“You Need to Move at Times a Step Ahead, but at Times You Don’t Have the Resources to Help You Move Ahead”: Institutional Entrepreneurship and the Use of Bricolage in a Sport for Development and Peace Organization

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The sport for development and peace (SDP) field, defined broadly as the use of sport and physical activity to achieve development goals (Kidd, 2008), continues to expand in research, policy, and practice. However, despite its growth, SDP remains a resource-constrained field, whereby organizations must often compete for financial support for program operation and sustainability (Clutterbuck & Doherty, 2019; Coalter, 2013). Given this, scholars have noted that there is a need for further examination of how SDP organizations navigate the institutional environment they are located in and develop practices to ensure organizational survival despite resource constraints (Dixon & Svensson, 2019; Svensson et al., 2018).

The purpose of this presentation is to apply institutional entrepreneurship (DiMaggio, 1988) and the concept of bricolage (Lévi-Strauss, 1966) to analyze how a social entrepreneurial not-for-profit organization, Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID), utilizes multiple resources to challenge institutional arrangements of poverty for refugees in Uganda. Institutional entrepreneurship is defined as the “activities of actors who have an interest in particular institutional arrangements and who leverage resources to create new institutions or transform existing ones” (Maguire et al., 2004, p. 657). The concept of bricolage, defined as “making do by applying combinations of the resources at hand to new problems and opportunities” (Baker & Nelson, 2005, p. 333), is one way to understand how organizations engage in entrepreneurship despite limited organizational resources.

YARID, located in Kampala, Uganda, operates a number of social programs, including interrelated gender equality workshops, microfinance groups and sport initiatives for refugees who are faced with numerous social inequalities such as unemployment and discrimination. Adopting a constructivist, participatory action research (PAR) methodology (Park, 2001), research with YARID was conducted from June-August 2019. Data collection included focus groups, observations, and semi-structured interviews with staff (n=9) and sport program users (n=30). Upon leaving the field, in-depth data analysis was conducted. Data were first open coded into raw data themes followed by the development of axial codes (first-order themes) and second-order themes based on deductive coding utilizing frameworks of institutional entrepreneurship and the concept of bricolage.

Based on data analysis, three prominent themes were identified: (1) the combination of resources for purposes other than originally intended for (e.g., sport for the purposes of building economic value); (2) use of different internal (e.g., social networks, experiences of staff) and external (e.g., existing institutions such as microfinance banking services) resources, to challenge the institutional prevalence of poverty; and (3) the political nature of bricolage and resistance to the work of institutional entrepreneurs (i.e., YARID) to challenge poverty by other actors such as families and Ugandan nationals.

The presentation concludes by emphasizing how institutional entrepreneurship and the concept of bricolage are useful for building on and extending theoretical insights into the entrepreneurial work of SDP organizations (Svensson et al., 2020) and responds to calls for research into the intersections of institutional theory and entrepreneurship (Janssen et al., 2018; Mair & Marti, 2009). Practical implications for the field of SDP are outlined for organizations and practitioners to consider.