

Abstract

In 2003, the Swedish government made a "hand-shake" (Handslaget) with the The Swedish Sports Confederation, offering one billion Swedish crowns over a period of four years to local sport clubs in order to create project that will engage more children in organised sport. One of the themes for creating projects is by way of sport clubs collaborating with schools, so that within the school day time pupils will be exposed to club sport – either through club instructors coming to the school or the pupils coming to the club facilities. But what happens when an activity constructed on one social field, and according to the specific conditions of that field, is simply lifted over to another social field? In this paper I discuss some consequences emanated from such a process.

Keywords: Social Field, Sport, Physical Education, Handslaget/the Handshake.

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When the field of sport crosses the field of physical education

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This paper deals with the relation between two social fields - the fields of sport and school. Both are affected by a political reform called "The Handshake," which was implemented in Sweden 2004-2007. The Government announced in 2003 that The Swedish Sports Confederation would be allocated one billion SEK (950 million EURO) over a four year period to invest in children's and youth sporting activities. The Government called the investment "A Handshake with Sport." The money would be used to support and encourage sport clubs and associations to open their doors to more members, to reduce costs, to invest more in girls' sporting activities, to take part in the fight against drugs and to intensify cooperation with schools. Measures shall also be put in place to offer children and youths, who today do not take part in sporting activities, enjoyable and health-promoting activities. Furthermore, possibilities should be created for girls to practise sport in the manner they themselves wish. Sports clubs would be encouraged, in close cooperation with the schools, to develop methods which attract every pupil to physical activity in different forms. The Handshake continues after 2007, under the new label "Idrottslyftet." That is what was said - a powerful support for Sweden's biggest and most active national movement, no less. Historically, the sport movement in Sweden, as in all the Scandinavian countries, was built in the form of a voluntary association, as a "People's Movement." These organisations are regarded as the fundamentals of the democratic system, since to participate in voluntary associations has been seen as an important measure in fostering democratic citizens. The sports movements in the Scandinavian countries have, in a historical perspective, been comparatively well supported by the State. That is, state support for youth leisure activities has been directed to different youth organisations, particularly sports clubs, organised at lower levels on an every-day basis as voluntary organisations. The distinction between the State and organisations situated in the civil society is, however, blurred in the case of the cooperation between sport clubs and the schools, or more correctly, *projects which take place during school time*. Many projects have activities that begin just before or immediately after school time, and there I do not see any problems. *But the school day belongs to the school, not the sports clubs*. This is where suddenly two social fields collide, two field logics, with numerous fundamental

problems as a result. In which context shall one try to find the answers for this construction?

An increasingly vociferous and well articulated criticism has been voiced regarding the number of sport hours being successively reduced during school time (Cf. Bunkefloprojektet) since the beginning of the new century, as well as the knowledge that the percentage of inactive young people has increased dramatically during recent decades, prompted The Social Democrats to include “30 minutes of physical activity daily for all school children” in their political manifesto, August 2002, and a decision to emphasize physical activity was implemented in the spring before the election of 2003.

It was also stated that “sporting organizations would be given an important role to cooperate more with the country’s schools (Sydsvenska Dagbladet 2003-02-01). The school authorities did not reject the decision, but as usual, asked where the money for the reforms was coming from. The Government referred to the Local Authorities, who however did not accept that they had the necessary resources. At about the same time that the Government launched its “Handshake with Sport,” a plan that The Swedish Sports Confederation was extremely satisfied with. A handshake is made in order to avoid written agreements, the idea was that the Swedish Sports Confederation would plan the scheme as it saw fit. However, after the election, there came a directive from the Government stipulating what type of projects sports clubs could use the handshake money for. The projects were to be divided into five themes, one being to intensify the cooperation with schools (www.rf.se). My interpretation, possibly a little conspiratorial, is that this theme was included as a hasty improvisation which made it possible to say to the Local Authorities and schools: money is available. Such an interpretation would make the construction easier to understand.

Not least, this caused the schools and sports’ clubs a number of crucial and practical problems. In The Swedish Sports Confederation’s comments (www.rf.se) concerning the directive, which can also be seen as a guideline for the approval boards (regarding the cooperation with the school, these are The Swedish Sports Confederation’s district organisations) was, for instance, the following:

The majority of sports leaders work on a voluntary basis, in other words, are busy with their civilian jobs during school time. If they were to take part in school activities, they should be compensated...The sports clubs activities...are designed for children and youths who join of their own free will. The physical activities in school have as their most important target group those who, for various reasons, are not attracted by the activities offered by the sports associations. A different approach and pedagogy are required which

will, in turn, require training for the sport leaders engaged in school work. Finally, it is important to emphasise the division of responsibility between the public school and the voluntary sports movement. Sports associations can be an important support resource in schools activities, but can never shoulder the responsibility for teaching.

In this commentary a number of problems are identified in cooperation between the school and the sports clubs: unpaid sport leaders who complement/substitute for school personnel, a different approach to the sports associations normal activity – based on a different pedagogy and also structuring the activity so it does not replace ordinary school work. That schools and sports clubs shall cooperate in order to “get people to exercise more” may appear to be a commendable and problem free appeal. There is a large consensus in society regarding how important sport and physical activity are for health and well being. At the same time, current research shows that those who are active are doing more and more, while those who are inactive are increasing in numbers (Engström, 2002). The Swedish Sports Confederation’s comments illustrate some of the possible problems which occur when two enterprises *which are based on different conditions* merge. During recent decades school sport has undergone changes. The objectives of the subject have been broadened, the content has been enlarged because new sports have been introduced and a more specific emphasis on “health work” has been included. In Sweden, the name of the subject has, to date, been changed six times during the 20th century, the most recent from “sport” to “sport and health.” The reason for the latest name change is to stress that there are similarities, but also big differences between the subject in school and the elite/competitive sport that is practised in many associations.

The revised subject description shall not be seen as dissociation from sport in the traditional sense, but rather as an indication that sport in school is used as a means to achieve overall objectives. In the curriculum for Physical Education and Health, it is emphasised that the pupils take a life long responsibility for their bodies and that every individual shall develop according to their own potential. The subject has also received an increasingly clearer theoretical profile. The Swedish Sports Confederation policy document “Sport wants” declares for its part that “We want, at all levels, to manage our sport so that it develops people in a positive way, not only physically and mentally but also socially and culturally” (www.fr.se). At the same time, competition is the basis for club sport with its basis in selection and ranking. Another relevant question regarding the Handshake is: what are the consequences when voluntary associations take over the responsibility for activities during school time – for society, for the school, for the sports clubs and for the children involved?

How the fields are constituted

What happens when an activity which is constructed on one social field, and according to this field's unique circumstances, is transferred to another? There are several schools of theory which are possible to use in order to clarify relationships between different sections of society. Employing Luhmann's system theory, one can analyse how different systems work based on determined codes, with their own rules and rationality depending on their historical and social position (cf. Tangen 2004). The systems have their own logic and work with the help of a code that decides the difference. Every system or context has its form to see the individual. The social context and communication in this indicate and create a special form of social address for the individual. In school this is carried out by the pupil, in day care by the child, in sport by the member etc. The social address includes a direct and also limited expectation of the individual. The social arena's specific logic not only decides the expectation of the individual and produces its own access to what is to be included, but also boundaries for what is to be excluded. This is how a child/youth moves between different social addresses, between different systems with its varying contextual values and norms.

However, I have chosen to allow myself to be inspired by Bourdieu's field theory in order to illustrate the field of the school and club sport – the limitations, the position of power, the players, the different forms of capital at their command and the different forms of habitus which are created in the respective field (Bourdieu, 1993; 1997). Also, the terms disposition and position constitute important theoretical approaches regarding the analysis of the two fields. It is not my intention to carry out an in depth field and correspondence analysis, but rather to utilise Bourdieu's concepts as the starting point to discuss *the prerequisites for the crossing of the fields in terms of differences and similarities*.

According to Bourdieu's field theory the crossing of the fields should give rise to a number of problems because they are constituted in different ways (Bourdieu, 1993). In our case there are a number of fundamental differences between school sport and club sport (for future reference limited, for us, to the relevant sub-fields which incorporate the school sport subject respective children and youth sport). To begin with, the school is one of the central state instruments, while club sport is the largest and most active of civil society's central players – as a peoples movement (*folkrörelse*), that is, in the form of voluntary organisations. Because the school is a state instrument, it is a bureaucracy with a heavily regulated field of activity (curriculum) and the teaching is provided by professional personnel, specifically qualified and remunerated. School activity also hinges on one of society's few remaining compulsory statutes – obligatory school attendance.

Children and youth sport run an activity which in these terms is the direct opposite of the school - every association has the right to independently interpret the business concepts The Swedish Sports Confederation stands for (see "Sport wants"), nearly everybody who manages the activity work on a voluntary basis, the level of training is low and the whole concept is founded on voluntary input. Despite the fact that the central issue is called the same thing – sport – the prerequisites are certainly different for school sport and club sport. Other variations that can be deduced from these differences are how pedagogy is employed, varying forms of democratic participation, different structure of the selection system (certificate respective performance) and different attitudes regarding the parental role (in school, parents are kept outside the sphere of activity, as regards sport, parents are often indispensable).

Despite these fundamental differences in requirements for the activity, reality does not appear to be so straightforward. For example, there are a large number of unauthorized sport teachers in our schools (Lundvall & Meckbach 2004), and there is an element of financial compensation and advanced training courses within club sport. A considerable number of sports teachers are at the same time voluntary trainers during their free time. There are many indications that the activity of school sport is affected by influences from club sport over and above the Handshake and, on the other hand, youth activity, at least in the majority of typical elite clubs, is fashioned in such a way as to remind one of the school's work patterns, including an explicit *obligatorium* ("you must not miss a single training if you want to compete").

Besides this it can be said that the activities of both fields have indirect similarities assuming that school sport and club sport constitute possibly the most important secondary socialisation factors in Swedish society. They both constitute important tools for upbringing and influence, where knowledge, skills, behaviour, and values are produced, conveyed, recreated and altered. They both work with children and youths during the most formative years of their lives and they both work with a typically study orientated approach. They shall deliver both education and social awareness. Both act at the same time as a selection system, where children and youths are graded according to knowledge intake respective performance. The structure for this varies – formally via certificates respective selection, indirect via pedagogical structures which are employed to give children and youths both education and upbringing.

Related research

The Handshake is a unique political commitment in a country where sport is run and organised, from an international perspective, in a unique way (the Nordic Sport Model). Therefore it is difficult to find comparable research data regarding this area (For Bourdieuan analysis on Sport and on Physical Education, see Hunter (2004), Brown (2005) and Mountakis (2001). There is Swedish research regarding many aspect of the two social fields we are interested in: the school's sport training Annerstedt (1991), Karlefors (2002), Lundquist Wanneberg (2004), Carli (2004), Sandahl (2005), Quennerstedt (2006), Öhman (2007), see also Larsson & Redelius (2004) and Skolverket (2005), and children and youth sport Augustsson (2007), Carlson (1991), Franzén & Peterson (2004), Hertting (2007), Karp (2000), Nilsson (1993), Patriksson (1987) and Redelius (2002). However, there is very little research about what happens when the fields cross. One exception is Rolf Jonsson's follow up study of the Upper Secondary Sport Schools, where he conducts an interesting discussion regarding the connection between school sport and club sport (Jonsson, 2000).

In my own research I have earlier discussed the similarities and differences between school sport and club sport as a fostering and educational environment. In an article about selection and ranking logic (Peterson, 2004), I state that physical maturity plays a notable role as a selection factor both for school certificates and the Football Association training system (which acts as the foundation for National Youth Teams in football). The result is in line with a large number of studies dealing with the phenomenon RAE – The Relative Age Effect (Musch & Grondin, 2001). In the study, I state that there is a systematic difference in the likelihood of priority selection within youth football, which says that the earlier in the year a person is born, the greater the chance of being picked, this likelihood is evident at every stage of the “selection ladder,” from association level to the national team level.

This also applies to sport certificates. In a report from 1993, Allan Svensson highlights the differences which exist between factors such as date of birth, gender and social background regarding certificates in 9th grade (Svensson, 1993). On the subject of sport, he points out the significant differences regarding all three factors. The conditions are the same as in 1993, and they can be summarised by stating that there is a systematic difference in the average grade in the subject of sport depending on which month of the year a person is born, which says that the earlier in the year a person is born, the higher the grade a person attains. Boys have a consistently higher average grade than girls. Sport and health should be one of the few, or possibly, the only subject where boys have a higher average grade than girls at this age.

This conclusion seems peculiar considering that according to the curriculum for Sport and Health, every individual should be judged on their own merits. The combination of physical practice and the need to measure (whether it is grades or competitive results) however, often results in an aptitude (talent, ability) is confused with differences in physical maturity. One can discuss what happens as regards club sport and even be upset about it, but nevertheless, it is a voluntary activity. If you do not wish to continue, then you can stop. School sport, however, is based on an *obligatorium* and if you refuse to take part, eventually the police may be contacted. The connection between month of birth and sport grades indicates that the core of the subject of school sport is influenced by the same type of philosophy pertaining to the connection between aptitude and physical maturity which exists within club sport. Consequently, there arises a conflict of interest in the curriculum, where it is stated that the most important objective is to stimulate the pupils to adopt a life long responsibility for their own bodies and that every individual should develop according to their own capability. Therefore, it can be said that here is an example of what one can interpret as one field's logic influencing the criteria of another field.

In a more recent study of the Landskrona BoIS youth activity, I put the case for examining a different course of action (Peterson, 2007). The hypothesis is that the more professionally a youth sports activity is managed, the more it will draw a parallel with the public school system. The basis for this assumption is that every professional organisation (both inside and outside sport) amongst other things, strives for a formal, consistent and comparable education with systematic subject knowledge, a standardized pedagogy and professional teachers, plus a uniform and consistent grading system. In the description of the Landskrona BoIS' youth activity and its development during recent decades I maintain that you can see just such a development. I assume that a study of the most professional Swedish sport clubs - both within football and within other sports - would generalise these observations. A fall in membership analysis of youth football¹⁶ supports this assumption. Those who finished playing football between the ages of 15 and 16 were also those who chose not to pursue a high school education. When the pressure increases in football and at school, it appears that here is a group that gives both the cold shoulder, even if it is an exaggeration to say as far as school is concerned since the majority chose to continue after compulsory schooling. Consequently, football does not act - at least not for the youths who are not particularly study motivated - as an alternative to school. Therefore football cannot be seen as an opponent to school in this regard.

Three critical theses

Approximately one third of the approved Handshake projects included Sport Clubs cooperating with the schools, which suggests that that about 350 million SEK (33 million EURO) of the billion was used for such projects. If it is the intentions that the Handshake projects should offer more physical activity in the schools, then there is a critical dilemma if the sports clubs and club leaders shall be responsible for the *modus operandi*. The Swedish Sports Confederation instead depicts the sports clubs as being “an important support resource in school activity.” Neither can the main purpose be to reach out to those who are already active in the associations. On the other hand, it may be a basic concept behind the state’s desire that club sports encroach on the school’s field in order to activate children and youth who are not already physically active and to generate interest for a continued activity outside the school. On the other hand, this objective is included in the curriculum for school sport, while it is not included in the sports club’s normal agenda; on the contrary, this includes only those who take part on a voluntary basis.

One question that therefore arises is how qualified are the Handshake sports clubs to solve this undertaking should the schools fail to do so? Shall Handshake sports clubs offer children and youths more of the same type of activity that the physically inactive have already rejected? Or have the Handshake sports clubs adjusted their ordinary activity according to this task? How, then, has one proceeded? And if this is the case – what happens when one, via a Handshake association, applies to a sports club and is confronted with its normal activity? In the group physically passive, there are children and youths with so called special needs; what type of proficiency do the Handshake sports clubs have in their activities to deal with these? Is school sport to be influenced by the contents of the Handshake projects and are the clubs’ activities to be influenced by the school sports design? What will happen to the sport club’s normal activities when energy and resources must be earmarked for Handshake activities during school time? And what type of success will the handshake projects have as regards activating more people?

The First Thesis

In order to clarify my probing position I shall, in the following text, articulate and express in favour of some thesis. The first one is that *the theme concerning increased cooperation with the schools complicates the work of getting the country’s children to exercise more*. The main reason for this is that the Government instead should allocate resources to strengthen the subject of sport in school, both quantitatively and qualitatively. We are facing an extensive national health problem; that those who are active are doing more

and more, while those who are inactive are increasing in numbers. The Swedish Sports Confederation itself identifies the basic problem: “the sports clubs’ program is designed for those children and youths who apply voluntarily. The physical activities in school have as their most important target group those who, for various reasons, are not attracted to what the sport clubs have to offer.” Therefore, from a national health perspective, major focus should be on those who today are inactive. This is an assignment that the subject of school sport has difficulty in resolving. Why should the sports associations be the answer? Why should they, who have previously declined both the sports associations and school sport, be encouraged by even more sports association activity?

And why should one solve a problem that the school finds difficult to solve, with external help? Bourdieu’s social fields are built on power hierarchies. In the Swedish school field there are, at the bottom of the hierarchy, a number of subjects such as visual art, music, domestic science and sport, whose prospects are typified by this position. If a headmaster was forced to admit that the school was unable to provide an acceptable level of teaching mathematics, would the school then appoint an external and amateurish mathematics association to help out? No, but in the case of school sport, it is OK. So, the field is leaking in that section and that is what makes the Handshake so problematical. The Government wants to use the sports clubs in order to solve the schools’ problem. This in turn, indirectly, presents an argument for not having to deal with an extensive national health political dilemma.

This viewpoint is not new. Schoolchildren have always been able to meet the sports associations during school time. An element of the school’s brief is to acquaint children and youths with different aspects of society. Therefore, museum study visits, external lecturers and different forms of “try it and see activities” are included as natural components in teaching. During the SIA school construction (The internal work of schools), some decades ago, it can be certainly said that this activity, with the emphasis on people’s movement cooperation, was institutionalised. Today, many schools have established links with sporting associations in various forms. The initiatives can come from both the schools and the associations. The cooperation can be both short term and long term and can range from a single visit from a sports club in order to provide information regarding its activities to a school having to hire localities and expertise from a club in order to carry out the teaching of sport. The latter, however, rather illustrates the low ranking of the subject of sport in the school’s social field.

The Second Thesis

Because many of The Handshake projects are associated with earlier cooperation there is a significant risk that The Handshake would only facilitate in reinforcing this low ranking. In the framework of sports associations replacing school sport, the contents of the curriculum regarding school sport would be undermined. According to the directive, “sports associations shall be encouraged, in close cooperation with the schools, to develop methods which attract all pupils to physical activity in different forms,” and that “in this situation a different direction and pedagogy are required thus demanding qualified sports teachers who are engaged in the work of the school.” These conditions are difficult to fulfil. The following explanations are taken from my second thesis: *club sport is good at what club sport does*. Club sport as we know it, under the direction of The Swedish Sports Confederation, has, since 1945, had a tricky relationship regarding other types of physical activity other than competitive sport, e.g. keep fit sport activity. For several decades, The Swedish Sports Confederation and Korpen (The Swedish Federation for Company Sports and Swedish Sport For All Association) waged a bitter fight about this very issue (Bolling, 2005; Norberg, 2004). The reason is that The Swedish Sports Confederation sport is, by and large, competition sport. It is competition that attracts children and youths to sport. But we are also aware that there large groups who are not interested in this type of activity. For these groups, the associations shall therefore develop alternative methods based on a different agenda and pedagogy than the ones being used for their own activities.

Club sport is good at what club sport does. And it is an activity that has been shaped in the field of sport, according to the field’s specific circumstances and logic. The main point is that the normal activity is transferred to school time. It is here that the effects of another problem increase regarding the profiling of the subject of school sport. In the National Agency for Education evaluation regarding the subject Sport and Health “it is evident that even if there is a large number of pupils who appear to benefit from the subject, there is another situation for a not insignificant number of pupils who, because of obesity or other problems, are physically inactive during their free time. Research has shown that the subject of sport in school is more and more becoming aligned to association sport and various ball games dominate” (Ericsson, 2005; cfr. Skolverket, 2005). Once again, the fragility of the contents of the subject of school sport is illustrated, subdued in it’s own field and strongly influenced by activity in another. As already stated, it leaks. In this context, let us not forget the responsibility the sport teaching training programs in Sweden has for the present situation, including myself, since I have the main academic responsibility in Malmö.

The Third Thesis

It is also stated that “sports clubs can act as an important support resource for the school activity, but can never take over the overriding responsibility for teaching.” This to me is *contradictio in adiecto*. The Handshake activity takes place during school time. Where is it placed? Deciding factors can be the time available, the pupil’s choice, school sport subject time or an extension of the school day. But only in the last case can it be said that it does not replace another subject according to the timetable. Furthermore, the Handshake activity can not be regarded as a “support resource.” It is compulsory since it is during school time. Or? When I have asked headmasters, teachers and Handshake instructors if it is voluntary for the pupils to take part, I received differing answers. The best way to summarise the situation is the following answer: “yes, it is voluntary, but they do not know that it is.” A closely related problem concerns responsibility for accidents during Handshake activities. If a pupil breaks a leg the school’s insurance covers the costs. But if a pupil’s parents file a civil suit on the grounds that a voluntary organisation has the main responsibility for an activity during school time, what happens then?

It is certainly the case that the Handshake association has the “main responsibility for teaching.” The school’s responsibility is to make sure that there is a teacher present (form teacher, assistant teacher, special needs teacher, sports teacher), which most schools do, but the teacher never has the main responsibility for teaching. Apart from this, the school seldom has any authority regarding the contents, other than obviously being able to decline the project offered. On the other hand, the project does not cost the school money, which must influence the decision, since this is one of the few things schools have been offered free of cost for many years.

My third theory is therefore *what takes place during school time, shall take place during school time*. The contents of the Handshake projects should be incorporated into the curriculum, be compulsory, the school should hold the legal and pedagogical responsibility and should be offered to all pupils unconditionally. I do not take this stance for formalistic reasons, but rather to make it possible to reach the ones that all interested parties wants the activity to reach: those who do not exercise enough. Therefore, I am fundamentally critical of the whole construction and nearly all of the constructors: the Government, Parliament, the public school system, the local authorities, the national sport training programmes and The Swedish Sports Confederation. The only section I do not have any serious criticism with is the Handshake sports clubs, because they do what they can. They are modern day heroes.

So, while the Handshake continues after 2007, under the new label “Idrottslyftet,” I remain critical of including the theme “increased coopera-

tion with the schools.” In order to take measures against the overriding problem, that our children do not exercise enough, the Government and Parliament should invest resources to strengthen the subject of school sport: increase the hours, ensure that there are qualified teachers and adequate sports premises in every school, give the subject a more qualitative and a more comprehensive purpose, possibly only award grades for the theoretical aspects of the subject. From this commanding position, the sports teachers can then work towards making the physical activity of the pupils an issue involving the whole school. From such a commanding position, the school would be able to establish a comprehensive cooperation with association sport, but on its own terms.

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