

# **A discourse analysis of the National Sport and Recreation Policy for Botswana**

Jimoh Shehu\* and Martin M. Mokgwathi

*University of Botswana*

The thesis of this article is that national sport and recreation policies constitute a pedagogical problematic, as they are texts bound to specific meaning and learning, with potential to impact on roles and subjectivities. As such, it is crucially important for physical education scholars to adopt a critical stance towards them, opening up the assumptions, intentions and social relations they embody to a profound and sensitive engagement. Ultimately, such a stance has broader implications for intelligible formulation and translation of policies into culturally sensitive practice. Using discourse analysis, a methodology grounded in poststructuralism, the National Sport and Recreation Policy for Botswana is examined for its ideological and epistemological rationale. The analysis presented in this article underscores the need for a reflective and reflexive attitude towards recreation policies, which seem to be taken for granted in postcolonial societies.

## **Introduction**

On 11 April 1997, the Botswana Parliament adopted a motion to investigate the cause of poor performance of national sports teams in international competitions. Institutionally, this initiative was a watershed in sport administration in Botswana in terms of explicating the problems besetting the sports sector and defining the principles and strategies that should inspire the government in formulating contextualized solutions. In pursuance of this self-critical quest to prevent further humiliation in the sporting arena, a five-person committee was set up by the Minister of Labour and Home Affairs, B. K. Temane. The Committee to Investigate Poor Performance of National Sport Teams (CIPPNST) was headed by Kgosi Seepapisto IV (Chairman of the House of Chiefs), with the director of the newly established Department of Sport and Recreation as secretary. Other members included the former chairman of the Botswana Sport Council, a former national netball coach (designated as representing the private sector), the then head of the Physical Education Department at the University of Botswana and

the principal education officer for physical education in the Ministry of Education.

The committee immediately went to work, administering a questionnaire and travelling all over the country to receive oral and written submissions from individuals and organizations. In October of the same year a national consultative conference was organized in order to garner ideas from the sports policy community. Participants at the conference included representatives from the Botswana National Sport Council, the Botswana National Olympic Committee, the Botswana National Youth Council, national sports associations, district and local authorities, government departments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Other participants included delegates from Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, the United Kingdom Sports Council and the United States Sport Academy (Department of Sport and Recreation, 2001, p. 3).

The committee's report brought to light deep contradictions and serious structural deficiencies in the administration of sport in the country and supplied increasingly convincing arguments in support of a national sport policy as a strategic instrument for the much-needed reforms. Following the report of the committee, a White Paper, along with a National Sport and Recreation Policy for Botswana (NSRPB), was passed by the parliament in April 2001. Apart from the lack of a policy oriented to sport in a coherent way, a number of interconnected challenges were also highlighted:

This policy is an outcome of an extensive consultative process countrywide. As a result of the many consultations undertaken to date, the following critical factors have been identified as constraints to sport development in Botswana:

1. Low level of a culture of sport
  2. Limited funding
  3. Inadequacy of trained sport personnel
  4. Absence of a policy on sport
  5. Poor or inadequacy of sporting facilities
  6. Poor coordination between stakeholders
  7. Low participation of people with disabilities and the marginalized
  8. Low participation rates of women in sport and groups with specific needs.
- (Department of Sport and Recreation, 2001, p. 3)

If there is anything striking about the policy, it is perhaps the way it recursively plays at reducing recreation to sport and holding up sport as a marker of access to public recreation. While reference to recreation surfaces and resurfaces in the policy, the entire document is charged with a sense of urgency about developing sport in Botswana, with the larger domain of public recreation as a marginalized addendum. Since the policy was enacted, no qualitative studies designed to tease out its exclusionary tendencies to mistake the particular (sport) for the general (recreation) have to our knowledge been carried out. As such, this article examines the tensions and contradictions embodied in the document.

### **Theoretical background**

This study is grounded in critical and poststructuralist perspectives, which have informed much recent research into the questions of power, ideology and cultural production. These perspectives, to be sure, encompass a wide range of forces (Coakley, 2001), but they all challenge fixed, inherited categories of thought and the hegemony and universality of Western rationality. They attempt to unmask many comfortable preconceptions of contemporary issues and cultural practices (Gramsci, 1971; Foucault, 1977; Kuhn, 1985; Nandy, 1988; Grossberg *et al.*, 1992; Andrew & Loy, 1993; Ball, 1994; Hargreaves, 1994; Young, 1995; Troung, 1999). Specifically, we employ critical theory in contextualizing and situating sport development policy in Botswana in broader structural relationships of power and knowledge configurations. In other words, we take the NSRPB as an ideological intervention formulated within parameters of widening space for elitist programmes and massive exclusions due to the use of talent and excellence in sport as a form of gate-keeping. Viewing the NSRPB from a critical perspective is a didactic attempt to assert a counter-discourse that will provoke a broader interrogation of linear answers to difficult questions about sport systems as leisure interventions in former colonies. A critical, pedagogical analysis also helps to pinpoint the normalized premises and taken-for-granted assumptions characterizing the policy (Green, 1988; Said, 1991; Ball, 1994; Taylor, 1997; Maclaren, 1998).

At a textual level, poststructuralist analysis usefully highlights how an official document like the NSRPB is positioned and determined by certain meta-narratives or dominant discourses that elide contextual realities and occlude the possibility of other recreational constructs. The past three or so decades have witnessed diverse and theoretically informed empirical research into the social construction of knowledge and the methodology by which ideas became dominant and institutionalized (Gramsci, 1971; Mercuse, 1972; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Williams, 1977; Apple, 1979; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Holub, 1992; White, 1996; Maclaren, 1998; Priestley, 2002). At the core of this poststructuralist theorization is an inquiry into the politics, ideology and epistemology of canons, representation, scholarship and documentary practices (Apthorpe & Gasper, 1996). From this epistemic stance, knowledge, practices and documents are seen as embodying implicit assumptions, rules and preferred claims to truth about specific objects, subjects and events.

As White (1996, p. 109) explains, 'Knowledge is embedded in a set of cultural practices which are encoded in language, resulting in the creating of a set of texts, whose emphasis and omissions help construct what a subject means and what it means to know'. In this sense, policies as texts articulate or mediate norms and propositions emerging from an epistemological framework and order of power relations (Ball, 1998).

According to Foucault (1980) the power-knowledge nexus operates hierarchically, with some discourses or 'regimes of truth' being seen as more legitimate than

others. But while power can limit, sustain and reproduce policy actions and reactions, the process by which policies are translated to practices is not 'over-determined'. For according to Evans *et al.* (1997), the context of policy-making affects how policies are interpreted, contested and translated into practice at different sites.

We are aware that critical and poststructuralist frameworks have been castigated for conceptual circularity and incessant complaints about hegemony (Hunter, 1994); relativist story-telling (Francis, 2003); lack of pragmatism (Shalin, 1992); self-referential parochialism (Rust, 1991); and indulgent hermeneutic-subjectivist excess (Gellner, 1992). Still, poststructuralist frameworks, warts and all, are valuable means of evaluating sport policies in terms of transformational visions, building the crucial alliances needed to critique power relations in the recreational arena and empowering people to become actively engaged in culturally relevant leisure projects ignored by conventional, neo-liberal sport programmes (Sparkes, 1992).

### **Methodology**

Methodologically, we employed discourse analysis to cast light on the NSRPB (Department of Sport and Recreation, 2001) as a discursively constructed text (Evans *et al.*, 1997). Discourse analysis is a methodology that draws on critical and poststructuralist theory. Its uses in education include demonstrating how some textbooks and policy documents embody racism, gender bias, privilege, power, sexism, voice appropriation, exclusion, marginalization, suppression and so on (Janks, 1997). Foucault (1980) conceives of discourse as a limited range of meanings embedded in a societal context and helping to shape that context. Seen from this perspective, discourse analysis is an invitation to critical scrutiny of the structure, content, direction and likely consequences of policy documents (Burton & Carlen, 1979; Houlihan, 1997; Larsen, 1997; Maclaren, 1998). The merits of this approach to policy analysis include deepening our understanding of ideological and quality issues in cultural processes and practices, as well as unmasking the gaps, inequities, contradictions, ambiguities as well as contestable meanings implied in official rhetoric (Shapiro, 1988; Rust, 1991; Hargreaves, 1994; Porter, 1996; Jagger, 1997; Alldred, 1998; Flintoff & Scraton, 2001).

A discourse analysis is not without limitations, however. First, textual interpretations are inevitably shaped by the presuppositions, biases and persuasions of the interpreter(s); secondly, interpretive slippages often arise from treating policy pronouncements, phrases and themes as conceptual evidence of hidden hegemonic agenda (Fish, 1980; Penney & Evans, 1999). Be that as it may, slippages often provide a valuable discursive space for reconsidering and re-inscribing the complexities of policy issues at stake.

## Analysis

### *NSRPB: a document framed in isomorphic terms*

Two principal themes are ostensibly encapsulated in the title of the NSRPB: sport and recreation. Seemingly, the policy (Department of Sport and Recreation, 2001) sets out from the assumption that both spheres need to be reconciled and directed to socially useful ends:

This policy has been premised on the rationale that sports and recreational activities form an integral part of the country's vision. (p. 3)

Sport and recreation can enhance the development and maintenance of a well balanced democratic society by

- Promoting the physical, mental and moral qualities relevant to national aspirations
- Providing an environment for social interaction
- Improving community health and productivity
- Preventing crime and juvenile delinquency by providing useful utilization of leisure
- Providing lifelong skills with carryover values into desirable adulthood. (p. 4)

To be clear, the 'vision' alluded to above is the 'long term vision for Botswana' (Presidential Task Group, 1997), commonly known as 'Vision 2016', which envisages that sport and recreation programmes in Botswana will serve as a strategy for attracting international and regional sporting events and promoting economic growth, tourism, better infrastructure, professional sports and general well-being of the population, as well as controlling the rising wave of alcoholism and the frightening spread of AIDS (p. 62). But while the top priority in the NSRPB is 'to establish a clear, integrated structure for the planning, coordination and delivery of sport and recreational opportunities at all levels' (Department of Sport and Recreation, 2001, p. 7), the strategic objectives listed therein are oriented to developing structures and processes which will help in grooming elite athletes, raising standards of performance in sport, identifying and nurturing talents, improving sports facilities, boosting the quantity and quality of sports personnel, developing a culture of sport in Botswana and developing broad-based programmes on the basis of 'sport for all'. This official rhetoric reflects the emerging discourse of sport and recreation in Southern Africa. This discourse is dominated by the concept of 'development', in which sport is seen as a modernizing force for developing nations. In part this notion reflects the resurgence of interest amongst donor communities in 'harnessing the power of sport in Africa' (United Kingdom Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2005). A number of donor agencies, such as the UK-funded International Development Assistance Programme, the Australia Africa Sport Development Programme and the Norwegian Sport Federation, for instance, regard sport as a viable mode of organizing African people's developmental efforts. For example, in a press release from the United Kingdom's (UK) Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2005), it was stated that:

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport will tell an international conference in Africa this weekend that sport can be used to tackle many of the problems afflicting the developing world.

This statement was in reference to the 2005 'Next Step' conference in Livingstone, Zambia, which had been organized by the UK High Performance Sports Agency and a host of other international bodies. The themes of the conference smacked of a subtle universalization or naturalization of sport, disguised by the idiom of development assistance: 'Strengthening local community sport structures', 'Sport as development', 'Using sport as a vehicle for change in the area of health (HIV/AIDS)', 'Using sport as a tool for peace and reconciliation'. In the said press release, Tessa Jowell MP was quoted as saying:

Sport has the ability to motivate, inspire and empower people, which is why we need to ensure it thrives and has an impact across the world, and particularly in countries where it's most needed. This conference is an exciting opportunity to create and develop meaningful partnerships that will have a positive impact on communities in developing countries. Young people in Britain are able to access an excellent sporting infrastructure, in terms of equipment, coaching and facilities. Youth in developing countries don't have this right and we recognize the role we have to play in opening up sporting opportunities to all.

Within this context, a number of Southern African countries, including Zambia, Lesotho, Namibia, Malawi, Swaziland, Botswana and South Africa, have become fascinated with sport as a veritable social technology to regulate the lives of young people in the face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and to galvanize urban renewal, rural development, poverty alleviation and job creation. Consider, for example, the four-fold objectives of Sports and Recreation South Africa (2005, p. 1), encapsulated in the theme of 'getting the nation to play':

- Increasing the level of participation in sport and recreation activities.
- Raising sport's profile in the face of conflicting priorities.
- Maximizing the probability of success in major events.
- Placing sport at the forefront of efforts to educate the public about HIV/AIDS, and to reduce the level of crime.

To a large extent, these objectives resemble those of Botswana's Department of Sport and Recreation, which include attaining the national goal of 'sport for all', improving the welfare of society, solving the problem of unemployment and combating anti-social behavior. To be sure, programmes to redirect the energies of social groups towards wholesome pastimes defined in sporting terms are evident in countries such as the UK, France, America and Australia (Cooke, 1994; Wright, 1996; Houlihan, 1997; Polley, 1998). However, conceptualizing public recreation in terms of competitive or athletic activity is socially problematic, as such fixed notions can be recruited to legitimate sports agendas that are inimical to a broad, pluralistic recreation framework. In this context, the NSRPB has betrayed the sphere of recreation, not by omission of its importance, but by valorization of the sports sector. In particular, the issue of recreation has been caught in a peculiar neo-liberal nexus

of mass participation and endemic spectatorism, 'sport for all' and elitist sport economics. Admittedly, the term 'recreation' figures in the NSRPB on every page. However, it was incorporated in subsidiary fashion: 'add recreation and stir'. The centrepiece of the policy is to achieve better governance of sport and ensure successful outings for the national teams, as if the document had nothing to with widening access to leisure opportunities for the populace as well. Consider the opening paragraph of the policy:

Over the years, individuals and the Government at large have often expressed dissatisfaction regarding the development and promotion of sport as well as the low level and standard of performance of the various national teams representing the country in international competitions. Several reasons have been suggested for this unsatisfactory performance. One of these is lack of a National Sport Policy. (Department of Sport and Recreation, 2001, p. 3)

From the outset, the discourse over the need for a policy was structured by a set of metaphors in which Botswana's social standing within the international sporting community was considered to be at a 'low level', characterized by 'unsatisfactory performance' and disappointing 'development and promotion', with high standards of performance and adequate advancement being the natural path to take. If the rationale of the NSRPB is a matter of gaining a competitive edge in the area of sport, then the issue of public recreation built into the title has been paradoxically designed to fall flat. As Wright (1996, p. 119) argues:

The danger of eliding sport(s) with recreative and other less institutionalized physical activities is that we deny their different effects; the different types of experience available for participants and the normalizing effect of institutionalized processes of sport.

In the glossary of terms appended to the policy, 'sport' is referred to as 'a highly formalized and organized physical activity of high intensity regulated by accepted rules' (Department of Sport and Recreation, 2001, p. 20). The operational definition of sport preferred by the policy-makers is both ideological and tautological and presumes additional problematic dichotomies (e.g., loosely/highly formalized; high/low intensity; organized/unorganized; maximum/minimum; physical/non-physical activity; and so forth). 'Recreation', on the other hand, is defined in the policy as 'a guided process of voluntary participation in any activity which contributes to the overall improvement of general health, well-being and skills of the individual' (p. 20). Interestingly, the same definition of recreation can be found in the preamble of Sports and Recreation South Africa (2005), implying that some of the notions, options and instruments woven into the NSRPB were spun from imported fabric. It is salutary to note that the policy-making process included a fact-finding tour of South Africa in 1996 by some officials of the Botswana National Sport Council (BNSC), followed by the previously-mentioned sport development policy consultative conference in 1997, to which South Africa and a host of other countries sent delegates.

According to Gough-Yates (2003), policy definitions are discursive, as they summon readers to think about issues in particular ways and to act accordingly. The framing of the NSRPB in isomorphic terms of sport-as-recreation and recreation-as-sport (that is, as reflections of each other or as substitutable) is therefore theoretically and politically significant. It is rooted in the essentialist thesis that Western sport is of outstanding humanitarian significance and increasing political and cultural salience in installing and nurturing public leisure and social development worldwide (United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace, 2003). This is an essentialism that needs dissolving. While it is true that sport is a popular recreation technology and to that extent appealing to a global audience (Maguire, 1999; Sage, 2000; Van Bottenburg, 2001), it does not follow that it is a veritable and inclusive leisure pursuit. What the framers of policy have done is to use recreation rhetoric to justify sport as a natural necessity, as a fact which public policy and citizens must embrace, rather than as a situation partially created by the policy itself. But performing a fitness/leisure/wellness tapdance around sport cannot gloss over the fact that modern sport is not the lynchpin of physical recreation or public leisure.

Philosophically, the notion of recreation is that it is restorative, and in accordance with the laws of physics: increasingly hectic activity ends in entropy (Schumer, 1999). As Naisbitt *et al.* (2001) explain, recreational activity revivifies and edifies, enabling us to engage with the questions of life's meaning and purpose and to slow down the wear and tear on our bodies, minds and souls. It entails taking time to revitalize, recharge and recuperate, avoiding the trap of yearning to conquer time, or playing our lives against the clock in hyperactive, destructive and stressful productivity. It involves volitional, spontaneous, enthusiastic and joyful engagement in and with refreshing and exhilarating activity during one's leisure. Such activity takes many forms: mental, physical, spiritual, social, artistic, festive, relational, aesthetic, contemplative, musical, horticultural and so on. In contrast, the central strategies and priorities enunciated in the NSRPB are focused mainly on sports coordination and promotion, thereby mistaking a part for the whole. Consider the following quotation from Section 4.0 of the policy, entitled 'Institutional framework for policy implementation':

This policy seeks to provide a focus for the provision and delivery of sport and recreation. In this connection, there is need for an appropriate institutional framework which will effectively coordinate, promote and ensure implementation of approved Government policies and strategies for sport and recreation. The Botswana National Sport Council (BNSC), Botswana National Olympic Committee (BNOC), National Sport Associations and other sport structures, shall have ... mandates and roles as stipulated in ... this policy. (Department of Sport and Recreation, 2001, p. 11)

Note that by the end, the statement has spun off from the theme of recreation to assign privileged positions and powers to sports stakeholders. Applying the 'semiotic principle of omission', which inquires into what is not said by being ignored or glossed in a text (Real, 1989), we can see that the NSRPB is, reasonably, an



ideological cover for the 'sportification' of recreation in Botswana; that is, a camouflage for advancing hegemonic sports economics and politics. The fixed positioning of the NSRPB in terms of developing a sporting culture bears the biases of a particular intellectual tradition. It is advocacy, in large measure, of the modernization of the lifestyle, which is rooted in Western social heritage. It assumes that performance in international sport is a kind of conceptual measuring stick or critique of how far postcolonial cultures have or have not evolved as modern nations. The 'given-ness', normalization or conception of recreation in athletic terms ultimately complicates the provision of inclusive leisure services, as neo-liberal preferences for sporting elites undermine sensitivity to the more fragmented and multidimensional recreational interests of the majority (Coalter *et al.*, 1988). Understandably, the discursive insistence on using the term 'recreation' as a policy cover in the case of Botswana must arise out of recognition that it could easily be conflated with the existing presumptions about the public-goods attributes of the dominant sport system. And it allows the government to be seen to be doing something about the distributive aspect of leisure services.

#### Consciousness-awakening

Part of the findings from a nationwide survey conducted by the CIPPNST in 1999 was that Batswana (the plural form for citizens of Botswana) in general 'do not think that sport contributes to the physical, emotional, intellectual and physical development of the individual' (CIPPNST, 1999, vol. 2, p. 13). Consequently, the need to galvanize mass and elite sport participation was highlighted in the NSRPB. This is instantiated in the following statement:

The development of a National Sport Policy is necessary since it demonstrates a declaration by the Government to awaken sports consciousness in the entire citizenry and ensure mass and elite participation in sports for the attainment of physical, mental, social and moral development of the people. (Department of Sport and Recreation, 2001, p. 3)

In its original Freirean sense, 'conscientization' or 'consciousness-raising' entails both cognitive and political mobilization of people for the achievement of their good, defined in their own material and epistemological terms (Freire, 1972). Pervasive usage of the concept has been rightly critiqued by Berger (1977, pp. 136–137) and is worth quoting at length:

A good way to begin a critique of the concept is to concretize it sociologically: *Whose* consciousness is supposed to be raised, and *who* is supposed to do the raising? The answer is clear wherever the term is used in political rhetoric: It is the consciousness of the 'masses' that must be raised, and it is the 'vanguard' that will do the raising. ... The 'vanguard' may be defined for our purposes here as individuals whose job is the production and distribution of theories. ... The concretization, therefore, may be put this way: 'Consciousness Raising' is a project of higher-class individuals directed at a lower-class population. ... What's more, the consciousness at issue is the consciousness that the lower-class has of *its own*

*situation*. Thus a crucial assumption of the concept is that lower-class people do not understand their own situation, that they are in need of enlightenment on the matter, and that this service can be provided by selected higher-class individuals.

To see the discourse of sports consciousness-awakening in sharp relief it may be necessary to identify the imageries implied in it: rousing Batswana from somnolence, inertia, alienation, lack of recognition and poverty of aspiration with respect to sport. Rhetorically, the NSRPB seeks to be an instrument of a popular project which is propelled by the people, but as an official discourse tied to the political and social tasks of raising standards of sports performance, consciousness-awakening could not include interpretations of public recreation that go against the grain of global sports norms. As has been noted by Coakley (2001, p. 95):

People with power and resources usually want sports in their cultures to be organized and played in way that promote their interests. They want sport to fit with how they see the world. They want sports to celebrate the relationships, orientations, and values that will reproduce their privileged positions in society. Today, power and performance sports fit the interests of people with power and resources.

The language employed in the NSRPB signifies acts and processes in which the populace is to be actively and massively encouraged to participate in a variety of recreational activities, but in which participation is discursively tied to forwarding the cause of modern sport systems. To be clear, the concept of participation in itself implies the people's active effort in sport development processes. However, textual representation of the efforts involved suggests the purloining of public community recreation discourse to serve a sports development agenda. The culture of nonchalance towards sport alluded to in the policy is thus a fine example of how unrealistic and unwittingly naked the imperial sport project appears in the judgment of the populace. Integral to the premise of the policy is the notion of sport development as emblematic of economic growth, unity, civic pride, respect for the rule of law, health promotion, solidarity, inclusion, social control, youth development and so on (Department of Sport and Recreation, 2001, pp. 4–7). This instrumental discourse clearly also serves a tactical purpose: it does not acknowledge the contradictions inherent in seeking to develop inclusive, transformative community recreation services through a class-based, technocratic sports system. Playing with the subtext that sport is an unproblematic cultural practice, the slogan 'sport for all' is interpreted by the policy-makers as implying homogenization of leisure, in which sport becomes the vehicle of dogma. The trouble is, of course (this has been obvious all along, but politicians have always obscured it), that, measured against its degree of financial, spatial, infrastructural, material, technological, technical, cultural and educational prerequisites, modern sport cannot be 'for all' in both social core and periphery. To the extent that sport as a welfare policy is a contested concept and its instrumental discourse shifting (see, for example, Coalter *et al.*, 1988; Bockrath & Franke, 1995; Cashmore, 1996; Coakley & Dunning, 2000; Coakley, 2001; Bodin *et al.*, 2005), it is no longer morally, theoretically or pragmatically tenable for policy-makers in developing countries to adopt an unreflective attitude towards its cultural

benefits. None of the touted values of sport can be taken for granted. Instead of uncritically assuming that sport is a force for peace, wellness, representativity, economic growth, poverty alleviation, equity, redistribution and so on, policy process must attend to the ways in which sport promotes elitism, sexism, alienation, violence, racial tension, deviance, mindless spectatorism and social reproduction of relations of domination and cultural subordination (Gruneau, 1983; Hargreaves, 1986, 1994; Collins & Kay, 2003).

### **Reproducing superstructures**

The models and metaphors posited in a policy serve as images that function symbolically to nurture specific visions, perceptions and apprehension of a preferred mode of fashioning and evaluating its instruments. The privileged image or symbol that grounds the NSRPB is that of a pyramid. Central to the adoption of this metaphorical designation by the framers of the NSRPB is the presumption that sport development is susceptible to and dependent upon linear construction, with a causal arrow running from its substructure to an elitist superstructure:

Throughout the consultation process a strong belief in the pyramid model has become apparent. This holds the view that the wider the base of a pyramid, the higher the apex... Therefore, there is emphasis throughout this policy on developing as wide a participation base as possible, in the belief that 'active children become active adults'. (Department of Sport and Recreation, 2001, p. 4)

As a model of sport development the pyramid was first prescribed for developing countries by Schmidt (1977). Its application to sport was metaphorical, providing a language with which to speak about widening the talent pool, and the promotion and demotion processes by which athletes, clubs and teams may rise and fall in their ranking on the league table. This rhetorical way of thinking about sport went hand in glove with the expansion of global sport tournaments, as well as advances in sports marketing. An essential characteristic of the 'pyramid system' of sports administration is its focus on qualification, sanction, relegation and promotion. To be sure, competition organizers need some structures, and rightfully so; competitors must be graded or seeded and losers must be separated from winners in the sport marketplace.

In the UK, a continuum was the metaphor chosen to evoke a link between lifelong physical activity and sports development, integratively nurtured in space and time. This space-time imagery is based on the premise that young people need foundational skills and knowledge about physical activity; that they need ample opportunities to participate in physical activity for a variety of reasons; that their creativity and talents need to be nurtured to enable them to perform and improve in specific sport domains; and that they need to be trained, encouraged, supported and given the necessary exposure to excel in top-level competitions (Sports Council, 1993). In a way, the continuum can be regarded as a paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1970), in

which one analytic lens (that of a pyramid) has been remodeled to include a consideration of fluid boundaries and the imperatives of self-determination.

In the context of Botswana the discursive adoption of the pyramid imagery necessarily presupposes recognition of the need for a broad-based restructuring of the physical education landscape as a guarantee of its signification. Apparently, the nine priorities identified in the NSRPB come close to an inclusive agenda:

1. To establish a clear, integrated structure for the planning, coordination and delivery of sport and recreation opportunities at all levels.
2. To increase and build capacity of clubs and national sport associations in the development and management of their sport.
3. To improve the facilities for sport and recreation in Botswana.
4. To build a national approach to elite athlete development that will increase the standard of performance in sport in Botswana.
5. To ensure that all Batswana are aware of the benefits of participation in sport and recreation and have opportunities to become engaged in all aspects of sport and recreation.
6. To increase and sustain the quality and the number of people trained in all aspects of sport.
7. To develop and implement a system of information, research, monitoring and evaluation that will measure the contribution of sport and recreation to the attainment of the country's socio-economic integration and its human development objectives.
8. To develop a culture of sport in Botswana.
9. To develop a broad-based recreation and leisure programme. (Department of Sport and Recreation, 2001, pp. 7–11)

However, the situation of the pyramid metaphor in the context of physical education opportunity structures in the school system has not come out strongly in the priorities outlined above. To be sure, out of the 40 strategies listed for dealing with these priorities, two are expected to ensure that 'some schools are identified as centers of excellence for training super achievers in sport' and 'physical education is part of the core curriculum in all schools up to senior secondary schools' (p. 9). However, due to the constraints created by a blatant policy focus on quick sporting success at the expense of quality of access to various activities, physical education has been enfeebled in both primary and secondary schools. At the primary-school level, physical education belongs under the heading of CAPA (creative and performing arts), together with music, art and craft, design and technology and home economics, all of which collectively are allotted a mere two hours per week. In the secondary school curriculum, there are nine optional subjects—home economics, commerce, principles of accounts/book-keeping, office skills, religious education, third language, art, music and physical education—from which a student may select a minimum of two and a maximum of three. The main consequence of this elective status is that physical education is under-resourced and denied to most students. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education has been championing elitist sports programmes in schools and colleges by funding the Botswana Integrated Sports Associations (BISA), which caters for sports tournaments in primary and secondary schools, and the Botswana Tertiary

Students Sports Association (BOTESSA). Both of these associations are affiliated to and further supported by the BNSC. This serves as a sign of what the government considers a more laudable goal when choosing between physical education as a core subject and the entrenchment of sports leagues in the school system. It is noteworthy that the BNSC expends its annual budgets on programmes which are unmistakably designed to raise sporting standards: sport development, talent development (Zebra Athletes), elite scholarships, stadium-building and sports foundations (BNSC, 2004). The peculiar policy desire to reinforce sport in the psyches of potential recreation participants is reflected in the initiatives of the Department of Sport and Recreation, which for the most part rehearse BNSC activities: the Annual Sport Expo, the Annual District Sport Festival, construction and maintenance of sport complexes, active community clubs (with support from the Australia Africa Sport Development Programme), the Junior Sport Programme, the Sport and HIV/AIDS project, the Annual Sport, Health and Productivity Day and the Sport and Environment Project (Department of Sport and Recreation, 2005).

Any attempt to fully understand how the NSRPB might be interpreted and implemented by actors in the education system must take into account the position of the government with respect to the report of CIPPNST. In a White Paper (Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, 2002), which was approved along with the NSRPB in 2001, the government accepted without reservation the following recommendations:

- The Ministry of Education should establish a schools' sport unit to be responsible for planning of physical education and sport development programmes at primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. This unit should have an annual budget to run the affairs of sport in schools on behalf of the Ministry.
- In liaison with the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs and Local Government, Lands and Housing, Ministry of Education should designate some schools in the different districts as schools of excellence. Government should not reinvent the wheel, as there already exist schools that can simply be improved and equipped with adequate resources.
- Botswana Institutions Sports Associations should have full-time staff to coordinate activities of sport in secondary schools.
- The primary schools should form a sport association and this body should have full-time staff (Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, 2002, p. 4).

Significantly, these recommendations echo the position of the report of the National Commission on Education (1993, p. 108) that:

Co-curricular activities (sport/games) should be introduced in primary schools and continued up to the highest levels of education as these are equally important in molding the child and bringing out other social skills that formal curriculum is never able to draw out.

Clearly, this shift in ministerial discourse argues a need for schools in Botswana to align co-curricular activities with sport and games, and this explains why the focus

has moved towards the sports side of recreation. In his analysis of government involvement in sport in the UK, Houlihan (1997, p. 95) cites a similar example of how the policy area of mass participation became marginalized in an official attempt to significantly boost elitist sport programmes:

*Sport: Raising the Game* provides a clear indication of government priorities. In particular it adds momentum to the withdrawal of central government and Sports Council from the provision of opportunities for mass participation on the assumption that a substantial facility infrastructure is securely in place and that local authorities are a more suitable provider or coordinator of this aspect of provision. The policy document therefore concentrates on the development of elite sportsmen and women and suggests, *inter alia*, that an elite training centre be established along the lines of more involved in the fostering of elite athletes and that grants to governing bodies will be conditional upon explicit support for government objectives. The third policy theme reflects the government's concern to promote and protect heritage sport partly by requiring schools to ensure that traditional competitive team sports are part of the curriculum.

Mainstream physical education literature (see for example, Evans, 1986; Murdoch, 1987; Penney & Evans, 1999; Williams & Bedward, 2001; Penney & Jess, 2004) has pointed out the need to examine more seriously this practice of overselling and exaggerating young people's desire to embrace competitive sports programmes, coupled with a lack of due regard to the pedagogical imperatives of physical education in the school curriculum. The greater the fixation on elitist sports, the more difficult it is to pursue the policy goal of enhancing the health, wellness and quality of life of young people. The poor standing of physical education in schools in Botswana clearly belies the pyramid the government wishes to erect. Were the policy-makers to take the image seriously, it would imply recognition that grand terms like 'sport for all' sit uneasily on a precarious physical education structure. Following a recent government-sponsored webcast conference in the USA, in which the image of the pyramid was used to symbolize ascent to physical fitness, Jackson (2005) succinctly underscores the need to reverse the fatal drive of elitism in education and recreation policies:

The government tells people to cut the fat with fitness at the same time it is trimming fitness right out of the budget. In Bush's budget proposal for fiscal year 2006, he would cut federal funds for physical education teachers and equipment from \$74m to \$55m. . . . When you hear that, it makes the pyramid seem a puny instrument, however well-meaning, to fight obesity. The best step, if the president and Americans are committed to physical fitness is to send a message to America's children and parents that we are returning physical education to the schools. The classes were among the first to be cut during the mad dash toward standardized testing. . . . At the same time we drive them up the ladder of achievement, we are preparing the pyramid to be their tomb.

By making Olympic sports the core agenda of co-curriculum and recreation policy in Botswana, the NSRPB is endangering the very equity and public fitness it claims to espouse. Certainly, this is not a consequence that the parliament intended when it passed the policy into law. While each person can judge for him- or herself the merits of the discursive direction taken by the government, one cannot question the fact that

the first sport and recreation policy in Botswana's history is somehow inimical to a pluralistic recreation culture.

### **Conclusion**

This article was grounded on the assumption that recreation and sport policies are discursive constructions that are subject to interrogation and revitalization. Through an analysis of specific aspects of the NSRPB, we have shown how the government has exploited the public perception of an unequal sporting relationship between Botswana and other countries, thematized as 'poor performance of national teams', as a prime ideological vehicle to conceptualize public recreation. We have posed and explored questions of how policy-making is dependent upon ways of knowing, and how policy positions and their assumptions, often unexamined and untheorized, privilege certain truths to the exclusion of rival ontologies. The issues that this article raises require that researchers in Botswana and elsewhere in developing countries consider more fully the implications of public policies for orchestrating a specific pedagogical ethos in schools and post-school recreation sites. Such considerations would include the impact of normalization of sport discourse on the level of access to public recreation resources, as well as on individual agency in pursuit of physical fitness and wellness. To be sure, there can be wonderful political and economic good in the best aspects of the modern sport system. But we think that a false dilemma is set up when developing countries are offered a choice between commercialized elite sport and paternalistic mass sport in the name of recreation. Perhaps it is high time more academics showed up this false dilemma. By so doing they would be opening up a discursive arena for considering every possible recreational opportunity—or creating yet unimagined ones.

### **Acknowledgements**

We are grateful to the reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article; they have no responsibility for any remaining errors.

### **References**

- Aldred, P. (1998) Ethnography and discourse analysis, in: J. Ribbens & R. Edwards (Eds) *Feminist dilemmas and qualitative research* (London, Sage), 144–170.
- Andrew, D. L. & Loy, J. W. (1993) British cultural studies and sports: past encounters and future possibilities, *Quest*, 45, 255–276.
- Apple, M. W. (1979) *Ideology and curriculum* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul).
- Apple, M. W. & Christian-Smith, L. K. (1991) *The politics of the textbook* (New York, Routledge).
- Apthorpe, R. & Gasper, D. (Eds) (1996) *Arguing development policy: frames and discourse* (London, Frank Cass).
- Ball, S. (1994) *Education reform: a critical poststructural approach* (Buckingham, UK, Open University Press).



- Ball, S. (1998) Big policies/small world: an introduction to international perspective in educational policy, *Comparative Education*, 34(2), 119–130.
- Berger, P. L. (1977) *Pyramids of sacrifice: political ethics and social change* (London, Pelican Books).
- Bockrath, F. & Franke, E. (1995) Is there any value in sports? About ethical significance of sports activities, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 30(3/4), 283–310.
- Bodin, D., Robene, L. & Heas, S. (2005) *Sport violence in Europe* (Strasbourg, Council of Europe).
- Botswana National Sport Council (BNSC) (2004) *Annual report* (Gaborone, Botswana, BNSC).
- Bowles, S. & Gintis, H. (1976) *Schooling in capitalist America* (New York, Basic Books).
- Burton, F. & Carlen, P. (1979) *Official discourse* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul).
- Cashmore, E. (1996) *Making sense of sports* (London, Routledge).
- Coakley, J. (2001) *Sport in society: issues and controversies* (Boston, MA, McGraw-Hill).
- Coakley, J. & Dunning, E. (2000) *Handbook of sports studies* (London, Sage).
- Coalter, F. W., Duffield, B. & Long, J. (1988) *Recreational welfare: the rationale for public leisure policy* (London, Routledge).
- Collins, M. F. & Kay, T. (2003) *Sport and social exclusion* (London, Routledge).
- Committee to Investigate Poor Performance of National Sport Teams (CIPPNST) (1999) *Report on the investigation of poor performance of the national sports teams* (vols 1 & 2) (Gaborone, Botswana, Ministry of Labour & Home Affairs).
- Cooke, A. C. (1994) *The economics of leisure and sport* (London, Routledge).
- Department of Sport and Recreation (2001) *National Sport and Recreation Policy for Botswana* (Gaborone, Botswana, Department of Sport and Recreation, Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs).
- Department of Sport and Recreation (2005) *Information flyer* (Gaborone, Botswana, Department of Sport and Recreation, Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs).
- Dreyfus, H. & Rabinow, P. (1983) *Michael Foucault: beyond structuralism and hermeneutics* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press).
- Evans, J. (Ed.) (1986) *Physical education, sports and schooling* (London, Falmer Press).
- Evans, J., Penney, D. & Bryant, A. (1997) Playing by market rules: physical education in England and Wales after ERA, in: G. McFee & A. Tomlinson (Eds) *Education, sport and leisure: connections and controversies* (Aachen, Germany, Meyer & Meyer Verlag).
- Fish, S. (1980) *Is there a text in this class?* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press).
- Flintoff, A. & Scraton, S. (2001) Stepping into active leisure? Young women's perceptions of active lifestyles and their experiences of school physical education, *Sport, Education and Society*, 6(1), 5–21.
- Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and punish* (London, Allen Lane).
- Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/Knowledge* (New York, Pantheon).
- Francis, B. (2003) The creation and dissemination of feminist research in education: facts or fictions?, in: C. Hughes (Ed.) *Disseminating qualitative research in educational settings* (Buckingham, UK, Open University Press), 55–65.
- Freire, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (London, Penguin).
- Gellner, E. (1992) Anthropology and Europe, *Social Anthropology*, 1(1A), 1–7.
- Gough-Yates, A. (2003) *Understanding women's magazines* (London, Routledge).
- Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from the prison notebooks* (New York, International Publishers).
- Green, M. (1988) *The dialectic of freedom* (New York, Teachers College Press).
- Grossberg, L., Nelson, C. & Treichler, P. (Eds) (1992) *Cultural studies* (London, Routledge).
- Gruneau, R. (1983) *Class, sports and social development* (Amherst, MA, University of Massachusetts Press).
- Hargreaves, J. (1986) *Sports, power and culture* (Cambridge, UK, Polity Press).
- Hargreaves, J. (1994) *Sporting females: critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sports* (London, Routledge).
- Holub, R. (1992) *Antonio Gramsci: beyond Marxism and postmodernism* (London, Routledge).
- Houlihan, B. (1997) *Sport, policy and politics: a comparative analysis* (London, Routledge).



- Hunter, L. (1994) *Rethinking the school: subjectivity, bureaucracy, criticism* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin).
- Jackson, D. Z. (2005) *The crumbling pyramids*. Available online at: <http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial-opinion/oped/articles> (accessed 27 April 2005).
- Jagger, E. (1997) The production of official discourse on 'glue-sniffing', *Journal of Social Policy*, 26(4), 445-465.
- Janks, H. (1997) Critical discourse analysis as a research tool, *Discourse*, 18(2), 329-342.
- Kuhn, A. (1985) *Power of the image: essays on representation and sexuality* (New York, Routledge).
- Kuhn, T. S. (1970) *The structure of scientific revolutions* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press).
- Larsen, H. (1997) *Foreign policy and discourse analysis: France, Britain and Europe* (London, Routledge).
- Maclaren, P. (1998) *Life in schools: an introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundation of education* (New York, Longman).
- Maguire, J. (1999) *Global sport: identities, societies, civilizations* (Cambridge, UK, Polity Press).
- Mercuse, H. (1972) *Negations: essays in critical theory* (London, Free Association Books).
- Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs. (2002) *Investigation of poor performance of the national sports teams* (Government White Paper No. 4) (Gaborone, Botswana, Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs).
- Murdoch, E. (1987) *Sports in schools* (London, Department of Education and Science).
- Naisbitt, J., Naisbitt, N. & Phillips, D. (2001) *High tech/high touch: technology and our accelerated search for meaning* (London, Nicholas Brearley).
- Nandy, A. (1988) *The intimate enemy* (Delhi, India, Oxford University Press).
- National Commission on Education. (1993) *Report of the National Commission on Education* (Gaborone, Botswana, Government Printers).
- Penney, D. & Evans, J. (1999) *Politics, policy and practice in physical education* (London, E. & F. Spon).
- Penney, D. & Jess, M. (2004) Physical education and physically active lives: a lifelong approach to curriculum development, *Sport, Education and Society*, 9(2), 269-287.
- Polley, M. (1998) *Moving the goalposts* (London, Routledge).
- Porter, J. (1996) *Representing reality: discourse, rhetoric and social constructions* (London, Sage).
- Presidential Task Group (1997) *Long term vision for Botswana: towards prosperity for all* (Gaborone, Botswana, Presidential Task Group for a Long Term Vision for Botswana).
- Priestley, M. (2002) Global discourses and national reconstruction: the impact of globalization on curriculum policy, *Curriculum Journal*, 13(1), 121-138.
- Real, M. R. (1989) *Super media: a cultural studies approach* (London, Sage).
- Rust, V. D. (1991) Postmodernism and its comparative education implications, *Comparative Education Review*, 35(4), 610-626.
- Sage, G. H. (2000) Political economy and sport, in: J. Coakley & E. Dunning (Eds) *Handbook of sport studies* (London, Sage), 261-276.
- Said, E. (1991) *Musical elaborations* (New York, Colombia University Press).
- Schmidt, B. (1977) Toward the promotion of sport in developing countries, *International Journal of Physical Education*, 14(4), 19-25.
- Shalin, D. (1992) Critical theory and the pragmatist challenge, *American Journal of Sociology*, 98(2), 237-279.
- Shapiro, M. (1988) *The politics of representations* (Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press).
- Sparkes, A. (Ed.) (1992) *Research in physical education and sports: exploring alternative visions* (London, Falmer Press).
- Sports and Recreation South Africa (2005) *White Paper: getting the nation to play*. Available online at: <http://www.srsa.gov.za/right.asp> (accessed 8 July 2005).
- Sports Council (1993) *Young people and sport: policy and frameworks for action* (London, Sports Council).
- Schumer, D. (1999) In the millrace of time, *Deutschland*, 63-65.

- Taylor, S. (1997) Critical policy analysis: exploring contexts, texts and consequences, *Discourse*, 18(1), 23–35.
- Trouong, T. D. (1999) The underbelly of the tiger and gender demystification of the Asian miracle, *Review of International Political Economy*, 6(2), 133–165.
- United Kingdom Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2005) *Harnessing the power of sport in Africa*. Press release. Available online at: <http://www.uk sport.gov.uk/template.asp> (accessed 12 June 2005).
- United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace (2003) *Sport for development and peace: towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals* (New York, United Nations).
- Van Bottenburg, M. (2001) *Global games* (Champaign, IL, University of Illinois Press).
- White, J. (1996) Research on English and the teaching of girls, in: P. F. Murphy & C. V. Gipps (Eds) *Equity in the classroom: towards effective pedagogy for girls and boys* (London, Falmer Press/UNESCO), 97–110.
- Williams, A. & Bedward, J. (2001) Gender, culture and generation gap: students' and teachers' perceptions of the aspects of the National Curriculum Physical Education, *Sport, Education and Society*, 6(1), 53–66.
- Williams, R. (1977) *Marxism and literature* (Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press).
- Wright, J. (1996) Review of 'Sporting females: critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sports' (J. Hargreaves), *Sport, Education and Society*, 1(1), 117–122.
- Young, R. (1995) *Colonial desire* (London, Routledge).