

# Chapter 14

## Strategies for the Development of Life Skills and Values through Sport Programmes: Review and Recommendations

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### ABSTRACT

*Sport is a very popular activity that provides a context suitable for positive youth development (Danish, Forneris, & Wallace, 2005). Although the acquisition of motor skills and sport-specific abilities are indispensable constituents of sport involvement, other elements contributing to athletes' positive development such as life skills and values must be considered (Carron, Hausenblas, & Estabrooks, 2003; Forneris, Camiré, & Trudel, 2012; Landers & Petruzzello, 1994). Several studies have examined the effectiveness of sport-based programmes designed for developing life skills and values, but a limited amount of research has specifically addressed how to promote this type of material among youth. There is a need for a review that explores the potential approaches for infusing the learning of life skills and values in sport participation, and improving the effectiveness of structured life skills and values-driven training programmes in order to achieve the desired developmental benefits of sport participation.*

### INTRODUCTION

Numerous benefits have been associated with participation in sport, especially in school sport programmes (Bailey, 2006; Etnier et al., 1997). According to a poll commissioned by the Josephson Institute Center for Sport Ethics (2006),

more than half of the young athletes surveyed stated that they had acquired character traits in the respective games that they were involved in. Indeed, sport has been deemed to be a platform conducive to the development of life skills, values and character that can benefit individuals' personal growth such as interpersonal and intrapersonal

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competencies, which are important in later parts of one's life (Gould & Carson, 2008). Participation in sport can also possibly generate positive behaviours such as supporting teammates or helping injured opponents while reducing negative behaviours such as intimidating and injuring other players (Kavussanu, 2007). Given the demonstrated potential of sport in fostering the development of positive life skills and values in youth, it is not surprising that policy makers and curriculum developers want to use sport to make significant and distinctive contributions to positive youth development, to schools, and to wider society (Bailey et al., 2009).

However, it is important to understand that positive developmental outcomes do not emerge automatically from mere participation in sport. Poor sportsmanship, decline in moral reasoning, discrimination, racism, aggression, and win-at-all cost attitudes that distort fair play have been associated with sport participation as well (Bredemeier, Weiss, Shields, & Cooper, 1987; Buford-May, 2001). Indeed, the emergence of positive outcomes must be nurtured through a purposeful curriculum and deliberate teaching strategies (Bailey et al., 2009; Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2012; Gould, Carson, & Blanton, 2013). When programmes are efficiently delivered, sport participation has been associated with positive effects on self-esteem, educational pursuit, psychosocial functioning, fair-play, moral reasoning, and desired behaviours among adolescents (Harrison & Narayan, 2003; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003; Mouratidou, Goutza, & Chatzopoulos, 2007; Vidoni & Ward, 2009). It is therefore important for sport administrators, instructors, and policy makers to monitor and evaluate how sport can contribute to the development of life skills and values in young athletes for them to become productive citizens and make positive contributions to society (Bailey et al., 2009; Côté & Gilbert, 2009). This statement is especially important and being met with growing interest in Asian countries such as China and Taiwan who have hosted or will be hosting major international sporting events such as the Olympic Games, the Youth Olympic Games, and the World

Games. As a result, the demand for sport science studies has increased tremendously in the Asian region (Dolles & Söderman, 2008).

In the case of Singapore, the government has shown increasing interest in professionalising the sport industry (e.g., Formula One Race), and raising awareness on the health and wellness of Singaporeans (e.g., Standard Chartered Marathon). In fact, the government has recently invested \$300 million in the Sporting Singapore Fund to finance sport development (Koh, Mallett, & Wang, 2011), with the hope that sport can make significant contributions to children, to schools, and wider society (Bailey et al., 2009). In this regard, sport participation is regarded by the Singapore government as an important platform through which children can learn life skills and values, and carry these positive attributes to the next phases of their lives (Josephson Institute Center for Sport Ethics, 2006). Accordingly, it is essential to explicitly teach life skills and values so that positive developmental outcomes might be achieved through sport. Indeed, more research is needed in this line of inquiry to build on the limited number of empirical studies that have examined how sport actually facilitates the development of life skills and values in athletes (Camiré et al., 2012; Koh, Ong, & Camiré, 2014; Mouratidou et al., 2007; Vidoni & Ward, 2009). The purpose of the current chapter aims to provide a review of the literature on the development of values through sport programmes by addressing three main themes:

1. Providing an overview of the research studies on the development of life skills and values through sport programmes,
2. Describing training programmes implemented in two countries (Canada and Singapore) to develop life skills and values through sport, and
3. Drawing conclusions from the empirical studies reviewed by providing suggestions in terms of how life skills and values can be purposefully developed through sport programmes.

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