

# The YoungHeroes Programme: Learnings from a CSR funded Multi-Stakeholder Partnership in Education and Sport for Development

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# Introduction

The YoungHeroes programme was developed as part of a response to the rising trend of inactivity in young South Africans, inadequate implementation of physical education and the lack of adequate opportunities to play sport in many schools (Hendricks, 2004; McVeigh, Norris, Cameron and Pettifor, 2004; Medical Research Council, 2002).

The initial motivation for the focus on Physical Education (PE) stemmed from involvement in the Charter of Physical Activity, Sport, Play and Well-Being for all Children and Youth in South Africa (2005)<sup>1</sup>, which was based on research that suggested there was a lack of physical activity in public primary schools. The Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (2002) suggested that more than a third of South African school children did not participate in sufficient physical activity to have a positive health benefit, and only 54% of learners had PE or an equivalent in school. (Medical Research Council, 2002). At a similar time, the RedCap Foundation was being conceptualised as a youth education and development non-profit organisation. With Mr Price, a business that has a track record of involvement in sport in South Africa, as its core funder, launching a project in the PE and sport area was one of the first to be approved and piloted. The programme has been developed over a seven year period, with many learning experiences, some misconceived endeavours, numerous challenges and successes, and most importantly partnerships, which has led YoungHeroes to become a comprehensive school Physical Education and Sport intervention. The unique partnership that the RedCap Foundation has forged with the South African Department of Basic Education (DBE) has allowed the YoungHeroes programme to focus on innovating solutions and strategies to help reinforce and support the systemic delivery of PE and sport.

As a practice focused paper, the case study of the YoungHeroes programme illustrates Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a catalyst for a relatively successful example of a Multi-Stakeholder Partnership in Education and Sport Development. This conceptualisation of YoungHeroes is based on the theoretical frameworks of Partnerships for Education (PfE)<sup>2</sup> and Sport for Development Theory<sup>3</sup>. Both theoretical frameworks were developed to promote collaborative and innovative development opportunities. YoungHeroes can be both defined within a role of education development, through its focus on achieving curriculum objectives, and as part of the sport for development movement through the programme's focus on sport development and maximizing the positive aspects of sports participation.

This paper will firstly outline the context within which YoungHeroes was conceptualised and is implemented; specifically child and youth inactivity, the burgeoning field of sport for development, and some background of the core funder of the programme. Secondly, an overview of two relevant theoretical frameworks is given, both of which has helped with creating a better theoretical understanding of the programme. Thirdly, the programme methodology and results chain is illustrated. The paper culminates with sharing the key learnings and recommendations of the YoungHeroes programme.

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<sup>1</sup> The Charter can be assessed at <http://www.health24.com/fitness/charter/charter.htm>

<sup>2</sup> A joint initiative between UNESCO and the World Economic Forum, and the World Economic Forum Global Education Initiative (GEI)

<sup>3</sup> As conceptualised by Alexis Lyras and Jon Peachey, Integrating sport-for-development theory and praxis. Sport Management Review (2011).

# Context

## **Physical Inactivity among South African primary school children**

The increase in the prevalence of chronic, non-communicable diseases (NCD) in developing countries has been attributed to changes in lifestyle associated with development and urban migration, including obesity, unhealthy/unbalanced diets, smoking and inactivity (WHO, 2004). South Africa has not been an exception to this phenomenon with physical inactivity appearing as an important public health concern; research suggests that 40% of children and youth are getting little or no moderate to vigorous activity each week (McVeigh, Norris, Cameron and Pettifor, 2004). It has been suggested that attitudes, in general, and also in reference to physical activity and risky health behaviours track from childhood, hence it is imperative to address these risk factors in Early Childhood Development (ECD) and primary education (Heckman & Masterov, 2004; Little, Wimer & Weiss, 2008; personal communication with Karen Sharwood, head of the Charter of Physical Activity, Sport, Play and Well-Being for all Children and Youth in South Africa, 20 April 2005). Furthermore, recent studies suggest that South African children continue to show a lack of physical activity and demonstrate unhealthy eating habits, a situation that needs systemic intervention to curb the impending negative health repercussions (Naidoo, Coopoo, Lambert & Draper, 2008).

## **Sport for Development (SfD)**

The value of sport as a vehicle for development and social cohesion is widely propagated, and there are numerous case studies from around the world. (FIFA, 2009; Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, 2010; Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, 2011; Swiss Academy for Development, 2010). In their research on sport and international development, Levermore & Beacom (2009) documented a more than tenfold increase in the number of registered SfD organisations between 2003 and 2008.

The vision of the RedCap Foundation is to “contribute to South African society”, and one of the mechanisms is by using sport as a vehicle to promote social development and positive change. Amongst other objectives, the RedCap Foundation aims to “promote positive values such as teamwork and participation, and inspire a positive life through sport”<sup>4</sup>. Hence it is assumed that physical education and sport, conducted in an inclusive and socially conscious manner, will benefit society. It is also purported that physical education and sport is an appropriate vehicle through which to deploy a CSR strategy for a funder like Mr Price.

However, some theorists in development circles are critical of the assumed value proposition for CSR in harnessing SfD programmes, as it is suggested that there is little transparent and substantive evidence to support the notion (Levermore, 2011). The nature of the approaches employed, especially the integration of development studies theory and praxis in SfD, in programme design and maintaining long-term sustainability, are not necessarily well-defined, or synthesised into best practice (Coalter, 2008). In the continuum of SfD, as defined by Coalter (2010: 298), the YoungHeroes programme is a “traditional form of provision for sport, with an implicit assumption or explicit affirmation that such sport has inherent developmental properties for participants”. At most, some aspects of the programme could fit into Coalter’s “Sport plus” category, “in which sports are

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<sup>4</sup> RedCap Foundation promotional material, available from [www.redcapfoundation.org](http://www.redcapfoundation.org).

adapted and often augmented with parallel programmes in order to maximize their potential to achieve developmental objectives” (2010: 298).

### **Mr Price - the core funder of the RedCap Foundation**

Mr Price funds the RedCap Foundation as part of its commitment to CSR, seeing this as part of its aim of being a more responsible corporate citizen and in its drive towards greater business sustainability. There is also a conducive legislative environment toward CSR spending in South Africa with businesses encouraged to support Socio-Economic Development by the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act<sup>5</sup> and the Income Tax Act<sup>6</sup>, which influences preferential procurement and has certain potential tax benefits.

A degree of alignment with the Mr Price brand has been seen by the RedCap Foundation as mutually beneficial. Mr Price has built a reputation for supporting sport in South Africa, being associated with school sport, club sport, individuals, academies, leagues, professional teams, and events. Currently, there are over 2500 athletes and 125 schools receiving support from Mr Price in various forms including financial assistance, kit, equipment, and opportunities to participate in leagues, tournaments and races locally and internationally. Hence, it is seen as socially conscious strategic alignment for Mr Price to support the RedCap Foundation’s work, and in particular a PE and sport intervention in public schools<sup>7</sup>.

## **Partnerships for Education (PfE) and Sport for Development Theory**

In order to better describe the theoretical underpinnings of the YoungHeroes programme and better understand how PE and sport can have a positive impact on young learners, reviews of literature and practice are on-going processes for the RedCap Foundation. In particular, Partnerships for Education (PfE) and Sport for Development Theory have been utilised to give perspective to the YoungHeroes programme, and cautionary criticisms from researchers and critical thinkers such as Fred Coalter, Roger Levermore and Bruce Kidd have been engaged with.

### **The Partnerships for Education (PfE)**

PfE is a joint initiative between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the World Economic Forum, and was developed to promote multi-stakeholder partnerships involving the private sector. The main objectives of the PfE is to identify principles and models for successful educational partnerships, promote the value of multi-stakeholder partnerships and the benefits of private sector involvement, enhance the capacities of key stakeholders to establish their own partnerships and implement them, and contribute to a greater global understanding and coordination of multi-stakeholder partnerships (Cassidy and Pakisma, 2007). Learnings for PfE have been taken, in particular, from the World Economic Forum Global Education Initiative (GEI) which, since 2003, has been engaging with educational projects involving the private sector in Jordan, India and Egypt. From these learning experiences a multi-stakeholder

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<sup>5</sup> South African Government Gazetted Act 53 of 2003, also known as BBBEE.

<sup>6</sup> South African Government Gazetted Act 58 of 1962, particularly section 18A.

<sup>7</sup> Information garnered from Mr Price in house documents.

PfE model has been designed to facilitate engagement between government and private sector and other key stakeholders in developing win-win partnerships for education.

Seven valuable lessons learned as identified by Cassidy and Pakisma (2007:26) are listed below:

- Multi-stakeholder partnerships can be effective in supporting ongoing education reform efforts and adding value to the activities and public images of partners
- Strong systemic management is essential for a successful initiative
- Broad and balanced partnership involvement on leadership and management teams is very important
- Changing teaching practices in schools and classrooms is considerably more complex and challenging than is typically understood or planned for
- Teachers and principals are at the heart of the change process and their active participation is critical to the success of an initiative
- Sustained partnership involvement is critical to the long-term success of initiatives
- Monitoring and evaluation as well as considerations of scale-up and sustainability are essential to the long-term success of initiatives and have yet to be given the attention required

Cassidy and Pakisma's list is included in this paper as it has provided a very relevant framework through which the YoungHeroes learnings are presented.

### **Sport for Development Theory**

It has been identified that there is a lack of substantive theory grounding SfD, with researchers suggesting that the lack of a theoretical framework for sport interventions hinders effective monitoring and evaluation (Coalter, 2007; Lyras, 2007). Lyras and Peachy (2011) profess that we should strive to develop theory to understand the conditions, structures and processes which can promote social change through sport.

In response to this, Lyras and Peachy have attempted to develop a Sport for Development Theory to showcase how sport interventions can most effectively promote social change and development, using multiple existing theoretical frameworks from anthropology, psychology, sociology, sports science, organisational change theory, various learning theories, olympism, and global citizenship education. Lyras and Peachy's meta-theory shows the complexity of merging development and sport.

More practically, they have broken down indicators for a successful programme into 5 components:

1. impact assessment,
2. sport/physical activity,
3. organisational,
4. educational,
5. and cultural enrichment

The YoungHeroes programme has used these indicators to initiate processes of self assessment which, while not presented in this paper, is hoped to provide guidance and insight for future development.

While Lyras and Peachy's theoretical understanding of SfD is relatively untested, and not yet widely supported, it has offered the YoungHeroes programme an opportunity to engage with a theoretical model for SfD and benchmark itself against other international initiatives. There are practical examples in Lyras and Peachy's research subset that are very useful for comparative analysis.

# Programme Methodology

The project has been developed over a seven year period, mainly in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. What started as a sports coaching initiative has developed into a comprehensive school Physical Education and Sport intervention; incorporating skills transfer to educators, the production and distribution of supporting material, and a community volunteers programme. The programme takes a cluster approach, incorporating five schools into a RedCap Centre where a facilitator guides the schools through establishing regular PE and sport participation. The YoungHeroes programme is underpinned by a logical framework model, and utilises on-going monitoring, evaluation, external research, and consulting subject matter experts to help guide its work. On-going engagement with stakeholders and continuous revision of the project model has led to a stage where tangible systemic solutions and policy are being implemented.

## YoungHeroes Results Chain

The programme logic is best illustrated through its results chain, on the next page (fig. 1).

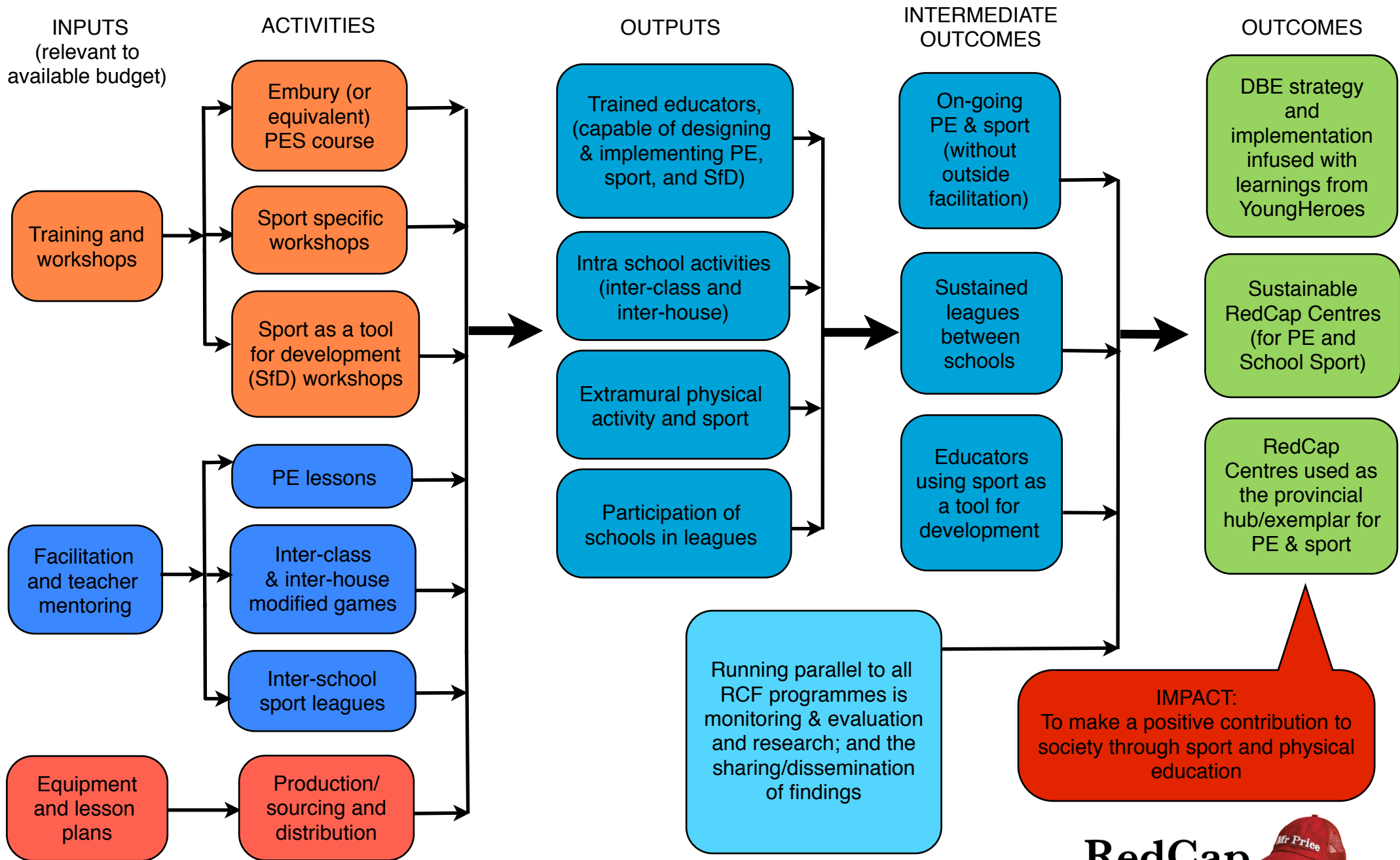
## Results

Over 2 500 educators and 84 000 learners have been involved in the piloting, testing, revision and implementation of the YoungHeroes programme since its inception.

The national partnership between the Department of Basic Education, the business sector (Mr Price), the RedCap Foundation and Sportstec (implementation partner), combined with the regional partners of District Department of Education, municipalities, sports councils, schools, individual educators, and communities are the fundamental drivers of the project's success. There is a strategy to develop RedCap Centres in all nine provinces, as a training and innovation hub, from which the dissemination of best practice can take place. The DBE has embraced YoungHeroes as part of its official PE and Sport strategy, with the RedCap Foundation taking the lead on innovation. This will be reflected in the soon to be released DBE Physical Education Implementation Plan.

In addition, the RedCap Foundation has set up a Knowledge Centre to contribute to further research, and the subsequent dissemination of information, lessons learned (from both successes and failures) and strategies.

The YoungHeroes Programme Results Chain (fig. 1)



# Key Learnings and Recommendations

Cassidy and Pakisma's (2007) findings on the PfE programme is used as a framework to document the learnings of the YoungHeroes programme. Their terminology is used in a few places for congruence. Interestingly, there are no examples from the YoungHeroes programme which are contradictory to any of the seven valuable lessons of the PfE programme. In addition, specific learnings from the YoungHeroes programme are also documented.

## **Multi-stakeholder partnerships**

Cassidy and Pakisma (2007:26) note that multi-stakeholder partnerships “can be effective in supporting ongoing education reform efforts and adding value to the activities”. In the YoungHeroes example, the strength of the partnership and degree of collaboration has been the cornerstone of the programme. The clear definition and commitment to the intended outcome and impact, has helped negotiate through differences in opinion and bring the, previously thought unlikely, partners together. This is believed to be a key factor in why this partnership is working relatively well. The nature of the partners and their input, being from the private sector, the public sector and non-profit organisations has helped mould a well balanced programme. This correlates with another of Cassidy and Pakisma's statements: “(b)road and balanced partnership involvement on leadership and management teams is very important”. In the YoungHeroes example, this has allowed partners to capitalise on their core strengths; for example the innovative nature of Mr Price as a business, and the DBE focusing on translating these innovations into supporting systemic efforts. Also contrary to common practice in the competitive corporate world, the YoungHeroes programme as a development initiative is not overly concerned with intellectual property protection and “trade secrets”, but rather on collaboration and inclusivity. This is a result of development and sustainability minded contributions brought in by the non-profit organisations and Mr Price's sustainability team, as apposed to what often happens in CSR funded programmes where marketing driven thinking apposes collaboration.

## **Strong management**

There is a need for strong management in a multi-stakeholder partnership to avoid mission myopia and confusion. A clear focus on the intended outcomes and impact, can avoid situations where programme implementation is reactionary and *ad hoc*. It is also essential in avoiding both dependency creation and innovating programme development that cannot be scaled up. An example of this, is early in the development of the YoungHeroes programme where a project manager forged a very close and productive working relationship with a particular school. The project manager was able to solve numerous education challenges for the school, but this created a dependency on one source for solutions and dulled the schools innovation in problem solving. This is an easily made mistake, which can often be made with best intentions in mind. Relationship management and role definition is also very important in a partnership with many key role players.

## **Sustainability and scale-up**

Following on from the importance of management in ensuring that a programme can be scaled up, is the focus on sustainability. In some of the early experiences of the YoungHeroes programme, there were examples of reactionary management without the necessary engagement with sustainability or the prospects of scaling up. It is relatively easy for a CSR project to help alleviate an immediate need in a beneficiary community, but to do so a manner that has pertinence to greater systemic development and, more

importantly, in a way that does not create dependence is very challenging. If a programme lacks transfer of skills and emancipation of the beneficiary, it will always be dependent on the CSR intervention, hence will have no sustainability should the CSR funding come to an end for any reason.

Cassidy and Pakisma (2007: 26) identify that “sustained partnership involvement... is critical to the long-term success of initiatives”. This means that programmes have to show a commitment to the process of developing beneficiaries, and not just putting a branded band-aid on a problem for a limited amount of time. Levermore (2011: 557), points out this phenomenon of a short term approach in relation to some of the FIFA 2010 World Cup social development projects which were “disengaged, distant and displayed a lack of long-term viability”. If CSR is going to get involved with development, it has to be committed and done in a sustainable manner. The YoungHeroes programme addresses sustainability through a focus on skills transfer, material development that is openly shared, scaling up the initiative through the DBE strategy and systems, staying committed to the partnership with the DBE through multiple phases of innovation, and collaboratively developing an incentive/recognition programme for well performing educators/schools.

### **Champions**

In the YoungHeroes example, the role of high level “champions” or key drivers within each of the partner organisations was vital in keeping the programme momentum going, and ensuring that there is appropriate buy-in at all levels. The work of the champions can be attributed as one of the reasons the multi-stakeholder partnership is progressing in the YoungHeroes programme. Using the same logic it was important to identify champions at each level of the programme implementation; with the province, the district, the school cluster, and individual schools. While champions is not one of Cassidy and Pakisma’s (2007) key learnings, they concurred with findings from the YoungHeroes programme in identifying the value of a champion as a promising practice.

### **Schools as complex organisations**

Cassidy and Pakisma (2007: 26) identify that “(c)hanging teaching practices in schools and classrooms is considerably more complex and challenging than is typically understood or planned for” and the experiences gained from the YoungHeroes programme concur with this. It should be acknowledged that each school is an individual organization that functions within the education system. The need for a programme to have a set methodology for the successful implementation has to be weighed up against the status and need of individual schools. If diversity is not acknowledged, then the project can be perceived as being too “top-down” and prescriptive, which can lead to resistance. This is where the appropriate champion, and community understanding and involvement is vital. Within the YoungHeroes programme, a needs assessment and baseline data has been identified as a vital component in shaping the approach of the intervention in a particular school. A process of engagement is also important in surveying the environment, and making informed decisions.

### **Principals and Educators**

Just as each school is unique, it must be acknowledged that each educator, principal and facilitator is unique, and should be acknowledged as having specific value to the outcomes of the project. They “are at the heart of the change process and their active participation is critical to the success of an initiative” (Cassidy and Pakisma, 2007: 26). The support and commitment of the staff at each school is where even the best conceptualised programmes can fall short. The YoungHeroes programme attempts to equip their facilitators to be able to engage and inspire the school staff, and learnings and facilitation

from a leadership and principal development programme are also included in the YoungHeroes programme methodology.

### **Research, and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)**

The YoungHeroes programme has, over time, realised the value in research, from which the current monitoring and evaluation framework has evolved. Research has helped gain a better understanding of the education, youth development, CSR, and sport for development environments; and has helped to better shape the intervention. Engagement with the Sustainability Institute (University of Stellenbosch), the School of Development Studies (University of KwaZulu-Natal) and the writings of critical theorists such as Fred Coalter, Roger Levermore and Bruce Kidd have also helped guide the programme's approach, question the logic model, and offer insight into global trends and practices (both exemplary and questionable). Research on the programme itself has also offered insight. A practical example of the the functionality of critical research; previous appraisals identified that the "M&E system is somewhat *ad hoc*", and that the programme lacked substantive evidence (Govender and Manyamba, 2009: 18). This led to the development of a robust M&E system, through engaging the services of a monitoring and evaluation practitioner in transferring skills to the project team, and engaging with the Postgraduate School of Public and Development Management (Wits University) in incorporating Results Based Management (monitoring and evaluation) into the programme.

### **Lessons and practices from the corporate world**

Another important aspect of the YoungHeroes programme is the example of taking practices from the corporate world and testing them in a development programme. The relationship between the partners has allowed relevant learnings from Mr Price's business model to be applied to the YoungHeroes programme.

For example, efficient use of technology in communication and in sustaining the M&E system is currently being piloted. Another favoured practice in the Mr Price business model is the use of incentives and recognition to promote excellence and innovation. Gestures of acknowledgement have proved inspirational to individuals involved in the programme. However, it has been important to do this in a sustainable manner, which the schools and the education department at its various levels can replicate without outside support or funding. This is important as the use of "grand" incentives in one year can cause a subsequent disincentive when funding is limited. It has also been important to identify that incentives and recognition are for excellence, and not for doing one's job. An additional set of learnings from the corporate world is the strict monitoring of the relationship between inputs and outputs, effective use of resources, and the limitation of "wastage". These lessons have translated into some critical questions about how resources are deployed and how this ultimately impacts the beneficiaries.

Interestingly, Mr Price is also looking closely at some of the innovative practices within the RedCap Foundation, should there be relevant learnings that could be applicable to the business. This would truly make the partnership a two way learning and sharing process.

### **Complexity of Development**

While this topic can be expanded on in many ways, in fact entire papers are dedicated to it, one of the most pertinent points from the YoungHeroes experience is drawn out here. Lyras and Peachy (2011: 14), in their sport for development theory, state that one needs to be aware of the multiple layers underlying challenges which programmes aim to resolve, since "these challenges entail social, psychological, societal, institutional, and political complexities". This runs true with the experiences of the YoungHeroes programme where

over simplifying a situation can be counter productive and patronising. It is important to take heed of the multiplicity of factors which play a role in achieving a programme's outcomes. Under certain conditions, programmes like YoungHeroes can provide opportunities to develop school education delivery standards and promote development through sport. However, it must be acknowledged that the programme itself is not a panacea and that practitioners should not over-estimate their impact. The programme is part of a greater process of development, and in its way contributes to assisting people to explore their potential and develop their own communities.

## **Conclusion**

The YoungHeroes programme can be seen as an exemplar case study as to how CSR funding, and the non-profit sector, can be a catalyst for systemic partnership with government, including a contribution to policy development. The programme has an innovative approach of openly sharing, continually engaging with critical and insightful research, and actively seeking collaboration. This is an approach that is seen as vital to multi-stakeholder partnerships, especially those that involve CSR funding.

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