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Competition or coalition? Evaluating the attitudes of National Governing Bodies of Sport and County Sport Partnerships towards School Sport Partnerships

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The article analyses the concept of partnership and specifically explores the significance for the operation of partnerships, in the areas of youth and community sport, of the perspectives that partners bring to these relationships. The general context for the analysis is the increasing use of partnerships by government for the achievement of its sport policy objectives. The article examines the triangular relationship between School Sport Partnerships (SSPs), National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), and County Sport Partnerships (CSPs). The specific context for the analysis is the decision by the Secretary of State for Education to remove funding from SSPs and the impact that this had on the triangular relationship. The study uses data from a number of semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with CSP and NGB representatives to explore their interpretations of this change. The findings present agents' perspectives in three discrete areas: the value and effectiveness of SSPs, the broader implications of the cut in funding SSPs for the sport policy community, and partners' responses to the cut in SSP funding. The findings include: (a) that whilst NGBs regretted the loss of SSPs, CSPs were more equivocal; (b) whilst NGBs considered SSP development managers to be facilitators, CSPs were more likely to see them as gatekeepers; (c) both NGBs and CSPs saw the dramatic contraction of the SSP programme as detrimental to the achievement of their own objectives; and (d) inter-personal relationships and local political context significantly affected the perspectives that both NGBs and CSPs had of their partnership with SSPs.

Keywords: school sport; community sport; partnerships; sport policy; England

1. Introduction

Since the early years of the present century partnerships have been an integral element in government policy for providing sports opportunities for young people/school pupils in England. The present coalition government policy (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2012, p. 4) refers to the establishment of 'at least 6000 partnerships between schools and local sports clubs by 2017' and requires every County Sport Partnership (CSPs) to have an officer dedicated to facilitating these partnerships. More recently the latest policy review by the Labour Party (2013, p. 9) argued for National Governing Bodies (NGBs) to 'become active partners in supporting local community sports clubs to engage with school sports' with CSPs playing an important facilitating role. The current emphasis on partnerships reflects, in part, the extent to which partnership working became an established approach in translating and implementing sport policy in England over the last 15 years with policy

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associated with school sport having been primarily led by School Sport Partnerships (SSPs) and community sport policy led by NGBs.¹ This article provides an analysis of the concept of partnership and its operation in relation to youth and community sport with a particular focus on the triangular relationship between SSPs, NGBs, and CSPs.

Partnerships have been a critical component of school and community sport policies since the turn of the century. In relation to the objectives of SSPs there were two objectives whose fulfilment relied heavily upon the formation of effective partnerships² with NGBs and CSPs. The two objectives were: 'out of hours: to provide enhanced opportunities for all pupils' and 'school to community: to increase participation in community sport' (Ofsted 2004, p. 1). The achievement of the first objective frequently involved the development of partnerships with local clubs which were often facilitated by regional or county NGBs. Clubs were involved in the achievement of the second objective, but so too were other local providers such as local authorities. CSPs, in their role as coordinators and enablers were in a strong position to facilitate cooperation between schools and local providers of sports opportunities for young people. NGBs in particular, but also CSPs, were important resources for SSPs and effective partnership working was integral to the fulfilment of SSP objectives. However, the relationships were not one-sided as NGBs benefitted from partnerships with SSPs as it brought young members into their clubs and helped to fulfil their participation targets set by Sport England. As will be discussed below the attitude of CSPs to SSPs was more equivocal.

The triangular relationship between SSPs, NGBs, and CSPs developed between 2002 and 2010 which was a period of relative stability for school sport policy but which ended rather abruptly following the election of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition in 2010. The announcement, soon after the election, that the Department for Education would no longer provide ring-fenced funding for SSPs was unexpected, particularly as they were viewed as effective, having exceeded their Public Service Agreement targets. The decision elicited 'vociferous criticism from teachers, sportspersons and the Labour opposition' (Bardens *et al.* 2012, p. 1), not least because they viewed it as an ideological decision, based on poor information and which paid no regard to the Sport Minister's view that it 'would be wrong to dismantle 13 years of work' (Bardens *et al.* 2012, p. 1, 7). Although those directly involved in school sport were almost uniformly critical of the government's decision, the attitude of other members of the policy community, particularly that of NGBs and CSPs, was less clear. This article aims to address this lack of clarity by examining attitudes and perspectives of NGBs and CSPs towards SSPs and towards the decision to remove ring-fenced funding. In particular, it will consider perceptions of the effectiveness of SSPs, discuss the broader implications of the withdrawal of government funding for SSPs for the sport policy community more generally, and explore the strategies being used to address the cut in SSP funding.

The context for this paper lies in the growing significance of partnerships and networks of partnerships within the sport policy field. Partnerships have been a key element of sport policy in England since the formative years of outreach and interventionist sport development in the 1980s. An early example of partnerships in sport policy was the Action Sport programme, which was the result of a partnership between the Sports Council of Great Britain and the Manpower Services Commission (Houlihan and White 2002). During the 1990s, partnerships were closer to the point of implementation and more concerned with direct delivery. Catalysts in this respect were the Champion Coaching programme (1994) and the National Junior Sport Programme (1995), of which the former became a part. These initiatives relied upon sub-regional coordination amongst local authority sport development officers, local education authority physical education (PE) advisors, schools, and sports clubs. The practice of

implementing sport policy through formalised partnerships has continued unabated with CSPs, Community Sport Networks, SSPs as well as sport-specific partnerships (e.g. local football partnerships, county running networks). More recently, the role of partnerships has been a more nuanced aspect of school sport policy implementation. Whilst partnerships remain the foundation upon which school sport policy is developed, the nature, focus, and type of partnership as well as the range of organisations involved are all determined at the local-level as opposed to a nationally determined network of SSPs across the country. As indicated above, the concept of partnership as a means of implementing school sport policy remains a highly relevant topic of enquiry.

2. Understanding partnerships

The persistence of reliance on partnerships has resulted in the development of a range of organisational types. Drawing on the work of Marsh and Rhodes (1992), Lindsey (2006) developed a categorisation of partnerships based upon his study of partnership development in response to new funding programmes. Lindsey identified three types of partnership (see Table 1). Partnership types are determined by examining the policy outcomes of each partnership and the way in which these outcomes reflected particular policy processes. Of particular relevance is the differentiation between wide networks with a tight core of local authority representation (Type 2) and inter-organisational networks with a variety of organisations represented (Type 3). In the former network, power is concentrated in the core primarily as a result of resources being controlled by the core. In contrast, in inter-organisational networks all members have areas of responsibility, thereby creating a more inclusive network where power is more equally distributed between members. It is the Type 2 partnership which most closely corresponds to the networked relationship between NGBs, CSPs, and SSPs.

McDonald (2005) has argued that the continued use of partnerships as policy instruments reflects the overly normative assumption that partnerships are inherently progressive. Policy rhetoric tends to accentuate the potential of partnerships, in particular their capacity to implement policy more efficiently and effectively than would otherwise be the case (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2012). Partnership can be viewed as a

Table 1. Typology of local partnerships (source: Lindsey 2006).

	Type 1 Local Authority community	Type 2 Wide network/tight core	Type 3 Inter-organisational network
Membership	Small group from local authority only	Wide networking including members from outside the local authority	Wide networking with variety of organisations
Integration	Previous experience of working together	Core local authority members driving process	Differing levels of previous integration
Resource	All members bring particular experience	Strong integration between core personal	Members all have areas of responsibility
Power	Some power locates in specific members	Greater power locates in core	Power equality distributes between members

Source: Local Partnerships in the United Kingdom for the New Opportunities for PE and Sport Programme: A Policy Network Analysis, Iain Lindsey, *European Sport Management Quarterly*, Volume 6 Issue 2, 2006 © European Association for Sport Management, reprinted by permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd, www.tandfonline.com on behalf of European Association for Sport Management.

practical response to the problems of policy implementation, but also one that comes with a supporting ideology of pro-action and common sense (Finlayson 2003). In practical terms partnership offers the potential for shared resources, greater efficiency and effectiveness, and enhanced legitimacy through the diversity of agents involved in the relationship (McQuaid 2000, cited in Houlihan and Lindsey 2008). However, less attention has been paid to the rationale for partnerships, and less still to the problems and implications for policy fields where the work of different partnerships overlaps as is the case with SSPs and CSPs. Partnerships reflect a concern with the practicalities of centralised delivery. They provide a pragmatic mechanism which enables government to retain control over myriad interests. They also can be seen as a risk avoidance strategy whereby the responsibility for policy is transferred, which creates the illusion of empowering local agents and at the same time distances the government from responsibility for potential policy failure. Whilst partnerships can in many cases be mutually beneficial to those involved and to their client groups they are highly politicised policy instruments and also arenas within which the often competing interests of members are manifest. Thus, '[t]he political importance of partnerships rests on the claim that they represent a more effective, democratic and participatory form of service delivery' (McDonald 2005, p. 580). Indeed, this provides the foundation for the propagation of sports-related partnerships. For example, SSPs, CSPs, Community Sport Networks, and the 'requirement for partnership' within applications for Lottery Sport Funding all underscore the view of partnerships as being the most effective vehicle for policy implementation.

Whilst partnerships may provide the most appropriate model for policy implementation, it is helpful to highlight the conditions under which partnerships best function in relation to sport as well as highlight the factors that adversely affect partnerships. Analysing these conditions and factors will lead to a richer, more accurate account of partnerships and should facilitate the development of strategies that better support the ongoing improvement of partnerships. There are two conditions which are generally considered important for effective partnerships. First, organisations require an actor that has the range of skills required of a 'collaborative leader' (Chrislip and Larson 1994, Feyerherm 1994) with the ability to lead when issues are complex and ambiguous, and 'to promote a broader good amongst competing parochial interests' (Williams and Sullivan 2007, p. 41). Bleak and Fulmer (2009) note that the success of the partnership often depends on the leaders' skills, particularly commitment, energy, and ability to fully leverage the partnership's potential. Also relevant to leadership in partnerships is the role of 'boundary spanners' (Tushman and Scanlan 1981, Daft 1989). These individuals have certain characteristics which allow them to build shared meaning and trust with individuals involved in the partnership, regardless of real or artificial boundaries.

The second condition is the extent to which the partnership's objectives are stable and clear (Houlihan and Lindsey 2008). Clarity is particularly important in a discretionary policy space such as community sport given that policy objectives have been subject to frequent change (Collins 2010). Stability of objectives is also an important characteristic. For example, there is significant variation in the organisational objectives of the whole sport plan of key NGBs, which has the potential to create confusion for any partner organisations that work beyond the sub-regional level with more than one NGB. Also, there needs to be space within partnerships 'to negotiate a shared sense of purpose and common objectives' (Houlihan and Lindsey 2008, p. 239), which is often an intricate and time-consuming process of balancing involvement and ownership with appropriate goals that match both national and local priorities (Huxham and Vangen 2000).

However, partnerships also exhibit characteristics which are potentially problematic and, in sum, likely to outweigh the benefits of partnerships (Houlihan and Lindsey 2008). These characteristics include: a large and often unwieldy membership; mission drift (Goss 2001); a lack of consensus; a tendency for one or two members to dominate (McQuaid 2000); the difficulty of overcoming cultural differences and building trust; and the problem of avoiding committee-based inertia (Huxham and Vangen 2000). In their study of local sports development officers, Bloyce *et al.* (2008) identified a bureaucratisation associated with partnership working, where development officers devoted more time to managing complex figurations, decreasing the time available for developing sport within their communities. Of more concern is the substantive yet sometimes elusive issue of power (Houlihan and Lindsey 2008). Whilst some partnerships may offer a modern and effective form of governance, 'others may be ideological fig leaves for dominant powers', reproducing and reinforcing existing patterns of power amongst a multiplicity of actors (McDonald 2005, p. 579). Here, it is more accurate to view partnerships as the product of existing power relations, rather than a new, democratic form of governance (Houlihan and Lindsey 2008). In evaluating the complexity of power relations within the partnership environment, Bloyce *et al.* (2008, p. 376) pinpointed a potentially significant unintended outcome:

[W]hile government policy has increasingly constrained Sport Development Officers to work with a wide variety of other organizations in order to achieve the government's non-sport policy goals, the outcomes of this increasingly complex interweaving of the actions of the many different groups may well have made it more difficult for Sport Development Officers to achieve the government's goals in relation to sports development proper, an outcome which it is fair to assume was neither intended nor desired by government.

The notion of partnership assumes a significant degree of equity between members, obscuring the reality of power imbalance, resource dependency, and hierarchy (Grix and Phillpots 2011). Such hierarchy and asymmetrical relations tend to be prevalent in partnerships founded on enforced cooperation, where – despite differences of culture, leadership, strategy, and priorities – agencies are required, usually as condition of grant aid, to demonstrate a commitment to partnership working (Robson 2008, Phillpots 2012). Such enforced partnerships can fundamentally compromise the principle of partnership (Powell and Glendinning 2002). Reinforcing this view, Rummery argued that enforced partnerships are contractual relationships rather than true partnerships:

Contracts bind the parties into behaviours that they would otherwise not engage in. If a partnership needs to be 'enforced' through a contractual relationship, can the relationship said to be a partnership at all? (2002, p. 236)

This is a particularly relevant issue insofar as the networked partnership between SSPs, CSPs, and NGBs is underpinned by the strong expectation from funders. In the case of the CSP–NGB relationship partnership is a condition of funding.

A final problem for partnerships is the lack of genuine 'collaborative capacity' (cf. Hudson *et al.* 1999, Chaskin 2001, Sullivan and Skelcher 2002, Beckley *et al.* 2008). Collaborative capacity is 'the interaction of human capital, organisational resources, and social capital' that can be used to solve collective problems and maintain the well-being of a given partnership or community (Chaskin 2001, p. 295). The challenges arising with collaborative capacity tend to be related to skills, attributes, and attitudes (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002), a lack of clarity regarding vision or divergent goals (Sullivan and

Skelcher 2002), competition for resources (Jansen *et al.* 2008), expectations concerning other partner agencies based on prior behaviour or reputation, and the level of mutual respect and trust which ultimately directs the organisations’ willingness and commitment to the partnership (Huxham and Vangen 2000). As will be demonstrated many of these barriers are evident in the partnerships between SSPs, CSPs, and the sub-regional NGB bodies.

3. The English sport landscape

Various strategies have been developed over the past decade in response to criticism regarding the complex and, at times, divisive structure of sport in England (Roche 1993, McDonald 1995, Houlihan and White 2002, Green 2004). Criticism has extended beyond the academy, with the former Chief Executive of Sport England comparing the organisation of sport to a ‘convoluted bowl of spaghetti’ (Moffett, quoted in Chaudhary 2002), Tessa Jowell (then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport) referring to the structure of sport as a ‘nightmare’ (Jowell, quoted in The Independent Sport Review 2005), and Lord Carter in his 2004–2005 review of English sport stating that structures in community sport were overly complex and ‘required improved coordination’ (Carter 2005, p. 28).

As a result, the sport policy community has sought to simplify the structure of sport in England. This started with the creation of formalised partnerships for school and community policy (i.e. SSPs, CSPs, and Community Sport Networks) and culminated in 2008 with the introduction of a new sporting landscape with a clearer division of responsibility between the three key national organisations (see Figure 1), which aimed to ‘improve focus at every level of sport policy and better knit the three delivery bodies together’ (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2008, p. 6).

Whilst Figure 1 may be helpful in clarifying the lead agencies for school, community and elite sport and providing a reference point for how each policy area dovetails with the next, it does little to reveal the structures that underpin each field. In other words, the model may create the illusion of enhanced coordination and simplification, but at the

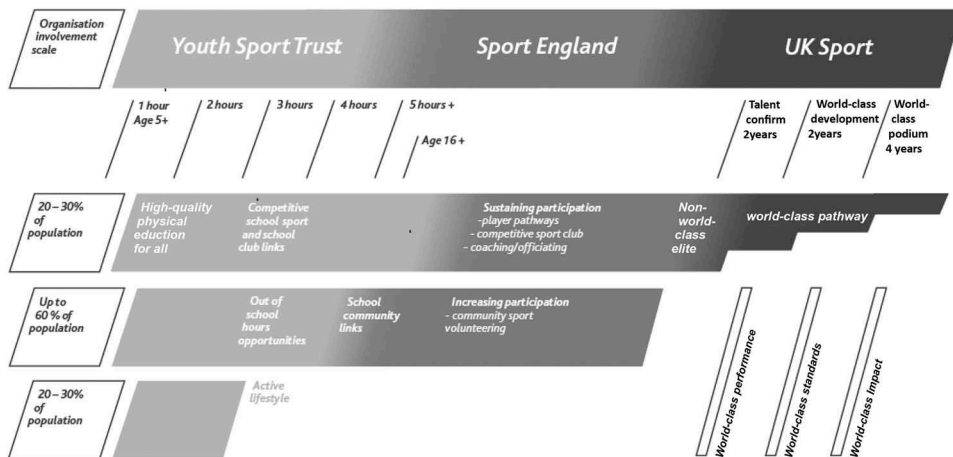


Figure 1. The Landscape for Sport (source: Sport England 2008, copyright Sport England).

operational-level structures are as complex as they were previously. The following discussion serves to clarify the network of partnerships created at the local level for the purpose of managing policy implementation.

3.1. School sport

Until 2010–2011, policy for school sport was defined by the PE and Sport Strategy for Young People (PESSYP, created 2008) which was a revision of the PE, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) strategy launched in 2002. The PESSCL strategy sought to improve the quality of PE and school sport, and increase engagement in PE and school sport. The central aspiration of the more recent PESSYP strategy was the ‘five hour offer’ intended to increase the number of young people engaged in five hours of sporting activity per week (Youth Sport Trust 2008). The strategy represented a sizeable political and financial commitment from the Labour government, with £755 million invested from 2008 to 2011 and a total investment of £2.2 billion since the strategy’s inception in 2002 (Youth Sport Trust 2008).

The PESSYP strategy was overseen by a charitable organisation, The Youth Sport Trust. The infrastructure for implementing policy was built around a national network of 450 SSPs, with 21,486 schools involved in partnerships in all counties across England (Department for Education 2010). Each partnership represented a family of schools which typically comprised a Specialist Sport College linked to a set of secondary schools, each of which had a further group of primary and special schools clustered around it (Department for Education 2010). Each partnership was directed by a Partnership Development Manager; every secondary school hosted a School Sport Coordinator who was responsible for coordinating activities across the group of primary feeder schools that the secondary school served; and in every primary or special school there was a Primary Link Teacher or Special School Link Teacher who was responsible for coordinating the implementation of activities in conjunction with the School Sport Coordinator (Youth Sport Trust 2009). Supporting this structure, a national network of 225 competition managers worked alongside each SSP to ‘create more and better opportunities for a wider range of young people to take part in competitive sport’ (Department for Education 2010, p. 5). Of particular relevance to this article is the significant focus that both the PESSCL strategy and the PESSYP, which superseded it, gave to high-quality extra-curricular sports participation, and in particular, after-school programmes (coaching, clubs, and competition), school-club links, and intra- and inter-scholastic competition. The primary purpose of this strand of each strategy was for schools to build bridges with other community agencies to allow pupils to transition more smoothly from the school environment to the community, thus enabling more pupils to continue and extend their sports experience outside of school. To do so effectively required that the school develop relations with other agencies, in particular NGBs, local authorities, sports clubs, and CSPs.

As briefly discussed above, the government’s approach to PE and school sport dramatically changed in October 2010, when the Secretary of State for Education (Michael Gove) of the newly formed Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government announced that ring-fenced government funding for the PESSYP strategy would be discontinued, including funding for SSPs. In an alternative strategy, the government, through the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, lowered the age threshold of community sport policy (from 16 to 14 years) and provided £50 million primarily for the purpose of re-emphasising competitive school sport. This objective was promoted through the implementation of an Olympic-style event, the School Games, which would ostensibly increase the opportunity for school pupils

to engage in competitive sport both in and between schools. The School Games are made up of four levels of activity: intra-school activity, inter-school competitions, county multi-sport festivals, and the national School Games finals, a national multi-sport event where the most talented young people in the UK are selected to compete (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2012, p. 4). Subsequently, in response to criticisms regarding the cuts set against the legacy promises associated with the London 2012 Games, the coalition government introduced a range of measures to reinvigorate school sport and to attempt to demonstrate sustained commitment to the 2012 Legacy promise of increasing youth sport participation. These measures included: £300 million over two years (2013–2015) invested directly to support the delivery of PE and sport in primary schools through the Primary School Premium³; £1.5 million additional funding for CSPs to support NGBs in the provision of youth sports coaching; the reform of initial primary PE teacher training; and renewed funding for the Young Ambassadors programme.⁴ Despite this investment, the House of Commons Education Committee (2013) expressed scepticism that the government's current policy could compensate for the loss of SSPs.

In response to the Education Committee or, more likely, the growing pressure to demonstrate a sustained commitment to school sport following the 2012 Games, David Cameron announced the continuation of the Primary Schools Premium. Primary schools will receive an extra £750 million between 2015 and 2020 (£8000 per school with an additional £5 per pupil) (HM Government 2014). Furthermore, in line with the government's commitment to deregulation the funding will continue to be invested directly into schools so that they can decide how to spend the money. The effective use of the Primary School Premium depends heavily on the capacity of primary schools to deliver PE and sport to its pupils. Given the scarcity of primary school teachers with an Initial Teaching Qualification in PE, it is highly likely that the achievement of government objectives will rely on the continuation or development of partnerships with organisations that have the capacity and expertise to deliver school sport. In this regard, we are likely to continue to see cross school partnerships (schools pooling funds), as well as partnerships with other related agencies such as CSPs, local authorities, private sector sports coaching enterprises and local sports clubs.

3.2. Community sport

Whilst the structure of stakeholding within community sport over the past decade has remained relatively stable one important change has been the shift from a CSP-dominant policy (pre-2008) to an NGB-led policy from 2008 onwards. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport, working through Sport England, set the policy priorities and Sport England manages and monitors policy delivery by selected NGBs and their clubs, CSPs and other local agents supported via the Lottery Sports Fund. Each NGB develops a sports-specific translation of policy through the preparation of a 'whole sport plan' which includes participation targets and which is agreed with Sport England. Following this, CSPs provide NGBs with a support service at the sub-regional level to support the implementation of the whole sport plan. The expectation at the 'street level' is that actors such as local authorities, private sector operators, Community Trusts, sports clubs, and coaches will work with NGBs and CSPs as part of a broader networked partnership to implement community sport schemes, although the extent to which this actually happens varies considerably according to sport and locale (Harris 2013).

An important aspect of the community sport landscape is the CSP–NGB relationship, particularly its role in managing the implementation of policy at the sub-regional level.

This role is challenging primarily due to the range of endogenous and exogenous factors that shape the relationship, including: the differences in CSP and NGB priorities (Phillpots *et al.* 2011, Harris 2013); the unique social context within which each organisation operates (Grix 2010); the way in which resource and positional power intersects with and influences CSP-NGB interactions (Harris 2013); and the diversity in the size, structure, and culture in each group of organisations.

Since the late 1990s most NGBs have steadily broadened their range of activities beyond enforcing rules of play, selecting international teams, and organising competitions (Hindley 2002) to include a greater concern with player, coach, volunteer and club development and the delivery of government sport participation objectives. The majority of NGBs have a core team at the national level responsible for policy and strategy, including the development of the NGB's whole sport plan.⁵ The regional NGB infrastructure tends to be highly variable, usually determined by the wealth of the sport – which is directly related to its commercial attractiveness, the significance of the NGB's whole sport plan funding, and the NGB's strategic priorities. At the sub-regional level, many sports have a network of long-established county sport associations (Taylor and Sullivan 2009) whilst at the community level, almost all NGBs rely on a network of voluntarily managed sport clubs and/or school sport programmes to provide opportunities to sustain and grow participation in their sport.

CSPs were introduced into the English sporting landscape in 2002. A CSP is perhaps best understood as 'an umbrella organisation for sport in each county', in that they were initially introduced to address the problem of a fragmented community sport system (Grix 2010, p. 458). However, the very notion of 'partnership' and who it represents has created confusion (Mackintosh 2011). The CSP comprises three distinct levels: (i) the core team (made up of professionals employed by the CSP to develop and deliver the CSP strategy and the Sport England core specification); (ii) the board (selected individuals or representatives whose primary role is to advise the CSP core team and to make decisions of strategic importance; and (iii) the broader networked partnership of organisations that have an association with the area served by the CSP, usually involving local authorities, NGBs, clubs, schools, and clinical commissioning groups. Of the 49 CSPs,⁶ 35 are hosted by a third-party organisation (usually a local authority or University) and 14 are independent trusts or businesses.

Each CSP receives core funding from Sport England totalling £240,000 per year. This funding is primarily used to employ the CSP's core team. In return for core funding, CSPs are required to meet four objectives outlined in Sport England's core specification for CSPs: (i) to deliver cross-sport services to meet NGB priorities, (ii) to develop and maintain the strategic alliances and local networks NGBs and Sport England need to drive, deliver, and secure resources; (iii) to deliver cross-sport coaching services to meet local need; and (iv) to manage and operate the CSP and ensure sound governance (Sport England 2012). These objectives demonstrate the enforced nature of the CSP-NGB relationship. However, despite receiving substantial funding from Sport England, CSPs are keen to stress their independence and remain committed to the idea of the Partnership representing their local sub-region, rather than being seen as the local Sport England office. They strive to achieve autonomy by appointing high calibre personnel and board members, diversifying their revenue so that they are not wholly dependent on Sport England funding, and developing a more powerful voice for CSPs through the creation of the national CSP network. This means that whilst the CSP must deliver certain minimum standards for NGBs according to Sport England funding requirements, outside of this the CSP is a free agent to pursue objectives of its own choosing (Harris 2013).

4. Methodology

The study was directed by a critical realist ontological paradigm and a post-positivist view of knowledge which is a set of assumptions that accepts that social reality exists, whilst also recognising that knowledge is a social construct (Baert 2005). The critical realist paradigm guided the research design specifically the use of three sub-regional case studies and the analysis of data from the series of semi-structured interviews. Each case involved three CSP representatives (Director, Chairperson, and NGB lead officer⁷) and eight sub-regional NGB representatives including football, cricket, tennis, netball, swimming, athletics, basketball, and golf. The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and were completed between May and July 2012. Follow-up questionnaires were emailed to all CSP Directors ($n = 3$) and NGB ($n = 24$) representatives and were used to obtain responses to issues raised, particularly by NGB interviewees, in the initial round of data collection. The questionnaire concentrated on five open response questions to probe the data from the semi-structured interviews. This allowed the researchers to focus more specifically on attitudes towards SSPs and the implications for the sport policy community. The questions asked partner agencies to consider the efficiency and effectiveness of SSPs, the impact of the cessation of funding of SSPs for school sport and for community sport, the extent to which the School Games Organiser network has replaced the SSP network, and the strategies that are being used to offset the cut in SSP funding. All three CSP Directors responded to the follow-up questionnaire and 12 of 24 NGB representatives responded. Responses to the questionnaire were received between August and September 2013.

The interviews were transcribed and the transcripts were analysed using an open coding thematic framework where codes relating specifically to PE, school sport, and SSPs were highlighted and then re-grouped into specific categories relating to the value and effectiveness of SSPs, the implications that the cut in SSP funding has on sport policy, and the local-level strategies being used to offset the cut in SSP funding. A citation protocol was adopted to protect the anonymity of respondents. Here, the job title and organisation type has been used to differentiate CSP and NGB respondents without revealing the identity of the interviewee. The interview data together with the responses to the questionnaire give agents a direct voice and provide an 'insider' view (Green 2006) into the policy process, in particular into the range of perspectives regarding the operationalisation of the partnership between NGBs and CSPs in the context of school/youth sport.

5. The demise of SSPs and the response of CSPs and NGBs

The reaction to recent changes in school sport policy (as summarised above) has thus far focused primarily on the views of agents directly involved in school sport policy, namely SSPs and the Youth Sport Trust with little attention paid to the views of CSPs and NGB representatives. The data presented below give voice to other network partners, providing an external reflection on the experience of working with SSPs and on the consequences of their rapid contraction. The data also illuminate the nature of the environment in which enforced partnerships function. The data are organised into three parts: perspectives regarding the value and effectiveness of the pre-2011 SSPs; the broader implications of the change in school sport for the sport policy community, and the strategies being used to address the cut in SSP funding.

5.1. The value and effectiveness of the SSP

The majority of CSP and NGB respondents in the case studies recognised the value of the SSPs in their area emphasising their importance as a coordinating body that was structurally coherent. For example, the *Chief Executive Officer of the CSP* in case 2 remarked that: ‘overall I think that it was a good system, clear and simple to understand’ (*Follow-up questionnaire*). This was a viewpoint that sport-specific CSP officers echoed, emphasising the importance of the SSP as a foundation upon which sport participation and performance could be developed: ‘they provided an effective network ... a coordinated environment where we knew who and what we were dealing with’ (*Development Director, County Cricket Board, case 2, Follow-up questionnaire*); ‘[they] were excellent for us, they worked really well in helping to coordinate coaching and competition as well as introducing juniors to the game’ (*Regional Development Manager, Lawn Tennis Association, case 2, Interview*); ‘they actually delivered stuff that was useful at the local level ... getting more sport in schools, linking them with clubs and generally making sure that sport was a positive experience in schools’ (*Chairman, County Athletics Association, case 3, Interview*). These remarks help to demonstrate the clarity and stability of both structure and objectives associated with SSPs; a critical factor associated with the creation of effective partnerships. However, the space within SSPs to ‘negotiate a shared sense of purpose’ (Houlihan and Lindsey 2008, p. 239) appears to be more enthusiastically occupied by NGBs than by CSPs. Whilst senior CSP officers were generally positive in their assessments of SSPs their opinions were often more qualified than those provided by NGB representatives. In particular, CSP representatives balanced their assessments by including reference to aspects of the SSP programme that they viewed as being ill conceived or poorly executed. The *CSP Director (case 3)* was suspicious of the messages coming out from the Youth Sport Trust, not to mention critical of the focus on infrastructure, the quality of the evaluation process, and the approach that many SSPs took in implementing policy:

If you listened to the Youth Sport Trust they would say that they delivered significant increases in participation in PE and out of curriculum sport. But there were some major issues ... the [School Sport] survey [designed to measure changes in participation] had no credibility and was poorly administered. Also, the focus wasn’t always on all pupils, but more so on the low hanging fruit ... The gains were not commensurate with the huge amount of investment that went into the system. Perhaps there was too much focus on the infrastructure rather than the deliverables. In our area, the fact that the SSPs were hosted by individual schools meant that they were only answerable to their head teachers. Even the Youth Sport Trust appeared to have limited control over what they did and how they did it. Their overall accountability was limited. (*Interview*)

All three CSP Directors criticised the measurement of the impact of SSPs on young people’s participation in sport. In particular, they referred to the school sport survey as being flimsy and lacking the robustness of other policy evaluation instruments such as the Active People Survey.⁸ Another, potentially more insidious, problem was the view of SSPs as controlling the school sport agenda. In this respect, SSPs and Partnership Development Managers in particular were seen as gatekeepers who decide on who gets access to what. This underscores both the challenge associated with the inherent power imbalance within networks of partnerships (Grix and Phillpots 2011) and that of identifying and supporting collaborative leaders whose primary concern is ‘to promote a broader good amongst competing parochial interests’ (Williams and Sullivan 2007, p. 41). The

way in which the key resource of knowledge was used by SSP leaders clearly troubled some CSPs:

The main weakness with the system was the issue of knowledge, you know knowledge equals power. The Partnership Development Managers act as gatekeepers, we have poor links with schools and therefore we have to do everything through the Partnership Development Managers. (*CSP Director, case 3, Follow-up questionnaire*)

In contrast, NGB representatives emphasised the value of SSPs with no discernible criticism regarding their effectiveness. NGBs underlined access, support, and participatory pathways as reasons why they felt SSPs were both valuable and effective. This was reflected in the following statement from the chair of the *County Athletics Network in case 2*:

They were one of the sport interventions in sport which has worked. This was because they had staff who fulfilled a really useful function in coaching and channelling children into clubs. They were particularly effective in reaching children and then supporting clubs. (*Interview*)

Here, the collaborative capacity literature is instructive in understanding why NGB representatives are more likely to focus on the positive attributes of SSPs, whereas CSPs cite criticisms or problematic aspects. The goals of SSPs aligned more closely with the traditional sport development goals of NGBs (i.e. player, coach, club, and competition development) and whilst the quality of school – NGB/club relations doubtless varied there was a much longer history of interaction than with CSPs. NGB goals broadly complement those of the SSP, and NGBs rely on schools as a foundation upon which new participants and performers are introduced to their sport. Many schools work (or have worked) closely with NGBs in areas such as coaching, clubs, competitive structures, and facility development. In contrast, whilst SSP activity clearly carried potential beneficial implications for adult sports participation the precise benefits to the CSP strategic goals were far less easy to identify and are less obviously mutually beneficial. One consequence of the differences in the complementarity of objectives was that SSPs tended to be amenable to forging closer relationships with NGBs and clubs than with CSPs. In short, the SSP–NGB relationship tended to be prioritised, whereas the SSP–CSP relationship tended to be seen being of secondary importance.

5.2. *The broader implications for the sport policy community*

CSPs and NGBs noted a wide range of implications associated with the cut in SSP funding for both school and community sport policy. For CSP representatives, the most commonly mentioned implications included poorer coordination of inter-school competition, the increased time required to work directly through individual schools, which was viewed to be particularly challenging ‘at the primary school end of things’ (*CSP Director, case 3, Interview*), and the insufficient human and financial resources now allocated to school sport. On this latter point, CSPs noted two particular challenges: first, the weakened school-based staffing infrastructure and the resentment of those who remain in school sport particularly towards other state agencies, such as CSPs, that have retained their funding:

We have retained some aspects of the SSP network across the county but the Partnership Development Managers have been too busy with the School Games and just trying to get by and survive. We don't work as we used to. Relations have at times been tense, perhaps competitive or even resentful. When more funding for school sport comes through [CSPs] it doesn't help as they obviously think that it should be directed through them. (*CSP Director, case 1, Follow-up questionnaire*)

Interesting here is the mention of SSP and CSP relations as tense, competitive, or resentful. According to CSP respondents, prior to 2011 CSPs envied the privileged access of SSPs to young people who were also an important target group and resource for CSPs. Since 2011 the position has reversed with the funding of CSPs agreed to 2017 and the role of CSPs endorsed by government in relation to community sport and extended into aspects of youth sport. More specifically, CSPs have also received funding to coordinate school sport programmes such as the School Games, Sportivate, and Satellite Clubs – all initiatives that could have been delivered by SSPs.

Given the dependence of both SSPs and CSPs on central funding and the recent changes in policy, it is unsurprising that the SSP–CSP relationship has been an uneasy one. The competition for resources between SSPs and CSPs and the overlap in target groups provides a plausible explanation of the problems in the relationship (Jansen *et al.* 2008). Neither SSPs nor CSPs possessed the level of autonomy of NGBs. Both CSPs and SSPs were established by national agencies (Sport England and the Youth Sport Trust, respectively) for the specific purpose of delivering public policy goals, with funding provided directly by the government. Thus, there existed an ever-present pressure to demonstrate value in order to sustain future funding. Whilst the same financial pressure and degree of resource dependence exists for many NGBs, they retain their formal independence and accountability to members and not just to government. The tension and resentment referred to above are more likely to be associated with the decision to cut core funding for SSPs and at the same time offer CSPs additional funding to roll out schools-related sports programmes. These decisions underscore the fickle nature of policy (Houlihan and White 2002), the asymmetrical power relations that direct them (Grix and Phillpots 2011), and the way in which these relations – particularly amongst resource dependent agents – can quickly change. Decisions such as these also shape the environment within which policy agents operate, and particularly the trust (or distrust) and mutual respect that agents hold for one another (Scheberle 2004). Whilst these may be micro-level considerations, they directly influence the strategic context in which SSPs, NGBs, and CSPs operate, which in a dialectical turn conditions future actions (Hay 2002).

The second challenge, identified most clearly by the *CSP Director in case 1*, referred to the resource implications of the cut in SSP funding for NGBs: 'What has happened previously is that even though they may admit it or not, a lot of the NGBs rely on SSPs to allocate money to areas like coaching or part-funding their posts and now that has completely gone' (*Interview*).

NGBs echoed many of the implications of the loss of SSPs mentioned by CSPs, in particular the problem of resources and the lack of infrastructure to coordinate activities with schools, especially primary schools: 'the big problem is just getting into schools in the first place' (*Regional Development Officer, Football Association, case 1, Interview*); 'the collapse of the SSP network has had a huge impact on delivery and getting our sport into schools, particularly in coordinating coaching and competition with primary schools' (*Development Director, County Cricket Board, case 1, Interview*); 'it takes a lot more time to work with schools, there is no coordination, whether schools are interested or not seems

to depend on who you end up speaking to' (*Regional Manager, England Netball, case 3, Follow-up questionnaire*). On this latter point, the Regional Manager suggested the major problem flowing from the demise of the SSP network was the lack of a champion for sport in each school, as having this 'key advocate' made the process of 'selling courses and programmes' more straightforward (*Regional Manager, England Netball, case 3, Follow-up questionnaire*).

Also clearly reflected in the evidence was the adverse effect on traditional sport development goals. NGBs emphasised a significant decrease in developmental outputs, particularly in coaching, competition, and club development: 'there is less money to support coaches going into schools' (*Regional Development Manager, Lawn Tennis Association, case 1, Interview*); 'the two big issues for us are coaching and competition, coaching in schools is absolutely key and we need funding for that, it's going to be a major problem now that the partnerships are gone ... there has also been a major decline in schools entering competitions, particularly at the primary school level' (*Development Director, County Cricket Board, case 3, Follow-up questionnaire*); 'we have fewer children accessing high quality sport, and fewer kids joining clubs' (*Regional Manager, England Basketball, case 1, Interview*), 'we've got a definite reduction in the amount of activity going on in schools and a reduction in the number of schools entering competitions' (*Regional Manager, England Netball, case 1, Interview*). The overall implication for extending school participation into the community through the development of school-clubs was summed up by the Chairman of the *County Athletics Network in case 2*:

I would say that we have lost about 50% of our year 3–6 members almost entirely as a result of the loss of SSP support. The community club programme here has been heralded as an example of good practice and has won awards, but thanks to the decision to stop funding SSPs it is now much less effective in its reach. It still does an excellent job but with half as many kids. (*Interview*)

The above discussion highlights the different perspectives on the involvement in the partnership with SSPs held by CSPs and NGBs. NGBs remain particularly concerned at the loss of SSPs and the implications for their engagement with young people and schools. In contrast, CSPs appear less concerned, primarily as they are still receiving core funding and, with the demise of SSPs, have the prospect of securing additional resources and, with it, a more influential role in the school sport policy community. However, whilst the demise of the SSP network provides an opportunity for role expansion by CSPs they would acknowledge the likely long-term adverse effect of the loss of SSPs on their own community sport policy objectives. The *CSP Director in case 3* commented that 'there is now an absolutely massive void in school sport ... we will see the implications of that 10–15 years down the road' (*Interview*). This expression of concern was echoed by NGB representatives who commented 'who is driving and developing sport in schools? We all know that active youngsters are far more likely to be active adults than those kids who are inactive' (*Regional Development Manager, Amateur Swimming Association, case 3, Interview*); 'the demise of SSPs has had a significant impact on youth sport development, we will see the result of that 10 years for now in terms of the numbers of adults playing sport' (*Chief Executive Officer, County Football Association, case 2, Interview*). The following remark clearly represents the general view of the key agents involved in the study:

We [CSPs and NGBs] all want to get more people playing sport. If we want to get more adults playing sport we really need to look at schools and make sure that people are getting exposed to good quality sport. It is really important to turn people onto sport at a young age.

By the time we are dealing with 18-, 20- or 30-year-olds, it's too late. (*Development Director, County Cricket Board, case 1, Interview*)

A persuasive argument underpinning the above point is that whilst the policy parameters placed around youth and adult sport may make sense in resource allocation or political terms, it is illogical and counterproductive when considering the reality of policy implementation. Such artificial boundaries add to the bureaucratisation of partnership working, where managers spend more time understanding and managing the relationship and fighting their corner and less time on sport-related matters (Bloyce *et al.* 2008).

5.3. *The strategies being used to address the cut in SSP funding*

The evidence demonstrated the different strategic responses of SSPs to the future of the partnership. The SSPs in cases 1 and 3 were seen to lack a proactive strategy in response to the cessation of funding. This was generally viewed to be a problem of capacity: 'it's difficult, they have limited resources and nobody in place to develop a strategy, there are a couple of part-time School Games Organisers but they struggle to do anything more than the basics' (*CSP Director, case 3, Follow-up questionnaire*). Moreover, the evidence in cases 1 and 3 revealed an acceptance of the more challenging contemporary policy context: 'we have little choice really, the decision has been made and we need to get on with it as best as we can' (*Development Director, County Cricket Board, case 1, Follow-up questionnaire*).

In contrast, the SSPs in case 2 were reportedly pursuing a coordinated twin-track strategy to ensure the continuation of the SSPs. The first part of their strategy involved a combination of measures to ensure the short-term survival of the SSPs. This included a pooling of school funding (including the Primary Schools Premium⁹ and the funding of the SGO networks), individual membership fees paid by schools, local authority grants, contributions from NGBs and county sport associations, funding from the CSP, and an agreed reduction in working hours and salaries across the SSP staff. The second strand of the strategy involved planning for the medium- to longer term sustainability of the SSPs. This involved the four Partnership Development Managers across the area working closely with the CSP, local authorities, and a business consultant to formalise a new sub-regional partnership with charitable status and responsibility for driving participation in high-quality PE and sport across the area:

All five SSPs in the area have managed to survive the cuts in funding. They have done this by securing funding directly from schools through a membership fee and by pooling resources from the Primary Schools Premium and the School Games resources. At the same time the partnership have engaged a consultancy to help them strategically plan for the long term, including the idea of creating an SSP charity across the county. (*CSP Chief Executive Officer, case 2, Follow-up questionnaire*)

The differences in strategic response provide important insights into the nature of local-level networks. On the one hand, the lack of proactive strategy in cases 1 and 3 relates to capacity and to a lack of credible alternatives (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). On the other hand, the problem reflects the nature of the broader environment within which the SSPs operate. The lack of strategy, lack of cooperation and, more notably, general lack of concern regarding the SSPs' future, reinforces the isolated and individualised nature of the local-level sports network (Harris 2013). In line with criticisms of division and fragmentation (Roche 1993, Houlihan and White 2002, Green 2006, Collins 2010), the evidence

revealed a history of fragmentation and silo-type work in the sub-region, with limited cross-agency work, particularly between the SSPs and CSP. Whether this approach was a conscious strategy or a natural result of the SSPs retaining a focus on school sport is unclear. However, what is clear is that this insularity has left SSPs in both cases in a vulnerable position. They retained dependence wholly on resources from central government, received limited local-level support and thus struggled, or perhaps failed to galvanise local-level support when it was needed most. Moreover, the evidence in case 3 suggests that the cut in funding for SSPs was viewed strategically as an opportunity for the CSP, with the potential for more responsibility, more funding and the chance to build its capacity and edge towards greater security and a higher likelihood of survival in the short to medium term. Such views underscore the real challenge of collaboration and cooperation, particularly in settings where the principal policy actors are financially dependent on the same governing agency (Chaskin 2001). In such contexts the ultimate institutional priority may not be so much about achieving policy outcomes as it is ensuring self-preservation, relative organisational advantage, and long-term survival.

The strategic response seen in case 2 reveals a far greater commitment to SSP objectives and a willingness to cooperate, reflecting a long history of effective partnership working across a group of actors that have remained relatively stable and who were instrumental in developing the original county partnership for sport and were closely involved in the development of SSPs across the county. Thus, the responsibility to sustain SSPs and the concern for their future were not issues of importance solely to the SSP but also major concerns for the CSP, NGBs, and local authorities. This sense of shared responsibility played a role in galvanising partner agencies and, whilst it offers no guarantee of long-term funding, it does represent a more convincing strategy. It, at least partially, reflects Parsons's argument concerning the power of self-transformation, where grassroots agents collaborate and place greater emphasis on 'the growth of organisations which are capable of their own self-transformation' and their own self-organisation, and thus more likely to achieve desired outcomes (2002, p. 51). In this case critical factors such as the initial involvement of key local agencies in the development of the CSP and the SSPs, the perceived value of these partnerships in achieving positive local outcomes, and the challenge of supporting the continuation of local-level services, despite central government cuts binds the network of partnerships ever more tightly. Despite this positive assessment, the Chief Executive Officer of CSP in case 2 retains a realist approach, understanding that ultimately the acceptance of the medium- to long-term strategy rests on the shoulders of schools:

What will be critical over the next few years is how well we can convince head teachers of the value of PE and sport to whole school attainment and improvement. If we can do that, sustainability may be possible. Without it, beyond 2015, we will see an even more challenging environment for school sport. (*Follow-up questionnaire*)

Whilst this advocacy exercise with schools will no doubt prove to be a challenging task, it is one made easier through the collaboration and support of local-level stakeholders. Without this, there is little doubt that the SSPs would not survive beyond 2015.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to examine the attitudes and perspectives of NGBs and CSPs towards SSPs and towards the decision to remove ring-fenced funding. In so doing, the

paper addressed three specific objectives: (i) to consider partner perceptions of the effectiveness of SSPs, (ii) to discuss the broader implications of the withdrawal of government funding for SSPs for the sport policy community more generally, and (iii) to analyse the strategies being used to address the cut in SSP funding.

With regard to the first objective, the data signal the perceived importance of SSPs to the NGB community, particularly with regards to the NGBs' concern for traditional sport development outcomes. From the NGB viewpoint, SSPs are a genuine and worthwhile partner, effective vehicles for improving access to and the coordination of school sport. SSPs provided a structurally efficient foundation upon which NGBs could develop their sports as well as create developmental pathways. In contrast, whilst CSPs acknowledged the value of SSPs in bringing structural coherence to school sport, their view was generally tempered by questions concerning the strategy employed by SSPs, the value for money they offered, and their real impact beyond the story of the school sport survey.

In terms of the broader implications of cuts in funding, the impact that the cuts will have on leadership comes across strongly from the data. For NGBs the leadership role of the Partnership Development Managers was a distinct advantage in facilitating access to the network of schools and acting as an internal advocate for school sport. However, this view contrasted with that of some of the CSPs interviewees who saw the Partnership Development Managers as a gatekeeper who controlled, and by implication limited, access by the CSP to the schools network, thus revealing the discrete yet deeply set patterns of power that underpin partnerships (McDonald 2005, Houlihan and Lindsey 2008). The significance of the stability in partnership objectives and the problems that arose from instability were also exemplified as argued by Houlihan and Lindsey (2008). The stability in the objectives of SSPs provided NGBs with an opportunity to build more talent development pathways. An ongoing source of instability has arguably been the competitive nature of the SSP and CSP relationship. This competition has evolved partly due to the resource dependency of both SSPs and CSPs – a common cause of conflict within partnerships (Rummary 2002), their past involvement in youth sport development (CSPs emerged from Active Sports partnerships who focused primarily on youth sport), and the more recent, gradual extension of objectives (mission creep) by CSPs into the sphere of activity dominated by SSPs. The final factor, collaborative capacity, was substantial in relation to SSPs although more limited in its network partners. What tended to be more significant was not collaborative capacity but collaborative enthusiasm. Further, NGBs and CSPs were united in their view on the long-term, negative effect that the cut in funding would have on other areas of sports policy and strategy, notably adult sports participation. Whilst the funding cut may provide some political and economic advantage to the government (displaying its deregulatory credentials and a small saving for the Treasury), these benefits will likely be short-lived. More damaging is the long-term effect on adult sports participation, NGB talent development pathways, and the lack of continuity in sport policy, a common criticism, which has the effect of increasing the scepticism of potential partners and their willingness to invest their resources in government-initiated policy.

With regards to the third objective, the strategies being used to address the cut in funding, a key problem appears to be the demarcation between youth and community sport, and the silo mentality which this demarcation cultivates. Whilst the three cases did reveal evidence of the SSP networks continuing to function, albeit with a skeleton staff and focusing on core projects, the majority of resources for extra-curricular sport are now channelled via CSPs. One CSP reported that this change had created a tense, even resentful environment. On the one hand, this change demonstrates a potential shift in

power in youth sport, where CSPs have the opportunity to fill (partially, at least) the void left by SSPs in youth sport policy leadership. However, how this leadership role translates into policy implementation remains a question of concern. Whilst CSPs may have greater resources for youth sport than was the case two or three years ago, it is primary schools who directly receive an average of £9000 each via the Primary School Premium, and it is schools in the person of the head teacher and governors, who determine what schools do (and do not do). This rapidly changing dynamic epitomises the fragility of partnerships, the problems of over-reliance on the state and the divisive nature of the artificial boundaries between school and community sport policy. It also goes some way in highlighting the problems of partnerships, not only the problem of resource dependency and its impact on collaboration and power distribution in partnerships (Powell and Glendinning 2002), but also the bureaucratisation of partnerships whereby considerable time and energy is spent on the means rather than the end (Bloyce *et al.* 2008).

The data do, however, present a glimmer of hope in that some SSPs are pursuing new sustainable models of development that do not require government funding. Critical to this new approach is the ability of the partnerships to work with NGBs, CSPs, and other community groups to advocate the value and importance of PE and sport, particularly to head teachers and school governors. Here, schools will need to work strategically through local champions and political leaders to connect PE and school sport to broader concerns regarding the health and well-being of school children. Furthermore, the likely success of new sustainable models of development will depend on the capacity of the partners involved in the networked partnership to act selflessly and pursue a strategy which is more concerned with collective action and collaborative capacity than one's own empire.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes

1. Further information about the role and function of NGBs and CSPs can be found at www.sportengland.org. Further information about the role and function of SSPs can be found at www.YouthSportTrust.org.
2. The term networked partnerships is used to refer to the broader partnerships that exist between more specific (sport, area, or school-family) partnerships such as NGBs, CSPs, and SSPs.
3. The exact allocation per school depends on pupil numbers. For example, a primary school with 250 pupils will receive £9250 per year.
4. See <http://www.youthsporttrust.org/how-we-can-help/programmes/young-ambassadors.aspx> for further information about the Young Ambassadors programme.
5. Whole Sport Plans are prepared by the 46 NGBs in receipt of funding from Sport England in order to Sustain and Grow participation in sport. The plans detail the priorities of each NGB, their sports participation targets for the 2013–2017 period and specific how these targets will be achieved.
6. Since the completion of the research the number of CSPs have reduced from 49 to 45 through the merger of the five partnerships in London.
7. The titles used here are generic and do not apply to the specific title given by each CSP. However, the three representatives involved from each CSP included, in all cases, the Chief Officer or Director, the Chairperson of the partnership, and the officer responsible for over-seeing NGB liaison.
8. The Active People Survey is an annual survey of sports participation in England funded by Sport England.
9. The government through the Department for Education, Health, and Culture, Media and Sport are investing £150 million per year for 2013–2014 and 2014–2015. The investment into each primary school is determined by the number of pupils attending the school. Schools with 17 or

more pupils receive £8000 plus £5 per eligible pupil. Schools with 16 or fewer pupils receive £500 per eligible pupil (Department for Education 2013).

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