

ADDRESSING PHYSICAL INACTIVITY IN CHILDREN THROUGH INTER-  
ORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION: A STUDY OF BENEFITS AND  
CHALLENGES

by

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**Abstract**

**Addressing physical inactivity in children through inter-organizational collaboration: A study of benefits and challenges**

Physical inactivity in children is being recognized as a growing problem in Canadian society and one contributing factor is the undervaluing and subsequent decline of physical education in the public elementary school system (Bedingfield, 1995; Donnelly & Kidd, 2003; Kidd, 1999; Wilson, 2002). Developing partnerships with other organizations in the sport delivery system has been recommended as one strategy for addressing this social problem (Canadian Sport Policy, 2002; Mills Report, 1998; Thibault & Harvey, 1997). However, schools and sport organizations exist in an environment of scarce resources and, in the absence of a clear working framework, inter-organizational collaboration has proven difficult (Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Frisby, Thibault & Kikulis, 2004; Provan & Milward, 2001).

The purpose of this case study was to examine three existing partnerships between provincial sport organizations (PSOs), sport clubs, and elementary schools who collaborated to develop programs to augment the physical education curriculum. Four specific research questions were addressed regarding: i) the environmental pressures leading to collaboration, ii) the resources shared, iii) the benefits obtained, and iv) the challenges encountered. A total of 16 interviews were conducted. An analysis of related documents and observations of the programs were additional data sources. All data were transcribed and analyzed using Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software program.

The results revealed that the partners experienced a number of environmental pressures leading them to collaborate including scarce resources accentuating non-profit pressures, sport system under-funding, and the undervaluing of PE in the public school system. In terms of resources, the PSOs contributed coaches, equipment, administrative support, and infrastructure; the sports clubs contributed; coaches, equipment and infrastructure, and the schools offered students, teachers as support, facilities, curriculum time and infrastructure. Although the partners experienced a number of challenges when collaborating such as communication and coordination when initiating programs, scheduling around limited facilities, scarcity of coaches, non-profits working in the public sector, and administrative limitations of the PSOs, overall the interviewees felt that the benefits outweighed the challenges. Examples of benefits for sport organizations (clubs and PSOs) included: exposure and legitimacy, increased membership, access to facilities, experience for coaches, and resource sharing. Schools experienced benefits such as resources for PE (on site Pro D, access to sport equipment), curriculum benefits, physical activity opportunities, and social and school community benefits.

This research provides a greater understanding of the complexities of inter-organizational collaboration and its potential to improve elementary school physical education curriculum. The implications are discussed and a number of recommendations for partnering organizations and future research are provided.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **The problem of physical inactivity**

Physical inactivity among children is increasingly being recognized as a growing problem for Canadian society and the social and health ramifications are becoming glaringly evident as media attention escalates. Research fueling this attention has provided alarming data, highlighting the fact that many Canadian children and youth are not active enough to maintain a healthy lifestyle (Corbin, 2002; Katzmarzyk, Gledhill & Shepard, 2000). Physical educators, leaders of sport organizations, and members of the medical community have witnessed this trend over time, but now politicians and policy makers have joined the chorus of concern, calling for action to address the growing problem of physical inactivity among Canadian youth (Coderre, 2001; Mills' Report, 1998).

The problem of physical inactivity is complex with a multiplicity of contributing factors. One contributing factor is the declining role of physical education (PE) in the public elementary school system, evidenced by the lack of specialist PE teachers, and the struggle PE has in maintaining its curriculum status in an overcrowded educational timetable (Hardman & Marshall, 1999). The lack of emphasis on comprehensive PE has resulted in many children lacking the skills necessary to participate in sport and physical activity. Though policy makers now see the value of physical activity for children's health, many elementary schools have lost the capacity to teach children movement skills because many teachers lack the training or resources (Bedingfield, 1995; Coderre, 2001; Corbin, 2002). Public elementary schools however are strategically positioned in communities to reach the majority of children and can play an important role in addressing the problem of physical inactivity. Public schools, unable to meet the physical activity needs of their students because

of limited teacher training and PE resources, are looking to other sectors for collaborative partners. The sport sector has been identified in federal documents as a potential collaborative partner for education (Sport: The Way Ahead, 1992; Thibault & Harvey, 1997). Through collaboration these sectors could share resources and expertise to address the needs of the organizations and their constituents.

Three collaborative programs between community sport organizations, provincial sport organizations, and public elementary schools involving the sharing of resources and expertise in the delivery of sport and movement skills during PE were examined in this study. This study explored the social, political and economic pressures experienced by these organizations that influenced their need to collaborate, along with the benefits and challenges experienced by the participating organizations. The overall aim was to begin to address whether inter-organizational collaborations of this type have potential for addressing the social problem of declining physical activity amongst youth.

### **Physical inactivity and physical education in public elementary schools**

In many provinces, physical education (PE) lies outside of the core curriculum (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2001). In British Columbia, PE occupies only 10 percent of the compulsory curriculum from grade one to grade ten, while remaining optional in grades eleven and twelve. Scarce education dollars have dramatically reduced the hiring of specialist PE teachers (Kidd, 1999; Wilson, 2002). As a result, PE is currently being taught in most public elementary schools predominantly by generalist teachers. The quality and amount of PE methods incorporated into generalist teacher training across the country fluctuates from comprehensive to negligible, resulting in PE instruction that is inconsistent and often unable

to meet the needs of today's sedentary children (Bedingfield, 1995; Sport: The Way Ahead, 1992).

The inconsistency of teacher training has led to a neglect of progressive motor skill development in some children's physical education, which has ramifications for their participation in the community sport setting. There is an assumption that children are introduced to movement skills in PE at school with community sport building on these skills (Mills' Report, 1998). Yet at the grassroots level of community sport, coaches find many children lack the basic skills and attitudes that contribute to a positive sport experience. This gap in the delivery of movement skills at schools has even greater repercussions for children who are unable to participate in community sport. Research has shown that children who participate in sport and physical activity experience benefits which prevent negative health outcomes, help them become more effective learners in school, reduce smoking, drug use, unwanted pregnancy and delinquent behavior, enhance other values of citizenship, have a positive effect on psychological health, and create safe and supportive communities (Kidd, 1999; Donnelly & Kidd, 2003). However many children face barriers to involvement in community sport and are denied these benefits. Poverty is considered the most significant barrier to access according to the most recent survey conducted by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES, 2002). The strategy of collaboration allows community sport organizations and schools to utilize the skills and expertise of community coaches within the school setting to offer a greater number of children exposure to the skills they need to be active. Designed to offer teachers support in the delivery of sport and movement education, these programs also provide a link between the public elementary schools and the sport community.

### **Physical inactivity and the sport system**

Provincial sport organizations (PSOs)<sup>1</sup>, community sport clubs, and schools are positioned within the Canadian sport delivery system at the grassroots level because of the roles they play in society and the resources they offer to provide sport and physical activity opportunities to the population as a whole (Mills' Report, 1998; Thibault & Harvey, 1997).<sup>2</sup> In some communities, schools and sport organizations have established loose informal ties, often through individuals acting as boundary spanners in their roles as teachers, coaches or parents. But these links are usually temporary and inconsistent. Thibault and Harvey point out that "the notion of system implies the involvement of a number of organizations, operating at different levels, participating in a "coordinated" fashion in the achievement of their goals and objectives" (1997, p. 45). In the Canadian sport system however, "the mechanisms necessary to ensure that these organizations work together harmoniously have been neglected" (Thibault & Harvey, 1997, p. 45).

While these observations refer to the national sport system, these same conditions are prevalent at the provincial level. In an environment of decreased government funding, single sport organizations are unable to deliver as broad a range of opportunities as they have in the past. Collaboration between the education and sport sectors offers a strategy allowing organizations to maximize their resources and work together toward shared benefits. Collaboration also offers an opportunity to establish connections between organizations, improving the coordination needed to strengthen the system.

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<sup>1</sup> A Provincial Sport Organization (PSO) is one that receives Block contribution and / or Athlete Assistance and / or Team BC funding from the Ministry responsible for sport.

<sup>2</sup> This segment of the sport system- provincial sport organizations (PSOs), community sport clubs and public elementary schools at the provincial level, is the focus of this research and may be referred to as either the grassroots level or entry level of the sport system.

Inter-organizational collaboration between different sectors has been identified as a way to increase the capacity of a “system” or community to address social problems (Selsky, 1991, p. 92). Systemic capacity building, involves “an increased ability to identify shared problems, develop policies and programs to address them, and mobilize appropriate resources effectively to fulfill these policies and programs” (Selsky, 1991, p. 97). The social issue of physical inactivity provides an opportunity to address the lack of coordination at the grassroots level between different sectors of the sport and education systems.

**Placing the need to collaborate and the benefits and challenges experienced within an environmental context.**

Organizations exist in uncertain and complex environments (Wood & Gray, 1991) and managers react to economic, social and political pressures in their general and daily task environment (Slack, 1997). For this reason it is important to identify environmental pressures to provide a context for understanding why organizations’ need to collaborate and the role resources play. Nationally and provincially, sport groups in Canada have felt the effects of decreased funding, financial pressures which are also experienced within the BC education sector. Economic concerns and scarce resources have caused organizations in both these sectors to explore collaboration and partnerships to assist in the delivery of their programs (Babiak, 2003; Thibault & Harvey, 1997).

Non-profit sport organizations and public educational institutions have been encouraged by municipal and provincial governments to seek partnerships to offset the effects of fewer financial resources. At the heart of these interactive processes is the ability to share, maximize and mobilize resources, which can be both tangible and intangible (Kanter, 1989; Thibault, Frisby, & Kikulis, 1999). Organizations choose collaborative partners based on the compatibility of the resources offered and whether the perceived benefits gained

through the collaborative process address their short or long-term needs. The goal of this research is to identify some of the benefits of collaboration between school and sports organizations in the delivery of grassroots programs to elementary school children, and assess whether the organizations appreciate the benefits enough to justify the perpetuation of the partnership programs.

The challenges encountered during the collaborative process also need to be identified to gain a better understanding of their nature and whether the challenges are considered manageable by the organizations. If organizations at the grassroots level of the sport system continue to participate in these types of collaborative processes, their success could contribute to the creation of a functioning framework to increase sport and physical activity opportunities for children at public elementary schools.

#### **Location of the researcher**

It is important at this point to clarify my position as a researcher in this study in order to allow the reader to gain insight into my motivation for researching this topic and my “common sense” knowledge of the issues and the environment (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). My experiences as an athlete, coach, parent, and volunteer sport administrator within the provincial sport environment have made me acutely aware of the multiple barriers to sport participation for many children. I have also become aware of the decline in the commitment to physical education (PE) as a valid component of children’s primary education. It is this awareness that has led me to embark on a research path committed to finding strategies to overcome these barriers, so that more children can experience the benefits of physical activity and be able to draw on these benefits throughout their lives.

My experience as a volunteer community coach led me to explore the idea of collaboration between sport organizations and elementary schools, not just to provide a skill set but also to improve access for more children. If children weren't being exposed to sports and the accompanying skills in PE, what was happening to those children who could not afford the experience of sport in the community? What about the children who experienced cultural or social barriers to sport experiences that could equip them with the knowledge they need to become physically active?

I became alarmed to the point of action in my volunteer role as chair of a non-profit organization that provided money to children who lacked the financial means to play sport. The demand for financial support was overwhelming, causing me to question not the intention but the efficiency of this approach. Instead why could sport organizations not share their expertise with generalist teachers during PE classes to reach more children?

It seemed to me a logical step to link schools with sport organizations through partnerships, especially in light of the Canadian Sport Policy Act of 2003 signed by governments at the provincial, territorial and federal levels committing them to increasing participation in sport as their first priority (Donnelly & Kidd, 2003). Delivering these basic opportunities at public schools offers more children exposure to movement skills, physical activity and a grassroots sport experience. I could anticipate multiple benefits from the sharing of resources between non-profit sport organizations and public elementary schools, but was also intrigued with the nature of the inevitable challenges evolving from inter-organizational collaboration. This curiosity and my desire to actively address the growing social problem of physical inactivity in Canadian children, has inspired my research and guided my research questions.

Collaboration between organizations in different sectors must accommodate the existence of different organizational values and goals. Physical education and community sport have historically upheld different values regarding the role of sport and competition, and held opposing positions on who is responsible for sport specific education (Donnelly & Kidd, 2003; Grant, Tredinnick, & Hodge, 1991; Horsley, 1995; Vail, 1993).

One philosophical outcome of my research assumptions is a shift in the perception of who is responsible for physical and sport education in the community (Grant et al., 1991). This shift can be addressed in two different but related areas; the content of the PE curriculum and the nature of the delivery of that curriculum. Teachers have traditionally defined their PE curriculum choices by the seasons of extra-curricular school sport, such as volleyball, basketball and track and field. Collaboration with community sport organizations would broaden the choices for content and expose both teachers and students to what could be considered non-traditional school sports. This would be a departure for some teachers from the content of their already established PE lesson plans. The delivery of PE has always been the role of teachers and the process of collaboration would involve utilizing the expertise of community sport educators. Some teachers could see this as a threat, yet from another perspective it could be considered a supportive measure for overburdened generalist teachers expected to provide comprehensive methods for all subjects and have experience in every area of the curriculum.

In the absence of specialist teachers, community educators in areas like sport, music, drama and art, who have traditionally been paid for their expertise in the community, could be welcomed into the schools through collaborative programs to share their abilities and passion in order to benefit the majority of students. This could be construed as controversial

by many in the public education sector, but from a different viewpoint perhaps a step towards a creative strategy to a shared social problem.

### **Purpose of the study**

According to a Canadian government document *Sport: The Way Ahead* (1992, p. 112); "There is little research into the interaction of sport and education. More sport research is needed and the sport and education systems need to work collaboratively to meet the needs of educators, coaches, administrators, researchers and athletes." The three case studies reported upon in this thesis begin to address the lack of research into inter-organizational collaboration to deliver physical education in elementary schools. One intention of the research is to provide a better understanding of the benefits and challenges experienced by the teachers, sport administrators and coaches during the collaborative process because:

There is no framework within which coordinated planning can easily occur. Provincial departments of education are separate from sport departments. Schools do not link well with community groups. There are different philosophies and perceptions between sport and education. An overall framework can help these different systems find a basis for cooperative planning and development (*Sport: The Way Ahead*, 1992, p. 112).

This study draws from partnership theories which present inter-organizational collaboration as a means of solving social problems by increasing or developing the capacity of a system (Gray, 1985; Logsdon, 1991; Selsky, 1991).

The specific purpose of this study was to examine inter-organizational partnerships between public elementary schools, community sport clubs, and provincial sport organizations involving three different sports designed to enhance elementary school PE curriculum. The following research questions guided the study:

- 1) What environmental pressures led to collaboration between provincial sport organizations (PSOs), community sport clubs, and public elementary schools?
- 2) What strategies did the partners use to pool resources?
- 3) What benefits and challenges did the partners encounter through this partnership?

In the next chapter a review of the literature related to key dimensions of this study will provide a basis for the analysis of the findings.

## Chapter Two

### Review of Literature

#### **More on the Social Problem of Physical Inactivity**

Health problems are only some of the consequences resulting from the increasingly sedentary lifestyles led by Canadian children. Technological advances and lifestyle choices have compounded the trend toward physical inactivity, which is further exacerbated by the decline of quality physical education available to children in public schools (CAHPERD, 1998; Donnelly & Kidd, 2003).

In the general population and children in particular, physical inactivity is influenced by demographic, individual, interpersonal, and environmental factors (CDC, 1997; Epstein, 1998; Health Canada, 1996). The 1998 Physical Activity Monitor shows that in Canada, three out of five children aged 5-17 are not active enough for optimal growth and development (CFLRI, 2000). The American Center for Disease Control (CDC) found that physical activity (defined as "any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that results in energy expenditure") (CDC, 1997, p.3) experienced regularly, improves aerobic endurance and muscular strength. For children with chronic disease risk factors, regular physical activity can decrease symptoms of hypertension as well as risk factors for cardiovascular disease. For obese children, regular physical activity increases physical fitness while decreasing the degree of overweight conditions (CDC, 1997). Physical activity has also been found to positively affect the quality of bone development in children (CDC, 1997; Donnelly & Kidd, 2003; Kidd, 1999; Wilson, McKay, Waddell, Notte, & Petit, 2000). Inactive children have a tendency to become inactive adults, so establishing patterns of exercise and healthy behaviors in childhood bodes well for

adulthood (CCES, 2002; Stone, McKenzie, Welk, & Booth, 1998; Vanreusel, Renson, Beunen, Claessens, Lefevre, Lysens, & Vanden Eynde, 1997; B.C. Ministry of Education, 2000).

While the 50 percent rise in obesity among Canadian children in the last 15 years (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2000) has been associated with increased occurrences of diabetes, heart and cardiovascular diseases (CFLRI, 2000), the consequences take their toll on the social and mental health of individuals as well. Regular physical activity has been shown to improve self-esteem and self-concept in children (Almond & McGeorge, 1998; Donnelly & Kidd, 2003; Gibbons, Wharf Higgins, Gaul, & Van Gyn, 1999; Kidd, 1999), and positively affect mental health (Donnelly & Kidd, 2003; Kidd, 1999). In fact, Health Canada suggests that a 10 percent reduction in the number of inactive Canadians would save the economy \$5 billion (Mills' Report, 1998).

The Canadian Medical Association concurs that in the face of convincing evidence of the cost of physical inactivity to society, "the promotion of a physically active lifestyle is an important public health objective" (Katzmarzyk, et al., 2000, p. 1435). It is time to create strategies to tackle the growing problem of inactivity and obesity (Lau, 1999; Birmingham, Muller, Palepu, Spinelli, & Anis, 1999), in light of the federal, provincial and territorial governments' recent public health objective to reduce physical inactivity in Canada 10 percent by 2003 (Katzmarzyk et al., 2000).

The benefits of physical activity experienced by children, are most notable for low-income and at risk children (Kidd, 1999), many of whom already suffer from low self-esteem and have limited opportunities for positive social experiences. If children are to leave school with the skills to keep them physically active throughout their life, these skills must be

incorporated into PE (Bailey, 1994; Kidd, 1999; Kowalski, 1999; Murray, 1994; Patterson, Anderson, & Klavora, 1997).

Exemplary physical educators ensure that fundamental and sport-specific skills are taught in ways that enable students to connect them to participation in physical activities outside school settings. The establishment of motor competency at an early age therefore, can be seen as a stepping stone to lifelong physical involvement (Patterson et al., 1997, p. 6).

The provision of movement skills in a developmental sequence “becomes the foundation for teaching all forms of physical knowledge” and “the extent to which a child acquires these skills in the early years influences their physical potential” (Vail, 1994, p. 23). The absence of specialist PE teachers in the elementary years, coupled with increasing curriculum pressures and scarce resources in the public education sector, result in many children not being exposed to relevant sport education (Donnelly & Kidd, 2003; Kidd, 1999). “PE as a subject is not being taught in many parts of Canada, let alone well with qualified instructors and safe, appropriate facilities” in fact, a recent international survey “found that less than 47% of schools in Canada, teach the required PE curriculum” (Donnelly & Kidd, 2003, p. 31). The failure of school PE to provide children with the basic skills to be physically active, is alarming when research has shown that children’s perception of perceived competence was identified as the most important variable for their participation in sport (Butcher, Sallis, McKenzie & Alcaraz, 2001) and “enjoyment of physical education class was one of the most powerful factors associated with participation in physical activity outside of school” (CDC, 1997, p. 1).

### **Organizations Positioned to Provide Grassroots Sport Opportunities**

Schools and community sport clubs have been identified as organizations in the Canadian sport delivery system with the responsibility for the provision of introductory and participation or grassroots sports ( Mills’ Report, 1998; Sport the Way Ahead, 1992; Thibault

& Harvey, 1997). The sport delivery system outlined in the Mills' Report (1998) assumes a link between grassroots participation and the provincial sport organizations (PSOs). Government documents such as the Mills' Report (1998) graphically outline the sport system with the international level at the top and the basic skills occupying the lowest position. While accurately illustrating the funding priorities of both federal and provincial governments, where elite athlete victories on the international stage reflect positively on government (Babiak, 2003; Whitson & Macintosh, 1996), this elite funding emphasis conflicts with the current federal government policy position that enhanced participation is a priority (Canadian Sport Policy, 2002). This dichotomy illustrates the long-standing tension within the sport system over the emphasis on elite performance versus equitable access (Babiak, 2003). Participation in sport and physical activity is considered a health priority (CCES, 2002), and school physical education (PE) is an important part of the sport system (Coderre, 2001), yet there is no visible support or connective mechanism in place to link schools and community sport clubs.

As mentioned earlier, Thibault and Harvey point out that "the notion of system implies the involvement of a number of organizations, operating at different levels, participating in a "coordinated" fashion in the achievement of their goals and objectives" (1997, p. 45). In the Canadian sport system however, "the mechanisms necessary to ensure that these organizations work together harmoniously have been neglected" (Thibault & Harvey, 1997, p. 45). In an environment of decreased government funding, single organizations are unable to deliver as broad a range of opportunities as they have in the past.

Collaboration between organizations perceived to be a part of the sport system, would provide linkages, allowing participants to move through the system in a succession of stages. However if the linkages are weak or non-existent, participants may not continue their physical

activities because they are unaware of alternative opportunities. Canadian government documents confusingly state that “the school system should represent the cornerstone of any strategies aimed at developing and increasing sport participation in Canada” (Mills’ Report, 1998, p. 81). At the same time, governments and others acknowledge that the lack of coordination between the sport system and the education system will continue in the absence of any infrastructure or framework offering formal linkages or opportunities to collaborate (Donnelly & Kidd, 2003; Mills’ Report, 1998; Sport: The Way Ahead, 1992; Thibault & Harvey, 1997; Vail, 1993). Federal funding focuses predominantly on elite sport yet claims the first objective of strategic direction for sport system development is “to collaborate with partners to promote healthy, technically and ethically sound, broad based sport participation opportunities for Canadians” (Sport Canada, 1998, p.3). This study examined existing collaborative programs between schools, community sport clubs, and provincial sport organizations. When organizations from different sectors collaborate they can create synergy to deal with a common problem, (Huxham & Macdonald, 1992; Selsky, 1991) and that synergy can lead to the development of capacity within a system to address a social issue (Selsky, 1991).

### **Environmental Pressures on Non-Profit Sport Organizations**

In order to understand inter-organizational processes between public schools, community sport clubs, and provincial sport organizations (PSOs), it is necessary to highlight environmental pressures that have led to collaboration between these organizations striving to achieve mutual goals under conditions of resource constraint. Organizational theories acknowledge the complexity, uncertainty, and turbulence within any organizational environment (Wood & Gray, 1991) and the non-profit sector is no exception. This sector is

characterized by a lack of control over external resources due to organizations' inability to consistently generate sufficient resources (Hall & Reed, 1998; Stone, Bigelow & Crittenden, 1999), and the need to manage multiple and sometimes conflicting constituencies (Alexander, 1998; Stone et al., 1999). Economic uncertainty within the Canadian sport environment during the last decade stems from a decrease in sport funding from both the government and private sectors (Babiak, 2003; Thibault & Harvey, 1997).

Since the inception of the Canadian sport system in the early 1970s, the federal government has funded sport at the national level, while provincial governments are responsible for the funding of PSOs (Howell & Howell, 1981). In a sport environment with scarce resources, the funding structure at the national level, perceived as a zero-sum game, promoted competition between sport organizations at all levels (Babiak, 2003). Economic downturn has affected all levels of government, and political decisions have reduced funding to organizations in the non-profit sector making it necessary for them to broaden their reach to secure sponsors and partners in the corporate domain (Alexander, 1998; Hall & Reed, 1998). These pressures affect sport and physical activity initiatives, limiting the ability of PSOs to fulfill their objectives in the delivery of sport programs from grassroots to elite (Thibault & Harvey, 1997).

Though budgets have been cut, there are rising expectations and social pressures from the public not only to maintain a constant level of service for the general population (Thibault et al., 1999), but to put more athletes on the podium at the international level (Babiak, 2003). The role of Sport Canada, as the federal funding body, has shifted from the sole provider to a partner with national sport federations (NSFs). This pro-partnership bias directed at the elite level of sport over the last decade has filtered down to the provinces and PSOs have been

encouraged to establish their own partnerships to support and maintain the delivery of their services to the community (Babiak, 2003; Sport Canada, 1997; Thibault & Harvey, 1997), increasing the competition for resources and fragmentation within the sport community. In addition to supporting elite programs on limited resources, a recent shift in government policy acknowledging the need to increase participation in sport (Canadian Sport Policy, 2002), has in turn increased pressure on the sport organizations to broaden their mandates.

Uncertainty is also heightened within the non-profit sector by the dependence of many organizations upon volunteer labour and financial donations (Hall & Reed, 1998). The provincial sport community of PSOs and community clubs, encompasses high profile sports with Olympic status and/or professional leagues (like ice hockey, basketball, tennis, baseball and soccer), to lower profile or "kitchen table" sports (like orienteering or ultimate Frisbee). Some of these organizations mirror the professionalism of their sport with adequate budgets and staffing while others, not qualifying for government funding, rely solely on volunteer commitment to fund and deliver their programs. Volunteer roles within the sport community range from positions on boards of directors down to providing food at games, and whatever the position, volunteers bring their own expectations to their roles which must be met for their continued participation (Hall & Reed, 1998).

The sport community must also contend with social perceptions that often value the pressing needs of health and education over sport and physical activity, even though physical inactivity has been shown to impact negatively on health and educational performance (Kidd, 1999). These perceptions limit the resources available to all levels of sport and physical activity. This was illustrated by the response to the 2010 Vancouver Olympic bid when many people called for spending on health care and education before sports.

Economic pressures have resulted in a “crisis of accountability” (Stone et al., 1999, p. 379) for organizations operating in the non-profit sector, as funding providers expect measurable feedback to assess the viability of their contributions. Performance measures within the non-profit sector are difficult to identify (Alexander, 1998; Stone et al., 1999) “because of their vague goals, multiple constituencies and the uncertain relationship between service activities and outcomes” (Stone et al., 1999, p. 382). Changes in the sport environment have increased pressures for sport organizations to be more accountable in the assessment of their management practices. Evaluation of organizational performance in the sport system is difficult as government funding bodies often judge success by athletes' presence on the victory podium not on the operations of the organization (Babiak, 2003). In the world of competitive sport with its multitude of variables affecting performance such as; finances to attend crucial competitive events, availability of qualified coaches, performance enhancing drug use, athletes' individual performance on a given day, injuries and inevitable retirement, accountability is problematic for sport administrators.

Another source of complexity for organizations within the non-profit environment is the “intersection of competing institutional spheres” (Alexander, 1998, p. 273) or the blurring of boundaries (Selsky, 1991). Non-profit organizations, squeezed by declining funding from traditional sources such as government, are pushed to adopt a business approach to achieve legitimacy and accountability while existing under the jurisdiction of non-profit regulations (Alexander, 1998; Hall & Reed, 1998). Many PSOs receiving government funding but operating as non-profits have been encouraged by government to seek partnerships with the private sector to offset funding cuts (Thibault & Harvey, 1997). Thibault et al. (1999) found these inter-sectoral partnerships contributed to conflicting values, as non-profits mandated to

deliver programs to fill social needs had to include a for-profit attitude to accommodate the needs of partners. As community sport clubs struggle financially, they must market their programs in order to draw in participants, often competing with schools and recreation programs for the same children within the community (Smale & Reid, 1995; Vail, 1993; 1994). Increasing operating costs for clubs result not only in increased costs for children and their families, limiting their ability to participate, it also diverts the organizations' attention to fund raising from their traditional mandate.

These environmental pressures and complexities have contributed to a lack of attention to the grassroots level of the sport system on the part of community sport clubs and provincial sport organizations, affecting their ability to develop and deliver programs to a broad range of children. This delivery gap has made the role of public school physical education more important in providing opportunities to get children physically active (Donnelly & Kidd, 2003; Kidd, 1999).

### **Environmental Pressures on Public Elementary Schools**

Economic, socio-political pressures are also present in the public school environment which includes provincial Ministries of Education, school boards, elementary and high schools as well as colleges and universities (Thibault & Harvey, 1997). The school system is positioned to play three major roles within the Canadian sport delivery system; the curriculum introduces children to sporting activities in physical education (PE), schools provide facilities for the practice of sport, and through intramural and inter-school competitions children are initiated into sport competition (Thibault & Harvey, 1997). Parents also play an integral role as part of the school community by creating sport and physical activity opportunities for their children through financing and volunteering their time.

Even though this description of the current sport system suggests a progression of opportunities for children to engage in sport and physical activity, from PE through to the elite level, the increase in physical inactivity and childhood obesity within the Canadian population implies there are flaws within the system. Physical education in public schools lies at the foundation of the sport system (Mills' Report, 1998; Sport: The Way Ahead, 1992), yet is undervalued for many reasons both within education and society as a whole (CAHPERD, 1998; Donnelly & Kidd, 2003; Hardman & Marshall, 1999; Kidd, 1999). In the absence of a national curriculum, provinces are responsible for learning outcomes and expectations, resulting in inconsistencies between regions (Mills' Report, 1998) especially in the subject of physical education (CAHPERD, 1998; Donnelly & Kidd, 2003).

The Canadian Teachers Federation indicates that only one-third of all schools in Canada have structured PE programs (CAHPERD, 1998). Across the country, physical education ranges "from 5% to 20% of class hours, with teachers ranging from those with no training in physical education to physical educators with specialized skills" (Sport: The Way Ahead, 1992, p. 109).

The fact that there is no clear evidence of the best way to prepare public school teachers in physical education is demonstrated by the number of different models of teacher preparation employed across Canada and often across a single province (Bedingfield, 1995, p. 13).

The trend to train generalist rather than specialist teachers extends across the country (BCTF, 2000; Bailey, 1994; Bedingfield, 1995; Mills' Report, 1998) possibly maximizing the use of personnel and scarce resources, but minimizing the quality of the experiences in courses such as PE. In Ontario the ratio of students to PE teachers is currently 1185 to 1 (Donnelly & Kidd, 2003). The emphasis on academics and technological education also impinges on curriculum needs. As technological education increasingly demands a place in schools, its

priority requires constant teacher training and expensive equipment upgrades (Hardman & Marshall, 1999), placing greater pressure on already stretched education dollars (Jantzen, 1995).

Within older schools, the quality of PE facilities is deteriorating and decreased capital costs resulting from thinly spread tax dollars translate into long waits for new gymnasiums and equipment (Jantzen, 1995). Due to competition for curriculum time, some educators feel physical activity should be addressed by community organizations. However this can be problematic. If schools do not value physical activity, many parents assume it is not a necessary component in a child's life, and physical activity then has to compete with other extra-curricular activities (CAHPERD, 1998) or is denied to those families unable to pay.

Physical performance improvements are left to the domain of interscholastic programs, community programs and clubs. Therefore the benefits of these activities tend to be enjoyed by students who have the time, ability, inclination and socio-economic backgrounds to do so. It is little wonder that it is this exclusive group who tends to incorporate healthy physical activity most often into their adult lives (McKinty, 1999, p.37).

Worried about the decline of physical education in Canadian schools, sport researchers have attempted to illuminate this social problem within an economic framework in order to gain the attention of policy makers (Donnelly & Kidd, 2003; Kidd, 1999). Building on the United Nations "Rights of the Child Convention" that stated that "children have a right to free and compulsory primary education, which seeks to develop the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential", Kidd (1999, p. 4) claims policy makers cannot afford to ignore the decline of PE in schools. Explaining that the benefits of physical activity are most notable for low- income and at-risk children, he points out that:

"... schools are best situated to provide opportunities because they are a ready made avenue to reach the largest amount of children. This may seem

to be a tremendous burden for physical education teachers, or beyond the scope of generalists, however communities can be creative in organizing these programs. Shared use ventures between schools and community organizations can be pursued" (Kidd, 1999, p. 8).

### **Fractionated organizational communities and the development of systemic capacity**

Concerned with social problems which fail to receive government attention and "fall through the cracks", Selsky (1991, p. 92) looked at the possibility of certain organizations from different sectors of a community coming together to deliver a program, with shared values, a common goal and aspirations for long term continuity. Without this, Selsky warns that fractionated organizational communities will remain which he defines as:

a community differentiated by several loosely organized clusters of functionally similar organizations characterized by some interdependencies based on tasks, resources and goals although their relations are weakly regulated in formal or legal terms, the organizations operate in their own task environment, but are subject to many of the same contextual influences" (1991, p. 94).

To counter this development, he argued that the functional efficiency or systemic capacity of these communities must be enhanced to achieve "an increased ability to identify shared problems, develop policies and programs to address them, and mobilize appropriate resources effectively to fulfill these policies and programs"(Selsky, 1991, p. 94). This particular focus is important for non-profit sport organizations unable to fulfill their mandates in a challenging environment of diminishing financial resources, characterized by conflicting values of volunteerism and professionalism, blurred sectoral boundaries, and multiple constituents (Selsky, 1991).

The portion of the Canadian sport system identified by the federal government with the responsibility for delivering grassroots sport opportunities to children includes provincial sport organizations, community sport clubs, and public elementary schools. Using Selsky's

definition, these three types of organizations could be considered to belong to the fractionated organizational community of sport. The three provincial sport organizations in the research are loosely connected, not only as part the provincial sport system, but also as members of Sport BC, an umbrella organization serving the administrative needs of its members and advocating on their behalf for the “collective position of amateur sport” (Sport BC, Annual Report, 1998-99, p. 2). Although they differ in size and structural configuration, these PSOs have similar roles and functions, through their designation by the provincial government as the authorized provider of their sport within the province. They operate in their own task environments, but are subject to many of the same socio-political and economic influences affecting both their ability to deliver grassroots opportunities as well as provide support for the elite level of sport (Babiak, 2003).

While the concept of systemic capacity is difficult to define, it touches on elements of “survival, power, institutions, systems and conforming to local expectations and external standards” (Hondale, 1986, p. 13). In the organizational context, organizations having capacity demonstrate the ability to “anticipate change, make informed decisions about policy, develop programs to implement policies, attract and absorb resources, manage resources and evaluate performance to guide future actions” (Hondale, 1986, p. 13-15). The general aim of development in the context of systemic capacity is to increase the ability of a community to manage its environment through collective decision-making and action. Increasing systemic capacity in the community is achieved through the development of policies and programs that mobilize the appropriate resources such as goods, services, information, and support (Selsky, 1991).

Selsky (1991) identified three different approaches to development through the mobilization of resources. The individual approach, involving two organizations in a shared environment pooling certain resources toward a common goal, differs from the segmental approach where more than two organizations contribute resources equally anticipating equitable returns. The third and more complex common approach, occurs when “organizations join others to forge a shared environment and through joint actions improve their collective efficiency” (Selsky, 1991, p. 98). The resulting synergy of the combined resources leads to benefits for the collective in the long term.

This framework presents a progression from the less complicated collaborative action between two organizations or groups, to the more complex involvement of multiple organizations. The involvement of organizations responsible for the delivery of grassroots physical opportunities for children might benefit in the long term from consideration of the common approach, if they were to consider the mutual benefits of shared goals through coordinated action.

### **Collaboration as a strategy for sharing resources to address social problems**

Pressures have increased turbulence and uncertainties in organizational environments (Astley, 1984; Astley & Fombrun, 1983) with implications for both structure and processes within organizations (Slack, 1997). Collaborative partnerships involving the sharing of resources between the private, public and non-profit sectors have been formed as a strategy to alleviate the impact of environmental pressures on the functioning and efficiency of organizations (Kanter, 1989; Provan & Milward, 2001; Slack, 1997; Thibault et al., 1999; Wood & Gray, 1991). In the public and non-profit sectors where agencies struggle to provide services with less, collaborative initiatives are needed to address pressing social problems that

organizations are unable to solve independently (Crompton, 1998; Huxham & Macdonald, 1992; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Kernaghan, 1993; Logsdon, 1991; Provan & Milward, 2001; Selsky, 1991; Van de Ven, 1976), to promote organizational legitimacy within the community, and to contribute to the public good by adding social value through equal opportunity (Kanter, 1999; Sharfman, Yan, & Gray, 1991).

The social problem domain, involving “a set of actors, either individuals, groups and/or organizations that become joined by a common problem or interest” (Gray, 1985, p. 912), becomes an inter-organizational domain with varied stakeholders when the problem spans different sectors of the environment. These linkages have also been described as a networks, or “a collection of programs and services that span a broad range of cooperating but legally autonomous organizations” (Provan & Milward, 2001, p. 417) within the public and non-profit sectors. At the community level where linkages are configured horizontally, the foundation for developing systemic capacity lies in successful collaborative action among organizations in the problem domain. Social issues with broad reaching consequences such as physical inactivity in children need a shared outlook in the search for long-term solutions. While the pro-partnership bias has been an organizational focus at the elite level of sport for decades, prevailing environmental pressures at the grassroots level have necessitated the need to form linkages to enhance inter-organizational coordination between the sport and education sectors.

How do these collaborative projects begin? Preconditions to successful collaboration between different sectors of society have been identified as; trust, shared values, common goals, scarce resources, shared language, symbols and culture, perceived status and legitimacy of partners (Kernaghan, 1993; Oliver, 1990; Roberts & Bradley, 1991; Smith, Carroll & Ashford, 1995; Uhlik, 1995; Vail, 1993; Van de Ven, 1976). Other considerations include

structural determinants such as; the number of partners in a relationship, the extent of their past social connections affecting perceptions around reliability and predictability, and the social context in which the cooperation occurs (Smith et al., 1995). The combination of psychological and structural determinants illustrates the interaction of personal and organizational components involved in successful collaborative action. The role of managers is fundamental to the collaborative process because ultimately collaboration and partnerships involve dynamic, personal connections between individuals representing organizations (Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Selsky, 1991; Spekman et al., 1998; Uhlik, 1995).

At the beginning of the relationship, when the stakeholders mutually acknowledge the problematic issue, there must be a degree of recognized interdependence and legitimacy with an organization or individual acting as a convener to initiate collaborative problem solving (Gray, 1985; Oliver, 1990; Selsky, 1991; Wood & Gray, 1991). Babiak (2003) in her study of partnerships with a Canadian National Sports Centre also stressed the importance of a broker or convener in the initiation of partnerships in the sport environment. Logsdon (1991) found that with collaboration addressing social issues, the interests of the individual organizations and their perceived levels of organizational interdependence were essential factors in the preliminary phase of collaboration. In order to assess common interests, managers of organizations must ask, does the collaborative effort provide short term or long term benefits to the organization, such as stability leading to long term planning, enhanced exposure or legitimacy of the organization in the community? Before cross-sectoral collaboration can be considered, the degree of perceived interdependence between groups needs be acknowledged by participants. Managers must assess whether these groups are instrumental to the

collaborative process and if they have the necessary resources to address the social problem effectively.

Resources play a pivotal role in inter-organizational collaboration (Crompton, 1998; Kernaghan, 1993; Selsky, 1991; Thibault & Harvey, 1997; Thibault et al., 1999; Van de Ven, 1976). Managers will allocate scarce resources to collaborative initiatives if they have an impact on the functioning of their organization. Resources needed by non-profits typically include; administrative capacity to manage material resources, information resources to disseminate current information to the community, and normative resources reflecting the legitimacy of the organization which strengthens the delivery of their information to the stakeholders (Selsky, 1991). Babiak, (2003) found this to be the case in the sport environment where partnerships enabled sport organizations to access scarce resources such as financial capital, expertise, and organizational legitimacy in the community. In addition to the internal need for resources, the partnering organizations must also share a commitment to the external problem or opportunity (Van de Ven, 1976). The sharing of resources takes the form of a reciprocal arrangement to increase efficiency of service delivery by reducing the duplication of services that can lead to organizational stability (Kernaghan, 1993; Oliver, 1990). In addition to increased efficiency, collaboration can also improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of public institutions in the delivery of services (Kernaghan, 1993).

As public institutions assumed to be sport delivery partners (Mills' Report, 1998; Sport: The Way Ahead, 1992; Thibault & Harvey, 1997; Vail, 1993), public schools appear poised to benefit from this type of collaboration with PSOs and community clubs to improve the effectiveness of their sport education delivery and allow them to be responsive to the issue of physical inactivity in the school population. Studying school/sport collaboration in England,

Campbell (1995) found that to ensure co-operation across sectors, networks need to be established.

Partnership is about co-operation and enterprise to create structured pathways of opportunity for pupils from their curriculum time to extra-curricular time to their community (Campbell, 1995, p. 10).

Thibault et al. agree that linkages allow access to “financial, human and material resources as well as new strategies for delivering products and/or services” (1999, p.127). Resources shared in school/sport collaboration include physical and human resources in the school and community (Campbell, 1995).

PSO managers realize that to increase participation at the grassroots level, it is to their benefit to approach schools where children have the time to learn and teachers have the need to fulfill their PE curriculum with subject matter that meets the Integrated Resource Package (IRP)<sup>3</sup> requirements. Teachers recognize that PSOs have the expertise and resources to deliver programs that enhance their PE content. By delivering sport programs at schools there is an opportunity to establish relationships or linkages with schools giving students and their parents, exposure and awareness of community sport programs. This exposure could contribute to long term stability for both the PSO and community clubs through increased membership and to enhanced PE opportunities for students over the years. Reviewing relevant theoretical contributions around the benefits and challenges of partnerships provides a foundation to explore the perceived benefits and challenges of inter-sectoral collaboration between sport and education.

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<sup>3</sup> The IRP is the B C Ministry of Education document that guides the curriculum for each subject.

### **Benefits of collaboration**

The perceived benefits of collaboration provide the motivation for establishing partnerships (Kanter, 1989) as well as maintaining them (Smith, et al., 1995). The benefits resulting from the sharing of organizational resources are not limited to the sharing of financial resources. Benefits taking the form of either tangible or intangible assets (Thibault et al., 1999) include: the reduced duplication of services leading to improved efficiencies (Crompton, 1998; Kanter, 1989; Kernaghan, 1998; Oliver, 1990; Thibault et al., 1999; Vail, 1992; 1993) establishing organizational stability in turbulent times (Astley & Fombrun, 1983); gaining a new found sense of organizational legitimacy and exposure (Oliver, 1990; Sharfman et al., 1991); sharing human, administrative and material resources such as expertise, knowledge and networks to deliver a service together (Campbell, 1995; Crompton, 1998; Gray & Wood, 1991; Kanter, 1989; Selsky, 1991) and the achievement of goals which are unattainable independently (Huxham & Macdonald, 1992; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Kanter, 1989; Kernaghan, 1998; Provan & Milward, 2001; Selsky, 1991; Van den Ven, 1976).

Babiak (2003) identified various collaborative benefits expected by sport organizations entering into partnerships with each other and the private sector:

... to obtain necessary funds to continue providing programs and services to athletes, to attain a degree of legitimacy in the sport and corporate world, and to gain skills, knowledge and expertise that might not have been possible to develop and implement by operating independently (2003, p. 12).

Collaboration through resource sharing can also produce unexpected benefits. For example, the sharing of financial resources within an inter-organizational context can “solve a community problem” and at the same time “create a better quality of life” (Crompton, 1998, p.92). Babiak

(2003) found that the collaborative relationship itself can be considered a resource providing legitimacy to organizations which in turn, helped attract other potential partners.

If developing linkages is considered an effective strategy to share resources in order to improve effectiveness and provide opportunities to groups (Thibault et al., 1999), what are the actual benefits accrued to schools, community sport groups and PSOs as a result of collaboration? The expectation of this research was to identify benefits among those groups participating in the school/sport programs as a result of linking services.

### **Challenges of Inter-organizational Collaboration**

While there are benefits to collaboration, they are often accompanied by challenges. In the enthusiasm to initiate partnerships and experience the benefits of such collaborative arrangements, participating organizations often underestimate the challenges involved in bringing together groups with different structures, missions, mandates and constraints to achieve a common goal (Frisby, Thibault & Kikulis, 2004; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Kanter, 1989; Uhlik, 1995). Challenges to successful partnerships include: “uneven levels of commitment to the goals; power imbalances related to each organization’s contribution of resources and information or expertise; the imbalance of benefits; premature trust and under management” (Kanter, 1989, p. 190-191). Vulnerabilities in partnerships often stem from poor communication resulting in a lack of adequate and accurate information about the partners’ organizations as well as their intentions and policies (Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Uhlik, 1995). Some of the challenges are a result of organizations with different structures working toward a common goal (Huxham & Macdonald, 1992; Huxham & Vangen, 2000), while others are a result of limitations of the actual collaborative process due to under management practices (Frisby et al., 2004). The pro-partnership bias in the sport environment, accentuating

collaborative benefits (Babiak, 2003), needs to be balanced by considerations of the consequences of under managed partnerships (Frisby et al., 2004). If the move to collaborate is a result of economic pressures creating scarce resources for staffing and programs, managers and their organizations must take a realistic look at the capacity of their already stretched administration to manage additional relationships.

Conditions leading to challenges between schools, community sport clubs, and PSOs stem from environmental pressures, but other contributing factors have been attributed to the “traditional values disconnect” (Vail, 1993, p. 22). Government documents such as *Sport: The Way Ahead*, (1992), and the *Mills’ Report*, (1998) corroborate Vail’s findings that there is a perception that schools see sport as over focused on skill acquisition and winning and losing, as opposed to the development of the whole person. From another viewpoint, sports assume that schools don’t “value sport, the sport experience in and of itself, or the pursuit of excellence” (Vail, 1993, p.22). This research looked for evidence to support these differences in values between sport and schools, but assumed that because these non-profit and public sector organizations were working toward greater involvement in sport and physical activity for children, these collaborative programs would allow time for the development of trust and mutual objectives (Crompton, 1998; Huxham & Macdonald, 1992; Roberts & Bradley, 1992).

In pro-partnership environment where managers seek membership in collaborative initiatives to achieve successful outcomes for their organizations, they must also be aware of the potential challenges involved in the inter-organizational collaborative process. Public and non-profit organizations striving to address social issues together to achieve collaborative advantage experience difficulties in the management of these inter-organizational partnerships (Frisby et al., 2004; Huxham & Macdonald, 1992; Huxham & Vangen, 2000). Referred to by

Huxham & Vangen as collaborative inertia, difficulties facing managers include: “problems negotiating joint purpose, communicating between different languages and cultures, developing joint modes of operating, managing the perceived power imbalances, managing the accountability of the joint venture to the organizations and their constituents, and the sometimes overwhelming logistics of working with others” (Huxham & Vangen, 2000, p. 773). Partnerships based on shared interests needed regular maintenance and support (Kanter, 1989), and while communication between stakeholders is important in the development and maintenance of partnerships (Thibault et al., 1999) organizations must devote administrative time and financial resources to the successful functioning of these relations. Frisby et al.’s (2004) study of partnerships in the leisure service sector revealed that many organizations lacked the managerial capacity to sustain successful partnerships and the researchers formulated a diagnostic framework for understanding the organizational dynamics contributing to under-managed partnerships. Dynamics contributing to inadequate managerial structures included a lack of planning and policy guidelines, unclear roles and reporting channels, and insufficient human resources, while the dynamics contributing to inadequate managerial processes included insufficient training, insufficient time devoted to partnerships, difficulties negotiating competing values, a lack of communication and consultation, poor co-ordination, insufficient supervision, a lack of evaluation, and a lack of partnership retention and termination strategies” (Frisby et al., 2004, p.23). PSOs managers entering into collaborative programs with a long-term view face many of these challenges. Considerations of these difficulties and the insights they offer about potential challenges to the viability of successful school/sport collaboration will be revisited in the findings.

## Summary

The Canadian government claims that schools are the cornerstone of the sport delivery system (Mills' Report, 1998), yet those within the system agree the present situation is inadequate to meet the physical needs of Canadian children. While there is agreement that public schools are the appropriate venue to impart skills and attitudes to children regarding the long-term benefits of physical activity and sport, there is also a realization that the issue is far reaching, extending beyond schools to the whole community. Before stakeholders in a problem domain can form a network with the systemic capacity capable of creating social change (Selsky, 1991), a collective strategy must be developed that centers on the formation of strong, functioning, collaborative links between individual groups or organizations. The success of smaller collaborative initiatives, which build trust between traditionally distinct organizations such as sport organizations and schools, can create the initiative and momentum for longer-term goals (Selsky, 1991). Roberts and Bradley (1991) found support for this in their study of public education policy initiatives where innovation or change occurred gradually and in many cases was facilitated through pilot projects that built trust among stakeholders.

This study addresses the need for more research on actual collaboration between sport and education (Vail, 1993) and provides evidence on the specific nature of collaboration between schools, PSOs and community sport clubs. The research seeks to identify the benefits and challenges experienced by participant organizations, and in the final analysis asks whether the benefits outweighed the challenges? In the next chapter, the methods used to address the research questions are presented.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Research Methods**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter the reasons for using a qualitative comparative case study approach to understanding: i) environmental pressures, ii) collaborative strategies used to share resources, and iii) benefits and challenges resulting from this collaboration will be outlined. The viewpoints of the teachers (9), coaches (3), community club representatives (2) and PSO managers (3) representing three provincial sport organizations, nine public elementary schools, and two community sport clubs is vital for the clarification and understanding of the types of pressures, strategies and benefits and challenges they experienced within their organizations at the time of the research.

Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2)

This chapter also provides a description of the specific organizations in the sample, the methods of data collection and data analysis, as well as ethical considerations.

#### **Qualitative Research Methods and Location of the Researcher**

Qualitative research as an interpretive approach searches for understandings of patterns of social interaction, and acknowledges the subjectivity and bias of both the researcher and the researched in the meanings attributed to observed behaviours. Using the researcher as the instrument of data collection, qualitative research employs ethnographic methods such as observations, document analysis, and interviews to collect information. This kind of research is

greatly influenced by the perceptions and intentions of the researcher, as indicated in the following quote.

Reflexivity or the conscious acknowledgment of the values, biases and experiences the researcher brings to the work, acknowledges that the orientations of the researchers will be shaped by their socio-historical locations (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 16).

Sensitized by the critical perspective that addresses relations of power affecting the people within the research (e.g., those being studied as well as the researcher), I am aware that my origins within a privileged socio-economic class has allowed me to be educated and known as a female athlete in the same community where I am conducting my research. My past volunteer administrative work in a provincial umbrella sport organization (whose members include provincial sport organizations in the study), places my participation in the dominant structures of the provincial sport system at the policy making level. As a parent of children within the school system, I have become aware of the benefits my children experience in their sporting activities and concerned for those children of inactive parents who are not able to take advantage of community sport opportunities whatever the reason. Although the focus of my study stands to benefit groups marginalized from these activities, I am researching within a system where I feel confident, legitimate and in some areas experienced.

### **Comparative Case Studies**

Certain characteristics are essential properties of qualitative case studies; first, they focus on problems within a particular context and by using detailed or thick description (Geertz, 1981), allow the reader to interpret values, attitudes, norms and notions within that context. Secondly, by addressing contemporary problems, these types of studies tend to be inductive in nature (Stake, 1995). They can present new meanings of phenomenon, confirm or extend the readers experience and by doing so uncover new relationships and emerging theories about the social

phenomena of interest (Merriam, 1988). Knowledge learned through case study analysis can make unique contributions to the field of educational research because it is more concrete, more contextual, more developed by the readers' interpretation and is based on reference populations (Stake, 1995). Qualitative case studies increase our understanding of "individual, organizational, social and political phenomenon" (Yin, 1994, p. 2), and in education are useful when issues of practice and policy need a deeper understanding. For these reasons this approach was used to better understand the organizational relationships of contemporary collaborative programs within educational and sport settings. Physical education and the issue of physical inactivity have been identified as areas of concern at the policy level, yet demand a closer look to gain a deeper understanding of the problems of current practices and lend insight into directions for future policies.

Conducting more than one case study, allows researchers to "gain insight into a research topic by concurrently studying multiple cases in one overall research study" (Johanson & Christensen, 2000, p. 329). Multiple cases allow for comparisons and can increase confidence in the findings when patterns are uncovered across cases. They are also helpful in explaining differences that might be uncovered. Although comparative case studies are advantageous for their comparative value in looking at similarities and differences, it is important to keep in mind that they offer opportunities to learn rather than opportunities to generalize (Stake, 1995). Sport organizations have different organizational structures, membership sizes, levels of recognition and profiles within the community, as well as particular equipment and facility needs. Schools have different populations, staff sizes, locations, capabilities, social and resource needs. This comparative case study allows programs of different PSOs to be scrutinized in different school settings to learn more about the influences of environmental pressures and the types of benefits

and challenges encountered through the sharing of various resources. Describing the contexts of multiple case studies thoroughly, provides the opportunity to surmise whether similar patterns in the data would be likely, given the context of other inter-organizational relations in education and sport.

### **The Case Studies**

The case studies comprising this research involved school programs initiated by three different provincial sport organizations (PSOs) in British Columbia. Centered in the Greater Vancouver Area, and focusing on the portion of these programs carried out within a single school district, the study examined the workings of each PSO school/program. The case studies, identified as Sport A, B, and C, involved different sports with varying organizational structures and resources bases, yet all sharing the desire to increase the exposure of their sport. The overall intention of all the sports was to initially increase participation over the long term that could lead to increased memberships in their organizations. Sport A and C school programs included the participation of community clubs in the area to varying degrees, while Sport B had no club affiliated with the program in the school district studied. Although there were some differences, the school programs were implemented in a similar manner as will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Figures 1, 2 and 3 presented at the end of this section, provide a summary description of the inter-organizational partnerships between the PSOs, community sport clubs, and schools participating that comprised the three case studies. The following section provides additional information about the provincial sport organizations (PSOs) and why they were chosen for the case studies and the specific nature of their programs.

### **Case Study 1: Sport A**

Sport A is an Olympic team sport, played by males and females across the country. In some areas of BC, girls compete in Sport A on high school teams culminating in a provincial championship. There is no similar high school level of competition within BC School Sports for boys. Although inter-varsity competition exists for women across the country, only one university in the province has a varsity men's team. Subsequently playing opportunities for school aged boys are restricted to community club league play and the elite stream.

In the past the community club of Sport A has run an ad hoc school program, in the catchment area of the club when they have needed new members. Historically the programs were initiated by the volunteer executive primarily to attract male members for the junior side of the club. The current program was a collaborative initiative initiated by the PSO, with the involvement of the club as an afterthought when they became aware of the program through the involvement of their elite national players. In this current program, the men's side of the PSO initiated a grassroots elementary schools program in 2001 to address a shortage of elite male players in the province. This research includes only the portion of the program that operated in conjunction with the community club (Club A) involved in the study and involves only the men's side of the PSO.

Sport A was chosen because it is not considered a traditional elementary school sport (therefore would be considered new PE content for many elementary students and teachers), is played extensively in the region year round, has a large participation base for females and males from youth to masters level, and it is popular all over the world. Skills acquired in this sport could be utilized from participation to elite levels and from youth to the masters' age groups, allowing lifelong participation and social connection.

### **Case Study 2: Sport B**

Sport B, played by males and females, separately and together, is both a team and an individual sport. The range of participation includes children to masters and extends to elite players participating at the Olympic and professional levels. The professional arm of Sport B offers access to funding outside of the Canadian sport system and increased exposure through television and magazines. This sport is a sanctioned provincial high school sport though most players get their training through memberships in private clubs. Sport B has had a grassroots school program for some years in this region run as a private enterprise, however funding from the professional arm (originating predominately in the United States) has allowed the schools program to be incorporated into the community development department of the PSO. Sport B has existing partnerships with corporate and community partners.

Sport B was chosen for the study, because it is played all over the world and can be a sport for life. Although access to outdoor facilities is hindered due to inclement weather in this region, limited public facilities are available at minimal to no cost and used weather permitting year round. Sport B had no club participating in the schools program in the region under study.

### **Case Study 3: Sport C**

Sport C involves males and females from participatory to elite levels. Although part of the Canadian sport system through its national and provincial bodies, this sport is considered a "kitchen table" sport because it is managed by volunteers with no paid staff. Hosting national championships, the national sport body sends a national team to represent Canada at World Championships, but the athletes must finance their own way. Though it is a national sport in some European countries, Sport C has low participation and limited exposure in the province,

though it is geographically well suited to the sport. Sport C is not considered a school sport in that there are no high school championships. This sport was chosen for the study because it is an individual outdoor sport, incorporating both physical and outdoor education skills that are invaluable to anyone wanting to be physically active in the out-of-doors. Sport C has run an elementary schools program through volunteers for the past six years and has held a provincial elementary schools event for the last two, but is not sanctioned as a provincial high school sport.

### **The elementary school sport programs**

These collaborative programs offered by sport organizations at the elementary schools are intended to provide both students and teachers' exposure to sport and movement skills, as well as coaching expertise within the PE class. PSO managers initiated contact with the schools in the district and waited for the schools to contact them regarding scheduling and the number of classes to be involved. Sport B preferred to organize their program for the whole school over a two week period. Sport A and C focused on the older grades (usually grades four to seven) but were flexible, hoping to involve as many schools as possible in their desire to gain exposure for their sport.

The PSOs scheduled program times according to the schools' internal scheduling needs and the coaches' availability. The programs lasted anywhere from three to five sessions (classes) with the sport organizations supplying coaches and the necessary equipment while the school offered the students, the curriculum time, teacher supervision and any available resources or facilities. The coaches delivered the programs either in the gymnasium, on the school grounds or at a community facility or park. Sports A and B offered the schools and students equipment purchase opportunities at reduced rates, either through arrangements with

existing corporate partners or through the PSO. This allowed teachers access to equipment for future PE classes and students could have equipment to play or practice outside of school.

Sport B and C were paying programs and within the schools studied the cost was covered by the student. Sport A had a different arrangement during the research period and the cost of the program was covered through an internal agreement involving the PSO, the club and the national sport federation.

The elementary schools approached to participate in the study were identified by the sport organizations and the teachers were then approached by the researcher. Schools included in the study are located within the same school district in order to identify some of the same environmental pressures that affect schools in their decision to be involved in the program. School districts are funded individually and experience different types of pressures, so researching within the same district provided a common starting point to assess the environmental pressures in the problem domain.

**Figure 1**  
**Case Study 1: Inter-organizational collaborations with Sport A**

Sport Club	PSO	Schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12 senior teams (6 men, 6 women)</li> <li>• 50 junior teams (780 juniors, 200 playing on the adult teams)</li> <li>• volunteer executive- 10 positions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• designated member of Sport Canada</li> <li>• men &amp; women's Olympic teams</li> <li>• over 100 adult and junior teams throughout BC</li> <li>• has men's section and women's section to organization<sup>4</sup></li> <li>• men's volunteer executive- 10 positions/ 3 vacant (coaching, high performance coordinator, coaching coordinator)</li> <li>• one paid staff member - men's program development</li> </ul>	<p><b>School 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• middle to high socio-economic status</li> <li>• 450 students-60 special needs, 20% ESL<sup>5</sup></li> </ul> <p><b>Teacher 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teacher training in BC</li> <li>• 5 years experience</li> <li>• split class 6/7, 26 students</li> </ul> <p><b>School 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• French Immersion, middle - high socio-economic status</li> <li>• 300 students- special needs for gifted learners</li> </ul> <p><b>Teacher 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teacher training in Ontario</li> <li>• 9 years experience</li> <li>• grade 4, 28 students</li> </ul> <p><b>School 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mixture of income levels</li> <li>• 230 students- "high" special needs, "many" ESL</li> </ul> <p><b>Teacher 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teacher training in BC</li> <li>• 33 years teaching experience</li> <li>• grade 5, 30 students</li> </ul>
Source: website/2003	Source: website/2003	Source: interviews

<sup>4</sup> This study relates only to the men's section.

<sup>5</sup> ESL- English as a Second Language

**Figure 2**  
**Case Study 2: Inter-organizational collaborations with Sport B**

Sport Club	PSO	Schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• n/a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• designated member of Sport Canada</li> <li>• men &amp; women's Olympic individual/team participants</li> <li>• 13,000 participants throughout BC</li> <li>• volunteer executive- 9 positions/ 12 league representatives</li> <li>• 6 paid staff positions</li> </ul>	<p><b>School 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• single stream French Immersion, k-7</li> <li>• middle socio-economic status on east/west boundary</li> <li>• 445 students-</li> </ul> <p><b>Teacher 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• part time PE specialist</li> <li>• educated in Quebec/ additional specialized training in France</li> <li>• 3 years experience/ 1 year in BC</li> <li>• teaches one PE class/week for each grade</li> </ul> <p><b>School 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English program, grades k-7 - high socio-economic status</li> <li>• 430 students- some special needs</li> </ul> <p><b>Teacher 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teacher training in BC</li> <li>• 33 years experience</li> <li>• grade 6,31 students/5 special needs (1 physical/4 learning disabled)</li> </ul> <p><b>School 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English program, primary annex, grades k-3, multi age groupings, low socio-economic status</li> <li>• 120 students, "high percentage" ESL/ 2 designated special needs</li> </ul> <p><b>Teacher 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teacher training in BC</li> <li>• 15 years teaching experience</li> <li>• multi aged grouping k-3, 2 special needs in class, 23 students</li> </ul>
	Source :website/2003 & interviews	Source: interviews

**Figure 3**  
**Case Study 3: Inter-organizational collaborations with Sport C**

Sport Club	PSO	Schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60 members (ages 13-65)</li> <li>• volunteer executive/ 10 members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• designated member of Sport Canada/ no funding from Sport Canada</li> <li>• provincial government funding</li> <li>• 7 clubs</li> <li>• national representation at World Championship events (6 competitors selected from high performance squad of 20)</li> <li>• 5 executive positions/4 committee chairs</li> <li>• totally volunteer organization</li> </ul>	<p><b>School 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diverse ethnic and socio-economic background</li> <li>• alternative district program/ family grouping Montessori</li> <li>• 200 students</li> </ul> <p><b>Teacher 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teacher training in BC</li> <li>• 24 years experience</li> <li>• mixed grouping grades 4-6/30 students</li> </ul> <p><b>School 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English program/ community school,</li> <li>• middle - high socio-economic status</li> <li>• 350 students- 50% of school ESL students/ some special needs</li> </ul> <p><b>Teacher 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teacher training in BC/ high school</li> <li>• 16 years experience</li> <li>• grade 7/ 28 students</li> </ul> <p><b>School 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English program</li> <li>• feeder school for international ESL students, middle to high socio-economic status</li> <li>• 360 students</li> </ul> <p><b>Teacher 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teacher training in BC/</li> <li>• 5 years teaching experience</li> <li>• grade 6/7, 31 students</li> </ul>
Source: website/2003 &interview	Source: website/2003 & interviews	Source: interviews

## **Methods of data collection**

Data collection methods included interviews, observations and document analysis. Though observations and documents were valuable sources of data, the semi-structured interviews with individuals (n=16) representing different organizations provided the bulk of the data.

### **Interviews**

In qualitative research, interviews are a valuable source of data collection and although time consuming to transcribe, they allow the researcher to address relevant questions to specific actors within the case (Stake, 1995). Semi-structured interviews are the richest source of data for case studies because unlike open-ended interviews they are economical from a time perspective and allow the interviewer to probe in order to redirect the responses to the research questions. The flexible and semi-structured nature of interviews is important in a multiple case study to ensure comparable coverage of the issues, while allowing other issues that had not yet been considered by the researcher to be raised by the interviewees. The greatest advantage of interviews in case studies like these, is the presence of interviewees' voices in the final analysis. Using direct quotes from the interviews in the findings, readers are able to make their own interpretations.

The interviews in this research were originally intended to include from each case study sport, a PSO program manager, a community club representative, and three teachers from three different elementary schools. As the study progressed, it became apparent that coaches should also be interviewed because they were the direct program delivery agents. Input from all these individuals was important because they offered their own understanding of the different

components of the programs, the benefits, challenges, and resource needed to mount the collaborative programs. It is acknowledged by the researcher that the voices of the students would fill a void in this particular research, but as the focus was on those responsible for the development and delivery of the collaborative programs at the organizational level, it is recommended that these voices be included in future research.

At the outset, the intention was to include six interviews (6) for each of the three sports (3) studied for a total of 18. As the research progressed however, only 16 interviews took place. Sport A had six interviews, but Sport B had only five interviews because there was no community club involved in the program. Sport C included five interviews because one person held two positions (coach and PSO representative). Semi-structured interviews, lasting one to one and a half hours, were tape-recorded and the data later transcribed. The interview questions used in this research are provided in Appendix 1.

### **Document analysis**

Documents are considered by some researchers to have limited use in interpretive data collection when interviews provide such a rich source of information. However keeping in mind Goffman's "front stage, back stage" analogy (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995), documents can present the official or "front stage" point of view while the interviews shed light on the "back stage" perspective. As a result, documents offered background material that was helpful in providing the researcher with contextual information before conducting the interviews. For this reason, document collection and analysis occurred throughout the data collection process. Federal government documents from Sport Canada (Sport Canada Objectives, 1998-2001, and The Canadian Sport Policy, 2002-2005) as well as commissioned reports (such as Sport: The Way Ahead, 1992; Mills' Report, 1998) provided background information on the intentions of

past and present federal sport system policies regarding collaboration and increased participation in physical activity and sport. Background information on the PSOs included organizations' websites and printed documents, and videotapes. In addition program specific documents included; brochures, handouts, magazines and information from the PSO or club website, communication from the PSO to the schools (marketing the program, application and permission forms, communication from the schools to the parents and any print material an organization had about the school programs (Sport B's magazine) and sport specific information).

Documents in paper form have a certain "feel" to them allowing the reader to interpret the information in response to certain cues (such as illustrations, font use and subtle merchandising techniques). I felt it was important to view these documents in order to assess their positive or negative contribution to the initiative. Unfortunately Sport A and B were the only sports that I was able to do this with, as Sport C had no print material left to scrutinize and all three sports converted much of their print material to a format that was easily sent as email. As a result some of the "documents" were actually copies of print material reformatted and sent to both recipients and myself through email.

### **Observations**

The initial intention in the research proposal was to observe the elementary school programs in operation and document the findings in a journal. In actuality, observations included school sessions of the programs for two sports (Sport A and B) and the observation of the culminating event within the community setting for Sport C. Observations for Sport A took place in a school where the teacher was unavailable for an interview and for this reason the notes were not included in the transcribed data. Observations for Sport B took place during a training program for the coaches as well as at two regular sessions in a school outside the school district

studied. The training session for the coaches was arranged at this school because the school was unable to pay for the program. In exchange for the training venue the program was delivered for free. Observation of the Sport C event was serendipitous after a chance encounter with a PSO executive member. Intending to observe, I ended up volunteering because of a lack of volunteers for the event. Although this impeded recording in a field journal, it did allow contact with individuals for all the future interviews and provided a great understanding of the pressures within the sport. For these reasons the field journals provided only background information of a general nature and were not specific enough to be transcribed and included in the coding. The observations were helpful by providing a visual basis for the verbal descriptions offered in the interviews and allowing enough of an understanding of the programs to probe the interviewees during the interview process to clarify information.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of ethnographic data is ongoing throughout the research process (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Johnson & Christensen, 2000). The researcher's reflexive analysis between data and emerging theory allows continuous reassessment of the evidence and potential sources for different data. This is an example of the flexibility within the case study design where the researcher must be sensitive to maintaining a focus on the research purpose, but also be creative and open in terms of interpreting the data to allow for the uncovering of new or non-conforming data.

Data was stored initially on small tapes, each labeled with the date, location, sport and name of the interviewee. After transcription into a word document, these documents were printed and filed as well as copied onto a computer disc (CD) and stored on the hard drive. All the

documents were grouped by sport and filed with copies of transcriptions and any forms relating to research ethics requirements (letters of introduction, permission and the ethics form).

During the data collection process, the interviews were transcribed into a Word document and then entered into a qualitative software program, Atlas.ti to facilitate organization, coding and analysis. Only interviews were transcribed because the observations occurred outside the schools in the study and the time needed to transcribe the documents was deemed too costly in relation to the benefits. The documents were coded manually but offered little information outside of the data uncovered during the interviews.

The process of coding began in an abstract manner through the identification of sensitizing concepts (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) such as collaboration, resources, environmental pressures, benefits and challenges. Though theoretical considerations provided the researcher with direction, the benefits of qualitative research allowed new concepts and details to emerge as the process unfolded. During the first stage of analysis, I used open coding to label words in the transcripts and identified conceptual categories based on the concepts explored through the research questions. The categories were then organized to specifically cover topics such as environmental pressures, collaboration, resources, benefits and challenges, and related sub-themes. These categories provided a basis for identifying patterns in the data (e.g. whether or not there was agreement within and between partner groupings).

### **Ethical considerations**

Ethical approval for this study was sought and granted through the Ethical Review Board at the University of British Columbia. In addition, to formal requirements needed to obtain ethical approval, such as assuring anonymity to study participants, issues that may arise from the research were considered. For example, this research could be construed by

some to challenge current employment policies for teachers regarding the use of “outside educators”. It was made clear to research participants that it was not the intention of the researcher to take a position, but merely to identify such policies if they are identified as a challenge to these kinds of collaborative programs.

In order to assure anonymity of the people being interviewed, I have done my best to try and avoid any identifying characteristics when describing the sports and their programs. I found this limited the richness of the findings because some quotes that accurately depicted a situation and lent support to the findings were too revealing about the individual, the organization or the sport.

My personal participation in the sport sector over time has resulted in many connections with people who are involved with these programs either as a participant, volunteer or organizer. I was forthcoming about my position within the research and shared with all those being interviewed the reason for doing this research. The purpose of the research was not to stop at achieving a greater understanding of the nature of these kinds of relationships between organizations, but to move to action guided by the findings. Can programs such as these address the social issue of physical inactivity, by providing skills to teachers and students in elementary school PE? Can these participating organizations maintain these kinds of programs with their current level of access to resources and managerial capacity? I look forward to future opportunities to share these results in an open manner among the participants in order to foster a greater understanding of this type of collaboration among organizations with such a program or those considering creating or entering into a similar program.

The following chapter presents the findings and provides analysis based on the theoretical material included in Chapter Two.

## Chapter Four

### Findings and Discussion

The findings in this chapter will be presented in relation to the research questions beginning with environmental pressures leading to collaboration, followed by collaborative strategies used to share resources, and the benefits and challenges of collaboration. In each case, the findings are presented from the perspectives of the partners participating in the collaborative school sport programs. These included representatives from two sport clubs, three provincial sport organizations, and nine public elementary schools.

#### Environmental Pressures Leading to Collaboration

Managers of organizations look externally to collaborate with other organizations in response to pressures in the environment which limit their ability to fulfill their goals and mandates. Understanding environmental pressures from the perspective of the partners clarifies the reasons they seek to collaborate and identifies the resources shared during the process.

#### Economic and Socio-political Pressures - Sport Clubs<sup>6</sup>

Sport A and Sport C community clubs, exist in a non-profit environment where political decisions at municipal, provincial, and federal levels of government have resulted in decreased funding for their organizations (Babiak, 2003; Hall & Reed, 1998; Thibault et al., 1999; Thibault & Harvey, 1997). *[Funding] has changed over the years, mainly through government programs. There was a time when we actually paid all of our coaches (Sport A/Club).* As revealed in the following quotation, the lack of funding for these clubs has

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<sup>6</sup> Two clubs were interviewed for the study Sport A club (Club A) and Sport C club (Club C). Sport B was not included in this section of the findings because it did not have a club involved with the schools program that was situated within the geographical boundaries of the study.

severely limited their ability to run their programs, pay coaches and purchase the necessary equipment to run events.

*We all share equipment. So a lot of times, when we have a really big event we need more [equipment] than there [is] there. And.... since we don't have very much money any more, all [the] clubs are sort of pooling their resources more. (Sport C/Club)*

These clubs have historically partnered with community groups such as community centres to register participants, distribute program information, and stage workshops, however the current economic climate has resulted in the need for more comprehensive collaborative strategies. In addition to sharing resources with other clubs, Club C is now looking to partner with other sport groups to share facilities, training times and coaches.

Facility needs increasingly reflect the decreased spending for sport and physical activity in municipalities leading to intense competition for facilities between different sports. Facilities for Sport A are under the jurisdiction of schools or the Parks Board, and clubs have to navigate within the different regulations of each jurisdiction to gain access.

*They let us into the gym to do these school programs, but if you try and rent the gym at night and say you're going to play [Sport A], they won't let you do it. (Sport A/Club)*

Openings may be available in schools for some sports in the off-hours, but getting access to Parks Board facilities has proven to be more difficult because of competition from other community groups needing facilities. The following quote lends evidence to Vail's (1992) findings that community sport groups are often competing with each other for resources and access to facilities.

*Like the Vancouver Parks Board, they go with the previous years tenant first. So if you've got 9 o'clock on a Wed. you've always got 9 o'clock on a Wed. until you give it up. So it's very hard to get in, in the first place. (Sport A/Club)*

Low profile sports, like Sports A and C, are not highly visible in the community which poses a challenge to organizations constantly in need of new members to provide stability for the future.

*What we want is simply to make the presence of [the sport] known in the community ... you just have to get the message out that the sport is there. (Sport A/Club)*

In comparison to sports like ice hockey, with professional exposure in the community and media, the low profile attributed to Sports A and C, makes it difficult to attract new members, "because the kids don't want to do it if none of their friends think it is cool" (Sport C/Club). Both the clubs felt the need to specifically target juniors because "we know that if we don't get them at that age, we're never going to get them" (Sport A/Club), but Sport C mentioned difficulties attracting juniors to their sport.

*Right now we don't have that many initiatives that get the beginners out. Basically we have a big website and it has what [Sport C] is on the website and we do a flyer brochure. (Sport C/Club)*

Developing junior initiatives in these sports is difficult in the absence of junior coordinators and qualified committed coaches. The scarcity of financial resources available to clubs to pay for coaches, coordinators, and officials increases the pressure on the club's volunteer executive to fill these positions with qualified volunteers. As volunteer burnout tends to occur, clubs have difficulties meeting the challenge to find junior members, *because as a club member, do we want to put our energy into the club members or [to] get new people? It is always a tough call (Sport C/Club).*

*The biggest challenge for us, are coaches and volunteers in general. Finding them and qualifying them. (Sport A/Club)*

*We don't have enough volunteer power, ... if we had more people that had time to do this, we could definitely train them, if they don't already have their training because you do coaching and officials training once a year or twice a year depending on the level. And we also pay them to go do their NCCP. We have quite a history of older people who have their coaching, but they are sort of out of it now, so we are having a really tough time getting people (Sport C/Club)*

Lack of available time for volunteering was not just limited to addressing the structural needs of the clubs it also had an impact on the time parents have to transport their children to practices and events (Butcher et al, 2001; Hall & Reed, 1998).

*It would be awesome if we got them to come to the [events] on weekends, but that takes parent dedication. You know for these events you have to pre-register so you need someone to fill out the forms for the kids or the kids have to hand it to their parents and the parents have to be willing to look at it ...and then transportation. (Sport C/Club)*

Clubs from low profile sports such as Sport A and C, experienced pressures in the environment that affected the way they function in their daily task environment. The clubs in the study felt they needed to increase their membership, (specifically junior members), to address the lack of qualified coaches and the difficulty of attracting volunteer help from their members. The decline of financial resources available to sport organizations hinders the clubs' capability to pay coordinators and coaches who would be an integral part of meeting the needs of an increased membership. The clubs felt that if they could increase their exposure in the community they would have more success in attracting future members and broadening their resource base.

### **Economic and socio-political pressures-PSOs**

As government funded non-profit organizations directly accountable to the provincial government through the Ministry responsible for sport, provincial sport organizations (PSOs) are positioned in a volatile economic and socio-political environment (Babiak, 2003; Thibault & Harvey, 1997). The decrease in funding at the national level (Sport Canada), where national sport federations (NSFs) struggle to maintain elite programs, has repercussions at the provincial level for PSOs. Sport A received less support from the NSF for programs such as coaching, but for Sport C the decline in funding resulted in a total loss of government support at the national level.

*[There are] limited resources within the environment because [we] have lost [our] funding at the National body. The [NSF] used to get money from the government but they don't get money anymore so they have to get their money from the clubs. (Sport C/Club)*

While PSOs have seen their provincial government funding decrease steadily, the cost of operating the sport continues to rise from grassroots to elite levels.

*Funding is getting cut left, right and centre, and so we need to try other avenues. (Sport A/PSO)*

*Money. It is one of my big frustrations in this department of grassroots and trying to develop or increase the number of people playing the game. I believe that we should have a budget to spend money [then] we would be more successful in bringing in people. We should be spending money, but it is not possible right now. There is no money. (Sport B/PSO)*

Even funded PSOs like Sport A struggled to find and retain staff, affecting their ability to develop programs.

*It's a hard one because there was never a position here in BC as a program director. [The PSO board] had an*

*executive director, and then they left the seat vacant for a couple of years until I came into it. (Sport A/PSO)*

The money PSOs do receive from government requires an accountability process that is reviewed constantly, taking up the PSO's valuable administrative time. One aspect of the accountability process includes membership numbers. *They [PSO] are interested in recruiting [members]. They need to show the government they have numbers (Sport A/Club).* PSOs, operating within regulatory constraints of the non-profit sector, need to find other sources of income to stabilize the uncertainty of their government source of funding as revealed in the following quotations.

*The organization before wasn't showing any income, just government money, which is crazy. (Sport C/PSO)*

*Now we need other sources of revenues to help us with that. I mean we can increase fees, sure, but that's not going to solve anything really. We're not a profitable organization, so we can't do anything essentially (Sport A/PSO)*

When non-profit organizations find it difficult to generate resources they have to focus on the needs of specific groups (Alexander, 1998; Hall & Reed, 1998), and PSOs in this position reported they had to limit their time and resources to the elite level of their sport to the detriment of grassroots development.

The shortage of facilities was also a concern for the PSOs. In order to develop sport and physical activity opportunities at any level, participants need access to facilities. The needs for entry level participants can be different than for elite players, where the facilities must meet the standards of competition sometimes set by the national or international bodies. Both Sport A and B experienced the impact of outdated and limited facilities in a climate of consistently inclement weather.

*There are not enough appropriate facilities for juniors, and the ones available are poor quality. [The executive director is] trying to access private facilities but this involves more money. (Sport A/PSO)*

*During the winter months there are very few facilities and those facilities are normally jammed because everyone [participates] and there are no outdoor facilities during the winter. (Sport B/PSO)*

The economic realities of scarce financial resources, for PSOs in the non-profit sport sector demonstrate the lack of control non-profit organizations have over external resources (Babiak, 2003; Hall & Reed, 1998; Stone et al., 1999; Thibault et al., 1999; Thibault & Harvey, 1997). PSOs that do receive funding also have the added responsibility of accounting for those funds to the government (Alexander, 1998; Hall & Reed, 1998; Stone et al., 1999). Economic pressures shaped by political decisions at the federal and provincial levels of government, limit profit generation and spending for non-profit organizations and lead to their dependence on volunteers to offset scarce resources (Hall & Reed, 1998).

Political pressures also impinge on government attitudes towards spending on sport and the capacity of the sport system to meet the needs and expectations of athletes, coaches and administrators. Currently the situation in the provincial sport system has left gaps at the entry level for these three PSOs, echoing Vail's (1992, 1993) research in Ontario where she found the connections from the national sport federations to the PSO to the community were fragmented.

*We need to have junior development. Canada is a bit of a backwoods. We don't really have a full program. We don't really have full coaching in the way they have it in [other] countries. (Sport C/Club)*

This gap leaves the responsibility of grassroots development to the PSOs because many clubs have so many other problems they cannot focus on addressing grassroots needs. Even though grassroots development appears to be outside the mandate of some PSOs, they feel the need to address the lack of leadership and responsibility in this area. Without a broad base of participation, PSOs may not have enough elite athletes to support their programs that feed into the national level.

*Well, there's nothing in writing, but we ... have recognized that's [entry level] going to be part of our role, I mean people are saying [the NSF] should do it, and we're [saying] that's not where their interest and concern is. They're High Performance and that's where their money's going to come from so forget them. And [if] we leave it to the clubs... the clubs need help. (Sport A/PSO)*

The size of British Columbia and the climate diversity within the different regions compounds the challenges experienced by sport organizations as they are unable to meet their mandate and extend their reach province wide.

*We have a mandate to try and get [Sport B] to every community in BC that's not had it. Obviously it's not possible to get into every community, it's too big a job, too big an area, especially in northern BC. (Sport B/PSO)*

*Sport A isn't known province wide ... a lot of people haven't seen it. [It is known on] the Lower Mainland ... and on the Island. In the Interior, it's a real struggle. (Sport A/PSO)*

Time has become a valued resource and the lack of time for volunteering is a major concern for non-profits. The need for volunteers to keep these sports functioning is often overwhelming.

*Volunteers ..... it's difficult to get people at the times[needed]. You know time is a problem for most people. (Sport B/PSO)*

*Unfortunately, volunteers don't exist anymore. Not many people volunteer just for the sake of volunteering. So we have to give them something .... It's really hard , so now we need other sources of revenues to help us with that. (Sport A/PSO)*

For all organizations dependent on volunteer labour, volunteer burnout is a problem (Hall & Reed, 1998). For organizations such as Sport C the availability of volunteers is even more crucial. With no national funding for administrative support volunteers often function at the club, PSO and NSF levels in administrative and coaching capacities.

*The association doesn't pay any money. It's a totally volunteer organization. Because it is labour intensive, I would say those 10 people in the club who are very active, they all do lots of work.... But some people... are burned (out) from so much work and they understand that if the association goes totally voluntarily and grows, it is just too much work for a few people. (Sport C/PSO)*

*The coaches...we are on a demographic cycle where some of the old guard is not as involved as they used to be. You know the people who coached [before] are in their retirement years. So I am not sure if the skill set has been transferred or if the skill set has been revised. (Sport C/Club)*

The lack of time available to children (and their parents) as well as adult participants, works against low profile sports such as Sport A and C. Before they can attract members they must first raise the exposure of their sport in the community where they compete against higher profile sports for participants and volunteers. The clubs' difficulties in raising visibility in the community and getting new members means the talent pool for selection of elite athletes to fill the PSO programs is limited and incomplete. Without a critical mass in

the elite talent pool, a team sport like Sport A, cannot have local competitions at the elite level because there are too few players to fill the positions for training and competitions. Smaller numbers translate into fewer dollars from government when competing for funding with higher profile sports (Babiak, 2003).

At the same time another related issue for the PSOs was the need to increase participation and membership. *“Getting new members, I would say that is [the PSO’s] biggest barrier” (Sport C/Club)*. As most clubs are either conflicted about or not focusing on junior development, the onus falls on the PSO to help develop both entry level and elite coaches.

*There are limitations for grassroots and elite programs starting at coaching and refereeing. There aren't enough active qualified coaches and no one wants to umpire and have people yell at you. If you have the [venues] and you have the clubs, but you don't have the coaches and you have a whole bunch of kids arrive! (Sport A/PSO)*

While Sport B dealt with these pressures within an organizational framework equipped with the resources to establish a paid position dedicated to junior development and the training of entry level coaches, more vulnerable organizations like Sport A and C struggled. Sport A had a budget for a paid administrative position, but the manager was overburdened with no time or resources to comprehensively plan long term strategies. *I don't know how the other coaches went about their program. I would have liked to go out to all of them and observe but I don't have the time (Sport A/PSO)*.

Sport C was totally dependent on volunteers and the charitable commitment of a few dedicated participants who are getting worn out by the need to fulfill multiple tasks. *[We] have limited funding to pay for coaching so it has to be once again somebody volunteering to*

*get the coaches (Sport C/PSO)*. These pressures complicated the day to day functioning of the PSOs as managers struggled to meet all the demands of their organization (Selsky, 1991). Environmental complexity leads to goal complexity and even conflict over goals, which might explain the differences within organizations over the need for junior development and the importance of pursuing grassroots programs when elite programs are requiring constant attention (Alexander, 1998; Stone et al., 1999).

The PSOs existing in the same general environment as the clubs also experienced pressures associated with scarce financial resources. The high cost of elite sport coupled with non-profit organizational pressures have increasingly led PSOs to depend on scarce volunteers and have contributed to gaps in their delivery of programs, especially at the entry level or grassroots. The PSOs are also trying to increase membership at the junior levels of the sport in order to increase participation and generate interest and revenue. Like the clubs, the PSOs find it difficult to attract new members in a social climate of limited time where children need their parents' commitment for transportation and volunteer involvement. Both clubs and PSOs identified the immediate need for more facilities. The present state of facilities available to the sports was considered problematic, either they were in disrepair or there were not enough to fill the needs of the existing members. If the memberships of the various sports were to grow the demand for facilities available to them would increase as well. Collaboration with schools would provide PSOs access to a broad range of children with the PE curriculum time to learn basic sport skills in school that they could play in the community on their own or in a community sport club.

### **Economic and Socio-political Pressures – School Sport Programs**

When school teachers were asked to identify the pressures in the public school environment directly relating to teaching PE, they provided insights as to why a collaborative strategy would be pursued. They found pressures in the public school environment affected their ability to provide a comprehensive PE program, leading them to seek outside resources. The need to supplement their PE programs was the impetus for teachers to collaborate with sport organizations in order to offer their students sport and physical activity opportunities that they could not offer on their own.

There were specialist elementary PE teachers in this district in the past but political decisions resulted in following the North American trend towards generalist teachers over specialists (Bailey, 1994; Bedingfield, 1995; BCTF, 2000; CDC, 1999; Kidd, 1999; Mills' Report, 1998; Wilson et al., 2000; Zeigler, 1993). Some teachers echoed findings in the literature, articulating the importance of specialists in providing comprehensive education to the students (CDC, 1999; Kidd, 1999), and when asked if the Ministry of Education valued PE within the curriculum one teacher responded,

*No. Otherwise they wouldn't have taken away PE specialists. Quite honestly, I believe that a specialist can offer much more, a higher developed program. Any sort of expert, coach [or] player etc. who has a real passion for the game. Because it's not just teaching them the skills, it's having them connect and feel this is fun. (Sport A/Teacher 2)*

The decision to remove specialist teachers from elementary schools has put pressure on already overburdened generalist teachers who have received limited or inconsistent training in PE. As one teacher commented, training in PE methods is minimal: *We did have*

one PE methods course, but that was all we did (Sport A/Teacher 1). These findings were supported by another teachers interviewed as revealed below.

*I can't teach gymnastics even when I was doing my gym because I just don't feel comfortable. I don't have the training to help someone over the bar and you know we just don't have specialists anymore. I think that is a key problem. (Sport C/Teacher 3)*

Generalist teachers may want to find ways to overcome their lack of teacher training in the area of physical education, but against a backdrop of declining resources within the public education sector this has proven to be difficult. The erosion of PE resources has left many generalist teachers feeling overburdened and isolated as the sole providers of PE in their schools (Halas, 1993).

*I think the bottom line is money. You know not having money for providing Pro D for teachers, providing instruction. It used to be that there were...people were more readily able to come out and work in schools with teachers and do Pro D for teachers as well as working with the kids. It just feels like there is less and less available, unless you are willing to go out on your own on a Saturday. (Sport B/Teacher 3)*

Many generalist elementary teachers lack awareness and personal experience in physical fitness, affecting their ability to act as role models for their students and provide comprehensive PE subject matter (McKenzie, McMaster, Sallis & Marshall, 1999). In response to the increased workload some teachers choose to let non-core subjects like PE take a back seat to academic subjects. While supporting the fact that PE is not valued as a subject in education and society at large (Feingold, 1995; Hardman & Marshall, 1999; Kidd, 1999; Lathrop & Murray, 1998) it also underlines the reality that elementary students not involved in sport outside of school are at a disadvantage in acquiring the basic motor skills

and attitudes that would allow them to fully participate (CDC, 1999; Kidd, 1999; Patterson et al., 1997).

*You are doing all the academic curriculum, and at the same time you are doing PE. So often when PE comes along for most teachers it's kind of the subject you don't have to prepare for. You just go to the gym, and you play a game of basketball or you play a game of this or that. (Sport A/Teacher 3)*

Not only is PE undervalued by some teachers, but also parents, contributing to the problems of children who are overweight and inactive (Katzmarzyk et al., 2000; Stone et al., 1998).

*I think a lot of the problems come too from just the home life of a lot of students. They can be highly academic, maybe the family is more oriented in that way but they just don't do any kind of exercise. (Sport C/Teacher 3)*

*It is very apparent that we have some very unfit students who are not active in anything and are driven everywhere and are incapable of reasonable cardiovascular activity. They can't even hold their body weight for a period of time. (Sport C/Teacher 2)*

In a climate of predictable rain year round, the lack of adequate facilities and limited PE equipment resources at elementary schools (Jantzen, 1995), compounds the pressures for generalist teachers.

*Most schools don't work by what they should have or what the government says, it works by how much gym time you can get. Two gym periods 40 minutes each is what I have given to me and allowed every year. Seasonally when the weather is better you tend to go out in the afternoons in September and the early spring, just to wear off the energy. But generally speaking the notion of daily physical exercise is not achieved very well by most people. (Sport C/Teacher 2)*

Public elementary schools with larger student populations, often have large enough facilities, but struggle to find enough available gym time. This internal scheduling difficulty is also experienced by smaller schools with fewer classes to accommodate and often smaller and outdated gymnasiums.

*You have to first start off with facilities that allow for every child to partake fully. I have been trying to do "Jump Rope for Heart" with my kids, 28 kids with skipping ropes in the gym. We hardly fit. They all have to be facing a certain direction and a certain distance apart. It's frustrating. We need a larger gym. (Sport A/Teacher 2)*

One of the reasons teachers find preparation for PE so difficult is the restrictive nature of the timetable. It is difficult to provide a comprehensive lesson, involving enough activity to provide the necessary physical requirements in a forty-minute period.

*You can take the kids out and play a game of baseball, and you have a 40 minute PE period, not that much really happened. The kids had fun, got a break from the class work, and it's really like supervised recess. It's not real PE. (Sport A/Teacher 3)*

The Integrated Resource Package, (IRP) which provides teachers with an outline of the specific curriculum requirements for each subject, proved to have its own set of problems. For some teachers the broad guidelines of the PE-IRP posed a challenge while the majority agreed that the content of the IRP did not meet the needs of their students.

*They give you the topic area however they don't really give you strategies to go with it. You need to hunt around and find other resources. It doesn't come as a complete package. (Sport A/Teacher 2)*

When the student population is inactive and lacking basic motor skills, it makes it difficult to follow the curriculum guidelines as they are laid out in the IRP, especially as classes are getting larger and students exhibit a variety of needs.

*It (the IRP) had expectations of [athletic] capacity that are not there. You assume a certain capability at a certain age and we don't see it. Last year I discovered when I was doing floor gymnastics that I had 80% of my [grade 7] students who did not know what a forward roll was. And in the process of teaching them in numbers, I am actually endangering [them]. (Sport C/Teacher 2)*

Teachers also have to be sensitive to the capabilities of special needs students in their classes, those with developmental and physical disabilities as well as the highly skilled athletes.

*You feel most frustrated that you can't meet the needs of the really skilful athlete who wants to go a level beyond what the average PE teacher is going to have, because the average PE teacher is a generalist, he'll teach soccer, volleyball, basketball (Sport A/Teacher 3)*

This last sentiment was echoed by other teachers who commented that many of their colleagues limited their PE activities to cover only those sports traditionally played in the interschool leagues such as volleyball, basketball, and track. It became apparent that teachers used the interschool seasons as markers for conducting their PE activities.<sup>7</sup> The PE curriculum offered within the timetable limitations (CDC, 1999) follows the interschool sports calendar leading to repetition and a lack of opportunity to experience other activities and sports (Corbin, 2002).

Teaching physical education in the public elementary schools environment had its own set of pressures for teachers, as a consequence of decreased funding and working in an environment valuing academic subjects over PE. Within the schools the most overwhelming challenge was the lack of specialist PE teachers and the inconsistency of PE teacher training

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<sup>7</sup> What came out of this line of questioning was the influence the teachers' union had teachers' participation in after school sports as coaches or team sponsor teachers for parent coaches. It is important to mention the union at this point because the influence was evident during the period of research, as there was job action that limited teachers' participation in any outside or after school sport activity.

experienced by the generalist teachers. The majority of generalist teachers felt overburdened in their jobs and found it difficult to meet the varied needs of their students, who were often unskilled, prone to inactivity and grouped in large classes. The IRP guidelines offered by the Ministry of Education rather than alleviating difficulties added to them by assuming that teachers had the appropriate training to teach physical education, enough time in the timetable to fulfill the requirements, and the facilities and equipment to meet the curriculum recommendations.

Generalist teachers chose to collaborate with sport organizations in the delivery of PE because there were few resources in an education environment which undervalued PE as a subject and was characterized by few specialist teachers and generalist teachers with little PE training, limited curriculum time, an inadequate course guideline (IRP), and large PE classes of unskilled unfit students with varied needs.

All the partners participating in these programs experienced economic pressures in their sector, a consequence of political decisions in response to declining public dollars. The teachers painted a picture of the state of PE in their schools which they attributed to decreased funding and the undervaluing of PE in relation to other more academic concerns. The lack of specialist PE teachers and appropriate PE resources mirrors the situation of sport clubs and PSOs where qualified coaches and updated sport facilities are needed to deliver sport opportunities within the community. The low profile attributed to both PE in the schools and amateur sport in the community attests to the undervaluing of these kinds of activities in society. In schools this results in dependence on overburdened generalist teachers lacking specific PE expertise and in the sport community a lack of qualified coaches. As a result of these pressures, basic movement and sport skills are not being

equitably delivered to many children within the province. A summary of these pressures appears in Table 1. The following section clarifies the reasons for collaboration and the types of resources shared.

<b>Table 1: Environmental pressures experienced by partners</b>	
<b>SPORT CLUBS</b>	<p><b>Economic-Scarce resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• need facility access</li> <li>• need qualified coaches</li> <li>• need coordinators</li> </ul> <p><b>Socio-political</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• low profile/need exposure</li> <li>• need members with time</li> <li>• need juniors with parent commitment</li> <li>• need volunteers</li> <li>• need to partner with PSOs</li> </ul>
<b>PSOs</b>	<p><b>Economic-Scarce resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• need funding for athletes, coaches, staff</li> <li>• dependence on volunteers</li> <li>• high cost of sport</li> <li>• need more facility access</li> </ul> <p><b>Socio-political</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sport system gaps</li> <li>• non-profit pressures</li> <li>• low profile sport/need exposure</li> <li>• need members with time</li> <li>• need qualified volunteers</li> <li>• need qualified coaches/ elite &amp; entry</li> </ul>
<b>SCHOOLS</b>	<p><b>Economic-Scarce resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• need PE resources</li> <li>• no specialist teachers</li> <li>• need more PE facilities</li> </ul> <p><b>Socio-political</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PE undervalued</li> <li>• inactive/unskilled kids</li> <li>• teachers needing PE training</li> <li>• teachers overburdened</li> <li>• restrictive employment practices re- sport</li> <li>• large class size/variety of needs</li> </ul> <p><b>Curriculum pressures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• timetable restrictions for PE</li> <li>• IRP challenges</li> <li>• content defined by inter-school sports</li> </ul>

### **Collaboration as a strategy to share resources**

The second research question asked about the resources shared and the strategies undertaken within these collaborative school programs by the clubs, PSOs and schools. This question was difficult to analyze at first, because many of the instances of collaboration mentioned covered experiences by organizations in the past and present, along with their hopes for the future. I therefore limited the analysis to collaboration that directly related to the organizations' functioning within the school sport programs, as well as any initiatives established to address future involvement in these specific programs. As will be revealed below, the two community sport clubs, three provincial sport organizations (PSOs), and nine schools shared different types of resources to achieve their goals.

#### **Resource collaboration strategies- Sport Clubs**

The two clubs involved in the school programs shared personnel (coaches and volunteers) and material resources within the program, as well as administrative resources of the PSO, exemplifying the types of resources needed by non-profits and shared through collaboration (Oliver, 1990; Selsky, 1991).

*We would provide our own people to go to the schools and we would provide half of the cost of it if they (the PSO) would do the liaison in terms of sending out letters and setting up the initial times. [We supplied] the coaches [and] the equipment. We had some documentation because we'd done it before, although that was hardly needed. (Sport A/Club)*

Sport C needed volunteers to run their event, however availability proved to be inconsistent from one year to the next making it difficult for the organizers.

*[The coach] is going in, and teaching at the schools and encouraging those schools to come to the event, which the club helps put on. So it really is showcasing to the kids the*

*sport in a community setting. [This] year we didn't have very many volunteers. The year before [the event] went really well. (Sport C/Club)*

In addition to resources, structural aspects of collaboration included the club as an avenue for future organized participation for individuals because “*unless you have a club that is prepared to take them and carry it on through, then they will just fall by the wayside*” (Sport A/Club). Relationships with the schools provided access to possible future facility use as well as the source of potential members. As a result of experiences within the schools programs, the clubs also created program related resources for themselves and for the partnering schools, such as lesson plans which could be used within the clubs left with schools.

*I went through his program with him, before he left and I have it on my computer, exactly what he did. (Sport A/Club)*

*One thing that I am looking at doing, is something to [create] a permanent [venue]. And then in that way it would be good because we could use their school as a starting point for [an event] or something. (Sport C/Club)*

The sharing of material, human, and administrative resources through collaboration supports findings in the literature that volunteer agencies often use joint programs to provide stability, legitimacy, reciprocity, and efficiency in the delivery of programs (Oliver, 1990; Selsky, 1991; Stone et al., 1999). Through reciprocity, the club sought members for themselves and the PSOs through the schools, as well as future concessions for the use of school facilities. The shared administrative resources of the club and PSOs provided exposure for the sport organizations within the school environment, and increased the efficiency of these groups to coordinate grassroots programs. As a result of the collaborative

process, the club created related resources for future use, such as computer files of lesson plans and coaches feedback (Van De Ven, 1976).

### **Resource collaboration strategies-PSOs**

The PSOs managers interviewed identified the shared material and human resources they utilized during the schools programs such as equipment, facilities, and personnel. Although some of the coaches from Sport A, and the Sport C coach came from the club, they represented the PSOs during the program. The coaches for Sport B were all hired by the PSO for the program.

*We use [their] gym, and we use all their equipment. Obviously in the schools program [we offer] expertise, that is a very important one, and we have all the [Sport B specific] equipment. And we have the coaches so all those resources, and we have a very organized PSO. (Sport B/PSO)*

*If there were children with special needs then normally a [school] attendant [was present] as well, which was very helpful. (Sport A/Coach)*

These quotes support findings in the literature regarding what types of situations or needs lead to collaborative initiatives (Kanter, 1989; Selsky, 1991; Stone et al., 1999). In addition to these already existing resources, program related resources and initiatives that had been created or would be created in response to these programs were identified by the PSO like accountability measures such as evaluation (Van de Ven, 1976).

*But definitely next year we are [going] to analyze this, and to see how many participants are actually coming to this (community program) from the schools program. The program is going to be [offering] some kind of survey to respond about how their coach was, what do they think about the program, what do they think about having the program next year? On the basis of that I will build a kind*

*of workshop that will be the background of every single coach as well. (Sport B/PSO)*

The organizations worked together in the delivery of these programs, to set up scheduling around availability of facilities and coaches, and working with the timetable.

*The beginning point for the scheduling is the athletes, when they are in town and available during the day. This then has to be superimposed upon the scheduling for the schools, are the kids having other field trips that week, can teachers juggle their lesson plans to accommodate the days of the program, is their enough gym time available to accommodate all the groups? (Sport A/PSO)*

For a fully volunteer organization like Sport C, this included the available time of the volunteers to come to the event which was held during a weekday to accommodate the schools, but proved to be difficult for members who worked full time to attend (Hall & Reed, 1998). Another aspect of collaboration between the PSOs and schools was the advantage of shared time within the schools' legitimate learning environment. The teachers are the authorized disciplinarians in the school environment and this support was mentioned by the coaches as extremely helpful when dealing with large numbers of new students, because they do not have this authority in the schools.

*From a teacher's point of view ...you'd be more inclined to the discipline side while (the coaches) can focus more on the skill. (Sport A/Teacher 2)*

*Coaches coming from outside the school can have a huge benefit from the teacher... students will listen more if the teacher is there. (Sport B/Coach)*

The PSO also played a pivotal role in facilitating community linkages between the school and club in the program (Thibault & Harvey, 1997) by passing on requests for membership.

*We got back 20 kids saying they were interested in playing so I faxed those off to the club (Sport A/PSO).*

In addition to the creation of collaborative related resources and coordinated scheduling with the participating organizations, instances were identified that lent evidence to the presence of unreal expectations of partners as well as perceptions of unequal resource sharing as a result of lack of information about the partners (Kanter, 1989; Thibault & Harvey, 1997). These differences in expectations of partners occurred primarily within Sport A's attempt to run an event on a weekend including the schools from the program.

*It was scheduled at a very poor time. I think it was done on Super Bowl Sunday. Bad move. I think everybody recognized that after the fact. Oops, you are not going to get public school teachers showing up on Sunday. (Sport A/Teacher 3)*

*We were paying the coaches, they weren't paying the coaches. We were supplying the equipment and everything else. Schools provided the kids but not much else. (Sport A/PSO)*

Some resources shared within school/sport programs became available through existing organizational partnerships. When organizations function in a domain where they share similar goals, funding sources and staff skills, the potential for partnerships is enhanced and networks emerge incrementally as a response to uncertainty and a need for stability (Logsdon, 1991; Slack, 1997)). Sport organizations have been encouraged to form partnerships to supplement their declining revenues (Babiak, 2003; Thibault & Harvey, 1997). Existing partnerships that contributed to the functioning of the school programs included, sport system partners, community partnerships, and corporate sponsors. Sport system partners included formalized partnerships at the national level, as well as informal

relationships between the PSO and clubs that became more focused as a result of the collaboration in the schools.

*I should probably mention, that's another partner, [Sport B] Canada ... that is just starting to get going right now. It is the second year that they are sort of proactive, they are trying to increase the participation. (Sport B/PSO)*

*We put together a few packages, starter kits for the coaches in schools, so now a couple of the clubs have said "oh we'd like to do this as well, what information do you have?" (Sport A/PSO)*

Sport B had an existing corporate sponsor that was a good fit for the schools program. *[They] are partners with Sport B and they help us with the product side of things for these sorts of initiatives. So [they] help us tremendously (Sport B/PSO).* Sport C is a member of an umbrella organization and benefited from one of their existing partners who provided some product at a partner price for the event. Sport C also sought sponsorships from the private sector. *Some sports do have a little bit of sponsorship. We don't have that, so what I did [was] contact private sponsors asking them (Sport C/PSO).*

It appeared that the schools program also created a stage for PSOs to consider expanding and including additional organizational partners from different sectors.

*Generally I think that the program should grow more and there should be more sponsors there and my idea is to involve some charities as well in the future. They should be part of the program because society should be benefiting more from this program. (Sport B/PSO)*

*Definitely run it again... next year as a combined initiative with [other members of the PSO]. (Sport A/PSO)*

These examples of resource sharing show that collective actions meeting the expectations of other collaborative stakeholders can increase trust and commitment between

stakeholders, and facilitate future collaboration (Logsdon, 1991; Roberts & Bradley, 1991; Spekman et al., 1998). Through the programs, the clubs provided some coaches and equipment while the PSOs contributed personnel (coaches and staff), administrative resources for organizational purposes as well as material resources such as equipment and administrative costs.

### **Resource collaborative strategies- Elementary Schools**

The schools offered the PSOs resources through access to their organizational infrastructure. Resources offered by the schools in these programs included; teachers present as support for the coaches, access to the students, facilities and PE time, utilizing parents for support through the PAC, as individual parents authorizing and paying for their children's participation, and by transporting students to off-site venues.

The presence and support of the teachers who assisted the coaches by grouping likeminded children for the classes illustrated the collaborative nature of the program when personnel from different organizations offer complementary roles to the endeavour.

*You have to kind of match the same kind of students together because you can't match a child who is really shy and anxious with a child who is just completely competitive. (Sport C/Teacher 3)*

*Usually I stay in the gym, because they asked me to be in charge of safety, security or if there was any problem. Because they don't know the kids and I know the kids. (Sport B/Teacher 1)*

Access to the students within the school day and the use of the facilities were essential to the PSOs' delivery of the program.

*Of course they offer the material, the material of students... they offer us a gym area where we teach the students, and*

*they offer us a great chance to come back again next year  
(Sport B/Coach)*

*They (the PSOs) use the gym and they use the time, they  
will see the kids 4 times (Sport B/Teacher 1)*

In addition to these aspects of shared organizational infrastructure that contributed to an awareness of perceived interdependence, reciprocity, and legitimacy (Logsdon, 1991; Oliver, 1990), collaborative strategies were utilized when teachers supplemented PE programs with other organizations' programs. The teachers interviewed discussed why they sought out these external resources, and how the process of collaboration within the programs in the study heightened their awareness of other organizations, strengthening the schools' connections with the community.

*I don't know that we need to collaborate, but I know that it  
makes it better when we do. We tend to get a better  
program going when we involve the outside organizations.  
(Sport A/Teacher 2)*

The potential for future partnerships was enhanced by the utilization of school /sport programs to supplement the PE curriculum. Campbell (1995) insists that there is a need to coordinate between schools and sports to ensure the best use of sport and physical activity resources. Schools are an essential partner in community sport delivery, but currently the specific role is unclear (Vail, 1993).

#### **Evidence of collaborative suitability/unsuitability**

The literature focusing on organizational collaboration and partnerships cites the importance of the suitability or compatibility of the participating organizations. Preconditions to collaboration include trust, shared values, common goals, scarce resources and shared

language, symbols and culture (Kernaghan, 1993; Oliver, 1990; Roberts & Bradley, 1991; Smith et al., 1995; Uhlik, 1995; Vail, 1993; Van de Ven, 1976). The findings in this study provided evidence of partners building trust and sharing common language, values, and goals during the relationship development process. As mentioned earlier in the introduction, though collaboration between these sectors has been suggested as a strategy to share resources to strengthen the sport system and address the lack of PE expertise in schools there has been a perpetuation of the idea that these sectors are traditionally at odds with differing goals, and values. If collaboration is to be a viable strategy for the future, it was important to uncover evidence of compatibility from the perspective of the participants. Did they feel the different sectors were unable to work together to address a problem? These instances offered insights as to whether or not these groups were suited as partners.

The teachers were clear that the school/sport programs were a good fit with their teaching intentions and the expected learning outcomes for their students. The PSOs also mentioned their awareness of the needs and capabilities of the students who were participating in the programs.

*I do have that package (IRP) and I use that. Those packages ... they are focusing on different levels, so I try to focus on the same level. (Sport C/Coach)*

*You know you don't teach those kinds of rules in your first week with the kids, you teach safety, you teach fun and participation. And they were spot on with that. They were big on participation, team work, all of the right attitude kinds of things. (Sport A/Teacher 3)*

By using a common language that demonstrated similar values and goals, the partners began the process of building trust (Gray, 1985; Vail, 1993).

*Having the kids share that passion and develop their abilities that way. It gives us this possibility of dialogue, for having them come back and continue to be involved and offer us these programs. (Sport A/Teacher 2)*

*It is easy for us to handle the schools that we have had before because they know the quality of the program and they always sign up again. (Sport B/Coach)*

Unlike Selsky's (1991) findings of conflicting values between certain sectors, and evidence from the sport specific literature of a conflict of values and philosophies between the education and sport sectors (Campbell, 1995; Sport: The Way Ahead, 1992; Vail, 1992, 1993), there were many instances in this study of shared values between non-profit sport organizations and public sector elementary schools. Organizations looking to collaborative initiatives as a strategy for resource sharing need to experience incremental successes through pilot projects (CDC, 1999; Roberts & Bradley 1991) to establish trust. When organizations are looking for partners to complement their strengths and improve weaknesses (Crompton, 1998) incremental successes can lead to the emergence of networks (Provan & Milward, 1992; Van de Ven, 1976) and the strengthening of horizontal community connections (Selsky, 1991). The programs studied appear to provide an opportunity to address perceived differences in philosophies between sport and education that contribute to the role confusion by key sport delivery provider groups mentioned by Vail (1992) as well as their lack of coordinated sharing of resources (Campbell, 1995; Thibault & Harvey, 1997; Vail, 1993). The benefits of collaboration experienced by the participating organizations are described in the next section.

SPORT CLUBS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• coaches</li> <li>• equipment</li> <li>• infrastructure</li> </ul>
PSOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• coaches</li> <li>• equipment</li> <li>• administrative support</li> <li>• existing partners</li> <li>• infrastructure</li> </ul>
SCHOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• students</li> <li>• teachers as support</li> <li>• facilities/equipment</li> <li>• curriculum time</li> <li>• infrastructure</li> </ul>

### **Benefits of the Collaborative Programs- Sport Clubs**

To address the third research question, participants were asked to describe the benefits and challenges encountered through their participation in the program. In part, the intention was to ascertain whether these benefits addressed the pressures uncovered in the first research question. If the collaborative benefits did address the pressures then the importance of pursuing collaborative school/sport programs as a strategy to tackle the issue of physical inactivity would be strengthened.

#### **Exposure increasing organizational legitimacy**

For the two participating sport clubs involved in the study of the schools programs, the overwhelming benefit of their involvement in the schools was exposure for their sport in the community.

*We have some of those kids who do come to [events]. And it is great if people even know just what [Sport C] is. (Sport C/Club)*

*In the summer time I had the chance to [work with] the club and to see how many of those students who had participated in the [Sport B] schools program at the*

*elementary schools came after that and decided to move on to the next level. (Sport B/Coach)*

It was not solely exposure, but a sense of legitimacy reflecting on the clubs through their involvement in the schools program. Legitimacy is important for non-profits needing to enhance their image as a means to increasing access to resources (Alexander, 1998; Oliver, 1990). This legitimacy, originated through the connection with the PSOs who were recognized as the provincial delivery agent of the elite level of sport, and was enhanced through the commitment of the PSOs to the programs. Babiak (2003) reported that partnerships on their own can lend legitimacy to a sport organization by enhancing its profile in the sport community.

*I always give them brochures and I show them a 10 minute film that always says "if you want to become [Sport C participant] contact the local club" and I always explain to them that we have local clubs here that [do events]. (Sport C/Coach-PSO)*

The administrative and financial commitment of the PSOs facilitated the establishment of community links and this was strengthened by the coaches in their dual capacities as PSO representatives and club members. This form of reciprocity (Oliver, 1990) promoted the collaborative aspect of grassroots delivery.

*If we can have elementary schools involved in this program, then the program is going to grow and the number of participants is going to grow. That is the connection we were talking about. If kids are playing that game in the school and they are going to love it at the next level. They need coaches, they need someone. (Sport B/Coach)*

*I did a report that was mostly about here's some games, here's some things to remember with children, why they are there. ... I did do some on the structure as well, in an*

*attempt to try to connect more clubs with schools. (Sport A/Coach)*

### **Increased membership**

In addition to the commitment of the PSOs to the program which increased exposure and legitimacy of the clubs in the community, the quality of the coaches contributed to increasing membership for the Sport A club.

*And I guess the outcome ... for the clubs is that we got more kids interested in playing [Sport A]. I saw a number of faces at the club (where) I coached that (I saw) in the schools. And they were there for the first time. (Sport A/Coach)*

*He, I think is the main reason our numbers have gone up ... from about 650 last year to 780 this year. (Sport A/Club)*

There was also evidence for this for Sport B.

*Now (from) what I see by my program and from other programs that are in the club in the summer, we had a huge amount of students coming in just because I did this program in the schools. (Sport B/Coach)*

These examples lend support to Thibault & Harvey's (1997) findings that partnership can lead to increased membership but with a caveat. This was not the case for Sport C, as they did not have a specific junior program to accommodate any new members exposed to the sport at school. It would appear that before membership can increase, the infrastructure must be in place to accommodate the next step. Sport clubs approaching school programs as a strategy to gain junior members, should have a junior program in place for the children to step into right away.

Increased membership at the club level appeared to be a result of having access to children at an appropriate age to learn the skills who demonstrate an attitude conducive to learning.

*[Sport C] is really neat for elementary school especially because they catch on so fast. It is way more gratifying to teach a twelve year old to [do Sport C], and they pick it up like that. (Sport C/Club)*

*We like to target grades 4,5,6's, because they're at that age where they haven't chosen their sport yet and we can get them while they're still interested in all different things. (Sport A/PSO)*

#### **Access to potential volunteers**

Non-profits are dependant upon the help of volunteers to function (Hall & Reed, 1998). Many parents volunteer during the time their children are active in a particular sport because children at this age need the involvement of their parents to participate in activities. If increased membership was a result of the schools programs for the clubs, an additional benefit was gaining access to the parents as potential volunteers for the club.

*There was a willing audience of 60 kids willing to take forms home and talk to their parents. (Sport A/Teacher 1)*

*If you have more kids turn out, you also get more parents who could become volunteers. (Sport A/PSO)*

#### **Coaching opportunities**

The need for volunteers and coaches was identified by clubs as a pressing concern in the functioning of their programs. The schools program offered an opportunity for club coaches to be involved with the PSO, to be mentored by more experienced coaches, and then to practice these new found skills within the club setting. The benefit of the collaboration was

to enrich the human resources of the clubs by giving the coaches a mentoring opportunity and broadening their expertise with large groups of school-aged children.

*It was interesting watching them improve as a coach as well. And throughout the day they'd remember more things or they'd add more things or they'd find their own way of getting the message across. So it was also a benefit for them as coaches as well. (Sport A/PSO)*

### **Opportunities for future collaborative programs**

Another benefit for sport clubs was that opportunities for future collaborative programs were enhanced as the program met the expectations of the club and the schools.

*Here were so many people... who had had the [program], and clearly only showed up at registration because of the school [program] that it was obviously a success. (Sport A/Club)*

*Benefits - I think it surpassed my expectations. The kids, I can't speak for the other classes, but this group it really clicked for them. And I remember one of the 2 players saying, "Hey, these guys are really good. They're catching on right away. Would you be interested in doing more?" When I put it to the kids, "oh, yeah, we'd love them to come back and show us more". (Sport A/ Teacher 2)*

Exposure in the community and increased membership (for Sport A) was the overwhelming benefit as a result of these programs for the sport clubs. Concurrent with increased exposure that contributed to the legitimacy of the clubs (Alexander, 1990; Oliver, 1990) was the creation of horizontal links within the community between agencies serving similar groups (Selsky, 1991). Collaboration between organizations identified as sport delivery agencies (Thibault & Harvey, 1997) did increase membership for one club (Sport A) and laid the groundwork for awareness leading to membership for the other (Sport C). The

fact that the organizers felt the programs fulfilled their expectations was encouraging for future initiatives.

### **Benefits of the Collaborative Programs – PSOs**

#### **Exposure and legitimacy**

Like the clubs, the three program managers interviewed from the PSOs were encouraged by the fact that the schools programs provided an avenue to increase the exposure and legitimacy of their sports in the schools and the community at large, normative resources which are of importance to non-profit organizations (Alexander, 1998; Crompton, 1998; Oliver, 1990; Selsky, 1991), especially sport organizations needing to increase their profile (Babiak, 2003).

*It gives us a lot of exposure. [Sport B] is getting out and trying to get [the sport] going. What it also does is give the schools a chance to see what we are doing. (Sport B/PSO)*

*They got exposure and they got good exposure because there were kids walking around here for a couple of weeks saying, "Can't we have [Sport A] again" (Sport A/Teacher 3)*

#### **Access to facilities and equipment**

In some cases, community facilities were used during the course of the program, giving the students a greater appreciation of what was available to them, in their community. *But even just bringing them to their own community [facilities]. Every community has their [facilities], you know kids don't even know that they are there (Sport B/Teacher 2).* A crucial aspect in the PSOs delivery of the programs was access to the school gyms and equipment bringing to mind the reciprocal benefits of resource sharing where groups are able to increase

efficiency by reducing the cost of delivery and doing more with less (Kernaghan, 1993; Oliver, 1990; Selsky, 1991).

*They have facilities and what I am talking about as facilities is a gym. You wouldn't believe how much the gym can be used for this sport. (Sport B/Coach)*

*We use the gym, and we use all their equipment, if we have to use anything, we have access. (Sport B/PSO)*

### **Increased Membership**

The chances of increasing membership through collaboration with the schools was enhanced by offering the programs within a legitimate learning environment, utilizing the PE curriculum time, and involving children at the appropriate age to learn the skills being presented by the coaches. Access to the students shows how collaboration with appropriate partners can help organizations gain market access (Kanter, 1989). Although this terminology is jarring in reference to sport organizations, non-profits have had to shift to this kind of thinking as they seek partnerships with different sectors (Babiak, 2003; Frisby et al., 2004; Thibault et al., 1999).

*You have kids in schools, who are there and at some point they need to do physical activity so it's a fantastic resource to have your clients there ready (Sport A/Coach)*

*For a lot of those kids, it will be the only time they will play [Sport B]. It is an opportunity to try the sport in the gym because I don't have ... the equipment to do it. Some of them don't have the money, or the interest. (Sport B/Teacher 1)*

The PSOs hoped the programs would increase participation at the grass roots levels as well as offering future development opportunities to potential elite players.

*There is a good chance that we could draw people in that wouldn't normally consider [Sport B] (Sport B/PSO)*

*They will have players who come from that and then will go on and play for BC, and play for Canada and join clubs. (Sport A/Coach)*

Like the clubs the PSOs were also aware that some of these new members could involve their parents as potential volunteers increasing the volunteer potential within the sport community.

*It is big exposure because children come, then parents start looking into what it is and they get attracted. (Sport C/Coach-PSO)*

*Parents are going to be involved as well to be responsible for the development of the students. (Sport B/Coach)*

### **Coaching benefits**

From the coaching perspective, the PSOs acknowledged that these programs provided an excellent venue for the coaches, an employment opportunity for elite athletes, a mentoring opportunity, and to gain experience in addition to their existing community sport background.

*The kids on the whole responded well to the coaches and the coaches learned a lot about themselves coaching this age-group and beginners. The kids had a great time and the coaches learned a lot. (Sport A/PSO)*

*It was very hard work, but it's also fulfilling and I just remembered lots of different exercises and got some from the other coaches and I thought "oh that's a great one to use". So it improved my coaching by 100%. (Sport A/Coach)*

The PSOs were fortunate to have coaches who were committed to this type of program and this enthusiasm was noted and appreciated by the teachers.

*The people who come in are motivated. They are really psyched, they are keen and they are keen from several directions, from wanting to get people involved in what they themselves enjoy. (Sport A/Teacher 3)*

*You are looking at people in the community who really enjoy something. They have a passion. It is a way of sharing their interests with others who might be interested. (Sport C/Teacher 1)*

The coach's commitment was fuelled by their awareness of the social value of the program.

*You go to schools and you would get 100 cards from kids saying they loved the program. Now to me that is successful, that's fantastic. (Sport B/PSO)*

*It feeds me as well emotionally, to see the smiles on the children's faces. Seeing them very confident in what they are doing, having them running and enjoying the sport. Nothing else matters. (Sport C/Coach)*

The coaches also realized that the success of these programs could contribute to increased employment opportunities within their sport.

*There are probably a number of people there who would like to do this work. So yes I think it increases opportunities. (Sport A/Coach)*

*There is so much possibility for the future for more coaches to be involved. There are going to be people who don't have enough hours in the club, so they can get more in the school program. (Sport B/Coach)*

## Resources

In terms of financial resources, Sport B and Sport C ran paying programs and the revenue added to their organizational assets. For Sport B the revenue made the program self-sustaining and not a drain on the organizations' assets while for Sport C the revenue met an accountability requirement within the provincial sport system. The revenue and accountability aspects represent the administrative and normative resources Selsky (1991) identified as important to non-profits.

*The money is totally collected from the parents. The parents pay the fee, those fees go to the [PSO] and the association pays me. It's beneficial for the organization, because before the organization before wasn't showing any income, just government money. (Sport C/Coach-PSO)*

The teachers' increased awareness of the sport resources in the community that were available to them through the PSO exemplify the informative resources mobilized through collaboration (Selsky, 1991).

*Most of the teachers don't know what [Sport C] is at all. Even if they receive the information they don't understand it. Once they learn what it is, they like it. (Sport C/Coach-PSO)*

*There's another guy who teaches a grade 5/6 class and he thought it was great. He would certainly want to have a greater involvement, next time around. (Sport A/Teacher 3)*

## Benefits for future collaborative programs for PSOs

All of the previously mentioned benefits created a positive experience that could lead to future collaboration between these groups. The PSOs were encouraged by the teachers' commitment to the program and their willingness to work with the coaches.

*[The coach] told me a little bit about what she would offer, and what kind of background information I would need that I was to build on with my classes before she came in. (Sport C/Teacher 3)*

*[The teachers] were really good, they changed the structure of their day in some instances. So they actually went out of their way to make it work. (Sport A/PSO)*

Both groups recognized the fact that the teachers served a different role than the coaches in the program and appreciated the value of the complementary roles.

*One of the things the coaches have talked about is they like that support. Because the teachers know the kids (Sport B/Teacher 2)*

*She (the teacher) knows the kids. She knows whom to watch. I think this is a benefit of having the teacher there as well. (Sport C/Coach-PSO)*

In addition to the teachers' commitment and supportive role in the program, the PSOs benefited from the internal scheduling flexibility of the elementary schools where generalist teachers are often able to change timetable needs to fit the situation.

*The scheduling and the timing present a problem, but it's not a major problem. Anyone who says timing and scheduling is a problem just isn't trying. (Sport A/Teacher 3)*

*She (the coach) did comment on the flexibility. She said here is my day and I said any time really. My day is not set in stone. I could cancel my actual gym time in the gymnasium or I could do whatever I wanted. There is that flexibility in the curriculum. (Sport C/Teacher 3)*

The PSOs recognized that the teachers' commitment coupled with the clubs buy in and allocation of resources laid the groundwork for future collaborative programs.

In addition to benefits such as exposure leading to increased legitimacy, access to facilities, potential for increased membership and volunteer contribution, coaching benefits, and expansion of available resources (administrative, normative and informative) were considered important. Collaboration as a strategy to pool existing resources and/or access new resources (Thibault et al., 1999) and markets (Kanter, 1989) also appeared to create or strengthen tenuous linkages in the sport community (Thibault & Harvey, 1997). Campbell (1995) proposed that these specific kinds of collaborative linkages form networks that build pathways for children to access sport and physical activity outside of school. The possibilities for the formation of future partnerships are enhanced when organizations are flexible, adaptable and capable of creative adaptations to traditional positions (Campbell, 1995).

#### **Benefits of the collaborative program – Elementary schools**

The extensive list of benefits for the schools demonstrates not only the fact that there were more interviews with schools than other groups, but also that the teachers were acutely aware of the positive contributions of these collaborative programs. These contributions not only addressed the problems they experienced in the delivery of PE to their students but also the broader social issue of physical inactivity. The contributions included resources for PE, meeting curriculum needs, increased physical activity opportunities, and social benefits for the school community.

#### **Enhanced resources for PE**

The scarcity of resources allocated to PE in the public schools affects the amount of professional development available to generalist teachers to assist them in their teaching of PE. The most frequently cited benefit of the collaborative school sport programs was the chance for teachers to experience on-site professional development. On-site PE professional

development (Pro D) in schools has been shown (Campbell, 1995; Fawcett, Nugent, Sallis & McKenzie, 2002) to have a positive impact on the PE learning outcomes, especially for upper elementary grade students. Teachers also experienced increased confidence as well as enhanced pedagogical skills as a result of watching qualified coaches run the sessions.

*I think it is Pro D for us. You know actually watching someone do that and doing it with the kids is even more beneficial than going to a workshop. It really is the ideal way to learn about something. (Sport B/Teacher 3)*

*Different strategies, different types of drills. There's always something to learn. They had drills I didn't even know existed. (Sport A/Teacher 2)*

The professional development for the teachers was a consequence of the high level of sport expertise brought by the coaches to the programs. Many of the coaches in the program were highly qualified and knew how to capture the students' attention.

*He is a Level 2 coach in England and he is also a qualified school teacher, a PE teacher, and he's also played at the national league level in England. So he was perfect, he was fantastic. (Sport A/Club)*

*They brought a higher skill level than I've ever been able to claim and (when) he shows (them) some stuff, you've got the kids listening. (Sport A/Teacher 3)*

The teachers also become aware of resources available to them in the sport community that they could access in the future or share with their colleagues.

*You are bringing outside resources in. It's like going to the library and getting an armload of books, it's the same kind of thing. You spend a couple of hours downloading programs, getting armloads of books, finding places to go on your field trips, that's all this is. (Sport A/Teacher 3)*

The teachers appreciated the fact that the sport programs provided them with the equipment that they would not necessarily have had at their schools, all for a relatively low cost, once again illustrating the reciprocal aspect of collaboration through resource sharing and how this contributes to the effectiveness of program delivery (Kernaghan, 1993; Oliver, 1990).

*We wouldn't have that equipment to even run a [Sport B] program, at this point certainly. (Sport B/Teacher 3)*

*It was really good and inexpensive. (Sport C/Teacher 3)*

### **Curriculum Benefits**

The teachers recognized the benefits of exposing their students to a variety of sports and how this added to their repertoire of motor skills increasing their ability to learn new physical skills (Patterson et al., 1997).

*I mean the more people they touch bases with, the more likely they are to connect with something or someone that makes it real for them. (Sport C/Teacher 1)*

*We found there was a very big ethnic population, at many of the schools we went to out there, and this was a real novelty to them (Sport A/PSO)*

The programs filled the need to enhance the PE curriculum that teachers were currently offering.

*I always look through to see what else can I do to add to what I am doing or what can I do to supplement something someone else can do for us? (Sport C/Teacher 3)*

*I feel better about the PE program when we bring in people from outside to run certain programs. It brings in the expertise that I obviously don't have. (Sport B/Teacher 3)*

Through the experience of the coaches and the expertise they acquired through the PSO coaching program, these school programs were designed to meet the needs of the students through a developmentally appropriate skill progression. In order to promote physical activity, the developmental level of the children must be considered by educators, allowing children to build the confidence they need to want to practice the skills they have learned (CDC, 1999; Corbin, 2002).

*They knew exactly what to say, how to talk to them, how to make sure they had fun while staying within the parameters of playing. They set up interesting drills for them. They scaled them so they started with the basic concepts. (Sport A/Teacher 2)*

*Well, just the strategy that they used, the ways that they begin. You know you are obviously not starting off having kids play (games), but just looking at all those beginning skills. Getting them comfortable with the (equipment). (Sport B/Teacher 3)*

The teachers found the programs helped them fulfill the IRP requirements and meet the learning outcomes for their students.

*I could show them at least 10 or 20 reasons why it is a valid use of time. I could show them why it completely fits in the IRP and how it fits with a variety of things, like personal planning especially because it has so much to do with confidence boosting. I could fit it in with anything and I don't think it would be a problem explaining why. (Sport C/Teacher 3)*

*Well looking at the IRPs, definitely my students met those goals. (Sport C/Teacher 1)*

Another important feature of the school sports programs was they relieved stress for those generalist teachers who were not always comfortable teaching PE to their students and felt

overburdened by the increasing demands of the curriculum in the absence of specialist teachers (Bedingfield, 1995; Corbin, 2002; Hardman & Marshall, 1999).

*I think this takes a lot of pressure off the classroom teacher who suddenly has to go in and be this PE teacher who doesn't have a background that way, in that they don't have to be the expert. (Sport A/Teacher 2)*

Another benefit of the programs was the PSOs ability to incorporate the mandate of the public schools that classes be inclusive in nature for special needs children. Many of the sport organizations have disabled athletes competing at the elite level and therefore experience incorporating this kind of learning into programs. *I had a class that half of the kids were deaf, but we just did one class, in class. Then the PE teacher wanted to do more (Sport C/Coach-PSO).*

### **Increasing physical activity opportunities**

Teachers were aware of their role in teaching students skills for lifelong physical activity, not only because this is the rationale for PE in BC schools (Ministry of Education, 2001), but because teachers recognized that physically active students contributed positively to the school (Almond & McGeorge, 1998).

*A healthy and active athlete is usually a happier student. Some students academically, it's not necessarily what connects them to the school, it's the physical activity, you know that keeps them in school and allows them to get over whatever hump that is. It's the acknowledgment in another area too, for some of them and just enjoying and being with other people. (Sport C/Teacher 1)*

*Benefits in your classroom? Their minds are active, they are ready to come in and work. I would say long term benefits are healthy body, healthy mind, active mind. (Sport B/Teacher 2)*

The teachers found that these programs offered opportunities for students to be physically active because they often allowed more class time during the program and because the coaches maximized the time they had by having the gymnasium set up and getting the kids moving right away.

*Even just having that extra PE time, you know so that even within a week the kids are getting physical activity of that sort, every day. And I think that, that is definitely beneficial, and we scheduled in for that because they are coming. (Sport B/Teacher 3)*

*And that's beyond their regular PE classes, so that's 2 extra periods. (Sport A/Teacher 1)*

The students learned skills that could serve as lifelong physical activity skills from coaches who served as role models through their passion and enthusiasm for their sports. Early experiences that promote skill acquisition in children are positive indicators that these individuals are more likely to be physically active later in life (CDC, 1999; Corbin, 2002; Curtis, McTeer & White, 1999; Patterson et al., 1997).

*The kids are charged, they are getting physical activity, (and) they are learning a skill that hopefully they can use throughout their life. (Sport C/Club)*

*When you bring stuff like that in, we hope that the students in our school will eventually find something that they really like to do and they will make it a lifelong sport. (Sport B/Teacher 2)*

*They are authentic, they are the experts, automatically, for the kids. They've got the passion for the sport, they certainly know the sport inside and out. (Sport A/Teacher 3)*

And most importantly according to the teachers, the children found learning skills through these program to be highly enjoyable.

*I had confidence that the kids would have fun, that they would learn some (skills) and some of them might take (it) up (in) the community as a result of the exposure, but I didn't know just how good the teaching was going to be and how much fun the kids were going to have. (Sport A/Teacher 3)*

*They are having a great time. They come in every day and the first question is when do we have (Sport B) today. You know they are loving it. (Sport B/Teacher 3)*

### **Social benefits for the school community**

The social benefits for the school community from the sport programs were not missed on the teachers who noticed increased self-confidence and a sense of achievement in some students through their participation in the programs. Not only did the children have fun in the programs, but the programs were an opportunity for some children to shine at non-traditional school sports.

*When you bring kids together with a different sport, you find kids who never thought that they were athletic because they are not running around all the time doing cross country, they go "I can do this". That is a really neat benefit for those kids who are not team players, who are not basketball players. I had one boy last year that...it was a discovery. He could play [Sport B]. It was amazing. He was like a C+ PE student and then it turns around his world. (Sport B/Teacher 2)*

These programs also gave the students a chance to learn life skills in addition to sports that contributed to the social skills of the individuals and benefited the school community (Corbin, 2002; Donnelly & Kidd, 2003; Kidd, 1999; Vail, 1993).

*They are skills for life, knowledge, responsibility and acknowledgment from other people because of what they are doing and that is how we are going to benefit society in general. (Sport B/Coach)*

*It was really beneficial for those kids who really wanted to challenge themselves and to try new things, because it can be more individual but it certainly wasn't the traditional team sport. They are using a lot more of their intellectual ability as well. (Sport C/Teacher 3)*

The social experiences of sport were also acknowledged by the teachers and the coaches as being beneficial for the students, and these programs offered those who were denied opportunities outside of school a chance to experience increased self esteem and confidence through physical activity and skill acquisition (Butcher et al., 2001; Corbin et al., 2002).

*There was one teacher, who just wanted those kids to get involved in as many sports as possible, nominally from a social point of view, because it was a little bit of a deprived area. (Sport A/Coach)*

*It was more the doing than the final prize. Persevering through the wet, you know the rain dripping off their noses and everything else, that was important and the kids were very excited about it. They really were. (Sport C/Teacher 1)*

The social aspects also brought a connection between the school community and the community at large in terms of what physical activity opportunities were available at local facilities.

*We did our (program) at [the park] because we had great weather, (so) we went outside. And we did it in May and the weather was just spectacular. (Then) the kids were up there on the weekends. They finally utilized a community activity. It was fabulous. (Sport B/Teacher 2)*

Within the smaller community of the classroom, the teachers enjoyed seeing their students responding to the coaches and the programs offered them a different perspective when evaluating their students.

*It also really affords you the time to sit there and better evaluate the children. You've got that luxury of sitting back and watching them go without having to be the one directing it. (Sport A/Teacher 2)*

*This program brought me more information about this kid. I saw very quickly what was the problem with her and I sent a message to her Mom to talk about this problem. (Sport B/Teacher 1)*

The coaches noted that the students also enjoyed seeing their teachers in a different light as they were also learning through the program.

*Some got involved and played a little bit and you could see the kids responding to that. They loved that actually, that the teachers got involved and it inspired some of the kids as well. (Sport A/Coach)*

### **Benefits for future collaboration for the elementary schools**

Buoyed by seeing how much fun the students had in the program and also realizing the commitment of the PSO to the success of such a quality experience for the students, the teachers all expressed interest in future collaborative programs.

*We initially started off with 2 afternoon periods per class. I believe it was 2 periods where they came in one hour per class. Then we were lucky enough to get it extended. (Sport A/Teacher 2)*

*We could have easily said no, the program has already finished, but... we need as many as we can REALLY! Even if one extra person (tries the sport), and he can tell another person and you know the domino affect. (Sport A/PSO)*

*I have already done one school at no cost, and I have used it as a workshop for coaches to come and see how a schools program can be delivered. So that is one way of doing it where my needs are met and we are reaching out to the schools. (Sport B/PSO)*

They appreciated being part of a program where the partners shared the same language and attitudes to engage the children in the learning experience which contradicts the literature stating that sport and education have different philosophies and language (Sport: The Way Ahead, 1992; Vail, 1992; 1993). It would appear in the face of these findings that these comments pertained more to the elite sport experience than the grassroots level of sport.

*They were great with the kids, they really valued what each kid could do. I thought that they were extremely positive and encouraging. (Sport B/Teacher 3)*

*That's how we promoted it. That it was an introductory program where we met certain goals of the Education Ministry in terms of teamwork, cooperation, sportsmanship and things like that. And the kids basically need to have a lot of fun. If it's fun, they'll want it next year again. (Sport B/PSO)*

The fact that the PSOs supplied the equipment to the schools through a program delivered at a relatively low cost was essential to the continued interest for future collaboration.

The benefits for the schools addressed some of the environmental pressures teachers had to deal with trying to give their students access to the sport and physical activity skills they need to be more active through PE. Access to sport expertise gave teachers on-site professional development and an awareness of sport resources in the community. The fact that the program supplied the equipment and charged a relatively low fee assisted teachers in offering such an opportunity when there was little school money available for PE activities.

The collaborative programs met some of the specific requirements of the IRP and presented a program where students received developmentally appropriate skill progression. The teachers felt the programs enhanced their delivery of the curriculum by offering variety and an introduction to skills the teachers would have been unable to offer.

The coaches not only made it easier for teachers by relieving some of their stress around teaching PE, they also made sure the students had fun learning. As role models, the coaches parlayed their passion and enthusiasm for their sports to both the students and the teachers generating an interest in the coaches as athletes and an interest in the sport outside of the school setting. The school community also benefited from the collaboration as teachers felt that physical activity opportunities were increased through additional PE time allocated to accommodate the program and the students learned skills they could use throughout their lives. The benefits of the social aspects of the program were highlighted by the teachers as making a positive contribution to the school community and perhaps as a catalyst to increasing the value of PE within the school environment.

The overall benefits bode well for future collaborations because teachers saw commitment and common goals from the different groups with the realization that they all had the well being of the students in mind. The challenges experienced by the participants of these programs need to be described and assessed as a realistic counterpoint to the benefits. Too often the benefits of collaboration are promoted without a substantial analysis of the challenges.

<b>Table 3: Benefits of collaboration for partners</b>	
SPORT CLUBS	<p><b>Exposure and legitimacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• community links/ exposure in the community</li> <li>• PSO commitment to program/community links</li> </ul> <p><b>Membership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• access to kids at appropriate age</li> </ul> <p><b>Volunteers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parents as potential volunteers</li> </ul> <p><b>Coaching</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mentoring/experience for coaches</li> </ul>
PSOs	<p><b>Exposure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exposure for sport in the community</li> <li>• increased awareness of community sport facilities</li> </ul> <p><b>Legitimacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• curriculum time</li> </ul> <p><b>Facilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• access to school facilities &amp; equipment</li> </ul> <p><b>Membership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• kids with time/appropriate age</li> <li>• potential members-grassroots/elite</li> </ul> <p><b>Volunteers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parents as potential volunteers</li> </ul> <p><b>Coaching</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mentoring/experience</li> <li>• employment opportunity</li> <li>• students as potential coaches</li> </ul> <p><b>Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teachers aware of outside resources</li> <li>• revenue potential</li> </ul>
SCHOOLS	<p><b>Resources for PE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• on site Pro D</li> <li>• awareness of sport community resources</li> <li>• program supplied equipment</li> <li>• low cost of program</li> </ul> <p><b>Curriculum benefits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• access to sport expertise</li> <li>• coaches as role models</li> <li>• exposure to variety of sports</li> <li>• curriculum enhancement</li> <li>• appropriate skill progression</li> <li>• meets IRP needs</li> <li>• relieves PE stress for teachers</li> <li>• inclusive of special needs</li> </ul> <p><b>Physical activity opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• skills for lifelong physical activity</li> <li>• physical activity offered in program</li> </ul> <p><b>Social /school community benefits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• kids had fun</li> <li>• opportunity for kids to shine at non-traditional sports</li> <li>• kids learned life skills other than sport</li> <li>• connection with community /social experience of sport</li> </ul>

## **Challenges for partners in the collaborative programs-Sport Clubs**

### **Dependence on Volunteers**

Club C run on a total volunteer basis found the amount of administrative work in the program taxing. From a structural perspective, the clubs' need for volunteers to run events evolving out of the schools programs was problematic. The Sport C event and future plans of Sport A needed the expertise and commitment of volunteers from the clubs. While the event was held during the school day to accommodate teachers and students (school structure), this complicated the recruiting of club volunteers who worked during those hours.

*For one the club doesn't have enough man volunteers to contact all the schools and then on the day we have to make sure that we are really organized. Right now we don't have the manpower. (Sport C/Club)*

The clubs felt that there were some teachers who did not "buy-in" to the program and they witnessed a visible lack of commitment on the part of these teachers. *Some schools are always receptive and some schools it changes. I guess it depends on the teachers (Sport A/Club).* The sports where this occurred were often those where the program had been initiated by the principal at the school. One of the documented challenges of collaboration is unequal commitment to the process (Kanter, 1989) and further study of school/sport programs might benefit from the exploration around inequality of commitment and whether it is associated with the involvement of the principal (management) in initiating the program, the reaction of certain staff members to collaborative programs in PE (outside organizations) or something else.

### **Membership**

For Sport C, the club had difficulties getting members as a direct result of the school program. *“The link to the school is a bit sporadic because you are not really seeing any members come from there” (Sport C/Club)*. The club involved in Sport A was successful at increasing junior membership, but the coach mentioned that other clubs may not have had the same success, if the schools were not in proximity to the club. Access to club infrastructure including teams with league access is facilitated by proximity to practices and competition. If school programs are in areas where participants have to travel long distances to gain access to the clubs, there is less chance they will participate.

### **Availability of coaches**

Sport A had difficulty scheduling club coaches in advance because matching the schedule of elite athletes, the teachers' needs and the junior league season was difficult. *“We don't know if we have the personnel to do it. In the past we've had elite athletes who are also students. So they have got time between classes to do it” (Sport A/Club)*. Sport C had one coach who handled the whole program. If this program was to grow in response to positive exposure in the schools, the lack of qualified coaches available during the school day could be a problem.

### **Poor communication about club**

Challenges for the clubs in terms of the actual collaborative process of the program were mostly related to communication and getting the clubs' brochures initially to the students and then home to their parents. Once the program was in the school, the next step of getting that information to the students and their families wasn't always successful.

*Everybody was given a form to take home, but I wouldn't have heard back whether or not they did anything with it. (Sport A/Teacher 1)*

*There were children who said they really enjoyed it, they didn't necessarily go that next step to try and get that information. (Sport C/Teacher 1)*

Communication between partners is important, especially at the start-up and development phase of collaboration (Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Kanter, 1989; Thibault et al., 1999; Uhlik, 1995) and these programs suffered from lack of communication between stakeholders as well as lack of planning (Frisby et al., 2004; Huxham & Vangen, 2000).

#### **Lack of coordination**

There was mention of a lack of coordination of the program with the Sport C club not knowing how many schools would be participating, making it difficult to provide the amount of volunteers needed. *It is also tough because we didn't know how many people were coming, the teachers didn't tell us (Sport C/Club)*. This demonstrated the need for the clubs to work together with the PSOs to provide the schools with a full picture of the program, what they experienced in school and what was offered outside of the school in the sport community. These findings illustrate those managerial practices that lead to the under-management of partnerships, such as a lack of planning and poor coordination (Frisby et al., 2004) as well as difficulties in developing joint modes of operation (Huxham & Vangen, 2000).

#### **Lack of evaluation and follow-up**

Regarding outcomes of the programs, follow-up resources for the teachers specific to these programs weren't always available. *We are probably not up to date on what is available to teachers (Sport A/Club)*. When asked, neither club had any follow up to the

schools programs on their club registration forms, making it difficult for the sports to track the success of the school programs for accountability purposes. Sport A/Club had only anecdotal information to explain the actual increase in numbers of junior players and Sport C/Club had no feedback. While unclear reporting channels were mentioned by Frisby et al. (2004) as a factor contributing to partnership under-management, managing the accountability of the collaboration to the stakeholders and constituents can also be a challenge.

### **Summary of challenges for sports clubs**

The clubs' challenges were minimal in the implementation and operation of the collaborative program. The Sport A club piggybacked on the existing program of the PSO and did not experience any difficulties with the administration of the program other than scheduling around the club coaches availability. Difficulties for the Sport C club lay with the lack of memberships generated from the school program in the short term. There was no measure or tracking mechanism for registration of new members from the program, which could be attributed to the fact that there was no junior program offered by the club, just the hope that they would enjoy the school experience and want to continue within the community setting. The lack of memberships for Sport C could be connected to the difficulty both Sports A and C had making sure all the participants received the brochures containing club information. Not being a school activity, the teachers had no reason to follow-up on whether the brochures reached the parents. Providing the information to the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) for submission to the school newsletter in either print or electronic form would be one way of disseminating this information to the school community.

### **Challenges for partners in the collaborative programs- PSOs**

Challenges for the PSOs resulted from their dealings with public elementary schools, their own structural limitations and those challenges they encountered within the process of the collaborative programs. As the actual agents of delivery, the coaches were positioned as the connection between the clubs, the PSOs and the schools but within each sport their situation varied. Sport A employed coaches who had direct ties with Club A, involved as elite provincial players and experienced club coaches. Sport B, employed coaches who had club connections in the community, but these were not relevant to this study. The Sport C school program involved one coach who was paid by the PSO through program generated revenue. Due to the voluntary nature of this organization at the provincial level, this coach's situation demonstrated the interdependence between the club and PSO. This coach was involved in the club executive and responsible for junior development within the PSO. The challenges the coaches experienced as representatives of the PSO are important to the assessment of the future viability of these programs and will be included at this point.

#### **Working with large classes and under-valued subject matter**

The greatest challenge for the coaches was a consequence of working within the school structure, where they dealt with large groups of school children with various levels of skill and enthusiasm, rather than the situation they usually face coaching at the club or elite levels.

*It was a slightly different experience because I think the major thing is you have got some kids in that class who are having a great time and love it and want more. You've got kids who are quite passive yet do it and then you've got kids who probably don't want to be there as well. So you are catering to lots of different tastes for sport. (Sport A/Coach)*

*There is a huge number of students. Now remember that coaching one person and coaching 30 people is different. You could be a perfect coach for one on one then maybe your coaching certification is not enough for coaching 30 students. (Sport B/Coach)*

They also noticed the different levels of teacher commitment to the program mentioned earlier. At one school, students had misbehaved in class before their scheduled time in the gym and the teacher chose to deny the program to the whole class as a consequence, leaving the coaches with an empty gymnasium and 40 minutes of their time wasted. *“This is quite annoying that a couple of kids misbehaved in one class so the whole class didn’t get to play, (Sport A/Coach).* While the coaches perceived this as a lack of commitment, it also demonstrates the undervaluing of sport education by some teachers. There was also the odd scheduling mix-up. *I think there [were] a couple of times where we may have turned up one lesson too late or we expected to have kids and we didn’t have them because there was a communication breakdown (Sport A/Coach).*

#### **Lack of awareness of IRP**

Being a part of the collaborative process meant some coaches had to acquaint themselves with the IRP to deliver the program in a language that both the students and teachers were familiar with. Some coaches were aware of these teaching guidelines, while others were not. *I am not aware of (it). That would probably be a good tool to have (Sport B/Coach).* Though some coaches felt they were not familiar with the IRP, in actuality they had been given a framework that included aspects of the IRP by the PSO.

Maintaining enthusiasm for the duration of the program was mentioned by one of the coaches and though it was not addressed by other coaches it seemed obvious that this could be a problem if the programs were to expand.

*“Coach fatigue? Yeah, definitely if you are overworked. When you have done your 20th school, you don’t have the same drive as when you start the program.” (Sport B/Coach)*

Some coaches worked alone with no real peer group and that was considered a bit of a challenge. *When I am doing the same program of course there is no one around me so (that) I can compare my work with them (Sport B/Coach).*

Although the coaches described these as challenges, they were certainly not overwhelming, and they may not have mentioned them had they not been asked.

### **Non-profits working in the public sector**

One of the structural challenges encountered in these collaborative programs by PSOs interviewed was the direct or indirect influence of the teachers’ union on the sport and physical activities at the schools, which was indicative of differences in professional cultures between non-profits and public sector organizations (Huxham & Vangen, 2000). It is important to repeat at this time, that during the course of the research, job action did take place in the public schools. The job action curtailed any teacher involvement outside of classroom time including, recess, lunch, after school and weekends. As sport activities take place during these periods and involve the volunteer time of generalist teachers, the teachers’ perceptions and interpretation of the influence of the job action had an impact on their perceptions of the collaborative programs. In the reporting of this union influence two different aspects were uncovered. In general terms, generalist public school elementary teachers are reluctant to spend any free time, specifically on weekend events or programs for their students, such as the event Sport A had tried in the past.

*It would happen on a weekend? That's not a problem for me, but that's my nature. I don't know if you'd ever get anyone involved on their free time. (Sport A/Teacher 2)*

*You are not going to get public school teachers showing up on Sunday. Working on the weekend is not a public school teacher's dream of how it should be and we just won't do it. (Sport A/Teacher 3)*

In specific terms, the implementation of a job action during the period of research heightened the awareness of the union regulations for some teachers. This made them wary of working outside their union's regulations either from personal conviction or to avoid any harassment from their colleagues.

*We are a small school and we reached the opinion to gracefully disagree and not to be on each other's cases. What we did agree to was doing those things during the school day that could be done. (Sport C/Teacher 1)*

*If I am doing the organization of this program during (class) time then it would be no problem. Everything before, after or during recess we can't do it. (Sport B/Teacher 1)*

These examples support findings in the literature that in partnerships when strategic shifts occur in one partner, it affects the other partners as well as the collaborative venture (Babiak, 2003; Kanter, 1989). For the PSOs the impact of the job action was significant, not just the management of the program, but the attitudes of the managers and the undermining of previously established relationships with schools.

*The job action has had a very definite impact on the program, when the first phase started, the phones just dried up on me. (Participation) was about 30% less (in the year of the job action). (Sport B/PSO)*

*It is a big challenge, the job action last year. And also this year, I have only private schools so far for this year. (Sport C/Coach-PSO)*

Within the structure of the public elementary schools, the union initiated job action definitely had an impact on the program for the PSOs, coaches and teachers. While connections between school and community sports groups has been limited in the past (Mills Report, 1998; Sport: The Way Ahead, 1992; Vail, 1993) and could continue to be a challenge, there were conflicting philosophies among the teachers interviewed as to whether this kind of action could jeopardize their future involvement in such a program.

### **Initiating programs at schools**

Staffing practices at the schools made connecting with the schools problematic for the PSOs. In the absence of specialist teachers, there was no designated person for the PSOs to contact and blanket communication within a school district appeared futile.

*Some school districts they don't accept any mailing. Any information (you) want to communicate to the teacher you have to do it yourself. When you do it yourself, the schools reject you. I sent maybe 200 beautiful posters to the school districts. When I called them, nobody had seen them. (Sport C/Coach-PSO)*

*So it was basically just really persistence in phoning the schools and getting rejected and none returning calls and things like that. (Sport B/PSO)*

It was difficult to gain access to teachers to make them aware of the sport programs partly because teachers were overburdened with their own programs, but also because most of the schools had no specialist PE teacher as a contact. The person most often identified as the contact in schools was the secretary who opened the mail, answered the faxes and email and responded to phone calls.

*Honestly when I send the brochure, I am quite sure that it's not the only one sent to the school, there are plenty of them. And most of them go into the garbage because they don't*

*have time to read them all. That is a problem where they are overworked with so many papers, teachers and principals. They don't have time. (Sport B/PSO)*

*The secretary doesn't sit in on our meetings at all. So she sort of screens whatever comes in and puts it, or sends it in the direction that she thinks is the right way to go. She usually sends any type of PE things to (another teacher) knowing that she's passionate about sport in general. That doesn't necessarily get filtered down to us though. (Sport A/Teacher 2)*

Even when a connection was established and the teachers were aware of the outside sport resources available to them, the PSOs had to make repeated attempts to communicate with the schools before finally getting teachers to sign up, using up valuable administrative time (Frisby et al., 2004; Selsky, 1991).

*I send out a letter, generally towards the end of Sept. of each school year and I wait for a week, and then I start phoning and then I would send out another newsletter after the Mar. spring break, and then at the very end of the school year. They get 3 issues, 3 contacts from [Sport B]. It's like anything, if you get something often enough, you eventually look at it. (Sport B/PSO)*

*I sent out faxes to a lot, I mean I blanketed the whole area pretty much, and I got back 8 saying they were definitely interested. (Sport A/PSO)*

These examples lend credence to the literature identifying difficulties communicating between organizations in different sectors and negotiating joint programs (Huxham & Vangen, 2000). Vail (1993) spoke about the difficulties sports had connecting with schools around facilities. Future research may be needed to uncover whether the basis for Vail's finding were conflicting values and philosophies between education and sport, or structural

difficulty communicating between sports organizations and schools because there is no designated avenue or method to exchange information about programs and facilities.

### **Scheduling around limited facilities**

The lack of substantial facilities at the public schools to serve the needs for PE (Jantzen, 1995) meant that the PSOs had to accommodate the internal scheduling of the schools where gymnasiums served multipurpose functions in the form of assembly halls, theatres, and lunchrooms.

*But scheduling in terms of season is a challenge because some organizations want to push their (programs) at a time when the schools don't necessarily have the best facilities or it's not the best timing. It can be that you have to close down the gym to other activity for the times you've got [Sport A] coming in. (Sport A/Teacher 3)*

If other sports choose to promote school/sport programs to address grassroots needs, there may be competition for access due to the limited capacity of the school facilities to accommodate the programs and other school activities.

### **Cost of the program**

The lack of financial resources for public education does not allow schools to pay for many outside programs from the school budget. The cost of the programs, although low and extremely affordable in comparison to the cost of community sport opportunities, was mentioned as a limitation by teachers who had experiences in lower socio-economic parts of the district. The cost for Sport B was \$7 per student for four sessions, while for Sport C the price varies according to the teachers needs ranging from \$10 to \$12 per student for two to three sessions. Sport C sessions were considerably longer than Sport B. Sport A ran a free program during this time but could shift to a paying program in the future to remain sustainable.

*I would like to do it, but it's very expensive, those programs. (Sport B/Teacher 1)*

*It would be great if they could have it and we didn't have to charge the children, if there was some kind of free resource that would be wonderful. (Sport C/Teacher 1)*

The lack of resources in the school environment could affect the future of paying programs in the long term in an environment of perceived free public education. The presence of the cost of the program in the findings for both benefits and challenges demonstrates the range of perceptions around paying programs in public schools. Perceptions as to whether this was a challenge or a benefit were influenced by the resources available to students at the school and some teachers experiences teaching in other areas. Some teachers agreed with the PSOs that the cost is good value for the quality of the program compared to the cost of enrolling in a community sport program. Others have the experience of working in school communities where this kind of cost would be described as a luxury in comparison to all the other pressing needs.

*Well the main challenge is the payment. The (money) sometimes is a problem, because supposedly the kids can't pay during school hours. During school hours, whatever is there should be free to the kids. That's in theory. However all the schools have things during school time that parents pay for. So it is a contradiction and that can be a problem. It's just if people can throw it back at me that you can't charge during school hours. (Sport B/PSO)*

### **Administrative limitations of the PSOs**

The structural limitations of the PSOs themselves presented challenges as well to the future of these kinds of collaborative programs, especially for an organization like Sport C, totally dependant on volunteers (Hall & Reed, 1998).

*I was spending three months of my time, totally not for profit. And all the printing and everything, doing the plan, connecting the schools, all the logistics, everything.” (Sport C/Coach-PSO)*

Even in sport organizations with paid staff like Sport A and B, the administrative time spent on the program drew staff away from other responsibilities, demonstrating how managing partnerships can be a strain on the skill set of organizational managers as well as the time they have available (Babiak, 2003; Frisby et al., 2004; Selsky, 1991; Thibault et al., 1999).

*This program increases my workload, because I’m the only one in the office, so when I’m away, nothing gets done and no one is available. (Sport A/PSO)*

Scarce financial resources to support the programs was mentioned by Sports A and C as a challenge to a more structured program that could run longer and include planning for years to come. Sport B had financial support in the PSO budget for the program because it had been running longer, generated self-sustaining revenue and the successes of the past made the program a priority for the PSO with the backing and support of the national body (NSF).

*Their expectations would have been that it would have been longer, and that we could have run it over 3 or 4 weeks. But we don't have the time and we don't have the resources to do that. (Sport A/PSO)*

*The other thing is that (the PSO) doesn't have any money to sponsor any of those programs, so they are totally self-sponsored. The first thing is all the work that I do like phoning and contacting is not paid which is understandable. (Sport C/Coach-PSO) I know in Alberta they have a fully paid guy. That is what he is doing, approaching the schools. He can do that because he has the time. (Sport C/Club)*

### **Scarcity of coaches and scheduling**

The problems for Sports A and C were further complicated by their programs' reliance on the availability of coaches who were already a scarcity. Programs like Sport B were also challenged by the inability to plan ahead, never knowing how many schools would sign up for the year.

*For myself it was a little bit of stress because it was a really busy time for me, to coach 6 hours at schools and then go and coach a couple of club sides in the evening. It was just too much. So in terms of work, it added a little bit of stress. (Sport A/Coach)*

*We have coaches who work part time. Now because the program is on a voluntary basis, we don't know how many schools we are going to get next year. You can't have a full time coach. (Sport B/PSO)*

In addition, the availability of the coaches did not always coincide with the optimal scheduling of the programs from the perspective of the PSOs. Sport A ideally would have liked the programs to lead into the beginning of the junior league registration, while Sport C wanted to attract participants to the end of year school championships. Neither Sport A nor Sport C did a good job of promoting the school programs to the other PSO members, unlike Sport B which included the program in all printed communication to members and on the web site.

### **Lack of information around partners' needs**

The unstructured aspect of the programs and the amount of administrative time spent on the program by the PSOs demonstrated a lack of awareness of the schools inner workings and the teachers' educational needs. Both Kanter (1989) and Uhlik (1995) discuss the need

for collaborating partners to educate themselves about each other to achieve successful outcomes.

*I think for some teachers though they do like to know about things well in advance. I'm talking 6 to 8 months in advance. (Sport C/Teacher 3)*

*And that was the problem with the elementary school champs. We kept saying stop doing this 2 weeks before. You have to get us together before hand so we can tell you what doesn't work with kids and what will work. (Sport C/Teacher 2)*

Managers embarking on collaborative ventures also need to supplement their skill set to accommodate the changing nature of their job. When an organization shifts its outlook from internal to include an external focus, managers may need additional skills and training (Kanter, 1989; Frisby et al., 2004; Thibault et al., 1999) including doing research on partner organizations' needs.

There appeared to be an opportunity for the PSOs to strengthen the contribution of these programs to the IRP by creating program related resources for the teachers to use in their curriculum. In addition to facilitating the inclusion of the school/sport programs into the curriculum, this would create a value added benefit showing commitment on the part of the PSO and an understanding of the schools needs.

*I would have liked to have like a unit, which isn't always easy for the person to have because they don't know necessarily know about the IRP and everything else. But just have some basic ideas, like here are four activities that you could possibly or three activities you could do and I did find information through other teachers but it took extra time I didn't really have to put into it. (Sport C/Teacher 3)*

Some of the coaches needed to be briefed and provided with more information regarding the educational mandates of the IRP pertaining to PE.

*He just did not have the structure and the discipline that I would have had with the kids. He wasn't a teacher. You know we like our discipline and structure and some sort of lesson that goes on and you know it was a little vague, but in spite of that, the kids loved it. (Sport B/Teacher 2)*

It appeared through the interviews that both coaches and PSO organizers of sport programs were unaware of the schools' planning process and when would be the opportune time to approach the teachers. *I actually just sent a questionnaire to every teacher that I know.... but I never included anything about when would be the best time to contact you (Sport C/Coach/PSO).*

#### **Lack of communication between sport organizations**

Communication was problematic throughout the process. The PSO and clubs did not provide each other with information about registration from the school programs.

*I provided information about the clubs (to students who wanted to sign up) but had no follow up mechanism at the club level. I don't have access to that information (from) the club registration forms. (Sport A/PSO)*

*I haven't put (any tracking mechanism) in place, no. I've always wondered why it hasn't been there because it'll give us valid feed back on if in fact it does work. (Sport B/PSO)*

And the PSOs were not even aware of whether the parents, who would be instrumental in initiating their child's participation at the community level, ever received the brochures containing the club information.

*I think there is a problem with the administrative part of the school. You know, like how do we try to reach the parents? (Sport B/Coach)*

*Many (parents) didn't (receive them). You count that by how many went on the floor or into the recycle bin. I would say that about half the kids stuffed theirs in their backpacks and took them home. They probably, most of them ended up being recycled at that point. But that's fine, that's the way it is. (Sport A/Teacher 3)*

This exemplified the difficulties of starting collaborative ventures and how lack of planning, poor coordination, and a lack of evaluation procedures can lead to negative consequences in collaboration (Frisby et al., 2004). Participating organizations lack of knowledge of partner capabilities was a significant challenge though not insurmountable. Continuation of these programs in the same schools will help information sharing between the groups.

Provan & Milward, (2001), found in networks that evolve informally, initiating agencies may have to absorb transaction and organizing costs initially. The challenges for the PSOs as the initiating organizations of relatively new or informal collaborative programs were considerable in comparison to the schools.

### **Challenges for partners in the collaborative programs- Elementary Schools**

#### **Scheduling around limited gymnasium time**

From the perspective of the teachers interviewed, the schools experienced few challenges and felt the programs were relatively stress free. Challenges for the schools were centred on internal scheduling

*We set up some dates and that was a bit difficult to find times that fit to when I taught PE when they could come, because our gym is used every period, all day, throughout the week. I team teach with another split class, and we had the grade 6s skiing. So we had one day where they did 2 periods of different classes back to back. The next time it was just the grade 7s because the grade 6s were skiing. Then the next week it was a miscommunication with the office and us, and the gym was booked for an outside*

*performance and we missed the last session. (Sport A/Teacher 1)*

Some schools brought the programs in for the whole student population, while other programs were scheduled for specific classes meaning teachers had to juggle to get access to the gymnasium. One school where classes were mixed groupings (K-3), sending the whole class together was problematic because of the broad range of physical capabilities among the students. Once the teachers experienced the first class, they realized they would have to organize the classes differently for future programs.

*The greatest challenge I had was getting people to change their PE times so I could have that block in the gym. (Sport A/Teacher 2)*

*When you are setting up a schedule and then you have to reorganize so that all the Ks go together all the (grade) 1s or all the younger than the older. It just means that only part of your class is going and then who is going with the kids and what are you doing with the rest of your kids and it becomes pretty time consuming organizing that, but I would certainly think that we would need to do it a different way if we were to do this again. (Sport B/Teacher 3)*

Both situations created some scheduling difficulties for the schools due to the shortage of facilities. This internal scheduling aspect had some impact on the scheduling of the programs with the PSOs.

*By the time I phoned people had obviously booked and I needed a Monday or a Wednesday, so in order to shuffle our schedule at the school with their schedule to find the time. (Sport A/Teacher 1)*

*If she were to send out something in April for example and then follow up with even a really short note at the end of June. Even if it was a short phone call and I could write it down in our daily planner where the teachers look every morning signing in. And then in September send out*

*something "OK here is the brochure that I told you about last spring". A lot of people do that planning a year ahead. (Sport C/Teacher 3)*

### **Lack of awareness of community sport resources**

Within the collaborative process, the major challenge from the teachers' perspective echoed that of the PSOs and centred on lack of awareness of the programs. The teachers were unaware of the outside sport resources available to them.

*I don't know why it is like this, but we definitely need more information about those programs. We don't have any information and we don't know how to get information. I didn't know that some sports were offering free programs for the kids. (Sport B/Teacher 1)*

*I just happened to get into my box. If it had gone off to someone else, I would have had no idea it had even arrived at the school. (Sport A/Teacher 2)*

Some teachers felt the program was too short and they worried about the cost, not for their schools, but for others.

### **Summary**

The challenges experienced by the teachers involving internal scheduling and facility use were seen by some teachers as a reality but not insurmountable. The fact that the program was considered too short by some teachers echoes findings in the literature that children need time to practice new skills (Corbin, 2002). The positive response by the overwhelming majority of participants bodes well for the future of these kinds of programs as a viable strategy to addressing the social issue of physical inactivity at schools within elementary PE. The following chapter will contain conclusions and recommendations for the future as well as the assumed contributions of this research.

<b>Table 4: Challenges experienced by partners</b>	
<b>SPORT CLUBS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dependence on volunteers</li> <li>• membership (Sport C only)</li> <li>• availability of coaches (elite athletes competing)</li> <li>• poor communication about club</li> <li>• lack of coordination</li> <li>• lack of evaluation and follow-up</li> </ul>
<b>PSOs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• working with large classes and under-valued subject matter</li> <li>• lack of awareness of IRP</li> <li>• non-profits working in the public sector</li> <li>• initiating programs at schools</li> <li>• scheduling around limited facilities</li> <li>• cost of the program</li> <li>• administrative limitations of the PSOs</li> <li>• scarcity of coaches and scheduling</li> <li>• lack of information around partners' needs</li> <li>• lack of communication between sport organizations</li> </ul>
<b>SCHOOLS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• scheduling around limited gym time</li> <li>• lack of awareness of community sport resources</li> <li>• short program/cost of program</li> </ul>

## **Chapter Five**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **Conclusions**

This research contributes to a greater understanding of the environmental pressures affecting specific public elementary schools, community sport clubs and provincial sport organizations in the delivery of grassroots sport opportunities to children. Pressures affecting the delivery of PE, experienced by certain generalist teachers in the public school system were juxtaposed against the pressures experienced by managers of non-profit sport organizations (clubs and PSOs) providing a context for the examination of an inter-organizational collaborative initiative between these three groups. Situated within a broader social context of the issue of physical inactivity in children, this comparative case study offers a glimpse at the benefits and challenges of collaboration experienced in the sharing of resources to enhance sport and physical opportunities for children in elementary school.

While the findings can offer a greater understanding of this kind of program to the fields of physical education and collaboration to address social issues, I feel the greatest contribution this research makes is actually documenting collaboration between PE and sport. Since 1992, in *Sport: The Way Ahead*, schools and sport organizations have been identified as partners in the delivery of grassroots sport opportunities as part of the Canadian sport system. However, the distance and lack of coordination and communication between these sectors has been the topic of policy papers, academic essays and media reports for the last decade (Donnelly & Kidd, 2003; Kidd, 1999; Mills Report, 1998; *Sport: The Way Ahead*, 1992; Thibault & Harvey, 1997; Vail, 1992; 1993; 1994). This research is a beginning that

hopefully can be built upon by others in different provinces and territories to provide information to assist in the collaborative promotion of sport and physical activities for Canadian children.

**Research question #1: *What environmental pressures have led to collaboration between provincial sport organizations, community sport clubs and public elementary schools?***

This research question set the stage for the study by providing the rationale for addressing the social issue of physical inactivity in children through a collaborative strategy. Identifying pressures in the environment provided a measure to assess the outcomes of collaboration by asking whether these pressures were addressed by the collaborative benefits experienced by the participating organizations, and whether the challenges were manageable within the present environment.

The clubs and PSOs as sport organizations operating in the non-profit sector experienced many of the same pressures. While public funding at the federal and provincial level of sport has declined over the last decade the cost of participating in sport at all levels has increased. Declining financial resources in the sport environment directly affected PSOs and restricted funds available to clubs, resulting in competition for facilities and limiting money for coaching, coordinators or administrators. Realizing they need to increase membership to survive, sport organizations struggling to provide services to their existing members, find it difficult to expand their vision to promote grassroots opportunities for children.

Compounding the financial stress for these organizations are the realities of non-profit limitations; a dependence on volunteers in a social climate where time is a precious commodity, accountability to funders (public and private) that is not only time consuming for

administrators but creates tension around organizational goals and mandates (profit generation versus social service) drawing managers in different directions, and competition for resources with struggling non-profits representing other sectors.

The public education sector has similar pressures as a result of decreased government funding and increased expectations. Fewer dollars in the school system directly affect non-core subjects such as physical education; outdated and inappropriate facilities in a region notorious for inclement weather, fewer resources to provide equipment and retain specialist teachers, unrealistic expectations on generalist teachers with limited training in PE methods and increased class sizes including students with a broad range of abilities and disabilities. Social realities add to these pressures: many teachers as well as parents under-value the benefits of physical activity contributing to the consequent undervaluing of PE as a subject against more academic subjects; not enough time allocated to PE in the curriculum to meet the physical needs of children; and many teachers having difficulties with the IRP, lack creativity in their PE content, satisfied to define content by the inter-school standby sports like, volleyball, basketball and track and field. Employment practices in public schools at times add further pressures to the delivery of sport and physical activity opportunities, evidenced by the restriction of teachers' volunteer activities during job action.

**Research question #2: *What strategies did the partners use to pool resources?***

Through collaboration in the delivery of school/sport programs, sport organizations and schools in the study were able to share material, administrative and normative resources (Selsky, 1991) covering the tangible and intangible resources referred to by Thibault et al., (1999). The sport organizations offered material and human resources including; coaches with expertise, equipment to be used during the program, as well as equipment purchase

opportunities for both students and schools facilitating continued participation in the sport after the program (at school and in the community) and program related resources and initiatives. In turn, the schools provided access to students, facilities, equipment and the participation of teachers as support for the coaches. Administrative resources shared by the groups included; the contributions of the PSO managers' time to facilitate marketing and scheduling of the programs, the efforts of the teachers to participate in the programs and seek permission and payment from the parents of the students. Normative resources promoted the legitimacy of the program and the organizations within the community. Teachers, children and parents became aware of the sport organizations through the programs and the opportunities they provide in the community that was legitimized through the school connection and inclusion in the curriculum.

**Research question #3: *What benefits and challenges did the partners encounter through this partnership?***

Incremental success bodes well for future collaboration (Roberts & Bradley, 1991; Selsky, 1991; Sharfman et al., 1991; Van de Ven, 1976) and sometimes even the implementation of a collaborative initiative between traditionally fragmented groups such as sport and education can be considered a success (Roberts & Bradley, 1991). Evaluation of collaborative initiatives between networks or more than two agencies is "critical to justify involvement by provider agencies and to justify public support of the concept" (Provan & Milward, 2001). This is the reason for posing this last research question to discern whether or not the benefits address the needs of the organizations and if the challenges are considered manageable by the participants within their existing environment.

The benefits mentioned by participants representing the clubs and the PSOs were; increased exposure leading to legitimacy in the school community, access to potential members and volunteers, mentoring opportunities and experience in a school setting for coaches, and for the PSOs access to school facilities and equipment during the program. In addition to these benefits, both clubs and PSOs experienced benefits that could lead to future collaboration including teachers' commitment to the program, teachers present as support for the coaches, the schools accommodation of the program in terms of scheduling flexibility, and an increased awareness within the school of outside sport resources.

The benefits for the schools were extensive and included providing scarce resources for PE, curriculum benefits for teachers and students, enhanced and increased physical activity opportunities, as well as school community benefits. In addition to the fact that students had fun in programs that supplied expertise, using shared language for a relatively low-cost, the teachers recognized the commitment of the PSOs to the success of the initiative, laying the groundwork for future collaboration. All the teachers and sport representatives expressed the intention to participate in the programs in the future, demonstrating that for these groups collaboration did provide a viable strategy to address their needs in the delivery of grassroots programs and elementary PE.

The challenges experienced by the PSOs and clubs, working with the public schools could be attributed to different structures from different sectors working together with short-term vision. Some schools needs considerable lead time to plan for programs and this was difficult for the sports, either because there was no dependable program funding or staffing (Sport A & C) or there was no guarantee that arrangements made for the next year would be upheld if there was a personnel change in the schools (Sport A, B, C). The sports appeared to

plan their programs without much information about the practices and understanding of the public schools system. These administrative challenges could be alleviated by communication and coordination, gathering more information about schools and planning programs to accommodate the differences.

All the groups failed to effectively evaluate the programs, missing out on an excellent opportunity to celebrate the successes and clarify the collaborative challenges and the strain they can place on organizational capacity. It is important for sport organization managers to be aware of the challenges and “understand the advantages, disadvantages and necessary management tools before they make a commitment to participate in inter-organizational relations” (Babiak, 2003, p. 301). Schools also need to evaluate collaborative initiatives in order to justify the time and cost committed to implementing programs and to share the successes with all levels of administration from the school district on up to the Ministry of Education.

The value of the multi-case study approach lies in increasing the understanding of school/sport collaboration. In the final analysis, is this collaborative strategy viable and does it increase capacity within a system to address social issues? Sport Canada (1998) suggests that the strategic direction for sport system development is to collaborate with partners to promote broad based participation. Describing a system as a number of organizations at different levels working together in a coordinated fashion to achieve goals, Thibault & Harvey (1997), join others claiming that the distance between sport and education will continue in the absence of any infrastructure or framework offering formal linkages (Campbell, 1995; Mills Report, 1998; Sport: The Way Ahead, 1992; Vail, 1993). Adding Selsky’s (1991) definition of development of systemic capacity within fractionated

organizational communities where organizations from different sectors identify problems and create programs to address them through the mobilization of resources, these school /sport programs appear to provide a viable strategy where the benefits of collaboration outweigh the challenges. As the partnership literature suggests more formalized structures and qualified staff are needed to provide stability and lay the groundwork for successful long-term collaboration (Frisby et al., 2004; Gray & Wood, 1991; Logsdon, 1991; Selsky, 1991). At this stage the value of these programs lies in addressing the challenges and sharing the successes with other sport organizations and schools to progressively increase trust and strengthen horizontal links within the sport system with a vision of a long term commitment. The next step is to formalize these relations, beginning at the organizational level, building on incremental successes that create momentum to spread out to other parts of the system.

### **Recommendations**

The contributions of this research lie more in the practical than the theoretical realm. The Canadian Sport Policy (2002) presents *enhanced participation* as its first goal with the number one priority being *increased participation*. The first action step is to “develop collaborative strategies to increase the public’s understanding of and participation in sport for all” (Canadian Sport Policy, 2002, p. 5). In addition to providing a modest beginning to a greater understanding of the potential of collaboration between sport and education, this research might contribute to the groundwork needed for the development of a working framework for resource sharing between organizations at the grassroots level of sport and physical activity.

During the course of research, I became aware that just doing the research and asking pertinent questions got people thinking about aspects of their program they had never

considered. As the research progressed I became involved in two of the programs, Sport A and Sport B. The information uncovered while collecting the data, provided the basis of two grants to fund Sport A's program and Sport B used the recommendations of my report to make changes to their next years program, and planning for the future. Sport C was also appreciative of the information I was able to share with them about the programs of other sports. From this perspective I feel this research has become action research and has made a practical contribution to the organizations that kindly offered their time for interviews.

### **Recommendations for sport clubs and PSOs**

Collaborative programs often fail because of unequal or unreal expectations of the partners, but they can also be vulnerable to the lack of knowledge of the partner organizations (e.g., values, goals, environmental pressures, and members' requirements, organizational capacity). A long-term vision of the school/sport program could benefit from some of the challenges uncovered in this research. On the strength of this data, I would recommend that PSOs and clubs pursue this kind of program delivery within their sports with the awareness that expectations of increased membership from school programs need to be accompanied by an internal focus on junior development programs within the sport. In addition to junior program commitment, PSOs need to provide organizational resources to create stability for the programs increasing the level of trust with schools. All programs should be evaluated from the perspective of the schools and the sport organizations. This will provide marketing information as well as feedback to strengthen any weaknesses or oversights.

### **Administration**

PSOs should send out a notice of the program to teachers in late March or early April, allowing appropriate lead-time for the teachers who plan ahead and an opportunity for those

who are more flexible to accommodate the program during the spring term in that year. It would be helpful to make further contact in May (regarding teachers' employment) and perhaps an arrangement with the school to have the information passed to a staff member who will remain at the school. Follow up in June or September is recommended..

### **Scheduling**

Some schools have limited gym time, so PSOs should ask the teachers or school at the time of contact, whether they have thought of any scheduling issues that may come up. For example: i) What if the weather is bad? ii) Do they have a hot lunch program or noon activities that are set up in the gym that could have an impact on the program? iii) Are there other programs that will conflict with scheduling related to split grade classes?

### **Coaches**

Sport B had good growth due to school/sport program coaching workshops. All the sports could benefit from this approach, making sure there are enough coaches to keep up the excitement and interest level of both coaches and students, sharing strategies and continuing the education of the coaches. More female coaches should be involved in the program, providing athlete and coach role models for both male and female students.

### **Content**

Sport organizations need to be familiar with the IRP information, readily available on the Ministry of Education website (PE curriculum k-7), and weave it into the content around learning outcomes, values, language, and teaching methods. This language should also be incorporated into the marketing information sent to schools, helping teachers immediately recognize the relevance of the content. PSOs working with a teacher to create a lesson plan, will give teachers a full unit, including i) a preparation phase which could include a video of

world class youth players (get information from the NSF), ii) the activity phase which is the school/sport portion, iii) some kind of follow up incorporating the sport information into other subjects (for example geography, history, math, physics).

### **Connecting and communicating**

Connecting with the schools was a challenge, first with the initial connection and then continued communication with the teachers. It would be advisable for PSOs to approach the teacher training institutions and make sure the instructors are aware of the programs, passing this information on to the generalist student teachers. It is paramount that PSOs maintain connections with current schools (principals, teachers and parents of the PAC) to strengthen the relationship.

Sport groups should make the handouts or brochures user friendly and specific to the group targeted. Handouts to parents and teachers should focus on different aspects of the program, and these need to be clarified. PSOs could include quotes from children, parents or teachers who have participated in the program to promote it to future participants (for example, teachers telling other teachers how easy the program was for them, how it fits the IRP needs, and how much fun the kids had). PSOs need to impress upon their coaches that every aspect of their participation leads to the success of the program. Brochures need to be distributed by the teacher in order to get to the parents. Perhaps incentives like a draw for free lessons or equipment will invite kids to take these brochures home and send in their names to the PSO to participate in the draw.

### **Marketing the program to teachers and schools**

The PSO school/sport program is offering instruction, in a safe, fun environment where children are experiencing something apart from what they do with their teachers. It is

important through print and the internet, to continue to celebrate the benefits of the program to PSO members and partners such as exposure, legitimacy, shared resources, coaches with broader experience, goodwill for future (maybe future participants and increased numbers for elite selection, maybe corporate opportunities for potential sponsors.)

PSOs need to make schools aware of the benefits for their community experienced through the program. Providing information either in print or in person to the PAC (Parent Advisory Council) would create a personal connection. They could show how the program benefits the school community as well as the individual and demonstrate through testimonials how it fits the needs of the teachers: teachers gained an enhanced PE curriculum; relieved stress for overburdened teachers; exposure to a new sport, for teachers, students and their families; links between education and the sport community. Working with a teacher to create a teaching resource which could include a unit with pre visit preparation and post visit information about connecting the game to the kids' lives and communities would be valuable. Creating a link from their school web page to the PSO, would continue the connection between the sport and the school. Including the web page information in the handout brochures could provide this link at home.

### **Consider challenges to charging fees**

Implementing a paying program in a publicly funded institution has economic and ethical considerations. PSOs could try to offer a small portion of needy schools an option to the payment either through bursaries, joint partnership with corporate sponsor, accessing foundation grants to benefit physically inactive children in lower income neighbourhoods or using a few schools as training ground for future coaches. Another avenue would be to include the resources of the parent group through the PAC, either as individual supporters

endorsing their child's participation, or designating PAC funds to finance a program for the school.

### **Sport Community Links**

It could be beneficial to explore the idea of joining up with other sports and make a template to incorporate these kinds of programs into the IRP and consider delivering a program with other sports as a year round alternative. All organizations providing these kinds of programs should designate staff time to the venture to maintain continuity and develop trust with their partners. This can mean a part time emphasis on the program for a portion of the year. It does not need to be an additional staff member.

### **Recommendations for elementary schools**

Public elementary schools lacking specialist PE teachers should take advantage of these programs to supplement their PE content and provide opportunities and awareness of community sport for themselves and their students. The professional development benefits alone attest to the need for supporting generalist teachers in the delivery of PE. The challenges experienced within the program by the collaborative partners could be mitigated by the following recommendations.

#### **Connecting with schools**

Schools as the major beneficiary of these programs need to be aware of the difficulties organizations have making an initial connection with them. Appointing a community resources staff member to be the conduit of information received by the school secretary would assist organizations in getting the information to the appropriate teachers. Sharing these opportunities at staff meetings and establishing a method for other teachers to access the information over time could alleviate the problems resulting from staff changes.

### **Scheduling**

Internal scheduling needs to be collectively considered by all staff to accommodate the programs. Sourcing community facilities when school facilities are occupied may be one avenue to pursue. Another approach is to schedule programs when the weather is conducive to outdoor activity, either for the sport program or for those classes who would be occupying the gym when the sport program is in session.

### **Communication**

Schools need to recognize their role in the collaboration by making sure the information from the sports gets to the parents. Having teachers (instead of the coaches) handout the brochures to the students increases the chances of the information getting home, but another avenue is the newsletter that many schools now deliver electronically. School websites are an opportunity for schools to keep information readily available for reference as well as providing a link to the web site of the sport organization for interested families.

### **Challenges of a paying program**

The benefits of the programs need to be shared among the school community to offset the negative perceptions around the cost. Schools could involve the parents through the PAC and have an information night highlighting the need for programs and the benefits with parents and children of past programs sharing their experiences. Showing how the programs' benefits address the needs of both the teachers and the students is one approach. Another is to clarify the cost in relation to participating in the community. Advance planning with the PAC is a good way to ensure that funding is available at the time of the program. Many public schools are linked with more needy "sister schools" who are recipients of fund raising

efforts. Offering to contribute to a program for a sister school, or having a sister school ask for donations to provide these programs could address the challenge of cost.

### **Recommendations for future research**

In the future, expanding this kind of research to include more public elementary schools; in the district, schools from other districts, schools across the province, schools in rural areas and even other provinces and territories, would enhance the understanding of these collaborative programs, and assess whether patterns from this study hold up in other contexts. Another approach would be to conduct a longitudinal study of a core group of schools following the students to see if they took advantage of the community connections established in the programs.

Additional research should include the response and perspectives of the students, as they are the focus of the strategy. This could involve interviews as well as video documentation to provide researchers with an efficient way of gathering and sharing information with the groups involved, and establish a broader base of data for analysis and evaluation. Exploring the issues around union influences on teachers' participation would be a sensitive yet revealing direction for any research involving collaboration with public schools. Questions in future research addressing students' experiences within the programs and teachers' philosophies on collaboration with external organizations within a union work environment might be helpful in identifying and addressing additional challenges to collaborative initiatives.

I feel this research has provided a beginning to an understanding of how schools and community sport organizations can share resources to deliver opportunities to children. The

importance of future research is to expand the awareness of the possibilities associated with this kind of strategy.

## **Epilogue**

### **Imagine!**

Imagine the future where a teacher can phone or email a school/sport bureau to choose from the menu of sport programs available. Partially funded by the Ministries of Health, Education and Sport and Physical Activity, this bureau will be the connective hub between sports organizations and schools. Sport organizations actively promoting and delivering grassroots program initiatives as part of their provincial funding accountability structure, will provide the necessary information about their programs to the bureau which will then be passed on to the schools.

In conjunction with the institutions of higher learning, sports and the coaching bodies will create training and qualification of community sport educators. These individuals will be qualified to teach sport education focused on grassroots participation, incorporating developmentally appropriate skill progression in programs at schools or in the community. Community sport educators will provide foundation skills to individuals who can move into a competitive stream or lifelong participation. The participation stream will include a strong intramural program where children can practice and play at their schools under the guidance of community sport educators in facilities built at schools through collaborative projects undertaken by school districts, municipalities, sport organizations and the provincial governments. Imagine how strong and healthy these communities could be with schools visibly active from morning till night benefiting the whole community.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Interview Questions**

#### **For Schools (Teachers)**

1. Could you describe your school population, the PE curriculum, your teacher training for PE, the after school sports program?
2. Are you able to offer comprehensive PE to your students or do you need to collaborate with outside organizations?
3. Has your school been involved in collaborative initiatives involving PE and sports in the past?
4. What are the main pressures or challenges to teaching PE and how do they influence partnerships like this?
5. What was your school's role in the school/sport program, how did it work, and what resources did your school have to offer?
6. What were the benefits for your school (teacher and students) from this program? Were there benefits you hadn't anticipated?
7. What challenges did your school face in your involvement in this program? Were there challenges you hadn't anticipated?
8. What were the outcomes for your school as a result of this collaborative program?

#### **For Community Sport Clubs (Executive Members)**

1. Could you describe your club, your role in the club and your club's philosophy on partnerships with other organizations?
2. Is it possible for your club to offer grass roots programs on its own, or do you need to partner?
3. What are the main pressures or challenges facing your organization today and how do they influence collaborative initiatives like this?
4. Could you describe your organization's role in the school/sport program and what resources your club offered to the collaboration?

5. What were the benefits to your club from this collaboration? Were there benefits your club hadn't anticipated?
6. What challenges did your club experience in this partnership? Were there challenges your organization hadn't anticipated?
7. What were the outcomes of this collaboration for your club?

**For Provincial Sport Organizations (Program Managers)**

1. Could you describe your organization, your role and your organizations philosophy on partnerships?
2. Are you able to offer grass roots programs on your own or do you need to partner?
3. What are the main pressures or challenges facing your organization today and how do they influence collaborative initiatives like this?
4. Could you describe your organizations role in the school program, and what it offered to the program?
5. What are the benefits to your organization as a result of the collaboration? Were there benefits you hadn't anticipated?
6. What were the challenges your organization experienced? Were there any you hadn't anticipated?
7. What are the outcomes of the collaboration for your organization?

**For Coaches**

1. Could you describe your coaching and /or teaching background as it relates to this school/sports program? How you got involved, your level of accreditation, the job description for this program?
2. Have you coached in a program involving collaboration between groups before (eg. schools and sports)?
3. What are the main challenges or pressures in the coaching environment in your sport? In the provincial sport community? How do these pressures influence programs like this (for example do these programs affect coaching opportunities, do they add or decrease stress around coaching)?

4. What was your role in the school/sports program? What resources did you have to offer (eg. expertise, attitude, mentoring capabilities)?
5. Are you aware of the IRP guidelines concerning PE? Do you consciously use those guidelines in these programs?
6. Are you aware of the inclusive elements regarding ethnicity, gender, ability and language in the public school environment?
7. As a coach what do you feel were the benefits of the program for the groups involved? Were there benefits you hadn't anticipated?
8. As a coach, were there challenges you encountered in the program? Were there challenges you hadn't expected?
9. Would you participate in this type of program again?