomes. Against this background, graduates of sport management programs are increasingly required to have expertise in the area of sport development.

In the second edition of this textbook, we invite readers to explore, learn and discuss the latest concepts and trends in managing sport development. This is important because only when appropriately conceived and managed, can sport development make a significant difference for professional athletes, as well as grass-roots clubs and local communities.

OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTER

This introductory chapter begins with a brief historical review of sport development and its evolution over time, including an overview of how the sport development landscape has shifted since our first edition of this text. The chapter then discusses what we describe as the two arms of sport development, that is: development *of* sport (sport development) and development *through* sport (sport for development). In doing so, the sport development field is introduced and analysed in the context of the wider sport management theory and practice. Next, the chapter briefly introduces the policy tensions in sport development, where differences in ideologies and political priorities result in struggles for funding and support between professional sport clubs and community sport initiatives. Finally, this first chapter introduces the remaining chapters that make up this textbook and identifies career opportunities in the sport development space. These should be of particular significance for young and aspiring university graduates on their way towards securing employment in the sport development sector.

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- understand the history and evolution of sport development;
- recognise the two arms of sport development and their specific contributions;
- critically analyse ongoing tensions between the two arms of sport development;
- appreciate the complexity of the sport development sector; and
- consider and reflect on career opportunities in sport development.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SPORT DEVELOPMENT

In essence, sport development is about providing opportunities for individuals and communities to engage and grow in different types of physical activity (Shilbury *et al.* [2008](#)). Sport development happens at different levels and in different social contexts; it spans from young children who are introduced to sport and play in schools and sport clubs, to professional athletes who are trying to improve their skill levels to win medals at world championships and Olympic Games. Sport development even applies to the growing number of masters sport initiatives where the focus is placed on keeping our aging population active and healthy. Overall, sport development is an important space for everyone involved in sport – from the young to the old, from grass roots to elite. However, as will be discussed in this book, the specific goals and objectives of sport development initiatives vary, and professionally educated sport managers are required to provide the most relevant and meaningful services and experiences needed for people to maximise their sport and community goals. In the nineteenth century, reforms that took place in elite English public schools resulted in what we know today as modern, codified sports (Schulenkorf and Adair [2012](#)). The undisciplined, often violent behaviour of schoolboys was at odds with the goal of producing young men who, by virtue of their social position, were set to

assume leadership roles in English society. They often had status on account of birth and privilege, but too many lacked the commitment to study and respect for authority. Sweeping reforms to this elite educational system were introduced during the mid-nineteenth century, part of which involved developing both the mind and the body of pupils (Holt [1990](#)). Sport, in the reformers' view, was much more than a mere game: it provided important lessons for life, such as striving for victory and accepting defeat – both with good grace. Similarly, sport was thought to build character and provide a productive outlet for young boys to express themselves physically and represent their schools, and in the process create feelings of community among students and promote a sense of loyalty to the institution (Chandler [1991](#)). These early forms of junior sport development, therefore, were about purposeful physical activity in the interests of inculcating moral values. The health dimensions of sport – that is, appropriate levels of exercise – were a secondary consideration.

Since then, much has changed. In the early twentieth century, the rise of the amateur ideal in sport – which became a cornerstone of the modern Olympic Games – provided an emphasis on *participation for its own sake* with a focus on selflessness and community spirit (Jobling [2000](#); Obel [2005](#); Seynard [2002](#)). At that time, sport was understood as a *common good* that provided people of varying ages and backgrounds with valuable social experiences. However, the boundaries around the amateur ideal began to loosen by the last quarter of the twentieth century (Schulenkorf and Adair 2012) and the commercialisation of sport began. This development towards the commercialisation of sport led to a new value system for sport within which community development is no longer inconsistent with commercial sponsorship, business-like operation and remuneration of club representatives (Owen and Weatherston [2002](#)). Winning and elite performance became the new currency for sport.

While the professionalisation of sport organisations and the management of them has been documented at length elsewhere (Dowling *et al.* [2014](#)), it is useful at this point to explore the place of sport development within the increasingly professional sport landscape. As Dowling *et al.* (2014) explain, professionalisation has occurred from a systemic, organisational and occupational perspective. That is, professionalisation of sport has occurred due to: system changes – such as when an external force impacts sport; organisational factors internal to the organisation – such as governance, structure and policy; and in terms of personnel where occupations become professions.

From a systemic perspective, many governments around the world have been a catalyst for the commercial development of sport and therefore the professionalisation of sport management in a range of ways. First, by increasing financial commitment to sport, some governments have invested in sports – albeit in many cases only a limited number of sports in which it is believed there will be international success – with the aim that the investment will lead to the development of athletes who can compete successfully nationally and internationally. Through doing so, governments anticipate that athletic successes will lead to national pride, as well as international prestige when nations can embrace the victories and triumphs of their successful athletes. Governments have contributed to sport development through a range of activities that include building of community and elite facilities or providing direct funding to programming; in addition, some governments have also invested in hosting international-level high-profile sport events through which they seek to increase social, economic and environmental rewards for host cities and communities. Aligned with this is the increased focus of many nations on the concept of sport diplomacy, using sport and sport events as a tool for international engagement and dialogue. Of course, in addition to government investment in sport, corporate businesses have increasingly invested in sport to enhance their own business success. In other words, as government investment has led to a more lucrative and popular sport market, businesses have sought to use sport to engage their customers. In particular, businesses have invested in sponsoring athletes, teams, sport programs, facilities and sport organisations, and they leverage their sponsorship of, and connection with, sport to engage sport consumers who they ultimately wish to secure as customers of their own businesses.

From an organisational perspective, the increasing investment in sport by both government and business has led to the need for sport organisations to professionalise. That is, they have been required to develop policy and governance practices that are formal and to structure themselves in ways that allow them to approach the

development and delivery of their products and services in a business-like manner – regardless of whether their sport business is aimed at a local club or at a professional-level championship match or event. Further, they have had to engage with government and the corporate sector in ways that reflect professional practice.

From an occupational perspective, there is an increasing number of specialist roles required in the business of sport, including in sport development, upon which this textbook focuses. Later in this chapter, the reader can explore the different specialist roles that are available to individuals who choose a career in sport development.

Through this textbook, the reader will explore the impact that the professionalisation of sport is having on sport development at all levels of delivery – from grass roots to elite. For example, governments are increasingly realising that sport provides opportunities beyond winning gold medals and international success. Investing in sport can prove to be a wise investment in community because sport – if managed appropriately – has the ability to facilitate the achievement of many social and community goals that may have nothing to do with competition and winning. Sport development, as a field of endeavour and academic enquiry, challenges governments, businesses and sport organisations to define and value sport for a range of different outcomes beyond winning. The following section starts to unpack what sport development means and provides a platform for readers of this textbook to continue the journey of understanding sport development.

CONCEPTUALISING THE TWO ARMS OF SPORT DEVELOPMENT

Sport development, for the purposes of our textbook, includes both *development of sport* (SD), as well as *sport for development* (SFD). These two arms of sport development have much in common and they are certainly related; however, they are distinct in their specific purpose and focus. While SD aims to create pathways for professional participation and talent identification, SFD focuses on the role that sport can play in contributing to specific social outcomes and overall community well-being. In other words, SD aims at improving the sport-related skills of particular athletes, while SFD refers to improvement of sport and other skills achieved through sport participation. In SD, individuals and groups participate with the focus on achieving mastery and potentially excellence in the sport. In SFD, individuals and groups participate to achieve more than just physical outcomes: they also participate with aspirations to realise certain social, cultural, psychological, educational and/or economic goals. It is essential to understand however that this is best understood as a continuum, rather than two completely distinct and separate ideas in both theory and practice. We will discuss this overlap further in the following sections.

Traditionally, the management and delivery of SD are the responsibilities of each individual sport organisation and are usually planned by a national sport organisation (NSO). That is, as readers will discover through this text, SD requires a range of elements from the macro to the micro level of organisation to be in place in order to provide appropriate SD. This includes the provision of appropriate facilities for individuals to have an opportunity to participate; programs that offer appropriate experiences depending on age, skill and other factors; pathways so that participants can transition to various programs at different levels to meet their needs; and personnel to facilitate the delivery of programs and the development of participants. Of course, all of these activities require financial investments and relevant budget appropriations. Traditionally, sport organisations have each developed their own facilities, programs, pathways and personnel in order to achieve SD, and hence have been internally focused on achieving this goal. However, as the reader will see in this textbook, sport organisations are sometimes turning to external organisations in order to successfully achieve SD outcomes.

The management and delivery of SFD can be a little more complex than that of SD, because SFD goes beyond sport per se, and instead links to the wider field of community development. The management and delivery of SFD focuses on using sport as a tool to achieve broader aims that are most often outside the scope of the sport itself. This might include using participation in sport to achieve wide-ranging aims such as social development, local empowerment or peace objectives (Coalter [2010](#); Schulenkorf [2012](#); Sugden [2010](#)). As such, the achievement of SFD outcomes often requires that managers take a much more externally focused view and develop partnerships with other organisations who might offer greater skills, experience and qualifications in the broader goals desired.

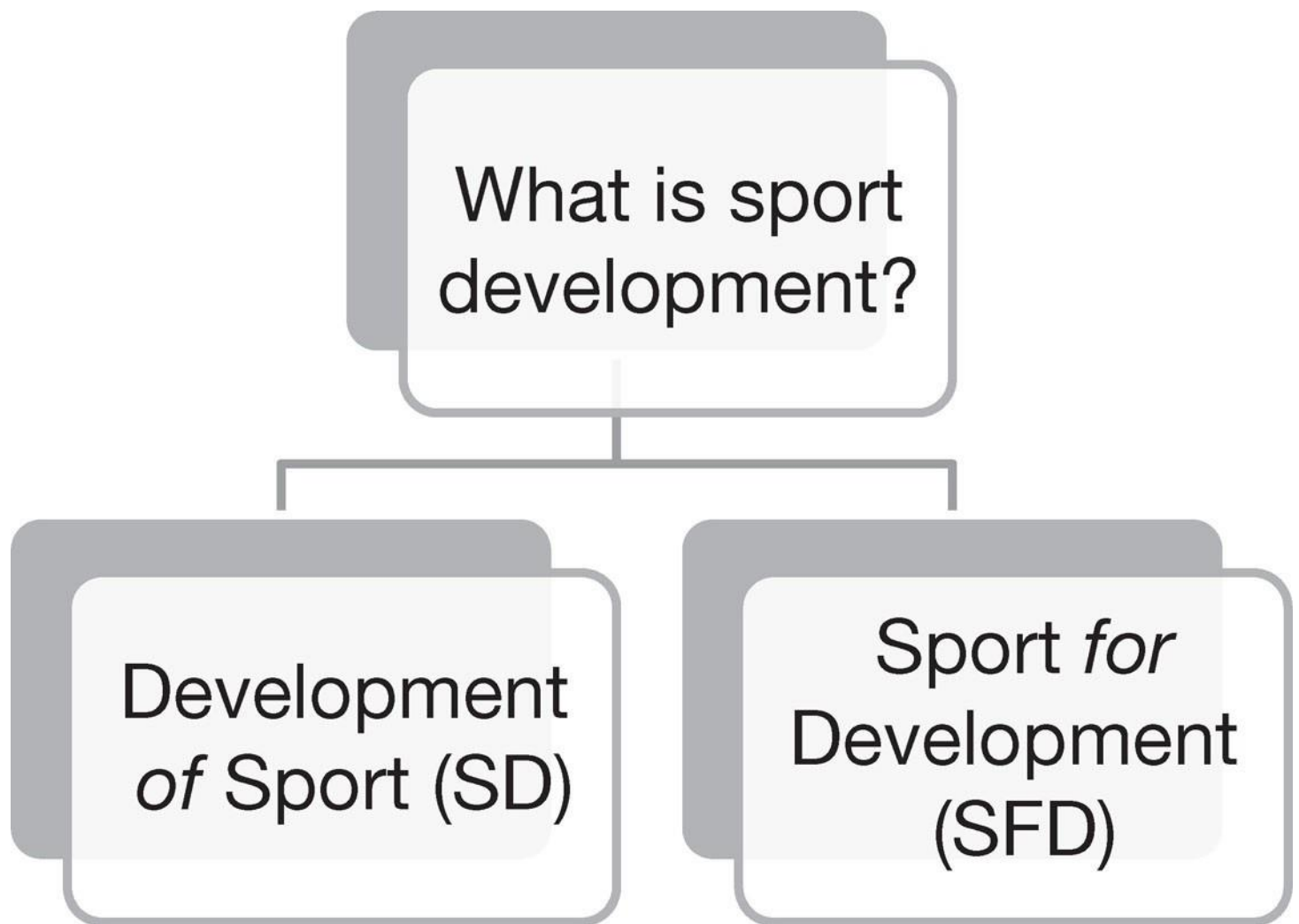


Figure 1.1 Defining sport development

Although SD and SFD are different in the way that they are defined, as the reader will see from the information presented throughout this textbook, sport programs are not necessarily exclusively focused on either SD or SFD. It is true that while some programs are aimed specifically at SD and others may specifically be aimed at achieving SFD outcomes, others find a balance between SD and SFD. Case studies throughout this textbook allow the reader to explore a variety of different permutations of programs that deliver SD and/or SFD outcomes. Overall, an easy and practical way of distinguishing whether a sport program focuses on SD or SFD, or is perhaps a combination of both, is by asking the following question:

Are the intended outcomes of the sport program to develop participants' skills and athletic performance, or to develop participants beyond the sport itself?

The answer to this question will determine if the program is focused on SD or SFD, or perhaps a combination of both. For any SD program initiative, success is closely linked to outcomes that are related to the particular sport in question. For example, a program that is focused on specific training to develop skills, techniques and competition tactics related to winning is most likely an SD program. In contrast, in the case of any SFD program initiative, success is not linked to sport-related outcomes. For example, to achieve social inclusion outcomes for recently arrived immigrants, the type of sport played is less important than how the program is managed and delivered so that it provides opportunities for social interaction and the like. In some cases, programs are designed to deliver both SD and SFD outcomes. In all chapters of this book, we will refer specifically to the two arms of sport development and provide examples through case studies from the field.

SPORT DEVELOPMENT: A SPACE FOR ONGOING TENSIONS

As the reader will note from this introduction, it is possible to deliver programs that have SD and SFD outcomes simultaneously; however, for the most part, SD and SFD have not sat easily alongside one another. In many cases, practical delivery of programs becomes either SD or SFD. The different foci of SD and SFD programs often cause debate about what should be funded and supported by local, regional and national governments, who are often the most significant financial contributors to sport development programs. Further, SD and SFD are often debated within sport organisations themselves as individuals struggle to give up on the traditional trappings of competitive sport for goals that are often seen as more lofty and idealistic. As the reader will discover throughout this textbook, there are strong arguments to support both of the arms of sport development. Often, due to limited funding and personnel available to them, sport organisations and policymakers need to make difficult decisions regarding resources that can be directed to SD and/or SFD initiatives. Ideally, both SD sport and SFD initiatives would be funded and supported to secure: (1) sustained international success for club and country; and (2) involvement of the community in regular physical activity and play. Unfortunately, the total amount of sport funding available rarely satisfies the demand for both arms of sport development, and hence political ideologies and strategies – as well as behind-the-scenes bargaining – tend to inform and influence the final sport development funding policies implemented.

SPORT DEVELOPMENT: THE NEW LANDSCAPE

Since our first edition of this text, the field of SD and SFD has shifted and evolved as both those who study the field, and those who invest, manage and work in the field continue to adapt to new challenges and opportunities. The distinction between SD and SFD has become increasingly blurred, with greater understanding of the variety of new models of sport development, new ways of managing, and more sophisticated organisation structures. Research by a number of authors (c.f. Raw et al., 2019; Svensson et al., 2020, 2022) have noted the emerging importance of organisational hybridity – that is organisations that balance both arms of sport development to achieve both social development outcomes and sport delivery and performance. In both SD and SFD there has also been an increasing focus on the importance of capacity building for successful delivery of programs, initiatives, and events. A growing body of work and investment in the sport industry is focused on managing resources – particularly staff and volunteers – in a way that ensures the ongoing sustainability of sport in all its forms. This second edition will also note changes in the sport development and sport industry landscape, with a particular focus on evolving trends such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, greater alignment with and focus on sport's contribution to the sustainable development goals, and an increasing focus and calls to action for environmental sustainability and the impact of sport on and by climate change. We note this changes in the short time between the first and second edition of this text to illustrate for the reader that the field of sport development is ever evolving, changing and responding to external pressures.

SPORT DEVELOPMENT CAREERS

Sport development offers a range of employment opportunities and career paths for individuals who are looking for a career in the sport industry. Sport development is unique in that it can offer an individual the opportunity to work either on or off the field of play, or perhaps to combine both on- and off-field roles. Sport development careers can be found in a wide variety of sport and non-sport organisations, including:

- international sport federations
- national sport organisations
- state or regional sport organisations
- professional sport clubs and teams
- community sport clubs
- non-profit sport for development organisations
- social ventures and non-governmental organisations
- government sport and active recreation departments and statutory authorities
- institutes of sport
- schools, colleges and universities.

On the field, for example, sport coaches, fitness instructors, sport development officers and community workers contribute to the delivery of sport programs, and through their expertise at the coalface they can facilitate the

development of participants in terms of sport and personal skills. Their work can be very hands-on with participants to achieve physical and/or emotional development.

Off the field, sport development officers and game coordinators, as well as school program managers and youth development staff, are involved in planning, managing and implementing sport programs, events and activities for teams and communities. These are only a handful of examples of roles in the sport development industry.

Additional career opportunities and positions related to the field of sport development are listed below:

- sport development officer;
- sport program manager;
- international sport advisor;
- community development officer;
- sport policymaker;
- professional coach;
- junior coach;
- player development expert;
- school attendance officer;
- after-school program coordinator;
- sport science manager;
- exercise and health specialist;
- customer service manager;
- community safety and youth development coordinator;
- sport for development and peace coordinator;
- competition and scheduling manager;
- sport event manager;
- coach education officer/manager; and facility manager.

Almost all of the sport development positions listed above require jobseekers to hold a sport-related university degree and/or have significant work experience in the sector; moreover, professional management knowledge is needed to be competitive. Hence, this textbook is designed to equip readers with the theoretical and applied knowledge necessary to secure – and succeed in – their chosen careers.

ABOUT THIS TEXTBOOK

The textbook is comprised of 12 chapters that are subdivided into four separate but interdependent sections. First, the ‘Theory and Policy Context’ section – Chapters 1, 2 and 3 – provides an understanding of the definition of sport development with its two arms: the development of sport (SD) and sport for development (SFD). In doing so, it explains the significance of the sport development field, its breadth, opportunities and tensions in both theory and practice. Second, the ‘Sport Development’ section – Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 – focuses on the priority areas for sport development (Chapter 4). This section provides an overview of the different institutions and organisations that manage and/or support elite and grass-roots sports (Chapters 5 and 6). It covers a large spectrum of sport development providers and highlights the different goals and foci of professional and community sport. In doing so, the chapters highlight the different systems and pathways in high performance sport, as well as opportunities and tensions that arise as a result of the professionalisation of sport; for example, through special technology or the use of drugs. The final chapter in this section outlines the managerial considerations in sport development (Chapter 7).

The third section focuses on ‘Sport for Development’ – Chapters 8, 9 and 10. These chapters focus on specific social development outcomes that can be intentionally achieved through sport via a chapter outlining the contribution of sport to the sustainable development goals (Chapter 8), followed by a focus on priority areas for SFD (chapter 9) and managerial considerations of SFD (Chapter 10).

Finally, Section 4 – Research, Evaluation and Future Trends - reflects on the previous 10 chapters and asks two questions, ‘How do we know that we have been successful?’, and what does the future hold? Chapter 11

provides an overview of different evaluation and measurement options, and uses two case studies, for which evaluation was conducted, to reflect on the tension between people's expectations and actual sport development outcomes. The final chapter (Chapter 12) outlines and discusses future trends in both SD and SFD, to provide the reader with some insights into the next evolution of sport development.

SUMMARY

Sport development is an exciting, fresh and important element of sport management. In this first chapter, we have provided our rationale for compiling a textbook on managing sport development. We have briefly reviewed the history and evolution of sport development over time and have discussed our conceptualisation of the two arms of sport development, namely the development *of* sport (SD) and development *through* sport, or sport for development (SFD). We have pinpointed key opportunities and tensions for the sport development field, both in terms of theory and praxis. Finally, we have established how this textbook – and its constituent sections and chapters – proposes to discuss the different aspects of sport development and their application to theory and practice.

We are confident that by using this textbook, readers will explore, learn and discuss the latest concepts and trends in managing sport development. We also believe that they will subsequently be equipped with the necessary knowledge to appropriately conceive and manage sport development assignments that can make a significant difference for elite athletes, as well as grass-roots clubs and local communities.

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