

Capability building through basketball: Exploring the Scottish context

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Abstract

Using basketball in Scotland as the focus, this qualitative analysis outlines five key baseline areas required for effective capability building: opportunity; person-first/needs-centred approach; intentionality; communication, democracy, and public dialogue; alongside collaboration, joint-up working, and partnerships. Grounded in capability approach (CA), the research draws conclusions from basketballscotland, Caledonia Gladiators, and We Play Together whilst amassing further insights from multiple community sport teams nationwide. The findings highlight that Scottish basketball is currently functioning under capability theory premises and is moving towards a CA agenda without knowing. Greater awareness and understanding of the present ecosystem can help improve the system and heighten overall development. This research strives to contribute to this realisation that if properly structured and supported, sports like basketball can have a transformative impact on, to and for people and communities. The underlying principles discussed can be applied to other sports and replicated in other countries to optimise development.

Keywords

basketball, capability approach/theory, policy, Scotland, sport-for-development

People worldwide suffer variational unfreedom, with developed countries having disadvantaged people lacking basic opportunities (Sen, 1999). These deprivations are repressive handicaps impeding human and societal development, whereby solutions require more freedoms, not less (Sen, 1999). McCrone (2017) flagged Scotland's worsening inequality gap alongside other prevalent issues requiring intervention, such as poverty and internal power dynamics. *The Jarvie Report* (2019) echoed this message, identifying capability, capacity, equality, funding, leadership, organisation, and strategy as Scottish sport's main issues. Opportunities exist for Scottish sport to be more coherent, collaborative, and effective, but require strategic investment alongside clear, commonly agreed

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purposes and visions shared across Scotland's sporting-government spectrum (Jarvie, 2019). Scottish sport policy's present state leverages sport, including basketball, helping fulfil government objectives surrounding inequality, national development and health outcomes (Coalter, 2005; Meir et al., 2024), but to flourish, Scotland must embrace change (Riddoch, 2023). To address Scotland's prevailing social issues, Brunner and Watson (2015) propose utilising the capability approach (CA).

This study promotes basketball to enable Scotland's potential by providing support to individuals and communities nationwide. While this research alludes to basketball's capabilities in generating development, this is a presupposition, requiring Scottish basketball to evidence how they achieve social impact more explicitly. Sen's (1999) CA grounds the research, assessing and informing conceptual and empirical content whilst rationalising, underpinning and guiding Scottish basketball's current and future endeavours. This investigation's justification links to its theoretical originality through applying CA as a sensitising framework for analysing and thinking about development and practice (Frediani, 2010) in the Scottish context. The study adopts Frediani's (2010) argument, contending CA is a normative framework radicalising development through sustaining and challenging current practices to improve systems and policy. Thus, CA is used to advance Scottish basketball and sport-for-development (SFD) whilst contributing to broader comprehensions of capability building beyond Sen's (1999) economics of development.

This study is the first to apply CA to basketball, Scottish sport and evaluate a country's sport system, helping articulate an approach to progressing developments overall practice. The research incorporates insights from Scottish basketball's three core areas, community organisations and clubs (Blaze Basketball Club); national federation (basketballscotland), and professional franchise (Caledonia Gladiators). While these organisations also focus on top-level basketball, the three domains represent Scottish basketball's system and are individually and collaboratively using basketball to develop people and local communities nationwide through generating non-sporting outcomes. The context's underlying principles can be applied more extensively in different activities to help develop sports and systems overall. They can also be replicated in other countries where funding for sport is limited, resources are scarce, but expectations to generate social impact are high.

The findings highlight that Scottish basketball is currently functioning under development premises, moving towards a CA model without knowing through positioning itself to render social impact. Yet, the Scottish ecosystem, nor current literature, has grasped CA's possibilities. Greater understanding of the present landscape alongside CA can help improve the system and heighten overall development. This research assesses basketball's development abilities, highlighting key themes required for capability building that are currently active in Scottish basketball. Lessons are learned through pinpointing areas of strength and weakness, specific areas requiring change, but also the logic behind incorporating CA. Similarly to Sen (1999), this research outlines motivation points to important aspects of development processes through basketball, promoting the game as a tool expanding people and communities' freedoms. If properly structured and supported, basketball can arguably have a transformative impact on, to and for Scotland, but also other countries worldwide.

Capability approach as a framework for policy and practice

Capability theory

CA was established by Sen (1999) and advanced by Nussbaum (2011) and Robeyns (2017). Sen's (1999) framework connects welfare economic theorisations to inequality studies, prioritising two core principles: the importance of acquiring freedom alongside understanding people's capabilities and opportunities in attaining freedom; essentially, broadening individuals' choices. Sen's (1999) system evaluates policies based on people's access to necessities and human rights like clean drinking water, education, food, medical care, and political registration, covering individuals' equality, health, and well-being. This enables accurate representations of people's freedom, which contrasts with narrower views of development revolving around personal income or social modernisation (Sen, 1999). Whereas Nussbaum (2011) developed a list containing central human capabilities and individuals' constitutional rights: affiliation; bodily health; bodily integrity; control over individualistic environments; different species; emotions; imagination, sense and thought; life; play; and practical reasoning. Overall, CA embeds a broad-ranging normative structure, evaluating people's social arrangements, welfare and social cost-benefit analysis alongside policy designs and proposals regarding societal changes (Robeyns, 2005).

CA's main proposition examines individuals' equality, justice, life qualities and well-being alongside communities' or countries' development stages without concentrating on mental states or resources, but prevailing opportunities available to people to live their best life (Robeyns, 2006). Like Sen (1999: 36), this research views freedom's expansion as development's primary end and principal means, and the "constitutive role" and "instrumental role" of freedom in development via enriching people's and communities' lives. Basketball is positioned as a solution, rather than an outcome, asking how it enables capabilities. In this study, development is defined as "the process of expanding human freedoms" (Sen, 1999: 3). "Capabilities" are alternative feasible combinations necessary to reach desired lifestyles (Sen, 1999: 75). A "capability set" comprises multiple functioning vectors (individual capabilities) people select when needed (Sen, 1999: 75). Functionings are components people place value on being or doing, including active community participation or being healthy (Sen, 1999). CA's evaluative focus is realised functionings (what people can do) or the capability (people's real opportunities), such as owning a bike and being able to ride it (Svensson and Levine, 2017). The argument for basketball in the capability building process entails that "learning by doing is a great ally of the rationalistic reformer" (Sen, 1999: 255).

Capability theory and Scotland

As the main actor enabling social development, development is central to the Scottish Government, particularly in addressing inequalities surrounding income, wealth, power and inclusion (Alexander, 2021). Despite contemporary opulence increases, people's development is hindered by social impediments such as a lack of opportunities to develop alongside reduced public facilities (Brunner and Watson, 2015). Applying CA

to public service reform could produce the criterion shift Scottish communities and society require to flourish through optimising the process of development for Scotland (Walker, 2023). Applying Sen's (1999) CA thinking to Scotland, Brunner and Watson (2015) propose a six-stage process: acknowledge prevailing social injustices for specific groups; recognise drivers behind unjust outcomes; develop change theories at structural, local and/or national policy level; apply conversion factors; evaluate impact rates over-time; and use research/policy methods promoting sustainability (Brunner and Watson, 2015). One key change entails redefining individuals and groups from objects to subjects (Sen, 1999). To live in a capitalist system like Scotland, society must develop baseline measures such as beliefs, lessons, traits, and values (Brunner and Watson, 2015). Such outcomes can be achieved through play (Scott-McKie and Campbell, 2019), which includes sport and physical activity and adds holistic dimensions to developing people's capabilities.

If third sector organisations are to operate as intended, they should support those with the least personal resources to help conversion into social just outcomes (Brunner and Watson, 2015). Sports like basketball are key enablers generating such outcomes (Coalter, 2005). A flexible CA's value asks about communities, countries, policies, and basketball, not just about basketball's role in building individuals and groups' capabilities, but also its influence and knowledge concerning Scottish policies. However, concerns remain about CA, particularly its transfer into policy or practice alongside limited conceptions of people and agency (Comim, Qizilbash and Alkire, 2008). Further questions about whether CA adequately documents groups and organisations' social norms and structures, and its differentiation between existing power dynamics and societal choice also exist (Robeyns, 2017). The overarching issue remains that Sen (1999) conducted limited empirical work on CA as a development tool. While this exploration cannot address all weaknesses, it highlights how CA informs thinking around development and practice, showcasing its relevance in real-life contexts within Scottish basketball.

Capability theory and sport-for-development

Within research, CA is gaining traction regarding its potential to improve sports-based development (Dao and Smith, 2019). It is employed as a theoretical framework to explain, explore and promote positive social change whilst expanding development ideologies and practices, including SFD (Zipp et al., 2019). CA as a development model merges theory with practice, providing appropriate theoretical underpinnings reflecting stakeholders' work (Dao and Darnell, 2021). This is important because SFD research is criticised for lacking evidence and having sizeable gaps between theory and practice (Nicholls et al., 2011) whilst advocating sport as a solo remedy for social issues when it is a contingent variable (Coalter, 2010). Jarvie and Sikes (2012) first applied Sen's (1999) development as freedom, proposing that comprehending sport through CA provides insights into sport's capacity and place in broader international development. Sen's (1999) model offers a pliable normative framework enhancing conceptual clarity of sporting practices from epistemological, methodological, and theoretical perspectives (Svensson and Levine, 2017). It further forces considerations of how

institutional, legislative and policy relationships affect an individual's capabilities and freedoms (Svensson and Levine, 2017). CA also enables politically engaged and practical methods aligning with Nussbaum's (2011) capabilities list to advance sporting interventions (Darnell and Dao, 2017). This is achieved by providing more holistic and instrumental systems, improving underprivileged lives through consideration of broader socio-cultural-economic-political influences on the development process (Darnell and Dao, 2017).

Through its potential to generate development, sport contributes to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) (Lindsey et al., 2020) via capability-building processes. Jarvie and Ahrens (2019) propose sport impacts life chances and choices, constructing the common good whilst fostering politically smarter cultural relations. Sherry (2010) and Suzuki (2017) also accredited sport's power to bolster human capabilities and social capital through its socially inclusive and re-engaging nature. Overall, sport unites people from opposing cultural, economic, political, and religious backgrounds whilst serving social justice through overcoming inequalities and marginalisation, especially surrounding issues of disability, gender, race, and sexuality (Watson et al., 2020). Connecting Scotland's social background to underlying CA principles alongside sport's benefits, Coalter (2005) argued that sport helps assuage social issues by developing people and groups' life qualities through improved education, health and well-being among other areas. However, sport can be detrimental to people's development with 75% of British children experiencing emotionally harmful behaviour, including bullying and humiliation from coaches and peers (Stafford et al., 2013). This realisation actively necessitates using CA to better understand individuals' and groups' needs alongside evaluating sporting systems.

Context: Scotland and basketball

Around 330,000 people play basketball at least once annually in Scotland (All-Party Parliamentary Group, 2014). Behind football, basketball is the second most participated sport, most popular for black and minority ethnic (BAME) communities and is well received among those with disabilities alongside women and girls (All-Party Parliamentary Group, 2014). The study's findings are informed by Scottish basketball's three leading organisations.

The first is Blaze Basketball Club/We Play Together (WPT); a social enterprise and community basketball team from Edinburgh. Currently driving SportScotland's (2019) Sport for Life and Changing Lives agenda, which seeks to improve life qualities through sport, and they are leading a step-change for community-based SFD programming. Through international programming prioritising non-sporting outcomes over technical and tactical skills, the organisation uses basketball to generate positive community impact to help improve people's wellbeing (Blaze, 2021).

The second group is basketballscotland who oversee amateur community basketball nationwide. Through participative sport, positive support, and networking, basketballscotland build individuals' capabilities via instilling non-sporting outcomes, skills and values whilst creating cohesive communities through basketball initiatives (basketballscotland, 2025). This is achieved through working alongside non-sporting organisations

with expertise in specific social issues before implementing programmes embedding these principles through merging them with basketball activities (Walker, 2023).

The third organisation is Caledonia Gladiators, formerly known as Caledonia Pride and Glasgow Rocks. Based in East Kilbride, the franchise is currently Scotland's only professional team, competing in the Super Basketball League; Scotland-Britain's highest level of competition (Walker, 2023). Committed to addressing communities' needs and wants, the franchise uses the club's experienced coaches, players and broader staff alongside the facility and resources to undertake community basketball initiatives to: improve health and wellbeing; reduce isolation; support youth in accessing positive activities; help tackle people's personal challenges; and aid reductions in anti-social behaviour (basketballscotland, 2022).

Methods and sources

Design

Interpretivism and qualitative methodology support this exploration of Scottish basketball. These approaches enhance sport research through generating improved interpretations via greater topic-related depth and explanations whilst providing diverse options for data collection and analysis (Sparkes and Smith, 2016). To ensure adequate depth, the qualitative analysis was undertaken from June 2021–June 2023, concentrating on the Scottish basketball organisation's efforts surrounding development, particularly merging insights from basketballscotland, Gladiators and WPT. Findings include input from twenty-seven community clubs nationwide who support basketballscotland's programmes. As the research was completed during the coronavirus pandemic and involved extracting information about protected and vulnerable groups, it was conducted online.

Data collection

Before starting the study, ethical approval was acquired in 2021 from the University of Edinburgh. To begin, a scoping review of literature (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005) was chosen due to basketball, CA and Scotland's under-researched nature. It followed Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five-stage process: identify research aims; pinpoint relevant publications; document selection; chart data; and collate, summarise, and report results. The inclusion criteria prioritised seminal texts connected to CA and SFD, such as Sen (1999) whose thinking underpins the UN's human development reports. Sen's (1999) thinking was chosen over Nussbaum (2011) and Robeyns (2017) because, as a framework, it has proven valuable in development and SFD studies to date, particularly around social inequalities evident in Scotland. Subsequently, manuscripts utilising other theoretical frameworks, focusing on other countries or applying SFD in isolation without CA were excluded.

Data collection involved sequentially ordered qualitative methods comprising three approaches. The first used document analysis (Bowen, 2009). Throughout the study, all sources were accessible online. Materials consisted of government manuscripts, newspaper articles and organisational reports. They were selected through sleuthing, a process

consulting all topic-related documents relating to the Scottish basketball organisations involved. Sources were discovered through searching keywords, “basketball” and “Scotland”, collectively on Google before separately adding “basketballscotland”, “Blaze”, “Caledonia Gladiators”, “Caledonia Pride”, “Glasgow Rocks” and “We Play Together”. 292 documents and reports were identified.

The second method consulted audio-visuals (Billups, 2019). 142 different materials, consisting of online interviews and podcasts, were utilised. These were also publicly accessible and found through documents and reports search criteria. With Scottish basketball dependent on volunteerism, existing as an underfunded sport and subject to regular movements of players, personnel and staff, audio-visuals helped draw on past and present people’s perspectives. They also permitted stakeholders’ opinions whilst involved in basketball to be considered rather than recalling experiences. Through using audio-visuals, results integrated viewpoints from coaches, club owners, government representatives, officials, parents, participants, partner organisations, practitioners, senior basketball staff, trustees and volunteers.

The third method collected data from semi-structured interviews with personnel from basketballscotland and WPT. Gladiators were approached but were unable to participate due to alternative commitments. Six interviewees were chosen through purposive sampling (Neuman, 2014). Before interviews, participants were informed that the research was confidential, participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw any time. Written consent was obtained through pre-signed forms and orally prior to the interviews beginning. Interviews were undertaken via Microsoft Teams, lasting between sixty and ninety minutes. Fewer interviews were conducted as extensive data was drawn from audio-visuals and document analysis, but also because the coronavirus pandemic meant many basketball personnel were furloughed or left the system. Interviews filled gaps in existing data and ensured reliability. Having collated data from audio-visuals and document analysis before undertaking interviews, this informed questions specific categories, mainly the Scottish basketball system, development programming, organisational motivations and capability building mechanisms. The open-ended questions enabled consistency across different interviewees and organisations, albeit allowing each person to answer from personal experiences.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis helped identify explicit and implicit trends within empirical content whilst synthesizing data and providing contextual meaning to emerging trends (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Through developing ciphers, improving patterns, and establishing themes, this helped compare materials and pinpoint commonalities (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six stages: familiarisation; coding; generating themes; reviewing themes; defining; naming themes; and writing up research. It involved one round of inductive coding with codes discovered through labelling insightful sections in audio-visuals, documents and reports, and semi-structured interviews discussing overarching points and consistent themes. Examples of labels consisted of approaches, partnerships and public involvement. Following the six stages enabled more holistic qualitative insights into Scottish basketball, the ability to

connect to Sen's (1999) CA and devise the final five themes. This was achieved through pinpointing patterns within coded data reflecting similar concepts before grouping them together. For example, public involvement aligns with Sen's (1999) discussion around democracy. To ensure data accuracy, credibility and validity, triangulation was employed to systematically harness the three methods (Flick, 2018). Further quality assurance measures involved member checking, whereby through the sources located, data was cross-validated by comparing different stakeholders' contributions to ensure alignment. Where discrepancies existed, information was not included to remove uncertainties.

Scottish society and basketball: qualitative substantive insights

Opportunity. The main hindrance facing Scottish basketball's participants is reduced, diverse opportunities for involvement, particularly for people typically excluded (Actify, 2020a). This is reflected in a community club trustee's observation:

"It's about the people...that aren't engaging...It's the victims of social inequality that can't access sport because it's too expensive...Those are the people that we need to include in sport so we can build up this argument for why sport should be supported and why it has a valuable role in Scottish society." (Actify, 2020b)

Aspiring to expand human development through capabilities, CA, alongside Scottish basketball, is concerned with increasing opportunities, recognising it is development's first step. CA is subsequently embedded in two of Gladiators three organisational pillars: community and opportunity (Neter, 2022). Currently, all organisations are creating new competitive, recreational, and social opportunities for all abilities and demographics, especially those previously excluded, such as tailored sessions for minority groups whose religion requires female-only environments (Actify, 2020c). To help people overcome participatory barriers, Blaze provides free camp places, coaching, scholarships, and school visits, donating £10,950 in-kind external support annually (Blaze, 2021). This stems from sport and social inequality's relationship merging the need for opportunities to catalyse capability building (Sen, 1999). If entities desire social change, expanding capabilities through offering opportunities is pivotal. While difficulties sparked by reduced funding poses issues, decreasing opportunities is not the solution (Sen, 1999). Increased participation leads to regular attendance. This helps successfully build capabilities as long-term impactful outcomes cannot be accrued from a few instances, rather frequent attendances over extended periods alongside pathways aligning with people's personal development (Sen, 1999). The more time spent in environments prioritising development, the increased possibility of having a lasting, in-depth impact (Sen, 1999). While participation is prioritised over development, participation's role enhances development because participatory methods democratise CA's application through perspectives of development (Clark et al., 2019).

Government evaluations discovered that for every £1 invested in basketball, the measured social return is £4 (All-Party Parliamentary Group, 2014). Basketball's social value thus exceeds the participatory opportunities to play basketball's initial offering. However, focusing on development must remain freedoms' "opportunity" and "process" aspect

(Sen, 1999: 285). Issues entail conflicts between having less inequality of freedoms and maximising freedom for all, irrespective of inequalities (Sen, 1999). Although social arrangements' main goal is freedom, meaning it efficiently recognises general welfare (Sen, 1999). Social opportunities facilitate economic participation, economics helps generate personal abundance and public resources for social facilities with freedoms strengthening and supplementing one another (Sen, 1999). For example, increased opportunities help reduce mortality rates, which contribute to reducing birth rates before reinforcing basic education's influence, such as literacy and schooling on fertility (Sen, 1999). Opportunities are conducive to enabling people's active contribution to society. With adequate social opportunities, "individuals can effectively shape their own destiny and help each other" (Sen, 1999: 11). Subsequently, basketball sessions comprising diverse involvement opportunities, directed at people's development, can beneficially affect attendees alongside political and national economies.

Summarising Blaze's impact, one benefactor stated that without diverse participatory opportunities and financial support, "I would probably be back in Nigeria or living underground with my parents somewhere" (Blaze, 2021). Applying Sen's (1999) normative approach to Scottish basketball means society's success and failure is determined through benefactors' substantive freedoms' effective evaluation; hence manifesting the need for more opportunities. Greater freedoms provide opportunities for valuable outcomes, enabling overall freedom, helping ascertain whether society is developing or underdeveloping through determining initiatives' social effectiveness (Sen, 1999). Through providing increased opportunities to develop, this enhances attendees' ability to help themselves whilst influencing broader society, albeit subject to individual or community agency regarding personal actions to generate change for themselves and others with positive outcomes creating sustainable development (Sen, 1999). It also prevents people from being "imprisoned in that little box" (Sen, 1999: 289) by opening horizons beyond perceived (personal impediments people create for themselves such as the belief that because nobody in the local community has not reached an advanced stage of development that this means that they equally cannot) and lived (barriers such as laws and regulations established by governments, regulatory bodies and states amongst other authoritative and influential institutions and organisations which can inhibit the development of people and communities) confinements. CA is about reversing circumstances' adverse domination over those impacted, helping people dominate circumstances to flourish and live chosen lifestyles (Sen, 1999).

Person-First/Needs-Centred Approach

Data analysis highlighted how Scottish basketball previously embodied sport-for-sports-sake, viewing development via increased participation and performance results:

"That is one mindset shift I think a lot of sporting organisations could make, is shifting away from the sport first mentality...towards community first." (Actify, 2020e)

As one practitioner's summary showcases, Scottish basketball's focus now aligns with Sen's (1999: 292) prioritisation with "the productive quality of human beings" being

integrally involved. This is reinforced by one club's head coaches' statement: "I couldn't care less about winning a basketball game", "My expectation of our coaches...going forward is number one, they are going to keep everyone safe and number two, there are going to have a good time" (Actify, 2020b). The same coach explained this approach necessitates understanding and prioritising stakeholders' needs beyond basketball before utilising organisational capacities and resources to assist development (Actify, 2020d). These endeavours are driven by communitarianism whereby operations are undertaken to see society flourish (Wright, 2021). Within this process, people must be seen holistically with broadenings being additional and inclusive rather than alternative to present perspectives (Sen, 1999). Development's case rests on its intrinsicity, consequential role in providing security incentives and constructiveness in priorities alongside values genesis (Sen, 1999).

Having engaged more extensively with communities through providing increased opportunities for public discussion and formal feedback, Scottish basketball better understands individuals, groups and society's needs. Through working with more experienced non-sporting organisations on specific social issues such as the Scottish Authority for Mental Health (basketballscotland, 2020), this helped entities recognise impediments infringing human lives alongside communities' capacities surrounding different demographics' informational bases. Since freedoms are diverse, problems entail selecting needs to address hindrances by assessing different freedoms' advantages for societal progress (Sen, 1999). Although this depends on basketball programmes' nature and size, with freedoms based on Scottish communities' prominent social issues or individuals' respective needs. Such mindsets require integration into holistic depictions of people's and communities' successes, but also organisation's and government's failures to help alleviate barriers preventing participation and opportunity creation (Sen, 1999). This shift gives society more accurate representations of prevailing issues through internally proliferating well-documented and underrepresented deprivations in national and sporting statistics (Sen, 1999). In this research, inequalities (age/class/economics/ethnicity/gender) experienced by Scotland's protected groups (BAME groups/elderly/females/handicapped people), including equal access to opportunities, have been exposed. Scottish basketball's membership figures for 2021–2022 show its prioritisation of males (4280) over females (1562) and youth (3172) over adults (2202), albeit more explicit data is required, particularly around members' ethnicity and participatory level (basketballscotland, 2021). With age, opportunities decrease when they require increasing (Sen, 1999) and changing delivery format.

Scottish basketball coaches noted how the system was previously coach-centred, an environment based on survivor syndrome (Actify, 2020e). The analysis reveals more person/needs-centred ecosystems prioritising people's requirements through viewing participants as humans over athletes. As one coach declared, "coaching...should be person first, player second" and "trying to help that individual or group achieve what they want to get out of it" (basketballscotland, 2018). Scottish basketball is currently moving towards a person-first, sport-second mentality with non-sporting outcomes valued equally or above sport's technical/tactical components. Person/needs-centred approaches establish operational and sustainable frameworks for development because they are freedom-orientated, allowing sessions to align with participants' needs (Sen, 1999). Through tailored efforts, more impactful results stem from basing practices on

people's needs to develop over individuals' and groups' perceived needs (Sen, 1999). This reflects Scottish basketball's historic one-size-fits-all applicability, which benefited few and represented Sen's (1999: 86) idea that "the use must take an all-or-none form". Current approaches focus on life qualities, substantive freedoms, and future pathways rather than one-dimensional views of individuals and groups' accumulated income and resources (Sen, 1999). While basketballscotland and Gladiator's strategies deliver outcomes, Blaze's honed approach embeds Sen's (1999) personal heterogeneities, social climate variations and relational perspective differences concepts, which heighten results. This is through basketball programming, treating performance outcomes as byproducts of developing people and groups, rather than traditional sport approaches viewing social impact as participatory byproducts (Wright, 2021).

Basketball practitioners currently recognise that, depending on personal circumstances (age/disability/economics/gender/religion), people alongside communities have diverse needs to enable participation and spark development, which require addressing via different methods (basketballscotland, 2018). At Blaze, they offer social basketball sessions on Friday evenings to accommodate mothers who are struggling to obtain mid-week childcare and who otherwise cannot attend. One mother stated that with "working full-time and having two children, there just wasn't time in the week to do it" and that the sessions "definitely benefited my wellbeing" (SportScotland, 2020). Without this understanding, people's circumstances become barriers that create disadvantages, constraining welfare, and life quality (Sen, 1999). Freedom's conversion into improved life quality is influenced by individual and group' social conditions, whereby community relationships are valuable determinants of outcomes, including social capital and mobility (Sen, 1999). Commodity requirements establish behavioural patterns varying between communities, depending on customs and traditions (Sen, 1999). For instance, poorer people living in richer communities can be prevented from attaining elementary functioning despite circumstances being more comfortable than those in poor communities, who can develop more effectively because of elevated environmental positions (Sen, 1999). Person/needs-centred approaches success criteria necessitate merging realised functionings (what a person/people can do) with capability sets (people/group's real opportunities) (Sen, 1999). This identifies people's stage of development alongside capability building needs to expand options whilst helping achieve desired lifestyles (Sen, 1999), enabling non-sporting and sporting results to be accrued simultaneously. Whether people seek growth in life or sport, both require personal development before learning basketball skills.

Intentionality

Every voice contributing to this study echoed the desire to help people and communities. From the data analysis, people's current negative positions drive Scottish basketball's motivations to change lives alongside the system, which previously impeded development. One community club practitioner's statement embodies this premise: "We are most proud when we see how what we do here impacts on individual lives" especially as the organisation's aim is "changing lives" (Places for People Scotland, 2019) for those impacted by social inequality (Actify, 2020b). While community buy-in remains organisations' main challenge, some clubs recognise the system is more intentional about generating development:

“Now more so than ever, they [basketball organisations] are being intentional about it [generating development] but previously...they might not have been so intentional about it...I think the leadership group know they’re doing it, but wider society doesn’t quite see it and it’s just getting it quite clear that these are intended outcomes, and these are intended activities.” (Actify, 2020e)

Sen (1999: 270) defines this intentionality as “commitment-based action”, advocating direct rather than derived development approaches through greater altruism and ethical considerations. Principle and intentionality are key to effective development (Robeyns, 2017). Even if nobody has direct reason to use certain capabilities, freedoms help achieve economic or social success, meaning people can inadvertently survive better (Sen, 1999). Intentional endeavours equip individuals with capability sets that help shape people’s destiny whilst aiding other community and societal members’ development (Sen, 1999). Yet, development programmes’ benefactors must be viewed as assertive actors, not passive recipients (Robeyns, 2017). However, committed behaviour may involve self-sacrifice, leading to practitioners experiencing injustices or unfreedoms which prevent personal wellbeing declinations (Sen, 1999). While Scottish basketball commits to helping transform lives, different clubs utilise opposing approaches, with some lacking more altruistic onuses such as generating non-sporting outcomes through prioritising basketball skills over human development (Garbelotto, 2021). Thus, capability building processes overall could be more consistent through basketballscotland incepting unilateral frameworks prioritising members’ development.

To intentionally safeguard people’s development from declining, Sen (1999: 40) advances safety nets providing “protective security”, preventing affected populations from experiencing abject misery if everything fails. Regardless of people’s circumstances, individuals are always close to vulnerabilities (cognitive/financial/physical/political/social) and can succumb to declinations due to situations’ adverse effects (Sen, 1999). Protective security in Scottish basketball is highlighted by Blaze, who have a fund to safeguard participants’ opportunities should external issues threaten organisational operations (Blaze, 2021). The coronavirus pandemic, which subjected numerous teams to operational insecurity, highlighted this need. Blaze also offers free access to non-sporting professional services to support members should their development encounter issues, such as therapy for those requiring mental health support (Blaze, 2021). Through providing such opportunities, arguments exist for advantages enhancing capabilities people have or can achieve through recognising sustainable agency alongside constructive impatience’s free and positive role (Sen, 1999).

Communication, democracy, and public dialogue

Nowadays, the Scottish basketball system is more bottom-up-led rather than top-down. One senior director noted that this change occurred through embracing greater democratic inputs:

“If I go back to the old way of coaching, it was very autocratic. This is what you do, and this is when you do it. I think the game is starting to evolve and there’s a lot more democracy...and people understand others and listen to others’ perspectives.” (Circe, 2020)

Communication and democracy put individuals and groups in control of manifesting destinies rather than being docile recipients of assistance or followers of instructions (Sen, 1999). Needs are identified and influenced by public dialogue and participation (Sen, 1999). Within freedom-orientated perspectives, top-down actors (experts/states) cannot determine bottom-up actors' (beneficiaries/participants) circumstances (Sen, 1999). Governing personnel cannot interpret local culture and values, whilst effective development approaches cannot be produced if authoritative personnel dominate (Sen, 1999). A broader reach is necessary whereby development must not be dissociated from popular participation (Robeyns, 2017). Failure to consult society is an injustice blocking freedoms (Sen, 1999). Nowadays, Scottish basketball prioritises coach-participant relationships with more bottom-up actors dictating basketball ecosystems alongside their future, whereby staff respond based on members' needs (Actify, 2020c). Blaze showcases this, providing participants regular opportunities to provide feedback through two-way exchanges where coaches review members and vice versa (Wright, 2021). These trends culminate in increased participatory opportunities due to understanding people and their views around development ecosystems (Sen, 1999). Scottish basketball's modernity requires more socially participatory resolutions embracing participants' input.

While basketball opportunities are important, recognising the choice of activity, correct competitive structure, and gender grouping is necessary if people and communities alongside sporting systems are to achieve their potential. Constituent elements of a good life varying across society must also be acknowledged (Sen, 1999). To discover this information, Blaze dispenses quarterly member surveys incorporating standardised questions to ascertain participants needs and wants from the club (Wright, 2021). Questions such as "what do you look for in a good coach?" help adapt environments to meet members' requirements (Wright, 2021). This connects to capabilities integral agency focus surrounding individual's abilities to choose and act, be autonomous and make respective decisions concerning personal values towards purposeful, goal-directed activities (Sen, 1999). Goal-directed activities might entail playing basketball, accessing professional systems, or having increased equality alongside voicing change. Agency is also synonymous with valued freedoms: education; self-expression; association alongside concepts such as participation, rights, the ability to act and giving a voice to basketball; adequate provision of facilities and funding; making things possible; and critical pragmatism regardless of one's societal position (Sen, 1999).

Increased public discussion would benefit the system, especially in top-level decision-making environments, which basketball community members have previously criticised for inadequately managing the sport (Bishara, 2018). Public discussion correlates with democracy, providing extensive reach and implications whilst its cultivation improves democracy's functionality (Sen, 1999). Participatory opportunities require societal openness because impeding participatory freedom to prioritise top-down decisions voids legitimacy (Sen, 1999). To spark unilateral shifts, all stakeholders must be included in decision-making processes to ascertain people and communities' wants and needs whilst acquiring buy-in regarding what people must accept and can expect (Sen, 1999). Even if individuals are disinterested in exercising participatory freedoms, they should be given opportunities as exclusion deprives

freedom (Sen, 1999). Strengthening democratic systems augments development's three virtues: intrinsic importance, instrumental contributions, and constructive role in creating norms and values (Sen, 1999). Participation in social choice alongside public decisions enhances and expedites opportunities alongside development's progress (Sen, 1999).

Collaboration, joined-up working, and partnerships

Successful development outcomes depend on joined-up, collaborative working. Connections and relationships are required internally (within basketball's ecosystem) and externally (across society). In one director's words:

"With the realisation that working together makes things better, it's just finding a way to work together...Listening and understanding are two key components." (Circe, 2020)

Scottish basketball's issue remains finding diverse partnerships. Yet, development to date has been optimised through non-basketball and basketball collaborations. For example, Jump2It was a former youth health education programme delivered by Rocks alongside Scottish Sport Futures (SSF), a charity established by Rocks & former owner using basketball to help encourage youngsters to lead goal-driven lives (All-Party Parliamentary Group, 2014). Through support from charities, local government authorities, community clubs and schools, Jump2It reached 12,000 youth annually from 2005–2020 with 91% of participants improving their concentration, confidence and communication among other skills (SSF, 2015; SSF, 2018). As Sen (1999) highlighted, educational facilities are the strongest basis and entry point given the pre-established infrastructure, resource, and support mechanisms, allowing non-sporting and sporting outcomes to be learned and reapplied in safe and nurturing environments. Collaborative action underpins development's collective capability building with collective capabilities emerging from social interactions guided by shared responsibility representations (Pelenc et al., 2013). Scottish basketball's participants might be better served by acting collectively, developing strong and meaningful partnerships that pursue better resources for basketball. Collective capabilities help move CA discussions beyond individuals, offering useful yet critical thinking (Sen, 2017) about those in basketball working collectively within a system to produce better basketball outcomes for everyone.

Basketball in Scotland has been led "by an invisible hand" to "advance the interest of the society", whereby in pursuing personal interests, people help others (Sen, 1999: 256). Rocks embodied this finding through community initiatives reflecting commercial intent with one player stating that upon retaining interest from programmes, "we'll start to see it payback in terms of sponsorships and money" (Turley, 2020). While unilateral intentional endeavours must nationally diffuse, the invisible hand concept provides a sustainable basis for basketball. Providing everyone attains desired outcomes, unless external factors impede proceedings, systems will maintain themselves (Sen, 1999). However, pursuits driven by interests in development in intelligent and rational ways are great moral improvements compared to ones underlined by monetary and personal propensities (Sen, 1999). Going forward, Scottish basketball must pursue development solely for

altruistic reasons rather than commercial by prioritising societal growth over personal gain. Doing so helps generate community buy-in through uniting localities under shared objectives (Sen, 1999).

In environments lacking finance, development through basketball requires passionate personnel. Scottish basketball must unite to ascertain unilateral progress. Individualism is constraining the environment's individual and collective development potential (Sen, 1999) whereby some organisations operate independently rather than collectively to maintain competitive advantages over others, receive the credit and prioritise personal objectives over the collective growth of the entire system. Such individualism is constraining the development of the sport, yet many people in authoritative positions believe it to be an optimal route for progress. Such endeavours require re-examining to determine whether the personnel or groups efforts are acting in the best interest for Scottish basketball and altruistically or are underdeveloping the system as means of advancing themselves. For example, basketballscotland and Rocks did not always work closely but through recognising that supporting each other would benefit the sport overall, basketballscotland and Gladiators formalised this commitment in a partnership (basketballscotland, 2022). Thus, Scottish basketball must work more collaboratively, seeking local, national, and international partnerships from mainstream and non-mainstream organisations. Within Scottish basketball, collective power outweighs individual autonomy (Sen, 1999). Without unilateral alignment, Scottish basketball will remain peripheral in the sporting landscape and to society. Marginalised sports, like basketball in Scotland, greatest strength in unity through sharing assets and capital to maximise overall operations (Sen, 1999). A disjointed and fragmented environment further marginalises Scottish basketball, causing its development and ability to develop people and communities to decline.

Capability, basketball and Scotland—critical reflections

This research develops insights about Scottish basketball's landscape, which Scottish sport, alongside SFD is missing and helps inform development practices (Dao and Smith, 2019). CA best represents Scottish basketball's environment by helping frame and understand current practicalities whilst providing direction for future discourses (Dao and Darnell, 2021). It encapsulates how Scottish basketball utilises its knowledge, partnerships, position, and resources to develop people, communities, and society, over seeking monetisation whilst producing elite athletes. Yet, the relationship between basketball, CA, development, and society is not a definitive framework with boundaries, but an evolving process requiring constant adaptation to people's and communities' prevailing needs. After time, trial and error, conversations alongside research, and structural changes, Scottish basketball organisations are developing clear social purposes tailored to individuals and groups alongside social issues. The difference between programmes historically and currently is that outcomes are generated more purposefully rather than as participatory byproducts. Scottish basketball addresses such needs by helping those involved overcome barriers to get fairer chances at attaining freedoms when government authorities should be intervening (Brunner and Watson, 2015). The best resources are those which already exist within the environment (Brunner and Watson, 2015). The

optimal method for generating outcomes is through relationships with decisions based on reason. These two principles must become basketball practice's core rather than arbitrary results.

To progress, Scottish basketball must redefine itself and rethink its role in Scotland through how it can better serve people and communities. It must adapt to prevailing circumstances by repositioning itself through maximising its capability-building ability (Brunner and Watson, 2015). This research advocates constructing intentional basketball development programming, merging conceptual theories with contemporary practices via joined-up working. The system also needs to communicate more effectively and learn from people at ground level who are directly impacted and require assistance (Sen, 1999). Amalgamating programming derived from bottom-up voices, local knowledge, and theoretical components provides direction and understanding to learn about how to improve current systems and strategies (Brunner and Watson, 2015). Clear theories of change that outline outcomes basketball can and wants to achieve must be evident, whilst stakeholders should contemplate the language used, social purpose and rationale underpinning selected approaches (Jarvie, 2019). Basketball in Scotland must also combine national development goals with ground-level needs whereby the two are symbiotic and align with the SDGs (Lindsey et al., 2020). While the latter is not reflected in Scottish basketball's strategic documents, it connects to policy spillage from other sectors, such as education and would make sense given that educational institutions help address lagging opportunities (Spaaij and Jeanes, 2013).

The difference between the main actors regarding the use of basketball highlights how community clubs, particularly Blaze, are leading and more actively applying heightened development practices through more intentional approaches. While Gladiators are currently in the process of developing new initiatives, it is unusual, but not always the case, in sport to see voluntary organisations at the forefront of pioneering change within a system as it is more so the responsibility of the national federation to support the community and develop new strategies. To augment and help establish a unilateral approach, Scottish basketball requires a defined, structured, supported, and transparent development system that clubs and organisations can buy into, contribute to, and learn from; one providing clarity, definitions, support, and education about how to achieve development outcomes. Many stakeholders advocate collective action, yet few outline its possibilities and manifest it or put it into practice; hence, a strategic document co-created by stakeholders' value to provide direction (Ferkins and Shilbury, 2010). This strategic document must outline a defined, sustainable and transparent system by including components reflective of basketball, CA, and society's relationship (Jarvie, 2019) whereby Scottish basketball responds proactively to prevailing circumstances rather than reactively. Within this system, models and strategies should be detailed clearly whilst comprising opportunities for internal support (Jarvie, 2019). For Scottish basketball, programming and strategic decisions must be evidence-based and have theoretical underpinnings. Development approaches through basketball should be driven by data alongside research and tailored to what information is necessary (Brunner and Watson, 2015). Likewise, robust impact measurement requires undertaking, measuring and finding commonalities about what is effective and ineffective whilst development outcomes need publicising (Robeyns, 2017).

Concluding remarks

As Scottish basketball's first overarching CA study, further empirical, methodological, and theoretical work is required to analyse different communities, countries and sports. This research does not provide a complete analysis of Scottish basketball. It supplies an original synthesis of empirical research outlining rudimentary composites and rationale to underpin a CA agenda applicable to other activities and nations. While arguments for using basketball exist, protagonists should not place too much weight on basketball's capabilities for development. Basketball is not a nostrum for all Scotland's social issues, or a foolproof means of capability building. It is also not a solo remedy, but a complementary tool requiring supporting non-sporting mechanisms to run parallel, one's offering avenues for long-term sustainability for basketball alongside individuals' and communities' development. For paradigm shifts towards more unilateral development focuses to work, non-sporting and sporting institutions must adopt, promote, and support organisational-sporting goals and valuational commitments, creating unilateral alignment of behavioural norms and reasons (Sen, 1999), enabling basketball to achieve greater development. This is a difficult challenge for those in the sport industry. However, if achieved, it is an efficient way to collectively advance entire sporting systems.

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