

ISSP PROPOSAL: SPRING 2015

Introduction

The International Society of Sport Psychology is the only worldwide organisation of scholars explicitly concerned with sport psychology. It was formed in 1965 under the direction of Dr. Ferruccio Antonelli of Italy, since has had General Assembly meetings every four years during the World Congress. The truly international flavor of the ISSP is illustrated by its numerous members from a variety of countries, and the diverse locations of past World Congresses, which include: Rome, Italy (1965), Washington, USA (1968), Madrid, Spain (1973), Prague, Czechoslovakia (1977), Ottawa, Canada (1981), Copenhagen, Denmark (1985), Singapore (1989), Lisbon, Portugal (1993), Telaviv, Israel (1997), Skiathos, Greece (2001), Sydney, Australia (2005), Marrakesh, Morocco (2009) and Beijing, China(2013).

The ISSP was conceived largely to grow the domain of sport psychology throughout the world whilst creating partnerships and a free exchange of knowledge among scholars from the professional community. During its early years, ISSP was the only society where scholars from the international community were actively encouraged to converge at a quadrennial congress and exchange ideas and build research partnerships.

Despite being recognized as a far reaching society for the profession of sport and exercise psychology, ISSP has suffered from inconsistent membership despite its high level reputation, low annual fees, and the provision of an academic journal, the International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, as part of the membership incentive. During the year of the quadrennial congress, though also to some degree for years within proximity of the congress, membership increases, only to ebb when there is no ISSP educational or knowledge exchange offering. For example, in the years 2014-2015, the active ISSP membership has been below 100 registrants, suggestive of disengagement other than in relation to congress activities. Furthermore, as a consequence of this inactivity, scholars from the international community only have options to meet at continental conferences not primarily focused on international information exchange and the broadest development of the domain.

Though ISSP is focused on the widest possible outreach and the advancement of the domain across developed and developing countries as its imperative, its current structure does not achieve this purpose. As such, ISSP does not fully achieve the objectives of its current mission. The strategic document that follows is aimed at changing this process and deepening the positive effects that ISSP might offer the field and those touched by it.

Strategic Plan Vision

The ISSP is a worldwide society with more than 1000 individual professional members from all five active continents. These members will together exert a strong professional impact through worldwide perspectives that centralize diversity, cultural inclusiveness and promote tolerance of all people through sport and physical activity.

Hallmarks of this worldwide reputation include a world leading academic journal, the International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, a renowned quadrennial ISSP Congress, annual ISSP regional conferences in collaboration with national and continental societies in developing and developed countries, international certification standards, and accessible continuing education, with all of these aspects accessible at the ISSP website. By creating opportunities for information exchanges through its offerings, ISSP is the society known for its exceptional ability to provide support to emerging and established professionals from developed and developing countries.

Strategic Plan Mission

The International Society of Sport Psychology (**ISSP**) is an organization devoted to promoting research, practice, and development in the discipline of sport psychology throughout the world. The **ISSP** is a multidisciplinary association of scholars whose research interests focus on some aspects of sport psychology. The Society exists to (a) encourage and promote the study of human behaviour within sport, physical activity, and health settings; (b) facilitate the sharing of knowledge through a newsletter, meetings and a quadrennial congress, and (c) improve the quality of research and professional practice in sport psychology. The Society also endeavours to foster peace and understanding among people from all countries. Members of the Society include researchers, psychologists, educators, coaches and administrators, as well as students and athletes interested in sport psychology.

New ISSP Initiatives: Goals for this Strategic Plan

A series of seven new initiatives follow, each explained in relation to the growth of ISSP during the time of the current strategic plan. These initiatives include (a) augmenting membership, (b) the development and launch of international certification, (c) Regional ISSP Conferences and continuing education, (d) the ISSP International Ambassadors Program (e) expanding the International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, (f) launching the ISSP Fellows Status and extending member awards, and (g) modernization of the ISSP website.

A. Augmenting Membership

The concept of growing sport psychology and ISSP through certification is intuitively appealing. However, the organization has yet to do the following that would permit an effective certification initiative and a healthy ISSP more broadly within and across years of each for year cycle that culminates with the ISSP Congress: (1) develop strategies to sustain and grow membership and in relation subscriptions to IJSEP and ISSP knowledge materials, (2) create or deepen annual connections with national and regional societies in order to link these groups with the ISSP certification process, and (3) outreach adequately each year to countries and regions seeking advancement in knowledge and expertise. The importance of addressing these shortcomings would resolve issues of sustained membership (i.e., member retention from year to year) that clearly are not answered through a cost friendly membership. Precisely, people are not retained in ISSP as a result

of the journal that more than compensates for a very low annual membership fee. There must be a deeper reason for ISSP's direct consumers (i.e., its members) to join and remain engaged with ISSP, and this reason must be perceived as of constant benefit to warrant member retention and concurrent membership growth.

One of the prevailing threads throughout this strategic planning document has been the recruitment and retention of ISSP members to ensure a vibrant society. The Finance and Membership Committee can be tasked with formal recruitment of prospective members, whilst also serving as a conduit to connect members with the managing council to ensure engagement and openness. This committee is not one typically found within sport and exercise psychology societies, and by adding added importance to this committee would be a formal and strategic attempt to dialog with members regularly and filter any feedback and concerns.

B. International Certification

The current ISSP President, Gangyan Si, has mandated the creation of a worldwide certification process. A committee has been formed to examine certification, though this is not the first time an ISSP ad hoc committee has been charged with this task. Previous committees have developed positions stands relating to certification and core competencies to practice applied sport psychology, though these writings have not parlayed into certification.

The current ad hoc committee is presently examining standards once again, from several key countries. From this examination, the intent is to create an acceptable standard for practice that can be set for the global sport and exercise psychology community. The hope is to grant acceptance to members from countries that meet the common standard and then to begin to augment standards in countries where standards are only developing or undeveloped.

Presently, the CC-AASP designation is the only known certification offered by an association that can possibly transcend one country's geographic borders (though it for the most part does not cross geographic borders). Despite the offering and reasonable standards that come with the CC-AASP designation, even within its current overhaul, the focus remains on a largely American member – consumer. Other than in the United States, credentials recognized within countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Poland, Germany, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia, are largely national.

There has yet to be an international society that has partnered or offered equivalency with national societies, where there is existing credentialing. ISSP has been the society to move in this direction with its credentialing, in order to standardize minimum international requirements and then seeking to augment standards in continental societies and national associations. This initiative matches with the global vision of ISSP that has existed since its inception and also as a result of the prestige and history associated with ISSP. Though it might not be the direct purpose of ISSP certification, having this mechanism will permit ISSP to retain certified members within its international list of

accepted practitioners (this must be a requirement to maintain one's certified status), adding to membership. One could easily foresee that the engagement of these members would also expand ISSP when members also begin to mentor the next generation of professionals for the field. This certification is to be unique in that a focus on inclusiveness and diversity within approaches to practice and understanding will be an inherent part of the project.

C. Regional ISSP Conferences and Continuing Education

The ISSP MC converges each year at such a conference hosted by a national association / society. Though this process benefits the local association and does create goodwill to and from the ISSP, it does not add to the membership of ISSP nor grow the ISSP as a brand name within the global domain, and so, what it can offer in terms of advancing the domain. There is no reason why there shouldn't be one such offering utilized to bring the ISSP MC together each year. Ideally, at least one or more of these regional conferences should be in a country known to be developing / emerging in relation to the domain, with the invitation to host extended by the ISSP MC.

Regional conferences would be regarded by ISSP as opportunities for a national society to extend the scope of its conference to outlying countries – in fact this can become a mandate (e.g., a forthcoming conference in Taiwan could serve to extend to members from similar cultures such as Hong Kong, Mainland China, and Macao. Similarly, the possibility of a regional conference in Brazil might serve to unite members from this country with Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay). Of note, these conferences would be advertised on the ISSP website to possibly open conference attendance beyond the regional focus to others enticed by featured presenters and continuing education opportunities.

ISSP Regional conferences might be looked at yearly, moving from South East Asia and the Pacific Rim, to South America, Africa, and perhaps Eastern Europe, with the decision of rotation influenced by scheduling of the continental societies and the ISSP quadrennial Congress. Hence, these conferences would not only serve to expand ISSP membership; they would also assist ISSP to continue to develop strong relationships with the national and continental societies, encouraging an improved flow of information exchange. Within these conferences, a particular focus on inclusiveness and diverse international perspectives will be encouraged.

Attendance at these conferences could permit opportunities for ISSP Continuing Education Certificates that scholars and practitioners might use to exemplify professional development. These offerings would be especially meaningful in developing countries to the domain where ISSP can grow the field globally. The offerings for continuing education could then serve as a piloting process of the ISSP Ambassador's Program, further strengthening this new initiative. In addition, symposia should be considered as part of each regional conference to increase the chance that delegates receive support from their respective universities and sport organizations, all the while pulling together pockets of expertise in relation to thematic areas.

ISSP Regional Conferences would be regarded as part of ISSP's mission to offer quality educational programs. However, this one meeting should not exclude any national association from seeking an ISSP partnership within their conferences whereby ISSP MC members and Fellows could accept invitations and be made available as invited speakers and as leaders of ISSP approved workshops where continuing education certificates relating to the competency would be garnered. The one stipulation for partnering in these conferences would be that the applicant association have its members pay the additional fee to become ISSP members that year. This reciprocity would create on going connections for ISSP and serve as a conduit to engage these members in ISSP certification and of equal importance, continuing education relating to targeted thematic areas such as cultural and sub-cultural competencies, ethics and moral reasoning, and broader professional conduct. Furthermore, the growth in continuous international members from diverse nationalities will enable on going breadth of perspectives and practices in ISSP educational opportunities.

D. ISSP Ambassadors Program

The ISSP – International Ambassadors are ISSP members distinguished as scholars and as applied professionals, operating in a manner consistent with sound scientific approaches. The candidates will be ISSP members of international stature who use their expertise to promote and pursue international connections in our field and for the society. Candidates are identified for three-year terms from the following pools: (a) ISSP members internationally recognized as having significant expertise in the field, (b) ISSP Past Presidents and senior management council members, and ISSP Fellows.

The ISSP Ambassadors will be tasked with promoting ISSP's initiatives in developing countries, such as certification and continuing education. These selected members will serve a three-year term that is renewable as many times as warranted. The Ambassadors will be selected by the senior management of the ISSP and assigned to invited opportunities based on what is requested by the national / continental society in relation to the candidate's knowledge base. Hence, while one intent is to grow interest in ISSP initiatives, a more central intent is to develop the field and build capacity in regions where there is a desire to develop skills and knowledge.

E. Expanding the International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology

IJSEP is a well-managed journal. Reflective of this management, submission rates have increased since Athanasios Papaioannou became editor and Taylor and Francis began to publish the journal. Presently, the IJSEP is in the process of renewing its relationship with Taylor and Francis for another term.

Recently, Robert Schinke, Athanasios Papaioannou, and Thomas Schack have published a call for submissions from developing and emerging countries. Within this special call, the purpose is to feature unique research programs undertaken in these countries in order

to centralize international perspectives and perspectives that have been omitted from scholarship. Furthermore, the call was conceptualized for authors from these countries to seek partnerships with established scholars from developed countries. The established scholars are approached to assist with methodological rigor and writing. As such, the intent is to augment sport and exercise research capacity within developing countries.

Concurrently, Papaioannou and Schinke have begun to develop processes where submitting authors from developing countries might be coached and mentored throughout their submission process, and proposed pairings with established authors could be proposed to systematize the special call aforementioned within the journal's regular submission processes. This intent might be in the form of a special section for authors from developing countries submitting in English.

With these attempts to enlist scholars from a wider number of countries, the hope is to increase submission rates and citations of IJSEP. To augment this purpose, IJSEP is also presently seeking to gain an impact factor.

F. ISSP Fellows Status and Member Awards

Recently, an ISSP Fellows status has also been approved to recognize international contributors to the domain through the ISSP. The Fellows status also requires that applicants remain as current ISSP members. The Fellows status will not only recognize current longstanding contributors to the society; it will also serve to entice younger and future members to aspire to this status and level of recognition. As a side benefit to both the member and ISSP, these aspirants will be retained as regular ISSP members for years to come, given that these members wish to retain their title and remain involved given this benefit.

The Developing Practitioner's Award has been conceptualized to support the development of newer practitioners to the field, who are undertaking exceptional work within their regions. These candidates will have earned a masters or doctoral degree in advance of their consideration.

The first group of approved fellows will be brought forth in 2017 during the ISSP Congress in Seville, Spain. These members will be recognized during the congress and also on the ISSP website. Specific benefits allotted to these members are articulated in the Fellows Award and Developing Practitioner Award documents.

G. ISSP Website Modernization

There is currently discussion about the development of an updated website, with three ISSP managing council members engaged in an updating process. The ISSP website at present does not serve to provide the message that ISSP is current and the foremost society within the global domain. Contrasted with other societies such as AASP and FEPSAC, the ISSP website lacks clarity regarding on going activities of what should be a vibrant society, situated within the international landscape.

The current discussion pertaining to the website is to identify a new web master tasked with the development of a new or modified website. This step is also an imperative should ISSP wish to attract and then retain members through clarity of what the society might offer members and prospective members on an annual basis. Possibilities might include (a) information on certification, (b) continuing education opportunities such as virtual conferences, webinars, and access to established scholars and practitioners through the development of a mentoring program, (c) a calendar of international activities, (d) linkages with regional societies and national associations, (e) ISSP social activism projects, and (f) award recipients and opportunities. All of these features would be provided through a calendar of ISSP international events throughout the year, and also for the next year. A central tenet of ISSP is to grow the domain and create capacities across countries, whilst supporting the development of emerging countries within the domain.

Time Planning and Priorities

Year: 2016

Launch the modernized ISSP website with new sections provided to attract and then retain members.

Launch the first official ISSP Regional Conference (previous such conferences have been partnerships hosted by national associations, but without ISSP centralized in the partnership, with only national delegates).

Launch IJSEP international initiative, beginning with special issue on developing and emerging countries. This special issue will embark a process whereby IJSEP facilitates processes for scholars from developing countries to buddy with mentors and gain guidance through the editorial board in relation to preparing their work for publication.

Year: 2017

Launch the ISSP Certification by introducing these to the conference delegates. By presenting this initiative at the conference there will automatically be exposure to more than 1000 delegates from across the global community. These delegates might then be tasked with sharing certification processes with people in their countries organically (national representatives can be named to do this as opposed to ISSP cold calling, with these members identified on the ISSP website as points of contact).

Additional functional roles could also be created to help with the purpose of strengthening the ISSP. Examples of these functional roles might include international supervisor(s) in applied sport psychology and ISSP scholarly expert(s) in various thematic areas, with these people accessible for consultation and site visits to forge deeper connections with national associations. These colleagues could be nominated

by/via ISSP MC members and the decision could be made by the MC with respect to certain criteria to be established prior to such a process.

Launch the ISSP Fellows Award at the 2017 Congress where members could be educated regarding how people are awarded this status, the benefits of gaining this title, and what the commitment would require on their part to retain this status. These parallel initiatives would begin to create a buzz of activity whereby members begin to consider stabilized membership in the form of retention and also new members.

Launch ISSP International Ambassadors Program. The goal through this program would be to have the most learned members of ISSP, such as people designated as ISSP Fellows to travel to these conferences by invitation though also through proactive coordination with national societies. These Ambassadors would be expected to engage in knowledge exchange and concurrently make a presentation about ISSP and its offerings to prospective members. Once more, these offerings could serve as opportunities for those attending to gain ISSP Continuing Education Certificates that feature a targeted competency. The hope would be to create a wider reaching understanding of ISSP, including its member benefits, and a broader base of members to retain.

Years: 2018-2019

Once these initiatives are implemented, the possibility would exist to hire a part-time management group that could grow its role in ISSP to eventual full-time status when membership and the aforementioned projects are stabilized. The management group would be responsible for overseeing the website, including (a) a meet the expert corner, (b) assisting with membership renewals, (c) conference submissions, and (d) the coordination of certification and continuing education endeavours such as the scheduling of educational training and the management of certification so that members remain current in their certification.

The management group would also be tasked with the streaming of webinars and 1-2 annual virtual international conferences that the membership can attend by streaming in, for an affordable cost. These virtual offerings will extend ISSP's reach to countries and regions with limited access and where economies impede engagement through in-person attendance opportunities, whilst also serving as an additional offering to existing ISSP members. Until the ISSP has a solid consistent base of members and project initiatives, the said management group could supplement its own revenue stream through profit sharing.