Para-Sport Policy factors Leading to International Sporting Success (Para-SPLISS)

*Sport Policy and the Paralympic Movement*

*A Three-Year International Comparative Research Project*

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Project Rationale

• An emerging body of literature has been developed over the past few years on elite sport policy development. This has led to a better understanding of elite sport systems in different nations and the factors that shape policy and success.

• However, none of these studies include Paralympics sports or more in general para-sports.

• Para-sport is growing quickly, but the strategies and structures to develop para-sport in general, and elite athletes in particular remain unclear.
Factors Affecting Sporting Success

Macro Level
- Eg. Population, GDP, Religion

Meso Level
- Eg. Financial Investment, Sport Policy

Micro Level
- Eg. Genetics, Training

(De Bosscher, De Knop, Van Bottenburg, & Shilbli, 2006)
Where would we like to be?

• Global participation in para-sport
  – eg. a higher number of countries sending larger teams with more competitive athletes, in a variety of sports

• NPCs as active supporters and drivers of national para-sport policy
  – eg. NPCs driving holistic programming – working in collaboration with schools, governments, national sport federations, academic institutions
Where are we now?

• **Rapid growth in Paralympic Sport** (eg. London 2012: 164 countries -18 new member countries since Beijing).

• **Drastically different levels of development across nations.** (eg. London 2013: 55% of countries did not win medals, 78 countries sent 2 athletes or less).

• **Imbalance in participation** (eg. certain countries dominating certain sports – team sports vs swimming/powerlifting).

• Varying degrees of legislation and policy defined and implemented.
Research Purpose

• To analyze and internationally compare policy factors affecting success and development of para-sports.

• With the intention of using these findings to better inform and guide policymakers, sport organisations and researchers to effectively and efficiently develop para-sport policy as the field continues to emerge.
Research Objectives

1. To gain insight into the factors (potentially pillars) affecting effectiveness of (elite) para-sport policies of different nations on all participation and competitive levels.

2. To develop a theoretical model usable for policy makers and researchers involved in the development of para-sport, that has been tested and compared in an empirical environment.

3. To develop a practical instrument that can be used by national policies to evaluate (elite) para-sport policy and its effectiveness.

4. To benchmark nations and learn from good practices in the field.
Setting the Foundation

• This research builds on our earlier work in able-bodied sport development that was developed by the SPLISS consortium group of researchers, from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium), the Netherlands, United Kingdom and later also Australia.

• Since 2002 this group, developed a theoretical model on the ‘Sports Policy factors Leading to International Sporting Success’ (SPLISS), that was tested in an empirical environment with six sample nations (in addition to the above, also Canada, Italy and Norway).

• Currently the SPLISS study has expanded to include 16 countries, with first results at the SPLISS conference 2013, Antwerp.
How does SPLISS Work?

• This model clusters elite sport policy into nine areas called pillars (De Bosscher, De Knop, van Bottenburg, & Shibli, 2006)

• These nine pillars are:
  – Pillar 1: Financial Support
  – Pillar 2: Organisation and Structure of Sport Policies
  – Pillar 3: Sport Participation
  – Pillar 4: Talent Identification and Development Systems
  – Pillar 5: Athletic and Post Athletic Career Support
  – Pillar 6: Trainings Facilities
  – Pillar 7: Coaches Provision and Development Systems
  – Pillar 8: National and International Competition
  – Pillar 9: Scientific Research
SPLISS Model

INPUT

National governing bodies

Foundation & participation

Pillar 3

Talent identification & development system

Pillar 4

Coaching provision & coach development

Pillar 7

Scientific research

Pillar 9

Elite sport Environment Media & Sponsoring

Pillar 5

Athletic & post-Career Support

Pillar 6

Training facilities

Pillar 8

(Inter)national competition

Pillar 2

Organisation and structure of sport policies: an integrated approach to policy development

INPUT

Financial support

Pillar 1

OUTPUT

Improved climate

OUTCOME
SPLISS Project

• Unique feature of the research is throughputs (processes) both in terms of the presence of various system components, as well as the ratings that 1090 athletes, 253 coaches and 69 performance directors gave to these system components.

• These nine pillars were underpinned by more than 100 critical success factors (CSF), which are elements that are vital for a strategy (pillar) to be successful.
PARA

Sport Policy factors Leading to International Sporting Success

A SPLiSS project.
Para-SPLISS is a 3-year project that produces results in 3 phases, each one having several tangible outcomes.

1. Model Development

2. Field Development

3. International Comparison
PHASE 1 – Model Development

Objective: Development of Para-SPLISS model

Procedures – application and adaptation of SPLISS methodology to para-sport systems:

- **Literature review** on Para-Sport from 3 perspectives:
  - global development and organization;
  - public policy, policy networks and governance;
  - national high performance and development sport structures.

- **Data collection** using mix methods (e.g. quantitative and qualitative):
  - interviews will be conducted with the following stakeholders within the para-sport system:
    - a) administrators (national and international levels);
    - b) coaches and classifiers
    - c) athletes

- **Content Analysis** - will lead to the development of:
  - The **theoretical Para-SPLISS model** with critical success factors (CSF) grouped together to form the model’s pillars
  - Two **practical/evaluation tools**: 1. Overall Para-Sports Policy Inventory, 2. The Para-Sport Sport Climate Survey

YEAR 1 OUTPUTS

- A theoretical model outlining critical factors affecting para-sporting success and development
- Two practical instruments that will allow to test and valid the model
PHASE 2 – Field Development

**Objective:** test and validate the Para-SPLISS Model and instruments in an empirical and international environment

**Procedures:**

- **Sample:** application of the model will be piloted in 6 comparable nations

- **Data collection:** in-country researchers will collect data on the pillars (CSF) at the national level in collaboration with their NPC using the two Para-SPLISS instruments:
  - **Overall Para-Sports Policy Inventory:** Semi structured questionnaires completed by researchers in each nation (mainly qualitative) on the identified pillars and CSF
  - **Elite Para-Sport Climate Survey:** Semi structured questionnaires completed by athletes, coaches & programme directors in participating nations (mainly quantitative)

**YEAR 2 OUTPUTS**

- Data collected on Para-SPLISS pillars at a national level, in all participating nations
- Completed para-sport policy evaluation of each participating country against each pillar, usable for strategic decision making and advocacy.
PHASE 3 – International Comparison

Objective: Comparison between nations participating in the pilot.

Procedures:

- Comparison analysis of para-sport policies across participating nations by the lead researcher (PhD student)
- Use of a measurement instrument based on SPLISS methodology

YEAR 3 OUTPUTS

- Benchmarking results of nations against each other
- Recommendations on key factors success factors that:
  - IPC and NPCs could use to shape their own programs
  - Policy makers could use towards developing inclusive sport policies
This 3-year research project is due to start in September 2015 and conclude with its final report in late 2018.

**Year 1**
- Sept 2015 - Sept 2016
- **Phase 1**
  - Data collection (expert interviews) and development of theoretical model

**Year 2**
- Sept 2016 - Sept 2017
- **Phase 2**
  - Application of theoretical model in each participating country using developed tools

**Year 3**
- Sept 2017 - Sept 2018
- **Phase 3**
  - International comparison. Final Report & Dispersion of findings

**Short Term Outcomes**
- The **Para-SPLISS model**, a framework of Para-sports development outlining the critical factors affecting para-sporting success/development.
- **Practical and validated tools** used by nations to monitor and evaluate para-sport process and policies, thus allowing them to measure improvement and track how resources are spent.
- A **benchmark study** allowing nations to situate their performance against policy pillars in comparison with other nations

**Summary**

An **International network providing** a communication platform that strengthens relationships between governments, researchers and the Paralympic Movement.
Project Structure

- Doctoral Supervisor(s)
- Steering Committee
- Doctoral Student(s)
  - 6+ in country researchers
Para-Sport Specifics...

Pillar 1: Financial support

Pillar 2: Organisation and structure of sport policies: an integrated approach to policy development

Pillar 3: Foundation & participation

Pillar 4: Talent identification & development system

Pillar 5: Athletic & post-Career Support

Pillar 6: Training facilities

Pillar 7: Coaching provision & coach development

Pillar 8: (International) competition

Pillar 9: Scientific research

Elite sport Environment Media & Sponsoring

National governing bodies

Outcome

Output

Improved climate

Input

Throughput
Brainstorm...

Pillar 1 – Funding
Pillar 2 - Governance structures (level of acceptance?)
Pillar 3 – Participations (school system, acquired)
Pillar 4 – Talent ID (very weak)
Pillar 5 – Athlete Support (financial & support services)
Pillar 6 - Facilities (equipment, transport?)
Pillar 7 – Coach training (classifiers?)
Pillar 8 - Competition structure
Pillar 9 – Research

Modify Pillars? Redefine CSF in each pillar?
Study participation?

This study is open to all nations participating in the Paralympic Games. Should we add something indicating that we are looking for comparable nations?

We are inviting interested researchers, research institutes, policy makers, sport movement and stakeholders to come together at an international level to share current positions, strategies and ultimately move development of Paralympic Sport forward in a more synchronized manner.
Participating Nations

• Have a researcher that collects data in his/her country (PT, FT, team) – **expected tasks:**
  – Task 1
  – Task 2
  – Task 3
  – Task 4
  – Task 5

• Example: Year 1: <5%, Year 2: 50%, Year 3: <10%

• Nations are encouraged to make their own national report after 2 years (likely dependent on funding arrangement with national partners)
Project Coordination

Coordination Tasks

• Development of research proposals
• Development of international network of researchers, policy makers and administrators in Para-Sport
• Continuous communication and information updates
• Organisation and planning of meetings
• Development of a research platform
• Coordinate the development of new Para-SPLISS research projects

Research Tasks

• Guide and mentor participating researchers
• Literature review, research instruments and coordinate standardized data collection
• Composing, collecting and comparing data
• Data analysis, reporting and publications
• Disseminate results and reports
Project Financing

Contribution from each Participating nation for the 3 years

30 000 EUR/nation (excl VAT)
For a minimum 6 nations sample

Additional funding for national data collection

Project Coordination
In-Country Data Collection

Option 1: all countries provide 30 000 EUR
Option 2: % of funding from international grants/organisations + % of countries funding (% of 30 000 EUR)
Benefits for Researchers

For researchers that are interested in taking part in this cooperation, the study will lead to:

- Involvement in an international growing network of research cooperation in para-sport and a forum of international comparative research.

- Common publications through involvement in international books, journal articles and articles in domestic journals, coordinated by each individual researcher.

- Sharing of common knowledge, increasing insights in para-sport policy factors leading to development and success internationally and in methods for comparing nations.
Benefits for Nations

For nations that are interested in taking part in this cooperation, the study will lead to:

✓ **Analysis** of their country’s **current situation** and development in comparison to other nations internationally

✓ This information will ultimately assist in making decisions contributing to the establishment and continued **development** of their **para-sport system** for international success.
Project Achievements

• **Several countries have expressed high interest in the project** (and started to search for funding), including Australia (funding secured), Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, Brazil and Canada

• Stakeholder meeting at SPLISS Conference brought together 23 interested researchers from 13 nations for methodological discussion *(Antwerp, Nov. 2013)*

• Project presentation to IFAPA board during ISAPA Conference *(Istanbul, July 2013)*

• Awareness raised during MINEPS V (Fifth World Sport Ministers Conference) through poster presentation and side discussions *(Berlin, May 2013)*

• Project meeting between Para-SPLISS and IPC *(Brussel, May 2013)*
Next Steps

• Preparation Phase (on going- until Sept 2015):
  – Agree on common proposal
  – Define project sample and key terminology
  – Secure national and project funding
  – Identify national researcher
  – Sign project agreement
  – Build international Para-SPLISS network, collaboration with national and transnational organizations, policy makers, NPCs
To join this collaborative international research project or to request further information, please contact:

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