

INCLUSIVE MULTI-FACETED NETWORK: WORLD LEISURE ORGANIZATION - HONG KONG CHAPTER

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ABSTRACT: This paper describes and examines the nature and activities of World Leisure Organization – Hong Kong Chapter (WLOHK). Established in 2008, the organization aligns with World Leisure Organization’s mission of fostering the role of leisure as a force for human growth, development and well-being. Since its foundation, WLOHK has been undertaking a series of initiatives in promoting, disseminating and advocating for leisure pursuits, study and education. The Chapter’s activities are underpinned by its inclusive multi-faceted network which facilitates participation and contribution of members from a wide range of areas including: education/research, fitness, sport, tourism, disability, outdoor recreation, parks and other affiliates. The success of WLOHK activities lies in the high dedication of its executive committee and members who are all volunteers that see their contribution for the enhancement of leisure in Hong Kong as serious leisure. Despite its relatively young age, WLOHK has managed to take significant steps towards achieving its aims. Forward looking, the Chapter aims to conduct a series of seminars for specific target groups within Hong Kong society so as to practically contribute to work–leisure balance for improving healthy living and wellbeing.

Keywords: World Leisure Organization. Hong Kong Chapter. Inclusive leisure network.

REDE INCLUSIVA MULTIFACETADA: ORGANIZAÇÃO MUNDIAL DE LAZER – GRUPO DE PESQUISA HONG KONG

RESUMO: Este ensaio descreve e examina as atividades realizadas pelo Grupo de Pesquisa Hong Kong da Organização Mundial de Lazer (WLOHK). Fundado em 2008, o referido grupo se alinha com a missão da Organização Mundial de Lazer no sentido de compreender o lazer como relevante elemento para o bem estar e desenvolvimento humano. Desde a sua fundação, o WLOHK tem promovido uma série de iniciativas na disseminação e defesa do lazer no tocante às suas possibilidades de estudo acadêmico. As atividades do grupo são fundamentadas por uma rede inclusiva multifacetada que possibilita a participação e contribuição de membros oriundos de uma ampla área de formação, tais como educação/pesquisa, fitness, esporte, turismo, educação especial para portadores de deficiência, recreação na natureza, parques, entre outros. O sucesso das atividades do WLOHK se devem à intensa dedicação de seu comitê executivo e de membros voluntários que se engajam no interesse comum pelo desenvolvimento do lazer em Hong Kong enquanto um lazer sério/comprometido. Mesmo ainda sendo um novo grupo, o WLOHK tem avançado consistentemente em seus objetivos. Para o futuro, o grupo intenta conduzir uma série de seminários para públicos específicos na sociedade de Hong Kong no desejo de contribuir de forma prática para o equilíbrio entre trabalho e lazer, almejando assim uma vida mais saudável e com melhor qualidade.

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Palavras-chave: Organização Mundial do Lazer. Grupo de Pesquisa de Hong Kong. Rede Inclusiva de Lazer.

RED INCLUSIVA MULTIFACÉTICA: ORGANIZACIÓN MUNDIAL DEL OCIO - GRUPO DE INVESTIGACIÓN HONG KONG

RESUMEN: Este artículo describe y examina las actividades de la Organización Mundial del Ocio - Capítulo Hong Kong. Establecida en 2008, la organización se alinea con la misión de fomentar el papel del ocio como fuente de crecimiento, bienestar y desarrollo humano. Desde su fundación, la Organización Mundial del Ocio ha realizado una serie de iniciativas para la promoción, difusión y defensa del ocio, su estudio y educación. Las actividades del Capítulo Hong Kong, se sustentan en su red multifacética e inclusiva, la cual facilita la participación y contribución de sus miembros en una amplia gama de áreas, incluyendo: educación/investigación, fitness, deporte, turismo, discapacidad, recreación al aire libre, parques, entre otras. El éxito de las actividades de la Organización Mundial del Ocio - Capítulo Hong Kong, radica en la gran dedicación de su comité ejecutivo y sus miembros, todos voluntarios, que consideran su contribución para el mejoramiento del ocio en Hong Kong como un ocio serio. A pesar de su relativa juventud, la Organización Mundial del Ocio - Capítulo Hong Kong, ha logrado dar pasos significativos hacia la consecución de sus objetivos. En el futuro, el Capítulo llevará a cabo una serie de seminarios para grupos específicos de la sociedad de Hong Kong, a fin de contribuir de forma práctica para el equilibrio entre trabajo y ocio buscando una vida más saludable y un mayor bienestar.

Palabras-clave: Organización Mundial del Ocio. Capítulo de Hong Kong. Red de ocio inclusiva.

Establishment of WLOHK

World Leisure Organization – Hong Kong Chapter (WLOHK) was founded and approved as a society by the government of Hong Kong Special Administration Region and confirmed by WLO Board of Directors on December 2008. The initiative to establish the Chapter was driven by the strong affiliation with World Leisure Organization's (WLO) aims and in response to its calls for founding organizations that could "pursue the broader goals of the organization on a local basis to meet their own particular needs and interests in advancing leisure" (EDINGTON, 2013, p. 285). The growing need for advancing leisure in Hong Kong and the increase of interest in this area in the Asian Region were also the motivating factors for this initiative.

Founders and office bearers of the WLOHK are: Atara Sivan (Chairperson), Elizabeth Dendle (Secretary) and Lawal Marafa (Treasurer) who are involved in leisure research and education in Hong Kong Baptist University, The University of Hong Kong and The Chinese University of Hong Kong respectively. As active WLO members, the three founders have been committed to disseminate and fulfill its aim of "discovering and fostering the conditions best permitting leisure to serve as a force for human growth,

development and well-being” (WLO, 2016). The establishment of the Chapter has been perceived as a good way for local and global dissemination.

The initiative to establish the Chapter started at the 9th World Leisure Congress (WLC) held in Hangzhou, China in 2008. This was the first WLC to be held in Mainland China and it was well attended by about 300 academics and professionals from the leisure field, study and industry. As an invited speaker to this Congress, Atara Sivan delivered her address on “Leisure Education Development in China”. The presentation included conceptual and practical aspects of leisure education with reference to various studies she has been conducting in Hong Kong. Follow-up questions from the audience have emphasized the need to further explore this topic and pointed to the essence of developing leisure education within the local Chinese context. Specifically, participants had shown a great interest to join a body that could further develop such programs in Hong Kong and Mainland China. The congress also provided a platform for exchange among both local and international researchers and practitioners who strongly supported the idea of establishing a local association. In particular, an informal meeting between Atara and Elizabeth set the grounds for WLOHK establishment.

Upon returning to Hong Kong, they held several meetings with Lawal to brainstorm ideas for development. During this period, a constitution was produced and a formal registration of the Chapter took place. Follow up meetings were held with a group of leisure researchers and practitioners who showed great interest in becoming part of the Chapter, leading to formal approval of the constitution, election of executive committee members and decisions on ways to go forward under the theme: "From Establishment to Action".

WLOHK aims & related activities

WLOHK has four aims:

- (i) To promote leisure practice and education in Hong Kong, SAR, China.
- (ii) To foster enquiry through research and scholarship for discovering the personal and social potentialities of leisure experiences.
- (iii) To disseminate knowledge and information related to leisure development and experiences.
- (iv) To advocate for conditions that optimize leisure experiences and programs.

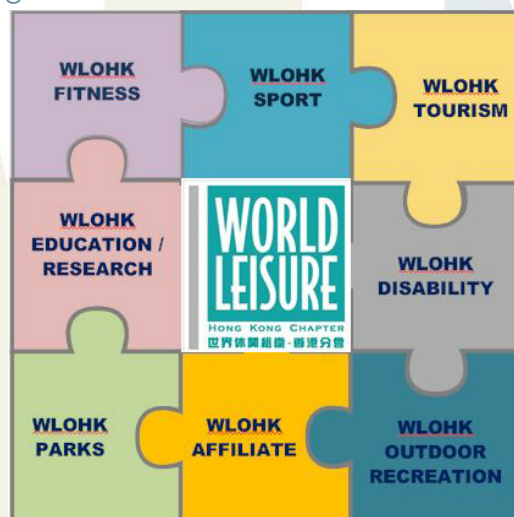
To achieve these aims, the Chapter has been utilizing five main channels in undertaking local, regional and international initiatives. The channels and their related activities are described below.

Establishing an inclusive network

Leisure is not meant only for those who research it or undertake positions in the leisure industry. To optimize leisure experiences there is a need to raise peoples' awareness of the role of leisure in their lives. Based on this premise, WLOHK has established an inclusive multi-faceted network which encompasses eight inter-related areas: education/research, fitness, sport, tourism, disability, outdoor recreation, parks and other affiliates. Figure 1 provides a schematic presentation of the network. The eight facets correspond to various ways in which leisure is practiced, advocated and facilitated.

The unique feature of WLOHK is its offering of an “umbrella approach” which recognizes specific sectors under the umbrella of a single organization. The aim is to draw membership from all sectors including: Government, Education and research institutions, Non-Government Organizations, Clubs and commercial facilities and, Hospitality and tourism providers. Initially established by three members from the education/research facet, the association now includes members from all other areas. To ensure inclusion, the association created a special facet “other affiliates” for people who are interested in leisure and leisure-related issues but may not be classified under a specific area.

Figure 1: Inclusive Network of WLOHK



Building an interactive website

WLOHK is the first WLO Chapter that has set up a website for sharing and dissemination of leisure issues both locally and globally. The website portrays the association's aims and history, its underpinning framework which allows people to choose which sections they best affiliate with, and members' benefits. It also posts upcoming events, recent news and includes an interactive function to allow members to log in and comment. Drawing on its strong affiliation with WLO, the website also provides platform for news and notices from that organization.

Presentation in international conferences

One way of disseminating knowledge and information related to leisure development and experiences is through participation in international conferences. Since its inception, WLOHK has been very active in publicizing its research and practical initiatives through paper presentations, symposia and seminars. Below are some highlights of these presentations:

Invited Symposium at the 2010 11th World Leisure Congress in Chuncheon, Korea

The Chapter's first international presentation was made in 2010 World Leisure congress in Chuncheon Korea. Members were invited to present a symposium under the theme of: "Recent Development in leisure research, education, practice and behavior in Hong Kong: implications for identity developments".

Five members participated in the symposium highlighting a range of leisure initiatives and developments, including study of leisure education, leading academic programs for preparing manpower for the leisure industry, holding the leisure games and the impact of major games on the local identity in the Hong Kong community. The symposium which has been attended by many participants further discussed the implications of all these initiatives for identity development of Hong Kong people as well as for regional and global inter-connectivity (SIVAN; CHU; DENDLE; MARAFA & WONG LEUNG, 2010).

Theme Based Session Presentation at the 2012 12th World Leisure Congress, Rimini, Italy

Along with the Congress theme of "Leisure and the City", WLOHK members participated in a theme-based session entitled: "Transforming Leisure in Asia's World City: The Case of Hong Kong". As a cosmopolitan place where East meets West, and which is characterized with an efficient and vibrant economy, Hong Kong has been identified as Asia's World City. Whereas, much has been known about Hong Kong work and business related development, there has been relatively little attention drawn to the leisure domain of its population and to the various efforts made for the enhancement of people's lives.

The presentation examined recent spatial, urban and educational developments that the city has been undergoing and their potential effect on people lifestyles and leisure behavior. Members' examinations which were supported with research data and policy, analyzed plans for urban environment, current leisure and recreation practices in local neighborhoods, educational reforms and their effect on leisure education in educational settings and preparation of manpower for the leisure industry. Implications were drawn to the importance of a multi-dimensional efforts for ensuring the transformation of cities for

the enhancement of people' quality of lives (SIVAN; DENDLE; MARAFA & WONG LEUNG, 2012).

Integrated Paper Presented at the 2014 13th World Leisure Congress in Mobile, Alabama, USA

A presentation called: "Enhancing Leisure in Hong Kong: Awareness, Activity and Education" was made as part of a special sessions for WLO Chapters. The presentation examined WLOHK concerted activities in raising people's awareness of leisure and shared the educational programs currently offered under the Chapter's leadership. Specific attention was drawn to recent findings on leisure education in schools and the enactment of serious leisure among adolescents. The importance of children's play as a means for wellbeing alongside the growth of leisure education in the post-secondary sector in relation to the needs of the growing leisure industry were also examined (SIVAN; DENDLE; SIU & WONG, 2014).

Collaborations with other international Leisure associations

In an attempt to widen the scope of the Chapter's activities, its members met with several leisure organizations as well as with WLO representatives. Some of the major meetings are described below:

Hosting the 2010 WLC Planning Committee from Korea

WLOHK hosted a group of leisure researchers and administrators from Korea to share ideas about the congress themes and administration. During a series of meetings, members exchanged practices and connections have been established for future collaboration.

Meeting with International Research Leisure Associations

A meeting was held during the during the 12th WLC in Rimini, Italy in October 2012 together with five national/regional leisure associations including Australian & New Zealand Association for Leisure Studies (ANZALS); Canadian Association for Leisure Studies (CALS); South Africa: Leisure & Recreation Association of South Africa (LARASA); Leisure Studies Association (LSA); and Academy of Leisure Sciences (ALS). The meeting was held under the auspice of the World Leisure Academy (WLA) and it included an exchange of recent developments including bi-lateral cooperative agreements between national leisure studies organizations and between leisure studies organizations and those in cognate areas, such as sport and tourism. The meeting also addressed the possibilities for further bi-lateral and multi-lateral collaboration and exchange in order to

better internationalize leisure research and foster and support the establishment of organizations in developing countries. Suggestions were made to strengthen affiliations with WLA and to maintain further contacts via different channels (COLES; EDGINTON & SIVAN, 2012).

Meetings with WLO Secretary General

As part of the affiliation with WLO, the Chapter's members met with WLO Secretary General in 2013 and 2014 to learn more about current trends and future plans of the organization. Issues discussed included membership and special projects that could help to nurture the Chapter within the region.

Ongoing Local Sharing and Deliberation Sessions

WLOHK members have been meeting to share, learn and update their involvement within the leisure. Discussions at these meetings have centered on bringing about changes and improvements to the way leisure is perceived and enacted in Hong Kong. Members' passion towards leisure as a field of study and practice have led to several initiatives for translating their ideas to practice including a leisure day, seminar for parents, workshops for school teachers, parents and leisure and recreation management students.

Membership & expertise

The Chapter's membership represents a wide spectrum of leisure and leisure-related engagements. WLOHK members are broadly representatives of sectors identified by the Chapter as integral facets of leisure. They include academics and practitioners with expertise in Leisure, Sport, Tourism, Recreation, Mental Health, Play and games, and specific population groups. Members are leaders, innovators and visionaries in Hong Kong. Among them are academics from Universities, community leaders, senior practitioners in organizations providing sport and recreation programs, entrepreneurs and experts from a range of disciplines where leisure can have an impact including recreation and mental health. Below are some highlights of members' contribution to leisure study and practice in Hong Kong and beyond.

Leisure study and education

For over twenty year members have been actively involved in research in the field of leisure education and the positive impact of leisure activities on intergenerational integration in Hong Kong. These involve territory-wide surveys on leisure participation and

perception, studies on leisure among different age groups (e.g. adolescents and elderly), in-depth examination of serious leisure practices among young adults, longitudinal research on leisure and studies on leisure education within educational settings, leisure and the outdoor environment, and tourism and recreation management. With their accumulated knowledge, members have been leading community engagement activities involving university students and staff, secondary school students and older adults in the community fostering the development of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes related to leisure.

The area of sport education, largely unrecognized at tertiary level before 1994, has flourished in the 2000's following the introduction of a range of academic and professional award bearing programs during the 1990's through the visionary approach of WLOHK members. Programs such as Sports and Recreation Management successfully provide the manpower for managing recreation facilities and services increasingly offered in Hong Kong.

Learning through play

In a competitive educational environment like Hong Kong, all means for obtaining better grades are welcomed. A new approach for the local community is how play can be used as a medium for the learning of languages, science and other core subject areas. Key members of the Chapter are exploring this initiative and offering unique programs in summer schools, and as part of teaching Science in local government schools. By leading these activities, members wish to generate more interest on the society in play as a form of enhancing children's wellbeing.

Games invention and sport development

Following the 2014 Sochi Olympics a group of WLOHK members were inspired to develop a new winter sport for Hong Kong. The sport association that followed is rapidly developing a global reputation and Hong Kong athletes have already been involved in international competitions. Our members are also innovators in developing board games for young people and have rapidly gained a following in the community via social media.

Leisure management & policy

Members of the Chapter also include managers in private sports clubs that provide six star facilities, programs and services to their members. They are senior practitioners responsible for shaping the mechanism behind the implementation of sport policy in Hong Kong, the operation of major regional games and the strategic change of leading sports associations. They are influencers of the sport and recreation industry in

Hong Kong guiding the education of young people who are working as teachers, administrators and leaders in schools, community organizations, private clubs, sports associations, fitness gyms, tertiary institutions, government departments, NGO's and corporate organizations.

Future plans & challenges

The Chapter intends to continue contributing to the field of study and practice through sharing sessions and presentations both locally and internationally. Members will continue their cooperation and exchange of their innovations and development. Specifically WLOHK is planning a series of seminars and advocacy activities targeting students in leisure & recreation programs under the general topic of: "Study-Play Balance". The aim is to introduce the concept of wellness and the role of leisure and play in people's lives through an active-learning approach and provision of hands on experiential learning through play and games. The presentation will incorporate information on World Leisure Organization and ways to involve participants in its global activities, and will solicit participants' needs to best tailor future training programs.

As a relatively young Chapter, WLOHK has been striving to increase its recognition in an area which includes a wide variety of fields. While members are well grounded in their field, there is a need for more planning and marketing so as to make the Chapter known and to establish offerings and programs that will arouse the public interest. In Hong Kong more attention is drawn towards work and study. Within this context, it is not easy to attract people to attend seminars on leisure. At the same time, members' energy, good practices and ideas seem to pave the way towards reaching out with positive results.

Even though WLOHK faces challenges, the Chapter which has been headed by a group of volunteers continues in its mission of advocating for leisure both locally and globally. The Chapter was highly praised by WLO for its initiatives and organization. After meeting with WLOHK members during one of his visits to Hong Kong, the then WLO Secretary General wrote: "The World Leisure Hong Kong Chapter is one of our most progressive, well organized and effectively led and is aimed at encouraging professional leadership development and community service" (EDGINTON, 2013). WLOHK members pledge to continue their efforts of fulfilling the Chapter's aims through well organized and effective channels ensuring leisure for all.

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