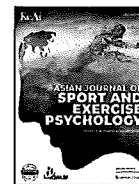




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History and development of the Asian-South Pacific Association of Sport Psychology from 1988 to 2020

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Introduction

In the late 1980s, the Managing Council of the International Society of Sport Psychology (ISSP) charged senior member, Atsushi Fujita from Japan, with the task of forming an organisation to promote sport psychology in the Asian region. Fujita called a meeting during the 1988 Seoul Olympic Scientific Congress, at which he gained support for the creation of such an organisation. Fujita recruited a small group of Asian and South Pacific colleagues to work toward this goal, appreciating that countries in Oceania and the southern Pacific would, otherwise, have no regional affiliation. During the 1989 ISSP World Congress in Singapore, Fujita presented the statutes of the Asian-South Pacific Association of Sport Psychology (ASPASP) to an open meeting. The statutes were supported, the regional body was established, and Fujita was elected inaugural President. Other notables involved from the very genesis of the organisation included Michael Bar-Eli (Israel), M. L. Kamlesh (India), Qi Wei Ma (China), and Colin Davey (Australia).

An organisation emerged, uncertain at first, that has steadily grown in stature, representing the world's most populous and diverse region. In this paper, we chronicle the development of ASPASP. We discuss the shaping and reshaping of its formal organisation, including the statutes and management. We consider the mission of ASPASP to develop sport psychology¹ in the Asian-South Pacific region. We reflect on the challenges of expanding membership to represent the broadest base across the region. We describe ASPASP international congresses, national and regional conferences, and links with world and regional organisations in sport psychology. We review ASPASP publications from nascent newsletters to major congress proceedings, the *Secrets of Asian Sport Psychology* edited e-textbook (Terry, Zhang, Kim, Morris, & Hanrahan, 2014), the ASPASP website, and now the launch of the exciting periodical, the *Asian Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* (AJSEP).

We also discuss the increasing role of ASPASP in education, including supporting symposia and conferences across the region, promoting the development of national organisations, supplying free educational resources to developing countries, and importantly, the first ASPASP-sponsored, open access course, *Elite Sport Performance: Psychological Perspectives* (Terry & Martin, 2015). The ASPASP constituency encompasses

the whole of Asia from Israel, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia in the west to Korea, Japan and the Philippines in the east and all points in between, plus Oceania, which encompasses Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands.

Evolution of ASPASP statutes

Fujita's original 1989 statutes document for ASPASP was based largely on the statutes of the ISSP, its "parent" organisation. Perhaps in recognition of the diversity of the Asian-South Pacific region, the 1989 statutes were relatively general in content. As the ASPASP Managing Council (MC) came to recognise the complexities of managing an organisation that aimed to represent more than 60 countries, including some of the most economically and technically sophisticated, the most populous, and some of the more isolated, smallest, and least-developed nations in the world, inevitably changes to the statutes occurred over time.

The original statutes stated that ASPASP "is the international organisation devoted to the promotion of sport psychology in the Asian and South Pacific countries and territories" (Article 1, ASPASP Statutes, 1999, p. 2). The statutes included six purposes (Article, 2) primary amongst which was "to support and promote scientific research in sport psychology and its application, interpretation and dissemination" (ASPASP Statutes, 1999, p. 2). The other purposes were to organise ASPASP congresses, to promote scientific relations among those working in sport psychology, to facilitate dissemination of information among members, to coordinate ASPASP official publications, and to facilitate the establishment of national societies of sport psychology. Three types of membership were created (Article 4), namely individual, group, and fellows, qualified by the important statement that, "All members have equal privileges of voice and vote in ASPASP" (ASPASP Statutes, 1999, p. 2). The statutes designated seven officers (Article 5): President, three Vice-Presidents, Secretary General, Treasurer, and Immediate Past-President. One Vice-President was to be nominated as Senior Vice-President.

An ASPASP MC (Article 6) was established by the statutes that was required to convene at least once every two years. It consisted of the seven officers and a national representative for each country. The statutes identified a General Assembly (Article 7) "comprised of all members who are present at the meeting" (ASPASP Statutes, 1999,

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¹ Throughout this paper, the term sport psychology should be understood to also incorporate exercise psychology and motor learning.<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajsep.2021.03.002>

p. 4), which convened every four years at the ASPASP Congress. Annual Membership Subscriptions (Article 8) were determined for Individual and Group members. ASPASP Elections (Article 9) were described, including announcement and nomination rules, as well as voting rights and procedures. The ASPASP Congress (Article 10) was also described, including brief instructions for nomination of the site and selection of the host, as well as the payment of individual congress fees. Finally, an ASPASP publication (Article 1.1) was identified in the form of a newsletter.

Since its inception, ASPASP MC has proposed several significant changes to the statutes that have been supported by the General Assembly. In particular, the statute changes have influenced how ASPASP achieves its goals of representing individuals and groups interested in sport psychology throughout the region. As issues were identified that appeared to obstruct the development and functioning of ASPASP, they were discussed by MC, sometimes at several MC meetings and by electronic communication between those annual face-to-face meetings. Then, changes proposed by MC were disseminated by national representatives and through the official ASPASP publications. In the early years, the only publication was the ASPASP newsletter. More recently, the ASPASP website has become the principal mode of information dissemination. Ultimately, ASPASP MC presented the proposed changes to the statutes to the General Assembly for approval.

ASPASP individual and group membership subscriptions was an issue that caused concern for some time. The original structure of individual and group membership fees was based on the model established by ISSP. In ISSP, individual membership involved an annual subscription and countries could opt to pay a group fee, which gave the country additional voting rights. However, most individual memberships of ISSP came from more affluent countries, where members could afford the subscription. In ASPASP, it soon became apparent that this system would restrict individual membership to those from a small number of countries. To promote the broader development of sport psychology within the region, ASPASP MC proposed a fee system for individual and group members. For individuals, the standard annual fee, passed by the ASPASP General Assembly at the 1999 ASPASP Congress, was US\$10, reducing to US\$6, US\$3, and even US\$1 for countries with lower Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It soon became evident that bank fees were often substantially more than subscriptions and asking individuals to pay ASPASP fees to their national representative failed to resolve the problem. ASPASP MC considered revenue to be less important than members, so proposed that individual membership fees be replaced by a system in which individuals joined their national organisation, and national organisations paid a group membership, based on number of members. Then, all members of the national organisation automatically became members of ASPASP. This change to the statutes was approved at the 2007 General Assembly and enacted at the 2011 General Assembly, increasing membership dramatically to approximately 4500 members, due to the large membership of national organisations in Korea (>2300), Japan (>800), and India (>600).

Another aspect of the formal structure of ASPASP that was refined on the basis of experience, relates to the structure and function of the MC. One issue of concern was that, as ASPASP grew and became more complex, most of the administrative burden fell on the President and the Secretary General. There were three Vice-Presidents, but they did not have designated roles, aside from one being identified as the Senior Vice-President, which was not associated with any duties, except to stand-in if the President had to step aside for any reason. ASPASP MC proposed that each Vice-President took responsibility for a major area of ASPASP activity, namely Programs, including the ASPASP Congress, Membership, and Publications. To increase the active involvement of all MC members, it was further proposed that every MC member should join a sub-committee associated with one of the three major areas of activity chaired by the relevant Vice-President. This change in the statutes was enacted at the 1999 General Assembly.

Growth of the Association over its first 20 years, necessitated a more significant statute change associated with the structure of the ASPASP MC. Article 6 of the statutes stated that the ASPASP MC should consist of seven officers and a national representative for each country. In the early years, the number of countries was small, comprising those that reflected advanced development of sport psychology, including Japan, China, Israel, Korea, Hong Kong, India, Taiwan, Australia, and New Zealand. Hosting early ASPASP MC meetings was manageable. In ASPASP Congress years, MC meetings were held in conjunction with the Congress, usually immediately before or at the start of the Congress, so that decisions made could be communicated to the membership at the General Assembly later in the Congress. Costs could largely be absorbed within Congress revenue. Annual MC meetings were possible in years when there was no ASPASP Congress by invitations from member countries that usually sought financial support from government, academic, or sport organisations to accommodate and feed ASPASP MC members. In return, MC members presented at a seminar or small conference run by the host country, at which the hosts could charge fees to other delegates to offset some of the cost of hosting the ASPASP MC. The list of dates and locations for Congresses and MC meetings is shown in Table 1.

As the number of ASPASP member countries grew, the financial burden of hosting an ASPASP MC meeting in non-Congress years became onerous. When ASPASP was founded in 1989, the number of countries formally involved was small and increased slowly during the early years of the organisation. However, by 2003 there were 14 member countries, which increased to 17 by 2007, 19 in 2011, and the number currently stands at 25. In addition, it was possible for countries to have more than one representative on ASPASP MC because the wording of Article 6 of the statutes did not explicitly state that officers should act as their country's national representative. Thus, a number of countries, including Australia, China, Japan, and Taiwan, had an officer and a national representative on ASPASP MC up until 2011. Given that an ASPASP MC meeting by this time could involve more than 20 members, Article 6 of the statutes was changed to create a more manageable sized MC. The proposal was approved by the 2011 General Assembly in Taiwan that, in addition to the seven officers, ASPASP MC should have seven elected members. The proposal also stated that no country could have more than one officer and one elected member on MC at the same time. The revision of Article 6 produced a compromise between the broad representation of countries in the governance of ASPASP that was the intention of the original Article and the need for an MC of manageable size to facilitate face-to-face meetings.

In anticipation of continued expansion of the number of group member countries and the desire to ensure that all countries retained a voice in ASPASP activities and developments, the MC also proposed the creation of a National Representative Council (NRC), with every group member country being represented. During the intervening years between ASPASP Congresses, all ASPASP group members are kept informed about activities and proposed developments electronically and can contribute to discussion of issues and make proposals for developments. Then, at each ASPASP Congress, a face-to-face NRC meeting is convened by the Secretary General and chaired by the President. The national representatives of all group members are invited to attend this meeting, including all members of MC. Table 2 lists the names and countries of all ASPASP Presidents and MC members since the organisation was established, as far as existing records allow. It is acknowledged that this historical record is incomplete and, therefore, anyone with additional authenticated information regarding MC membership is invited to contact the authors by email.

Mission of the organisation

The mission of ASPASP was enshrined in the purposes stated in Article 1 of the original statutes (ASPASP Statutes, 1989), which focused on providing support and promotion for scientific research in sport psychology and its application across the region. This included promoting

Table 1
History of ASPASP establishment, managing council (MC) meetings and international congresses.

| Year | Location | Meeting |
|------|------------------------|--|
| 1988 | Cheonan, Korea | Proposal to establish ASPASP approved during Seoul Olympic Scientific Congress |
| 1989 | Singapore | ASPASP established during ISSP World Congress |
| 1990 | No Meeting | |
| 1991 | Melbourne, Australia | MC meeting/1st International Congress |
| 1992 | No Meeting | |
| 1993 | No Formal Meeting | Informal MC Meeting at ISSP World Congress in Lisbon |
| 1994 | No Meeting | |
| 1995 | Hong Kong | MC Meeting/2nd International Congress |
| 1996 | No Meeting | |
| 1997 | Netanya, Israel | MC Meeting |
| 1998 | No Meeting | |
| 1999 | Wuhan, China | MC Meeting/3rd International Congress |
| 2000 | No Meeting | |
| 2001 | Taipei, Taiwan | MC Meeting |
| 2002 | Singapore | MC Meeting |
| 2003 | Seoul, Korea | MC Meeting/4th International Congress |
| 2004 | Beijing, China | MC Meeting |
| 2005 | Sydney, Australia | MC Meeting |
| 2006 | Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia | MC Meeting |
| 2007 | Bangkok, Thailand | MC Meeting/5th International Congress |
| 2008 | Sydney, Australia | MC e-Meeting |
| 2009 | Gwalior, India | MC Meeting |
| 2010 | Chuncheon, Korea | MC Meeting |
| 2011 | Taipei, Taiwan | MC Meeting/6th International Congress |
| 2012 | Macau, China | MC Meeting |
| 2013 | Beijing, China | MC Meeting |
| 2014 | Tokyo, Japan | MC Meeting/7th International Congress |
| 2015 | Varanasi, India | MC Meeting |
| 2016 | Kuching, Malaysia | MC Meeting |
| 2017 | Bang Saen, Thailand | MC Meeting |
| 2018 | Daegu, Korea | MC Meeting/8th International Congress |
| 2019 | Osaka, Japan | MC Meeting |
| 2020 | Seoul, Korea | MC e-Meeting |

Table 2
ASPASP presidents and managing council members 1989–2022.

| Years | President | MC Members |
|-----------|--------------------------|---|
| 1989–1995 | Atsushi Fujita (Japan) | Michael Bar-Eli (Israel), Jitendra Mohan (India), Qi Wei Ma (China), Colin Davey (Australia), Gangyan Si (Hong Kong) |
| 1995–1997 | Kimihiko Inomata (Japan) | Qi Wei Ma (China), Jitendra Mohan (India), Michael Bar-Eli (Israel), Tony Morris (Australia), Likang Chi (Taiwan), Myungwoo Han (Korea), Gangyan Si (Hong Kong) |
| 1997–2011 | Tony Morris (Australia) | Atsushi Fujita (Japan), Likang Chi (Taiwan), Fatolla Mosayebi (Iran), Supitr Samahito (Thailand), Peter Terry (Australia), Liwei Zhang (China), Jin Yoo (Korea), Gregory Kolt (Australia), Naira Orbeta (Philippines), Bervyn Lee (Singapore), Jayashree Acharya (India), Nadhim Al-Wattar (Iraq), Roy Chan (Hong Kong), Yuanita Nasution (Indonesia), Huynh Nguyen (Vietnam), Zhai Qun (Macau), Annathurai Ranganathan (Malaysia), Toshihiko Tsutsumi (Japan), Ning Ziheng (Macau), Tony Morris (Australia), Frank Lu (Taiwan), Fatolla Mosayebi (Iran), Naruepon Vongjaturapat (Thailand), Liwei Zhang (China), Young-Ho Kim (Korea), Naira Orbeta (Philippines), Ahmad Alharamlah (Saudi Arabia), Kaori Araki (Japan), Chung-Ju Huang (Taiwan), Zhijian Huang (China), Jihang Lee (Korea), Mohd Nizar Padzi (Malaysia) |
| 2011–2014 | Peter Terry (Australia) | Peter Terry (Australia), Frank Lu (Taiwan), Young-Ho Kim (Korea), Naruepon Vongjaturapat (Thailand), Garry Kuan (Malaysia), Yong-Chul Chung (Korea), Dilip Dureha (India), Maria Luisa Guinto (Philippines), Zhijian Huang (China), Hirohisa Isogai (Japan), Suyen Liu (Taiwan), Emily Ortega (Singapore) |
| 2014–2018 | Liwei Zhang (China) | Liwei Zhang (China), Kaori Araki (Japan), Frank Lu (Taiwan), Naruepon Vongjaturapat (Thailand), Garry Kuan (Malaysia), Jayashree Acharya (India), Nadhim Al-Wattar (Iraq), Yu-Kai Chang (Taiwan), Maria Luisa Guinto (Philippines), Zhijian Huang (China), Ji-Hang Lee (Korea), Emily Ortega (Singapore), Dev Roychowdhury (Australia) |
| 2018–2022 | Young-Ho Kim (Korea) | |

the dissemination of research and practice through ASPASP congresses and symposia, via sharing information among persons and groups working in sport psychology across the region, and by overseeing official ASPASP publications, as well as by advising on the establishment of national sport psychology societies. ASPASP support for its mission is experienced through interaction of these elements. For example, hosting of congresses across the last three decades has provided opportunities for students training to be sport psychology researchers or practitioners

and newly qualified sport psychologists to share knowledge and practice with the most experienced colleagues in the ASPASP region and beyond.

The novices have returned home to develop the discipline in their own countries, building the foundation for the establishment of national organisations that have then become group members of ASPASP. These national societies have then been able to grow their own membership and to disseminate information through the ASPASP newsletter, web-

site, and academic books and journals. In turn, the number of delegates at ASPASP congresses has progressively increased and the overall quality of presentations has improved. More recently, the increase in the number of countries that are group members of ASPASP and the growing number of individual members that they represent has facilitated the organisation of periodic regional seminars and conferences to supplement the quadrennial ASPASP Congress. Regional meetings have provided opportunities to attend sport psychology events to students and practitioners from countries new to ASPASP because the venues are often geographically closer to their homes and the events offer lower fees than those typically charged for attendance at major congresses. MC members have always been sensitive to attendance at any ASPASP events by people from countries not formally linked with the association, so those new students, teachers, researchers, and practitioners can make connections that should lead to greater involvement in ASPASP through enhanced communication.

International and national congresses

As a central part of its mission to assist the development of sport psychology throughout the region, ASPASP sponsors a quadrennial international congress. However, the usual 4-year interval was changed in 2014 to align the congress with the year of the Olympic Winter Games, which was judged by the MC to increase the potential for sponsorship and boost delegate numbers. To date, eight congresses have been held, in Melbourne, Australia (1991), Hong Kong (1995), Wuhan, China (1999), Seoul, Korea (2003), Bangkok, Thailand (2007), Taipei, Taiwan (2011), Tokyo, Japan (2014), and Daegu, Korea (2018). The 9th ASPASP international congress will take place from 27–30 June 2022 in Kuching, Malaysia (see www.aspasp2022.com). ASPASP international congresses typically attract 300–500 delegates and include the production of a book (or CD-ROM/e-book) of peer-reviewed conference proceedings (e.g., Liu, 2011; Samahito, 2007; Si, 1999; Yoo & Kim, 2003). Keynote speakers at these conferences have included such luminaries in the field as Dan Gould (1991, 2014), Richard Ryan (2011), Richard Schmidt (2014), and Gabriele Wulf (2003). The inaugural ASPASP international congress in Melbourne in 1991 proved to be a less than auspicious start for the organisation, with a large number of no-show delegates causing the event to incur a significant financial loss. This resulted in the late Colin Davey, as conference organiser, having to pay a bill of several thousand dollars from his own pocket. Subsequent congresses have had a more secure financial footing thanks to the generous support of government agencies and commercial sponsors.

In between its quadrennial international congress, ASPASP regularly sponsors national and regional conferences. These have often been held in countries where, at the time, sport psychology was something of a fledgling discipline, struggling for credibility. Such events held in countries including Iran, Malaysia, Philippines, and Saudi Arabia, have provided impetus towards the establishment of national societies of sport psychology. Over recent years, a tri-nation initiative of the current President, Young-Ho Kim (Korea), Vice-President [Publications] Frank Lu (Taiwan), and Vice-President [Membership] Naruepon Vongjaturapat (Thailand), has seen regular professional and cultural exchange of young scholars between their respective countries. This has evolved into the ASPASP Mentoring Program, with workshops held recently at the Ho Chi Minh City University of Sport in Viet Nam (2018) and the Olympic Training Centre in Nepal (2019).

ASPASP MC meetings are often held in conjunction with larger events presented by national, regional or global organisations, with MC members presenting their own research and professional practice findings in exchange for hospitality and the provision of meeting facilities. Examples of these partnership arrangements include the 2005 MC meeting that formed part of the 11th ISSP World Congress in Sydney, Australia; the 2007 MC meeting, which was aligned with the Joint Scientific Congress of the Southeast Asian (SEA) Games and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Para Games in Bangkok, Thailand;

the 2010 MC meeting, which was absorbed into the 11th World Leisure Conference in Chuncheon, Korea; and the 2016 MC meeting, in Kuching, Malaysia, which showcased the work of ASPASP researchers alongside presenters at the Sukma International Sports Science and 2nd Malaysian Sports Psychology Conference.

Organisational links

Although ASPASP is a significant international organisation in its own right, it proudly identifies as being affiliated closely with the ISSP as the global umbrella organisation for the profession. Indeed, the establishment of ASPASP emerged as a direct result of encouragement from then ISSP President, Robert Singer. This close relationship has been cemented over the years via several leading ASPASP office bearers also holding positions on the ISSP MC, including Atsushi Fujita (Japan), Jitendra Mohan (India), Tony Morris (Australia), Myung-Woo Han (Korea), Likang Chi (Taiwan), Gangyan Si (Hong Kong/China) and Young-Ho Kim (Korea). ASPASP also collaborates with other continental organisations via co-authored publications, in particular the European Federation of Sport Psychology (FEPSAC) and the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP), on matters of mutual interest, such as the training and professional accreditation of practitioners (e.g., Morris, Alfermann, Lintunen & Hall, 2003; Schinke et al., 2018).

Some national organisations in the region preceded the establishment of ASPASP. For example, the Japanese Society of Sport Psychology came into being as early as 1973, followed by the Korean Society of Sport Psychology in the 1980s, which has published its own journal, the *Korean Journal of Sport Psychology*, since 1990. The Sport Psychology Association of India was established in 1985 and has enjoyed close links with ASPASP, hosting MC meetings and regional conferences on multiple occasions (Bhattacharya, 1987). One key strength of ASPASP as a regional umbrella organisation is the closeness of its relationship with existing and emerging national sport psychology groups.

Communications with members

For much of its history, ASPASP communicated with its members by publishing a newsletter twice a year in addition to sponsoring locally based symposia around the region. Regular communication channels were changed fundamentally by the development of a website for the organisation. Roy Chan (Hong Kong) established the first ASPASP website in the early 2000s but it was discontinued when he stepped down from the MC. A new ASPASP website at its current domain address (www.aspasp.org) was created by Peter Terry on behalf of the MC and launched in October 2008. This represented a quantum leap forward for the organisation in terms of its capacity to communicate with members and kindred spirits outside of ASPASP.

Following its launch, traffic through the website grew rapidly to more than 100,000 hits annually, nullifying the need for bi-annual newsletters, and quickly established itself as the primary communication tool. However, given that the website was designed to be informational rather than interactional, its usefulness waned somewhat as communication preferences shifted to social media. In 2011, ASPASP launched its own Facebook page, then managed by MC members Naira Orbeta (Philippines) and Kaori Araki (Japan), and now by Emily Ortega (Singapore) and Garry Kuan (Malaysia). The ASPASP website has been rebuilt twice since its inception, firstly by webmaster Neil Martin (Australia) in 2015 and then by current MC member Dev Roychowdhury (Australia) in 2019.

Major publications

Other than conference proceedings published in conjunction with the quadrennial international congresses, for a major international organisation, ASPASP has until recently had a less than distinguished record of producing learned publications. At the 2011 ASPASP MC meeting held

in Taipei, Taiwan, the association committed to the production of an e-textbook titled *Secrets of Asian Sport Psychology* to assist the development of sport psychology throughout the region. This landmark project for the association was coordinated by Peter Terry as he began his tenure as ASPASP President, ably supported by co-editors Liwei Zhang (China), Yong-Ho Kim (Korea), Tony Morris and Stephanie Hanrahan (both Australia). Importantly the book was to be published under a creative commons (CC-BY) licence (see creativecommons.org) enabling it to be distributed freely as an open access resource. This was a critical feature of the project, given that the cost of commercially produced textbooks was beyond the means of a large proportion of individuals within the ASPASP region.

Secrets of Asian Sport Psychology (Terry, Zhang, Kim, Morris, & Hanrahan, 2014), which was officially launched at the 7th ASPASP International Congress in Tokyo, includes 21 chapters describing how many of the region's best athletes have used sport psychology techniques to achieve their success. The book links countries to sports at which they excel, including Archery in Korea, Gymnastics in China, Boxing in the Philippines, Triathlon in Australia, Rugby in New Zealand, Judo in Japan, Wrestling in Iran, Shooting in India, and so on. Chapters are authored by experienced applied practitioners working at the front line of elite sport, who provide authentic accounts of the psychology underpinning the success of Olympic and World champions. In many instances, the activities and techniques described in the book represent the first time these practitioners have chronicled their applied work; hence why *Secrets* was included in the title. Very deliberately, the book is visually stunning having benefitted from the efforts of multiple graphic designers and the inclusion of hundreds of creative commons-licensed colour photographs. With the benefit of significant sponsorship from the University of Southern Queensland, a print run of 100 copies of *Secrets of Asian Sport Psychology* was produced to present to dignitaries.

Discussions around launching an official journal for ASPASP occurred at MC meetings as early as 2011. Indeed, an online pilot journal issue was produced in 2016 with Garry Kuan as editor, in the form of a special issue of the *Journal of Physical Activity, Sports & Exercise*. However, it was not until the Tianjin University of Sport (TUS, China) generously offered to underwrite the production costs and Chengshu Ji from TUS and Chee Keng John Wang from Nanyang Technical University (Singapore) stepped forward as Editors-in-Chief, that ASPASP felt confident enough to launch the open access *Asia Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* as its official journal.

Gender disparity

Sport psychology has always been a male-dominated profession globally, although there has been some movement towards gender parity in recent decades (see Terry, Parsons-Smith, Quartiroli, & Blackmore, 2020). This gender imbalance exists despite females being in the majority in the parent discipline of psychology in most parts of the world, including the ASPASP region (Rich, Jaafar & Barron, 2020). In several Asian countries, notably China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, female academics tend to experience acute difficulty balancing professional and domestic responsibilities, which conspires to limit research productivity and involvement in applied practice (Tang, 2019). The membership and management of ASPASP has, disappointingly, also reflected this gender imbalance, although several female professionals have played prominent roles in the development of sport psychology in the region, either as part of the ASPASP MC and/or as conference organisers. We pay tribute to those women who have made such valuable commitments to ASPASP, including Jayashree Acharya (India), Yuanita Nasution (Indonesia), Riho Tonoue and Kaori Araki (Japan), Naira Orbeta and Maria-Luisa Guinto (Philippines), Emily Ortega (Singapore), Suyen Liu (Taiwan), and Supitir Samahito (Thailand).

Online training

As a tentative first step towards some form of standardized accreditation across the region and to provide additional free resources to interested parties, ASPASP MC committed to developing an open access course in sport psychology. The online course, *Elite Sport Performance: Psychological Perspectives* (Terry & Martin, 2015) was launched in 2015 and has, to date, attracted more than 22,000 users from no fewer than 161 countries, with over 200,000 pageviews. Within the ASPASP region, the greatest engagement with the course, as assessed by number of unique users, has come from Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, India, Taiwan, Philippines, Indonesia, China, Japan, and Iran. Interest from further afield has been considerable, with access originating, in descending order, from USA, Holland, UK, Russia, Italy, France, Greece, Brazil, Canada, and Germany.

More than 1000 people initially enrolled in the course when it was first offered in mid-2015, of whom 20% gained a certificate of completion for having finished all nine learning modules and developing an individualised mental training program for one of eight hypothetical elite athletes, each presenting with different performance issues. Twenty seven percent of learners completed all modules and 51% completed some modules; engagement statistics that significantly exceed the 12% completion rate that is normal for massive open online courses (MOOCs; Jordan, 2015). Although the course has had minimal promotion since 2016, a further 13,000 users have accessed course content since then. By design, the course promotes self-paced and autonomous learning, taking a recommended 40–80 h to complete, including opportunities for genuine choice and deeper exploration of specific learning concepts of interest to individuals (see Martin, Kelly & Terry, 2018).

Despite the popularity of the open course, the certificate of completion available to registrants has no currency in terms of inferring competence as a sport psychologist and should not be presented as such. It's fair to say, however, that the course and the accompanying e-textbook, *Secrets of Asian Sport Psychology* (Terry, Zhang, Kim, Morris, & Hanrahan, 2014) represent tangible examples of ASPASP's commitment to raising the standard of sport psychology services in the Asian-South Pacific region.

Accreditation issues

Among the more developed countries of the ASPASP region, sport psychology has been organised nationally for several decades. Countries including Australia, China, Japan, and Korea, all have well-established processes for accrediting sport psychologists and vibrant research communities. Other Asian countries, including Iran, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, have made significant strides in recent years to develop sport psychology as a profession and a credible area of research. Both China and Korea have 3-tier systems of accreditation for sport psychologists that require various combinations of relevant academic qualifications and applied experience under supervision. In Australia, the accreditation of sport psychologists is aligned with the psychology profession more generally. Sport psychologists first gain general registration as a psychologist and then complete the requirements for their specialist area of practice endorsement, which typically includes an accredited doctorate and one year of full-time equivalent practice with an approved supervisor (see Schinke et al., 2018 for further details). The formal accreditation of sport psychology professionals across the region represents a thorny challenge for ASPASP. It is an unresolved dilemma for the organisation to determine whether to align itself with the ISSP accreditation process (ISSP, 2020) or attempt to put in place an ASPASP-specific accreditation process.

Cultural specificity of professional practice

An ongoing thrust within ASPASP has been to promote culturally specific forms of psychological services. The sharing of diverse experi-

ences and integration of different psychological approaches and techniques has allowed practitioners across the ASPASP region to expand their repertoire of sport psychology knowledge and skills. In China, for example, the base of athlete development in sport psychology involves technique-oriented training in goalsetting, relaxation, imagery, biofeedback, and other mental skills, not dissimilar to Western approaches. However, important cultural and philosophical strategies such as calligraphy, education of Buddhism for self-control, and a dialectic approach to understanding the true meaning of winning and losing, overarch these mental training techniques. Accounts of consultation experiences confirm that Chinese athletes are exposed to both western and eastern methods in their psychological preparation (Ding et al., 2014; Si, Yue-Li, & Chen, 2016).

Moreover, the Whole-Nation sport system in China has a hierarchical, top down ethos, whereby psychology services are allocated to sports centrally by General Administration of Sport officials (Si, Duan, Li, Zhang & Su, 2015). This central government influence facilitates almost unparalleled levels of support for athletes in major international competitions. No fewer than 33 sport psychologists delivered services to Chinese national teams in the lead up to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and 22 attended the Games. A total of 45 of 51 gold medals won by Chinese athletes in Beijing came from teams receiving significant sport psychology support (Si et al., 2015, Zhang, 2014).

Conclusion

Since its inception, country membership of ASPASP has grown steadily. In 2020, ASPASP has representation from 25 countries; namely, Australia, China, Fiji, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Korea, Kuwait, Macau, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

In addition to the major growth in individual membership and member countries of ASPASP, the Association has a number of other achievements of which to be proud. These include the establishment of a vibrant quadrennial international congress that has attracted major figures from sport psychology as keynotes and increased in quality as well as size, and the creation of a website that is now widely viewed by interested individuals from within the region and around the world. ASPASP has also produced a ground-breaking book on sport psychology, sharing secrets of the techniques of practitioners from the breadth of Asia and the South Pacific, and an online course that has been globally studied and that provides a foundation for accreditation within the region and beyond. Importantly, as Article 1 of the original statutes called for, ASPASP has supported and encouraged the development of sport psychology teaching, research, and practice within the region through the increasing occurrence of national and cross-national conferences and seminars, collaborations, and mentoring programs. The launch of the *Asian Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* may be the pinnacle of ASPASP achievements to date.

Although the development of ASPASP has accelerated over the past decade or so, there is still great untouched potential within the Asian-

South Pacific region. ASPASP aims to further develop its program of meetings at which colleagues from neighbouring countries can exchange information and ideas. It also aims to expand the range of publications by sponsoring books that reflect sport psychology activity within the region, as well as research-oriented and practice-focused journals. The future holds many opportunities for this rich and diverse region, which in turn has much to offer in sport psychology to the rest of the world.

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