



Sports for All Philosophy:

The evolution in Cyprus and the Transfer from a Sport to a Health Orientation

Nicos Kartakoullis¹, George Karlis², Maria Karadakis²

1. School of Business, University of Nicosia

2. University of Ottawa

Correspondence with:

Nicos Kartakoullis

kartakoullis.n@unic.ac.cy

University of Nicosia,

School of Business

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the evolutionary trend of Sports for All participation and programs in Cyprus up to the year 2006. Specifically, Sport for All in Cyprus is examined under the following categories: 1) overall participation, and 2) participation and programs for children, women, men, and persons with disabilities. The methodology used is based on secondary data on the evolution of Sport for All up to the year 2006 provided by the Director of the Centre for Leisure, Tourism, Sports Research and Development of Cyprus, University of Nicosia. The results have been presented in the form of number counts based on participation levels for the following categories: 1) overall participation and 2) participation and programs for children, women, men, and persons with disabilities. The results illustrate an increase in Sports for All participation and programs in Cyprus up to 1997 and a decline from late 1997 to 1999. After 1999, the results show that the figures in terms of participation remained the same, showing that the program reached a plateau. In view of this fact, the figures are not provided for 2000-2006 in the tables that follow, as there are no major changes to be discussed.

Keywords: health orientation, sport for all, evolutionary trend

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Introduction

The founder of the Olympic Movement Baron Pierre de Coubertin was the first one to make reference to “Sport for All” in 1919. “In the past, the practice of sports was an occasional pastime of the rich and idle youth. I worked for thirty years for that practice to become a habitual pleasure of the petit bourgeoisie. Now it is necessary that this pleasure become part of the life of the young workers. All sports for everybody, Sport for all- this is without doubt a formula that will be labeled a crazily utopian”. Pierre de Coubertin, (1919). All Sport for everybody (Sport for All) was the major concept advocated by Pierre de Coubertin in his writings of 1919.

Sports are ultimately a reflection of today’s society. Through the promotion of sports, sport act as a tool to develop communities as well as advocate peace in various cultures (Forum Barcelona, 2004). During the Universal Forum of Cultures dialogue on Sports: A Universal Dialogue, in Barcelona—2004, Pere Miro, Director of Olympic Solidarity of the International Olympic Committee stated that “sports prove to be an essential tool for education and the development of societies as well as a value toward the integration of communities and eradicating intolerance” (Forum Barcelona, 2004).

The European Sports Charter is an agreement developed by the Council of Europe that develops and reviews policies for sports and is used by governments to promote total inclusion in sports (European Sports Charter, 1992). In 1975, under the sport policies within the European Sport Charter, the “Sports for All” program in Cyprus was recognized as a social service that was targeted towards children that were involved in sports for enjoyment, recreation, fitness and health purposes (European Sports for All Charter, 1975). As of 1999, the “Sports for All” program is targeted to all citizens in Cyprus (Centre for Leisure, Tourism, Sports Research, 2005-2006) and consists of a variety of mini-programs including (Cyprus Sport Organization, 2007):

- Physical Exercises
- Child Swim Programs
- Sports for All in Education
- Sports for Woman and Man
- Sports for Senior Citizens
- Sports for People with Special Needs

It would be important to note that the intention and goal of the CSO when the “Sport for All” programme was initially introduced was clearly the sport orientation. That is, giving the opportunity to young boys and girls to acquire skills and competencies in sport. The purpose of this study is to examine the evolutionary trend of Sports for All participation and programs in Cyprus up to the year 2005. Specifically, Sport for All in Cyprus is examined under the following categories: 1) overall participation, and 2) participation and programs for children, women, men, and persons with disabilities.

Section 1: Cyprus as a Society

Introduction to Cyprus Government on Sports:

During the Byzantine Era, Cypriot athlete's held successful reputations in Pan-Hellenic and Olympic contests in Olympia, Pythia and Isthmia (Republic of Cyprus, 2005). During this time period, ancient stadiums in Curium, Salamina, Paphos, Kitium and Lapithos acted as centers where residence gathered for social and athletic events.

In 1897, the first Gymnastics club was founded in Limassol and has contributed to the opening of other gymnastic clubs across the island (Republic of Cyprus, 2005). Due to the influence gymnastics played on sports, there are six gymnastics clubs still in operation in major towns where, as of 2004, 60 000 athletes of all ages are registered in 42 federations (Republic of Cyprus, 2005).

Cyprus Sport Organization:

In an effort to promote sports, the Government of Cyprus established the Cyprus Sport Organization (C.S.O.) in 1969. The C.S.O. acts as a non-profit organization where funds are allocated towards assisting federations and clubs for the promotion of athletic programs, as well as creating, maintaining and running athletic infrastructures including stadiums, sport facilities—indoor and outdoor and the maintenance of basic equipment (Cyprus Sport Organization, 2007). The C.S.O. main objective is to develop extracurricular sports for all age athletes, coordinate sports for residence in Cyprus and promote Cyprus on an the international sporting scene.

The C.S.O. consists of an Administration Board made up by nine members who are appointed by the Council of Ministers that must serve a minimum of a three year term. The organization is broken down into four sectors—Sports, Sports Ground, the Financial Management and Human Resources (Cyprus Sport Organization, 2007). The

history of the C.S.O. is divided into five periods starting as early as 1969 to 2005 to which each period has a specific objective (Cyprus Sport Organization, 2007). Period Z, 2001-2005, marked a time where Cyprus joined the European Union on May 1, 2004 enhancing the integration of unity for Europe. As well during this time period, the Centre of Sports Research was developed to assist athletes to excel in cooperation with other centers in Europe. In 1985, by the suggestion of Mr. Kyriacos Neocleos, then President of the C.S.O., adopted and put into practice the "Sports for All" program which runs throughout Cyprus in 180 sport centers and has benefited 15,000 children in six different sports (Cyprus Sport Organization, 2007).

Cyprus Olympic Committee:

The Cyprus Olympic Committee was established in 1974 (Cyprus Olympic Committee, 1997) and is a vital part of the international sport movement and participates actively in all sporting events. The main responsibility of the C.O.C is to protect the objectives and ideal of the Olympic Movement while respecting and implementing the rules specified in the "Olympic Charter" (Cyprus Olympic Committee, 1997). In 1979 the merger of the Cyprus Olympic Committee with the International Olympic Committee (I.O.C.) put the C.O.C at an equal membership status with other committees in I.O.C.

The Executive Council which is comprised of a Chairman and 8 members are elected by the 35 Federations that make up the Cyprus Olympic Committee (European Olympic Committee, no date). The Executive Council ensures that Cypriot athletes are represented at Olympic Games as well as games that the I.O.C. is partnered with. Within this partnership, the Cyprus Olympic Committee supports the activities that the I.O.C., the European Olympic Committee (EOC) Association and other National Olympic Committees host.

Due to its succession, the status of C.O.C. within the I.O.C and international sports committees is in constant upgrade. The C.O.C shares the responsibility of determining and signing protocols for co-operation with other countries (Cyprus Olympic Committee, 1997). It also is responsible for organizing the Union of the European Olympic Committees and the Meeting of the Union's Executive Committee every year.

An important project that the C.O.C. takes credit for is the National Olympic Academy. The National Olympic Academy (CNOA) was established on March 30th 1987 and works collaboratively with IOC, International Olympic Academy and other Sport Authorities that promote the values of the Olympic Idea (Cyprus Olympic

Committee,1997). The objectives of the CNOA is to provide Olympic Education for individuals involved in sports, to foster growing knowledge of the Olympic Values and promote the social principles of Olympism (Cyprus Olympic Committee,1997).

Methodology

During 2006-2008, The Centre for Leisure, Tourism, Sports Research and Development at Cyprus, University of Nicosia, along with Professor George Karlis of the University of Ottawa, and a team of European experts in the area released the study "*Μελέτη/Ερευνα για την αξιολόγηση των υπηρεσιών του προγράμματος <<Αθλητισμός για Όλους>>*" (An evaluation of the Services provided by the Sports for All program in Cyprus). This study looks at the history of Sports for All Programs in Cyprus and in other European countries like Belgium, Denmark, and Holland and how/what each country has done to market the program to its citizens.

The pool of the data for the aforementioned study was initiated by the principle researcher for this project who is the Director for the Centre for Leisure, Tourism, Sports Research and Development of Cyprus, University of Nicosia. At that time data was collected on Sport for All participation and programs in Cyprus up to the year of 2005, and it is this data that has been provided by the Director of the Centre for Leisure, Tourism, Sports Research and Development of Cyprus that is used as the basis of secondary data for this paper. The results have been presented in the form of number counts based on participation levels for the following categories: 1) overall participation and 2) participation and programs for children, women, men, and persons with disabilities.

Results

In 1985 the C.S.O. established the Sports for All Program as a means to have youth participate in physical activity and then expanded to include a diverse range of individuals. Prior to this time, "Sports for All" was present but took place in a non-formalized context. The beginning of Sports for All in Cyprus was linked to having cultural significance as sport was an important element in Greek culture and continues to be today (Centre for Leisure, Tourism, Sports Research, 2005-2006). Youth involvement in Sports for All prior to establishment was in traditional cultural elements that would celebrate life and embrace health through traditional games during holidays and festivals (Centre for Leisure, Tourism, Sports Research, 2005-2006).

After the invasion and tragic events in 1974 the Cypriot economy started to rise and so did the decisions to proceed with Sports for All Programs. In the first year, Sports for All programs were used for "Sport Orientation" geared to youth between the ages of 9-12 (Centre for Leisure, Tourism, Sports Research, 2005-2006) to get them involved in physical activity. In order for the C.S.O. to meet this goal, funds were allocated for hiring 25 qualified practitioners to organize and run programs with overall costs of £50,000 (Centre for Leisure, Tourism, Sports Research, 2005-2006). In 1987, the administration of the C.S.O. upgraded programs to include not only youth but adults, people with special needs/disabilities and seniors therefore increased costs to £100,000 (Centre for Leisure, Tourism, Sports Research, 2005-2006).

In order to ensure that the program would run successfully, the C.S.O. hired 40 qualified practitioners to run programs in different municipalities. After three years of the program running another upgrade took place and costs were raised to £200,000 (Centre for Leisure, Tourism, Sports Research, 2005-2006) to include a new division within the program that catered people who engaged in athletics as hobbies. The last program upgrade took place from 1993 to 1996 to which the program opened to all ages and all capabilities therefore everyone had the opportunity to get involved in Sports for All programs with overall costs totaling £400,000 (Centre for Leisure, Tourism, Sports Research, 2005-2006).

Participation in programs increased as more programs were being offered. In Table 1 we see the rise and fall of participation in Sports for All programs from 1985 to 1999. In the year of 1996-1997, participation reached its highest of 12, 520 and slowly decreasing in later years to 10, 214 participants. This decline in participation created new goals for Sports for All programs by the C.S.O. In order to have people continue to participate, programs were revised so that they met the needs of people participating.

Table 1. Participation in Sports for All according to the average number enrolled in the program for the years 1985-1999.

Year	Number of Participants
1985-1986	5,500
1986-1987	6,070
1987-1988	6,450
1988-1989	7,820
1989-1990	8,050
1990-1991	9,000
1991-1992	10,000

1992-1993	11,000
1993-1994	12,000
1994-1995	12,000
1995-1996	11,931
1996-1997	12,520
1997-1998	10,893
1998-1999	10,214

As mentioned earlier, in the beginning Sports for All programs were targeted to youth between the ages of 9-12. In order to have youth involved, the C.S.O. offered sports that were team oriented such as soccer, basketball, volleyball and then expanded to include tennis, taekwondo, dance, judo and in the summer months swimming. From 1998 to 1999 participation in specialized swimming programs dropped drastically from 7,000 to 3,600 participants (See Table 2).

Table 2. Participation Numbers of the specialized program “Swimming for Children”.

Year	No of Participants	P.E. Teachers Employed	Swimming Pools
1993	5000	58	8
1994	5000	58	8
1995	6000	66	8
1996	6000	66	8
1997	6000	64	8
1998	7000	70	8
1999	3600	66	9

As Sports for All programs opened up to include adults, people with special needs/disabilities and seniors, programs being offered were aerobic classes, basketball, tennis and swimming. From 1993 to 1999 we see that women’s participation increased the most (Table 3) from men (Table 4) while participation in programs offered to people with special needs/disabilities decreased (Table 5). What we also notice is that women had more facilities available to them than men and people with special needs/disabilities had schools established to cater to special needs/disabilities participants.

Table 3. Participation of Women in Sports for All Programs from 1993 to 1999.

Year	Number of Women	Sports for All Centers
1993-1994	664	29
1994-1995	635	35
1995-1996	760	34
1996-1997	1056	37

1997-1998	1000	40
1998-1999	1100	38

Table 4. Participation of Men in Sports for All Programs from 1993 to 1999.

Year	Number of Men	Sports for All Centers
1993-1994	72	7
1994-1995	50	7
1995-1996	300	19
1996-1997	214	18
1997-1998	180	14
1998-1999	200	22

Table 5. Participation of Programs Offered for People with Special Needs/Disabilities from 1993-1999.

Year	No. of Participants	P.E. Teachers Employed	Sports for All Centers/Special Schools
1993-1994	80	2	2
1994-1995	85	3	3
1995-1996	100	3	3
1996-1997	238	4	9
1997-1998	150	3	5
1998-1999	100	5	6

Eitzen (1984), refers to sports as an “important institution in society” (Centre for Leisure, Tourism, Sports Research, 2005-2006) and agrees with Professor DaCosta in stating that sport is an important element of culture. The starting steps for Sports for All programs in Cyprus incorporated culture as athleticism was an important element in traditional Greek life. Over the years, Sports for All programs became to be all inclusive for all ages and capabilities while still maintaining its ties to the past. Sports reflected everyday life as it pertained to not only youth but adults and people with special needs/disabilities. As the program continues to grow in Cyprus so does the development of programs while others are revised to meet the needs of the changing society.

It would be interesting to note that the program is now taking a new orientation. Numbers have remained the same in terms of participation over the last seven years, but the diversity and range of programs have been increased. However, the major change that occurred is in the orientation of the program. The major goal or objective of the program is not to assist children to acquire sporting skills but there is a clear health orientation now. The “Sports for All” program is now being utilized as a tool to improve

the quality of life of Cypriot citizens as this will be discussed in the next section of this paper.

Discussion and Conclusions

Sports for All” programs, as used by Cypriot government and municipalities, can be a “tool” used by other countries to enhance quality of life (QOL) for their citizens. The World Health Organization (WHO, 1997) defines QOL as “individuals’ perception of their position in life in the context of culture and value system and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person’s physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, and their relationships to salient features of their environment” (Iwasaki, 2006:235).

As the President of the World Sport for All Movement (TAFISA), Palm (1999), said the new millennium imposed new challenges in the Sport for All movement. Palm (1999), said that there are challenges ahead of us that harden the work and the same time improve the chances of Sport for All. This more precisely, involve the observed change in the labor market (shrinking employment connected with growing unwanted free time); the expanding lifespan as we move from a traditionally youth dominated to a senior citizen society; the acceleration of health costs and the role of sport in lowering the burden of illness; the role of sport in combating social problems and anti-social behavior; the fifth challenge of sport in the new millennium is its role as a counter factor to the increasing role of virtual reality; and the role of sport in the balance of globalization and local community life. In view of all the above challenges as stated by Palm (1999), the program in Cyprus has been transformed taking an entirely new direction whereby the emphasis is on the quality of life rather that the sport orientation.

When looking at individuals who suffer from obesity and/or disabilities these become barriers for participation in programs therefore it is important for Sports for All programs to motivate people to get involved thus create meaning. Yoshita Iwasaki defined the process of meaning-making as “a process of gaining something important or valuable in life” (Iwasaki, 2008:232) and created a “concept map” (Figure 1) that described how leisure activities can create meaning within a cultural context thus enhancing QOL.

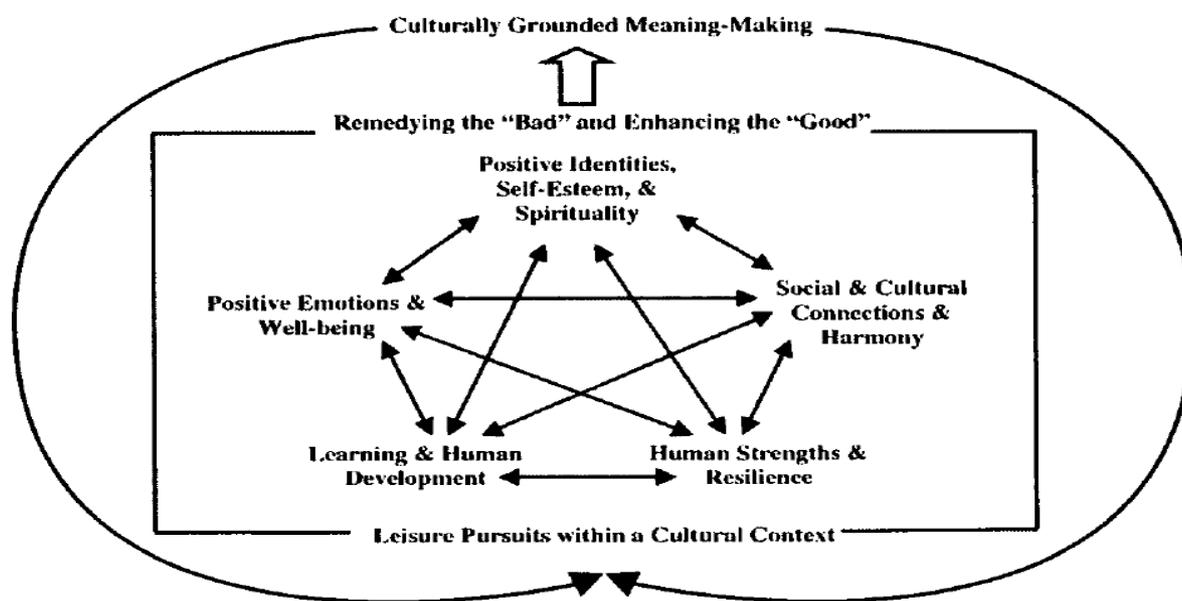


Figure 1. Iwasaki Concept Map on Meaning Making (Iwasaki, 2008).

The concept map is split into two sections: the first section, (the center of the map; Figure 2), indicates five factors that contribute to meaning making through recreational activities that can all be studied individually and/or collectively. Each factor looks at how leisure activities can contribute to meaning making, for example, Positive Emotions and Well Being, according to Folkman and Moskowitz (2000) states that people can create positive meanings by discovering positive values, experiences and gaining a sense of well being from events and activities in ones daily life (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2000). The second section (Figure 3), deals with a general level that transforms the “bad” and enhances the “good” aspects of leisure all within a cultural context. Baumeister and Volhs (2002), state that the people who create meaning making are the people who have transformed their perceptions of the unfortunate to the fortunate meaning that they have transformed the bad into the good so that it does not become a barrier to creating meaning on leisure activities.

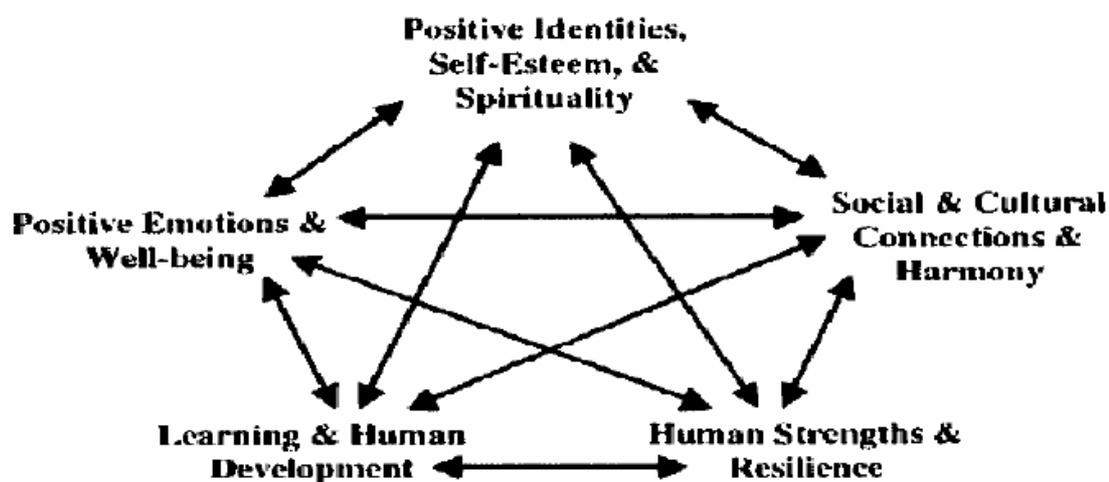


Figure 2. Section I: Factors that contribute to Meaning Making.

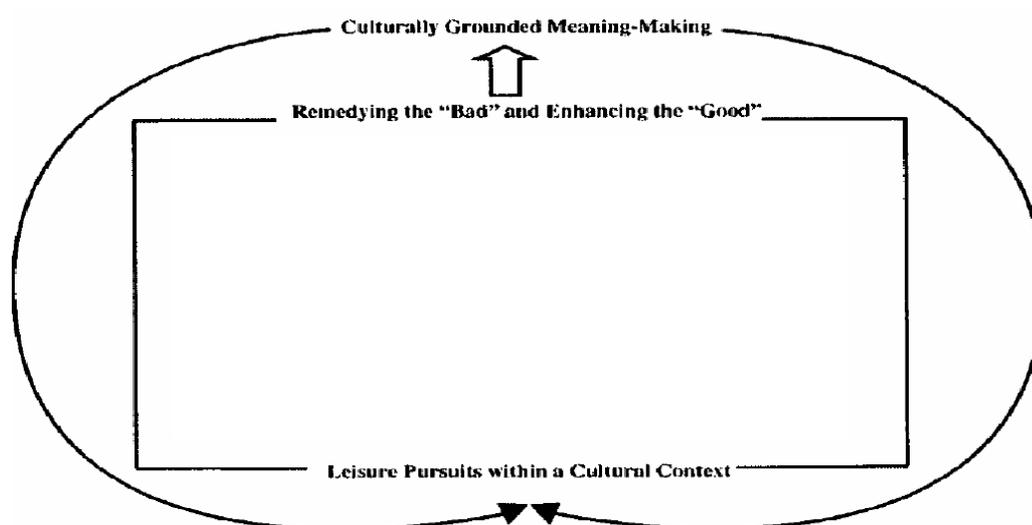


Figure 3. Section II: Transformation of the "Bad" into the "Good".

As the case in Cyprus where Sports for All programs are to get citizens involved in physical activity for multiple reasons including health purposes, we can adopt the "Promotion of Physical Activity and Healthy Eating" that Coleman et al. (2008), suggest as a means to not only get youth but adults and seniors involved in physical activity. Coleman et al. (2008), looked at the statistics on obesity in the United States and they

found that 60% of youth ages 9-13 do not participate in active recreation activities which is any form of physical activity that are either organized with supervision from adults with rules and/or free play that did not have rules and had little supervision (Eaton et al., 2006). Thus, Sports for All programs that cater to obesity and the promotion of physical activity can be used as a tool to transfer the bad (in this case, obesity as it is a barrier to participation) into the good (the promotion of physical activity on health) which Iwasaki states is important in order for meaning to be created.

The same can be said for Sports for All programs and individuals with disabilities, as it is important to transfer the “bad” into the “good” in order for “meaning-making.” A “Sports for All” program offered by the National Disability Sports Alliance (NDSA), which is a community based organization member of the United States Olympic Committee, provides individuals with disabilities an opportunity to participate in competitive and recreational sports (National Disability Sports Alliance, 2002). The NDSA offers programs based on a “multilevel competitive system” which allows individuals with disabilities to participate in individual sports and/or team sports to their level of ability (National Disability Sports Alliance, 2002). The NDSA works in conjunction with Blaze Sports to ensure that youth and adults have an opportunity to engage in competitive sports. Blaze Sports mission is to “advance the lives of youth and adults with physical disability through sport and healthy lifestyles” (Blaze Sports, 2003) by meeting the following five objectives:

1. Provide an opportunity for individuals with physical disabilities an opportunity in sports.
2. To enhance the quality of life for people with physical disabilities by fostering character development and ensuring individuals live productive, healthy and self-sufficient lives.
3. Build a positive perception of people with physical disabilities.
4. Hold the highest standards of quality in all aspects of the organization and sports.
5. To achieve long-term sustainability and organizational growth at all levels (Blaze Sports, 2003).

In Table 5, Participation of Programs Offered for People with Special Needs/Disabilities based in Cyprus from 1993 to 1999, we see that Cypriots with special needs/disabilities were highly involved in physical activities in 1996 to 1997 with 238

participants. In 1998-1999 the number of participants decreased by 138. In order to ensure that people stay involved in programs it is important to motivate them to get involved in activities that are catered to their abilities. For NDSA and Blaze Sports, “Sports for All” programs have ensured a competitive environment for people with physical disabilities and an opportunity to get involved in competitive sports. Sports for All programs ensure that quality, quantity, diversity and availability of activities are available for people with disabilities and companies that offer programs such as the NDSA and Blaze Sports thus enhancing the quality of life for participants as they offer these types of programs. These types of programs can be used to transform the “bad” into the “good” as individuals with disabilities get involved in activities that they feel comfortable and in return, create enjoyment.

“Sports for All” programs should be available and accessible to everyone. When individuals perceive a barrier to participation in physical activity one will not get involved. It is important that Sports for All programs cater to all types of individuals so that meaning can be created for everyone participating. As was the case with obesity and disabilities listed above—Sports for All programs can be used to transform the barrier (obesity/disability) into pure enjoyment (the good) thus create meaning for individuals participating.

Eitzen (1984), stated “it is well accepted that sport is an important institution in society and like any other institution, sport is an integral part of society, with its characteristics reflecting those of the surrounding social order” (Centre for Leisure, Tourism, Sports Research and Development of Cyprus, University of Nicosia, 2005-2006). As we have seen in the case of Cyprus, Sports for All is an ideal way for governments to promote physical activity to citizens as it is a service that offers programs to all citizens. Sports reflect what society is today and it is important that governments promote sports and physical activity for not only individuals but for communities as well. In Cyprus, the vast history of the Sports for All program laid the foundation for what sports is today and ensure that sports be accessible to all citizens. Cypriot municipalities and governments ensure that all citizens have an opportunity to get involved in some type of physical activity. With continuous upgrades being made to programs, we see that municipalities and governments in Cyprus use the Sports for All programs to enhance the quality of life for its citizens.

For people with disabilities, obesity and in general, Sports for All becomes an all inclusive philosophy that states through the use of Sports and other means of physical

activity we can enhance the quality of life for everyone as long as we offer programs that are all inclusive, meet the needs of participants and create meaning for individuals.

Recommendations

Through the use of Sports for All programs/services we can promote the positive impact that physical activity has on lifestyles. As leisure practitioners, we can design and implement budgets that would allocate funds by Government at Provincial, Federal and Municipal levels for Sports for All programs/services as a means to enhance quality of life for citizens. Continuous reviews and upgrades in programs need to be done to ensure that programs are meeting the standards of a changing society. It is also important to promote the Sports for All program/service in communities and ensure that individuals are aware of the availability for one to engage in Sports for All programs/services while making them affordable for all citizens. More research focused on Sports for All and other services related to Sports for All in other countries needs to be conducted in order to globally come up with a Charter for all countries to put into practice to enhance the quality of life for all citizens in the world.

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