

“Towards Young Active Citizens”: A Preliminary Assessment of the Youth Leadership Development programmes of the Department of Sport and Recreation of the City of Cape Town

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Introduction

Communities in the City of Cape Town are ravaged by a variety of social, economic and safety challenges such as poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, gangsterism, violent crime, abuse and teenage pregnancy (SSISA 2015; City of Cape Town 2011). These challenges affect working class communities and the youth in particular in Cape Town. One of the four objectives of the City of Cape Town's Sport and Recreation Department (DSR) is contributing to youth development through hosting youth leadership and skills development camp, called Camp Cape Town. The week long camp focused on recreational activities presents life skills and leadership development opportunities that focus on peer group learning processes.

Camp Cape Town completed its third year in 2015. A CHEC partnership between the Universities of Stellenbosch and Cape Town was appointed to conduct programme evaluation research to assess the camp in the context of the youth development objectives of the DSR. This paper presents preliminary findings from data collected by 65 youth participants with respect to the effects of their participation, and concludes with several reflections about sustainability and future policies.

Conceptual Framework

It is widely assumed that sport can deliver social, health and economic benefits by increasing access to and participation in sport programmes (Coalter 2013). Coalter (2007) also points out the public promotion of sport-for-development approaches is based on assumptions that sport is capable of developing personal and social skills, discipline, honesty, integrity, trustworthiness and may contribute to improved educational performance, reduction in antisocial behaviour and crime and contribute to social cohesion. Hoye et al (2010) argues

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that sport has therefore become an important policy instrument, in particular related to public health, social inclusion, urban regeneration and economic development sectors. However, Nicholson *et al* (2011) points out that a significant challenge is faced by advocates of this approach due to the short term nature of sport participation policies and programmes and that current approaches do not allow for assessments of interdepartmental or 'whole of government' (WHO 2004) approaches to the problem over medium and longer terms.

Social inclusion has increasingly come to dominate the policy agenda globally (Bloyce & Smith 2010) and in South Africa (Maralack 2013). Bloyce and Smith (2010) point out that although the concern with community renewal, social inclusion and personal responsibility has been expressed in a variety of ways in policy, "one major problem...is that relatively few schemes have built in techniques for evaluating their impact" on levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. It is argued that if we are to enhance the effectiveness of such schemes there is a clear need to think more clearly about the potential of sport to ameliorate social ills that are rooted in complex social processes (Bloyce & Smith 2010; Coalter 2013).

The approach of Camp Cape Town strives to integrate social, economic, education, health and sport outcomes, and is a more developmental approach that recognises that all social interventions are "complex systems thrust amidst complex systems" (Pawson 2006 quoted in Coalter 2013). This is a more ambitious vision that replaces many conventional sport-for-development efforts presented as once-off or short term projects (Coalter 2013). In the integrated approach, "monitoring and evaluation need to pursue *understanding* via participatory, process-centred and formative evaluation (Coalter 2007). In our attempt to implement programme evaluation in this manner, we hope to contribute to organisational capacity building, develop greater multi-stakeholder ownership, reflect on the often complex relationships between aims, objectives and outcomes and assist in the development of a self-critical and self-improving organisational culture (Coalter 2013). It can be argued that a critical approach to sport-for-development will place it within a broader world of knowledge and research and will enhance an understanding of its limitations and outline of its potential.

Contextualising the Youth Leadership Development Programme

The City of Cape Town's Recreation Report (2011) highlighted alarmingly low levels of participation in sport and recreation in most communities. There was a feeling among the staff that there was some kind of link between low levels of participation and high levels of crime and anti-social behavior. This led the Department to develop a recreation strategy that would use sport and recreation as a tool for holistic community development (a sport-for-development approach). The Department emphasized four pillars in their recreation strategy:

Getting people active; Developing sustainable programmes at recreation hubs; “Connecting the unconnected” via the City Games initiative; and addressing youth development. The Camp Cape Town initiative forms part of the fourth pillar and aims to intervene at youth level.

Methodology

Two research questions guided the initial processing of data for this preliminary report:

1. How has the existing programme affected the short term outcomes of the targeted youth, in particular knowledge of showing initiative, goal setting and healthy habits?
2. Has participation in the programme resulted in any change in attitudes and behaviour of youth related to community and school connection, social engagement, inclusion, and positive academic behaviours?.

A mixed method approach was followed. Data were gathered using individual surveys of youth participants who participated in the programme over the three years. The surveys were designed to provide both quantitative and qualitative information about the programme.

The Camp Cape Town Experience

Camp Cape Town is a three year leadership programme for youth between the ages of 15 and 16. The following objectives guide their participation in a one-week programme of recreation and sport activities.

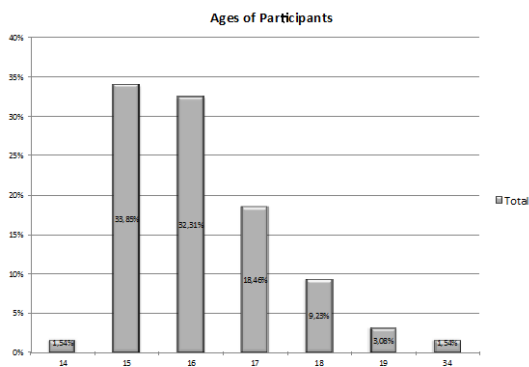
1. Engage in leadership and life skills development activities.
2. Focus on learning through participation rather than “heavy” lecture sessions.
3. Provide the opportunity for youth from various areas, backgrounds to interact and engage with each other.
4. Contribute actively to socially positive citizenry.

The camp is presented to 120 youth between the ages of 15 and 16, during the first week of December school holidays at Zandvlei Resort, Muizenberg. Participants were recruited from existing Sport and Recreation Programmes at Hubs. The criteria for selection included regular participation in existing departmental programmes and demonstrated leadership potential. Various NGO’s partner with the department to provide a range of leadership activities and programmes including hiking, surfing, adventure recreation, reading, dancing, scouts and lifesaving.

Preliminary Results

The research focuses on documenting and explaining the impact of Camp Cape Town and the leadership programme on individual, community and broader developmental outcomes and tests for developmental outcomes such as perceptions of personal impact, self-efficacy, leadership, interpersonal effectiveness and program sustainability, and structured around six topics:

1. Assessing active participation in programmes and receptiveness to learning new activities and skills.
2. Social cohesion, in particular attitudes to race and changes in behaviour.
3. Personal and community development (goal setting, initiative, leadership).
4. Impact on education, health and anti-social behaviour.
5. Effect on economic and income generation.
6. Recommendations for sustainability of the leadership programme.



Volume of responses and comments by participants, predominantly aged 15-16 years, identified four prominent themes:

1. Attitudes towards and interaction with other race groups
2. Goal setting
3. Academic performance
4. Starting new initiatives.

All respondents were positive about Camp Cape Town and their experiences at the camp. It offered opportunities to be introduced to new activities, skills and enhance interaction with youth beyond their previous frames of reference. Interaction across racial divides featured prominently in responses and ranks highly among most respondents. One respondent indicated that,

“the City of Cape Town camp is ... doing an awesome job showing youth that diversity and unity is important no matter what race or gender we are. (Creating) a family (through) team work is important. Without team work you won't get far in life.”

Another respondent reflected on the impact of the programme beyond the camp and his awareness of choices:

“Just stick to your school and don't do other things that are wrong and is against the law. Neither should you follow your friends - they won't be there when you fall.”

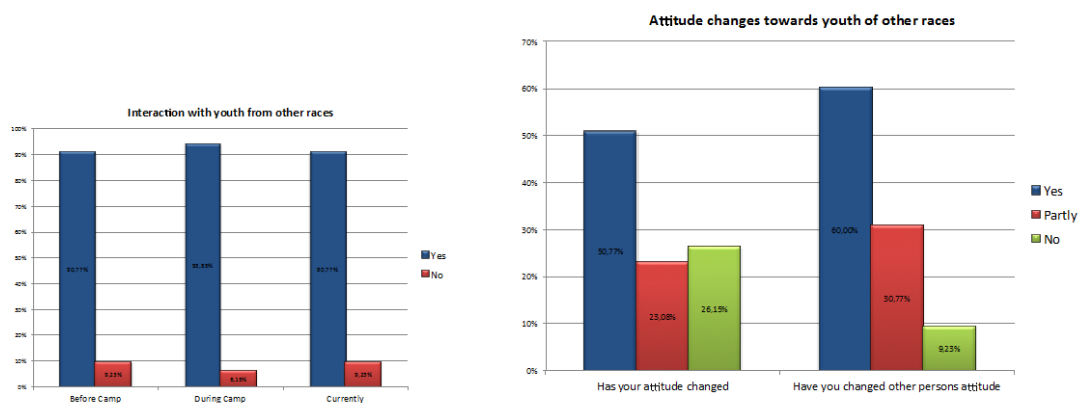
This is evidence of awareness of both personal impact and agency in making choices to resist challenges in their environment and encapsulates the four dominant themes discussed below.

Dominant Theme 1: Attitudes towards and interaction with other race groups

The majority of respondents indicated a greater ability to communicate with others and work with them to overcome challenges that they may experience. One respondent indicated that *“I learned a lot from other camp friends, their language, their diverse culture...and to respect people no matter their race...equally”*. Another explained that she had a significant shift in attitude:

“Yes, before Camp Cape Town my attitude was bad but now my attitude has changed and I met new friends, I met other kind of people. Now I go to church and I pass my ... exams very well”.

Data displayed on the graphs below indicate that there was no change in respondent interaction with other race groups before and after the camp, although it increased marginally on the camp. It is significant that 74% of youth indicated an attitude change as a result of the camp. (It should be noted that even though 26% indicated no attitude change, this should not be presumed as negative but could indicate that they had confidence in their ability to deal with external social relationships prior to the camp). It is significant that 91% of participants felt that they had altered somebody else’s attitude to race.



“I first felt different cause I was only used to people of my race and not of others, but when I went to camp Cape Town and came back I got to see a different view of other people with different races and I treat them as if they are my own race”.

“At first I was judgmental but at the end of the day I found that they are just as human as I am so why be racist...At this moment I can say that being around people of other races is not that difficult”.

Reflecting on changing peer behaviour, one respondent recalled that *“When my friends tried to steal a ball which I didnt like from another race, so I disagreed with them so there was no ball stolen, I trusted in myself”*.

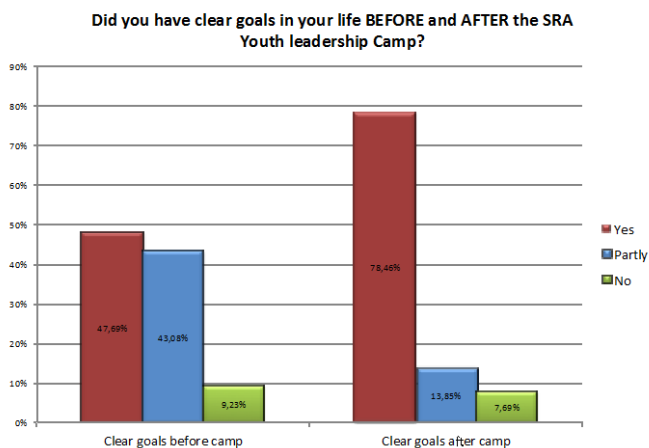
These quotes highlight that sport is a context for personal development, but that merely being in proximity to those perceived as “the other” is not sufficient. What people do together is significant.

Dominant Theme 2: Goal Setting, lifeskills and leadership

Respondents indicated improved self-discipline, confidence, empathy, and felt more secure about their ability to respond to challenges as a result of the camp.

“The camp has changed my perspective towards life. Before ... the camp I was somewhat of a follower (and) did what others told me to do, easily (falling) victim to peer pressure.

After the camp I changed. I became a leader and I learnt valuable life skills that helped me to become more of a people person. I do not judge others by their background and after the camp I began to value the existence of humans and it changed my way of how I look at things and whenever I see homeless people or kids I feel a pain in my chest and I now feel that I want to help them whichever way that I can”.



Most respondents indicated a greater sense of direction, making better decisions and influencing others:. One respondent argues that *“yes, my attitude changed and I encouraged more youth to do activies like soccer and other sports. I told them to make friends and respect other people*

in their community”. Another reflected on the struggle to resist being a product of the environment:

“At first there was a lot of struggling because most of the learners at my school did not seem interested so it was very hard for me because I really wanted to make a change for the better. I never gave up since day one. I told myself that this is what I’ve always wanted to do so I am never gonna throw in the towel.

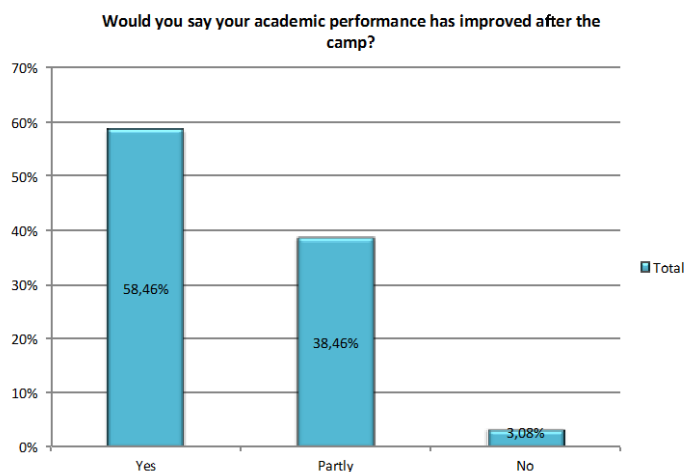
I kept telling them about the importance and the benefits of changing for the better ... and it worked very well, Eventually they realised how important the programme was so most of them joined”

Another pointed to the value of mentorships in translating changes of self-efficacy into impacts on the community and social environment: *“Friends started changing little by little, lets say we would stop doing wrong things and end up rapping or dancing or going to youth. We all stopped smoking and started rapping and dancing”*.

Dominant Theme 3: Academic Performance

Most respondents perceived the camp to have a positive impact on learning beyond academic performance. Skills such as chess and scrabble ranked high, for example, *“the children that are in the programme are now doing fun competitions with the top scrabble players in South Africa”*. These games are perceived as important attractors to academic programmes as shown by a respondent:

“Homework in the afternoons (teaching) kids how to read and helping them with their homework. More kids came and they got better in their studies and I also got help from school learners that wanted to help each other become successful”.

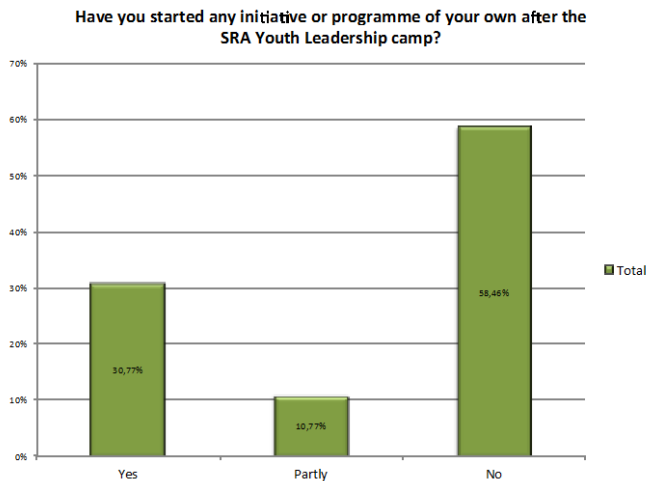


A 16 year old highlighted that in spite of the particular social and environmental challenges that education is key, *“because I don't want to be like other teenagers in my community and do all the wrong stuff when I know that I have free time and bring stress to my parents because I did this wrong and hit that person and used illegal substances.*

I just want to make them proud”.

Dominant Theme 4: Starting New Initiatives

Most respondents reflected that although goal setting and being aware of choices are important outcomes, that the critical area of concern is the scarcity of opportunities in setting up new initiatives. Some report successes in social interventions such as the “Donate a Fleece Blanket Campaign”, volunteering at orphanages, and setting up dance and rap groups, many respondents highlight the harsh responses they receive:



“The problem I would have is that when I start this programme many people would say they don't have time to waste in youth programme and I would suffer when it comes to an economy, money, sponsors”.

Respondents clearly state the requirements as well as constraints:

“To start a program you need a few things. Firstly you need to decide what type of program you want to

run and who your target is; secondly you need to find a place where you going to start your program; and third if your program requires money for the equipment or other things you need to find a way to make money”.

However, having agency to be aware of choices, identify opportunities and have perseverance does not translate into creating new initiatives. The addition of coaching and mentorship may help as indicated by a youth: *“support of community members and partners (will be) a big help”.*

A few respondents reflected that,

“for the past three years, leadership training after the camp only (happened) in 2014. Many of the children went back into their bad habits... The department need to do what they promised the leaders that attended the camp and should get people in from different types of work places so that young people can be introduced to things they haven't seen before and decide what career they want to go into”.

Conclusions

Respondents were positive about their experiences at Camp Cape Town indicating strong personal impacts such as direction setting, social relationships, self-efficacy and leadership. Participants are more confident and secure in their abilities to make the right choices, communicate and overcome challenges. The evidence also shows that these positive features need complementary coaching and mentorship after the camp.

This paper supports Coalter's (2013) caution that we need to resist the "tendency to see sport as a magic box" for dealing with complex and multi-layered social, economic and environmental challenges. The evidence above shows that sport is a learning environment that requires further mechanisms for youth development and leadership.

The findings of this study has implications for the design and implementation of youth leadership training programmes as it identifies the various mechanisms that may contribute to individual and community development. Evidence suggests that the content of interventions, the relationships between interventions and focused mentorships are important.

One element that needs to be considered is a "whole-institution-transformation" pedagogical model. Instead of a sport-focused approach, an intentional curriculum may need to be developed that scaffolds and mediates youth development from personal growth, goal setting, identification of new initiatives and specific mentoring aimed at individual, social and economic impacts. The participants in this study suggest that an evolutionary pedagogy can facilitate a sense of engagement, belonging and support for youth to be active citizens and be innovative to start new initiatives.

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