

## **Skills development or talent identification? An exploration of sport development initiatives in three previously disadvantaged communities in Tshwane, South Africa**

JANINE BOTHA<sup>1</sup> AND ENGELA VAN DER KLASHORST<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*University of Pretoria, Department of Sport and Leisure studies, University of Pretoria, Pretoria 0002, South Africa. E-mail: Janine.b.tech@gmail.com*

<sup>2</sup>*Centre for Multicultural Youth, 304 Drummond Street, Carlton, Victoria, Australia 3053.*

*(Received: 6 February 2019; Revision Accepted: 15 October 2019)*

*ORCID: JB (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2865-4677>), Ev-dK (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4110-6496>)*

*DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37597/ajphes.2020.26.4.10>*

### **Abstract**

The development of skilled athletes and players is an important step towards creating a winning sporting nation. Even though there are a variety of approaches that can be used to develop the sport skills of young athletes, the overall consensus is that this process takes time. This study explores the sport development approach currently used in sport development programmes in the previously disadvantaged communities<sup>a</sup> of Atteridgeville, Eersterust and Mamelodi in Tshwane, South Africa, by distinguishing between two phases in sport development, namely talent identification and skills development. The study utilised a qualitative research approach with key informant sampling comprised of sport administrators and coaches involved in sport development. Data were collected by means of document analysis and semi-structured interviews which were transcribed and coded using *Atlas.ti 8* software. It was concluded that the current sport development initiatives available to athletes aged between 7 and 18 years, residing in previously disadvantaged communities in Tshwane portray characteristics of talent identification rather than a skills development approach. Recommendations include provision of additional support to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in providing young athletes the opportunity to develop both sport and life skills in Sport for Development (SfD) initiatives.

**Keywords:** Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD), skills development, talent identification, sport development, previously disadvantaged community.

### ***How to cite this article:***

Botha, J. & van der Klashorst, E. (2020). Skills development or talent identification? An exploration of sport development initiatives in three previously disadvantaged communities in Tshwane, South Africa. *African Journal for Physical Activity and Health Sciences*, 26(4), 481-500. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37597/ajphes.2020.26.4.10>

---

<sup>a</sup>The description ‘previously disadvantaged communities’ refer to the three marginalised communities in the study (Atteridgeville, Eersterust and Mamelodi). The three communities were previously identified as ‘townships’ during Apartheid government which ended in 1994 following multiracial democratic elections. Even though it is now referred to as ‘previously disadvantaged’ these communities are still being disadvantaged in terms of sport and recreation services, and general infrastructure and governmental services (Nxumalo, 2015).

## Introduction

Sport is a powerful tool that has the influence to bring people together regardless of their origin, their background, their religious beliefs or their economic status (Darnell, 2010; Vanhatalo, Jones & Burnley, 2011). It can, however, also sew and accentuate division among people. South Africa - as a country with a history of deep division as result of government policy, legislative acts and economic conditions - presents a good example of how sport can both be a unifying and dividing force.

A memorable example of sport as a unifying force was seen in action in 1995, a year after the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as president, when South Africa not only hosted the Rugby World Cup, but walked away as champions. The Springboks, also known as Amabokoboko, triumphed over New Zealand's All Blacks and saw South Africans rejoicing as one unified nation (Richardson, 2018). The biggest win for the country, however, did not happen on the field, but rather in the hearts of South Africans, with the former president, better known as "Madiba", cheering alongside Springbok captain Francois Pienaar. The action of lifting the trophy became a unifying gesture for South Africans, signifying that a common ground can be found amidst diversity.

In 2010, South Africa's ability to come together as a nation was again illustrated in the build-up to hosting the FIFA World Cup. South Africans from all walks of life were united in wearing the national team's (Bafana Bafana) official jersey on Fridays, whilst the sound of 'Waka Waka' the official song of the 2010 FIFA World Cup was heard in offices and schools, as well as across cultural and racial boundaries. Not only did the mega sports event bring South Africans together around a unifying goal, but it branded South Africa as, "*an authentic nation-brand*" (Knott, Fyall & Jones, 2015:51).

With sport playing such an important role in unifying South Africa as a nation, the implementation of measures to facilitate equal access and opportunities to sport, and to essentially transform the sport landscape, became essential. The Department of Sport and Recreation South Africa (SRSA) responded to this need by presenting a National Sport and Recreation Plan (NSRP) with "*the strategic focus of reconstructing and revitalising the delivery of sport and recreation towards building an active and winning nation that equitably improves the lives of all South Africans*" (SRSA, 2012:3). Transformational measures that were put in place included a quota system, that even though it provided the first step towards a more equal playing field, it did not alter the uneven landscape of sport in South Africa (Penrose, 2017), as young athletes from previously disadvantaged communities still do not have the same opportunity to develop sport skills compared with their peers from more affluent areas of the country.

It is widely recognised by researchers that the development of sport skills starts from a young age (Goodway & Robinson, 2015; Myer, Lloyd, Brent & Faigenbaum, 2013). Transformational measures should, as result, not only be focused on providing equal opportunities during team selections, but also on providing ample opportunities for young athletes in township communities to be provided enabling access and opportunities to develop adequate sport skills. The uneven landscape of sport in South Africa is especially visible when opportunities to develop sport skills presented to young athletes residing in affluent and middle class communities are compared to those of the young athletes living in townships or informal settlements. Differences in opportunities start from pre-school right through to high school. Whereas the young person attending a previous Model C school<sup>b</sup> will have access to a good quality in-school physical education programme as well as to extra-curricular sport academies, the young person schooling in a previously disadvantaged community, will not have the same access to quality physical education, and will have to rely on sport development initiatives and programmes presented by Sport for Development non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and sporadic programmes implemented by sport federations.

This study aims to evaluate the current approach to sports development used by sport federations and franchises in the implementation of sport development programmes for young athletes residing in the previously disadvantaged communities of Atteridgeville, Eersterust and Mamelodi in Tshwane, South Africa. It is hypothesised that current sport development programmes presented by the Department of Sport and Recreation and Sport Federations utilise a short-term talent identification approach rather than a longer-term sport skills development strategy. It was also hypothesised that even though this approach has been successful in producing talented athletes, it is not aligned with the strategic objective of the NSRP about ensuring that equal opportunities exist for all South Africans to participate and excel in sport and recreation through the adoption of deliberate transformation initiatives (SRSA, 2012).

### ***Talent Identification versus Sport Skills Development***

Vaeyens, Lenoir, Williams and Philippaerts (2008: 1) defined talent identification as “... *the process of recognising current players that have the potential to excel in sport ... Talent identification involves attempts to predict future capacity of performance of an individual.*” Talent identification remains the preferred pathway for many national federations and sport franchises worldwide, to identify gifted athletes at a young age, in an attempt to focus available resources on the development of a smaller number of athletes with the potential to excel in future

---

<sup>b</sup> Former Model-C schools, a term often used to describe former white-only government schools, receive a subsidy from the State just like their ‘no fee’ state school counterparts, but unlike the ‘no fee’ state schools, former Model-C schools also receive additional funding from the school fees paid by parents and are generally better resourced than the public schools in townships.

sport competitions. Even though this approach makes financial sense, it does not come without risks to athletes' long-term development.

Côté and Hancock (2016) warn that the long-term prediction of talented athletes is unreliable, especially when talent identification is attempted during the pre-pubertal or pubertal growth periods. The defining characteristics of what constitutes a prospective athlete are often limited to physical characteristics and preclude social and psychological traits (Nia & Besharat, 2010). Adolescents who may possess certain characteristics will not necessarily retain these characteristics into adulthood (Vaeyens *et al.*, 2008; Williams & Reilly, 2010), thereby detracting from the value of talent identification as an appropriate approach for sports such as swimming, netball, rugby and athletics. Even though the talent identification approach has been proven to successfully identify young athletes who portray talent for a specific sport (Schorer, Baker, Busch, Wilhelm & Pabst, 2009), the context in which the process is applied must also be considered.

Skill development requires a broader catchment approach than talent identification and development. It necessitates the provision of an opportunity to acquire general sporting skills that may be transferable to other sports. Whereas talent identification focuses on identifying athletes with the potential to excel in a specific sport, skills development is concerned with the general development of sporting skill. A skills development approach would therefore require a longer time and financial investment, but it would enable participants to transfer skills between sports (Bowers & Green, 2010).

A skill development approach is visible in the process utilised in former Model C schools in South Africa. A foundation of sport skills is developed over the course of the primary school years, with opportunities to participate in rugby, cricket, swimming, athletics, hockey, netball, and tennis. Even though the most talented players are selected to represent school teams, skills development opportunities are open for all. School sport programmes in previously disadvantaged communities are, in comparison, often constrained by a lack of trained sport coaches (Whitley, Gould, Wright & Hayden, 2017), as well as poor facilities, and equipment (Huish, Carter & Darnell, 2013). In an attempt to provide young athletes and players from previously disadvantaged communities with an opportunity to develop sport skills, non-governmental organisations have stepped into this void by presenting sport for development (SfD) initiatives. Programmes presented by SfD NGOs are, however, focused on the development of life skills and may not present the most viable developmental pathways for young athletes or players (Burnett, 2010).

Sport federations, even though they are focused on the development of sport skills, are restricted by the need to identify talents from a large number of participants. Such programmes being organised in a previously disadvantaged community can,

therefore, see 500 participants reduced to 50 in as short a week's duration. Stark, Lorenzo and Landman (2016:45) reiterate the disadvantage that young athletes from previously disadvantaged communities face by quoting the late South African icon, Steve Biko, on life in a township: "*Township life alone makes it a miracle for anyone to live up to adulthood.*"

There has been an increase in the number of theoretical models developed over the last two decades in an attempt to understand how athletes develop in sport (Coutinho & Fonseca, 2016). One of these models, the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model, based on a physiological perspective, has been proposed as a viable approach to developing sporting skills and talents (Ford, De Ste Croix, Lloyd, Meyers, Moosavi, Oliver, Till & Williams, 2011). This model has also been proposed as a panacea for developing young sporting talents in South Africa in an attempt to combat early specialisation (Zeeman, 2014).

The LTAD model aids our understanding of the development of sporting potential alongside biological growth and it includes the use of critical or sensitive periods of adaptation. LTAD involves seven particular stages that, if correctly followed, can ensure that proper athlete development takes place at a rate and at speed not exceeding the athlete's physical, social and cognitive ability (Balyi, Way & Higgs, 2017). The first stage of the LTAD model starts the sport skill development process with emphasis on play and the acquisition of basic skills required in sport. Stages two and three see young athletes participating in more structured activities and developing foundational sport skills. In the fourth stage, which occurs at around 11 to 16 years of age, athletes are anatomically and physiologically adaptable and responsive to physical training, and the young athlete starts to build a training repertoire. It is only during the fifth stage that participation is connected to high performance competition. In this stage the athlete decides whether to pursue an active recreation or competitive stream of participation. Stage six is synonymous with the most intense high-performance training to win at elite level internationally. The final stage, stage seven, has no age restrictions, and promotes an active lifestyle regardless of whether it is recreational or on a competitive level (Balyi *et al.*, 2017). The goals set by the LTAD model can, however, only be achieved if school education programmes are connected and integrated with those of the community and the elite sport clubs.

### ***Sport Development Programmes in South Africa***

In an attempt to rectify past transgressions, to transform and to level the sport and the recreation landscape in South Africa, the Department of Sport and Recreation South Africa (SRSA) developed a NSRP, which represents an "*eight-year sustainable implementation plan for the sport and recreation policy*" (SRSA, 2012:6). In this document (SRSA, 2012), the SRSA identifies three core pillars of

implementation: (1) an active nation; (2) a winning nation; and (3) an enabling environment.

Pillars 2 and 3 are of special interest to the development of sport in South Africa as they are focused on the identification and development of athletes, through the implementation of a structured system; the improvement of athletes' performance by providing them with access to a comprehensive range of support programmes; and on providing formal sports participation opportunities through an integrated and sustainable club structure (SRSA, 2012). Delivery partners for talent identification and development programmes, as identified in the NSRP (SRSA, 2012), include the Department of Sport and Recreation, provincial and local government, sport academies and tertiary institutions. The NSRP further emphasised the importance of an integrated club structure for which the National Federations in the various sports are the key players in developing sporting talent across the country (SRSA, 2017).

Sport clubs in previously advantaged communities play an important role in the development of athletes with weekly training and regular opportunities for competition. Coupled with a strong school sport culture in middle class and affluent communities, the sport skills and the talent of athletes from the middle and higher income areas are developed according to principles advocated by both the LTAD and the Foundation, Talent, Elite and Mastery (FTEM) framework, which represents the three outcomes of sport participation, namely an active lifestyle, sport participation and sport excellence (SRSA, 2017).

In stark contrast is the offering of National Federations in marginalised and previously disadvantaged communities. Over-populated classrooms and a lack of sport facilities often hinder the availability of a school sport programme. Coupled with a club structure that does not extend to previously disadvantaged communities in a similar way as it does to more affluent areas, the sport skills and talent of athletes residing in these communities are left to be developed in a 'survival of the fittest' approach, also labelled as the Standard Model of Talent Development (SMTD). According to this model, development and performance are linear and the early ability that is identified as talent indicates future ability and performance. The selection process which often occurs as part of a sports clinic, or outreach programme, is done at the cost of the wider group with the focus on athletes identified as talented (Bailey & Collins, 2013).

In their paper entitled, *"The standard model of talent development and its discontents,"* Bailey and Collins (2013:249) emphasised that the apparent success of this model is an optical illusion, as *"there is no way of knowing who might have succeeded through different systems, and who were de-selected from the system, but might have (under different circumstances) gone on to achieve high performance."* As a result, it is possible to identify successful athletes who have

succeeded as a result of being identified during a five-day clinic, in which eight hundred participants were reduced to forty talented athletes; however, it is not possible to identify participants who have been overlooked in this superficial process.

The current LTAD model used by the South African National Federations does not allow for the equitable provision of opportunity as it only permits athletes identified as talented to develop a foundation of sport skills. Even though it provides athletes from previously marginalised communities with the opportunity to be identified as potential athletes, it does not offer a level playing field from which athletes could be identified. Athletes from previously marginalised communities do not have the same opportunity to develop sport skills compare with their peers residing in middle and higher socio-economic suburbs, and consequently have a limited opportunity to be identified as ‘talented athlete’.

The Department of Sport and Recreation has introduced measures to evaluate and assess whether sport development targets are met by National Federations. In comparing the gap between targets set and those achieved by National Federations in sport development programmes, the following comment in the Annual Performance Plan is significant: “The mid-year report against targets set in the 2015/16 Annual Performance Plan, pointed to a challenge in achieving mainly the targets relating to the support of provincial sport development programs” (SRSA, 2016:17-18). Even though the current talent identification approach utilised by the SRSA have produced surface level positive results, a critical analysis of the annual performance data illustrate a significant gap in the provision of sustainable sport development programmes in previously marginalised communities, and therefore in the provision of sport skill development opportunities. It is pertinent to mention as an example, Altus Sport, a SfD NGO which presents opportunities for young people in previously disadvantaged communities to participate in sport. As an active partner in youth skills development, Altus Sport is not always included in the talent development conversation; however, its contribution to long-term athlete development cannot be negated. An example of Altus Sport’s contribution to sport development is its programme offering which includes participation in athletics, rugby, hockey, soccer, netball, chess and basketball in communities where that is often the only opportunity for sport participation among the youth (Burnett, 2010).

## **Methodology**

### *Research design*

This study utilised a qualitative approach to gain insight into the current sport development programmes in previously disadvantaged communities in the City of Tshwane, South Africa, which focused on athletes aged between 7 and 18 years (Gratton & Jones, 2010). Literature focusing on youth sport development approaches between 2005 and 2019 were reviewed.

### Participants

A non-probability, key informant sample was used, with research participants selected on the basis of their experience as coaches or as senior sport federation administrators (Walliman, 2016) in the City of Tshwane. Inclusion criterion was at least a year's experience as sport administrator or coach in one of the selected sports as verified by the respective federations prior to the interview. Five sports were included in the research sample, with four of them involved in document analysis (see Table 1 below).

A total of 15 possible research participants were identified through a combined process of Sport Federation suggestions as well as word-of-mouth. After consideration of the inclusion criteria, a total of 8 participants were selected. This group consisted of coaches and middle-level managers within the identified Sport Federations. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted at venues selected by research participants, with each interview period not exceeding 90 minutes.

**Table 1:** Sports included in the study

Sport	Federation/Franchise	Data Collection Procedure	
		Document Analysis	Semi-Structured Interviews
Cricket	Cricket South Africa (Titans)		
Hockey	Hockey South Africa (Northern Hockey)		
Rugby	Rugby South Africa (Blue Bulls Rugby Union – BBRU also known as Vodacom Bulls)		
Soccer	South African Football Association (SAFA)		
Swimming	Swimming South Africa (Gauteng)		

### Study setting and context

The study setting included sport development programmes delivered to young participants aged between 7 and 18 years of age residing in Atteridgeville, Eersterust and Mamelodi, all located in the City of Tshwane, South Africa. Atteridgeville is located to the south-west of Tshwane and is home to approximately 64 000 people and 20 primary and secondary schools (Moodley, Matjila & Moosa, 2012; Statistics SA, 2011a). The Eersterust community, situated to the west of Mamelodi, was the least populated among the three communities with about 30 000 people (Statistics SA, 2011b). Mamelodi, as the largest community in the study, has an estimated population of 334 000 people, and is situated to the northeast of Tshwane (Statistics SA, 2011c).



The three communities included in the study were historically characterised by a lack of service delivery, overpopulation, a lack of resources and infrastructure, and high rates of unemployment and poverty (Nxumalo, 2015; Visser, Makin, Vandormael, Sikkema & Forsyth, 2009). Even though South Africa introduced numerous strategies to facilitate social integration, communities like Atteridgeville, Eersterust and Mamelodi, previously known as townships, are still plagued by these same challenges (Hamann & Horn, 2015).

Skill development initiatives in the communities studied included Sfd programmes provided by NGOs and events hosted by sport federations. Sport programmes presented by Sfd NGOs, for example, Altus Sport, are focused on using sport as tool to develop life skills in participants. This is often - apart from the very limited sport participation opportunities presented at school - the only opportunity that young athletes residing in previously disadvantaged communities have to develop sport skills. Sport events presented by sport federations in the community included sport clinics and opportunities to participate in sport tournaments. None of the research participants could, however, identify more than one clinic hosted for young athletes residing in the identified research communities. The programmes identified presented in the three communities included in the study were financially supported by national sport federations through the grants received from the Department of Sport and Recreation. Sport skill development opportunities presented by sport federations were based on the SMTD model as the selection process usually occurs as part of sport clinic or outreach programme presented, which is done at the cost of developing sport skills in the wider group of participants (Bailey & Collins, 2013). This model, therefore, focuses solely on progressing young athletes identified as talented, and as result directly leads to a number of athletes being removed from the system even though they may meet the identifiable standard later on (English, Nash & Martindale, 2018).

#### *Data collection instruments*

Data collection for the study comprised semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The development of the semi-structured interview instrument was guided by an extensive literature review (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016), coupled with hands-on experience gained in the sport development industry. The construction of questions included in the semi-structured interview followed a localist approach as this allows the researcher to explore complex issues from different theoretical perspectives, thus enabling formulation of research questions which resemble a conversation between two people (Qu & Dumay, 2011).

Documentary sources were grouped according to the Framework Method (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid & Redwood, 2013) and included vision and mission statements, policy documentation, and, promotional documentation presented by the sports included in the study (Ahmed, 2010). Documentary sources used in this

study were in the public domain and were therefore available without the need to obtain informed consent (Creswell, 2013). Trustworthiness of data was enhanced by addressing the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility was attained by providing research participants with the opportunity to validate data gathered during the semi-structured interviews. The use of *Atlas.ti 8* as a content analysis tool facilitated both dependability and confirmability of data as the process of analysis ensured that findings and interpretations made by the researchers were derived from the data (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017; Tracy, 2010). The transferability of data was achieved through the creation of an audit trail (see below the description of how authors worked from individual codes to themes) as well as as through research participants providing feedback on interpretation of collected data (Lub, 2015).

### *Ethical considerations*

This study adhered to the ethical considerations required to protect human participants. These considerations included protecting the privacy of participants, confidential treatment of information; adherence to voluntary participation and informed consent (Gratton & Jones, 2010). In addition to adhering to these ethical considerations, the study obtained ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Humanities (Reference number: GW0180922HS).

### *Data analysis*

Audio-recordings of the semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim. Documentary sources were converted to Microsoft Word and PDF files and together with the transcribed audio-recordings, formed the data analysed and coded on the qualitative data analysis platform, *Atlas.ti 8*. The analysis process was done according to the Framework Method in which a set of codes organised into categories jointly developed by researchers are used to organise the data (Gale *et al.*, 2013).

The initial list of codes was sorted, and they were merged into code categories using the 'Merge Codes' function. Merged codes were labelled as best practice in sport development initiatives that focus on skills development; talent identification versus skills development; skills development transition to sport development; and alternative suggestions to current sport development programmes. In an effort to reduce investigator bias, a reflective commentary was used to elucidate researcher predispositions and to acknowledge beliefs which may have impacted on decisions made in the coding process (Shenton, 2004).

## **Results and Discussion**

The data analysis process generated 84 open codes which were merged into 26 lower order themes. The lower order themes were then grouped into 12 higher

order themes, which were subsequently subdivided into 4 dimensions or major themes:

- 1) Current sport development programmes in previously disadvantaged communities;
- 2) 'Best practice' sport development initiatives focused on skills development for athletes between the ages of 7 and 18 years;
- 3) Talent identification versus skills development; and
- 4) Suggested amendments to the current approach to sport development in previously disadvantaged communities, to facilitate skills development.

### **Theme 1: Current sport development programmes in previously disadvantaged communities**

Themes under the current sport development programmes in marginalised communities in Tshwane centred around the need to increase the number of sport development programmes; the systemic disadvantages from South Africa's history that are still evident in the transformation of sport landscape; and the barriers to sport development programme implementation.

#### *Subtheme 1.1: An increase in sport development programmes needed in previously disadvantaged communities*

The need for more sport development programmes in previously disadvantaged communities was a strong theme that surfaced from research participants' statements. For example, one of them stated: *"That's why we want to do development because we think there is a lack of it."*

Participants further emphasised the need to introduce sports like hockey and rugby, into communities not previously familiar with the sport: *"Especially now in the senior team, it's always the same players in the team ... there aren't enough development players coming through the system at all. It's also difficult because hockey isn't really a part of black culture. So that makes it difficult. Those that are here are good but there aren't enough players."*

#### *Sub-theme 1.2: Systemic setbacks prevalent in previously disadvantaged communities*

The prevalence of structural drawbacks due to historical injustices within previously disadvantaged communities was a theme which corroborated the findings of Whitley, Wright and Gould (2013), as well as that of Swart, Bob, Knott and Salie (2011). One of the research participants highlighted the deep-rooted systemic disadvantages in a previously white sport such as rugby: *"There is very little being done for marginalised athletes in terms of rugby specifically. Since the competition that is being hosted for the marginalised groups doesn't create much interest globally; there is not much initiative from governing bodies to invest*

*resources to marginalised athletes or stakeholders in the sport. With enough players from disadvantaged areas on scholarships in schools, the need to develop players in township areas is topped by the cost involved.”*

In an attempt to ‘right the wrongs’ of South Africa’s political past, a quota system was introduced, which ensured that players from historically disadvantaged communities were included in provincial and national sports teams (Bailey & Talbot, 2015).

Even though this system contributed hugely to equalising the sport landscape, it might not have addressed the gaps left by the past, as highlighted by a research participant: *“But now there is a gap. Because these players haven’t been developed before now, they are dropped into provincial level and you can see the difference. There are the players who have been developed and then those players who aren’t, there is a massive gap. So, it actually then disadvantages these kids.”*

### *Sub-theme 1.3: Barriers to sport development in previously disadvantaged communities*

Despite the great number of barriers faced by sport administrators in developing sports in previously disadvantaged communities, a number of programmes are being implemented and run annually. The majority of these programmes are overseen or monitored by federations, yet they are largely funded and supported by external stakeholders. Some of the participants highlighted the external stakeholders as follows: *“We have the Danone under 12”*; *“We have the McDonalds under 14”*; and *“We have the Copa Coca Cola under 15”*.

The short-term nature of the programmes was, emphasised however, as a barrier to skill development, as expressed in the following statement: *“to be part of these programmes, players need to have the necessary skills. This is the next level in sport development. It is the first level that is missing ...”*

The development of coaches was acknowledged as a barrier by several research participants: *“More help with new coaches to get them up to standard.”* The development of young athletes is impacted by a lack of certified coaches in previously disadvantaged communities as expressed by an administrator: *“... the course is also not free. Because the cost means that only those with money can continue and they are not necessarily the talented ones ... we try to handle and support as we can, so that people don’t stay away ...”*

Two barriers not typically identified as barriers to sport development in the literature are the use of language and the lack of access to transport. One participant highlighted language use as a barrier to skills development: *“Another point is people in football are in the African community, so we have a language barrier. So, all the manuals are in English because the manuals are from overseas*

*because the foreigners are the leaders in terms of coaching, etc. now it's a barrier. We are trying to work on something more appropriate. So, if we have someone going to do courses, we have people there who can speak the native language as well as English who can facilitate and help with the language barriers."*

The lack of access to transportation was identified as one of the biggest barriers to current sport development programmes by the majority of the research participants. Communities within Gauteng province can become forgotten or harder to reach, which results in their exclusion from sport development programmes as indicated by a participant: *"... places are so remote that people from different races had never met each other and this in itself became a barrier to the programme's success."*

## **Theme 2: Best practice sport development initiatives focused on skill development for athletes aged 7 to 18 years old**

Research participants identified the characteristics of 'best practice' sport development programmes as those focused on the inclusion of athletes in previously disadvantaged communities. Such programmes have extended time periods in previously disadvantaged communities and are supported by external stakeholders.

### *Subtheme 2.1: Inclusion of athletes in previously disadvantaged communities*

Several research participants emphasised that best practice of sport development initiatives have a strong focus on the inclusion of athletes from previously disadvantaged communities. Factors identified by participants as contributors to the inclusion of athletes from such communities include the development of clubs within communities, which will allow for the diversification of current opportunities. For instance, a participant stated: *"More clubs in the township areas will allow athletes to grow up in a sport – not just as player, but as a human being."*

Research participants further suggested the need to include communities, thereby facilitating the inclusion of young athletes from previously disadvantaged communities into sporting opportunities. This suggestion is encapsulated in the following statement: *"I know that it is not always possible to have high performance sport programmes in every community, but we can at least try to train community residents to have some form of programme going to allow young people to have a go ..."*

### *Sub-theme 2.2: Sport development programmes with extended time periods in previously disadvantaged communities*

The need to provide a longer-term sport development programme that allows young athletes with adequate time to develop sport skills is a recurring theme in

sport development literature (Côté & Abernethy, 2012; Henriksen, Stambulova & Roessler, 2010). This characteristic of best practice in sport development programmes was corroborated by some research participants: *“Young athletes must be allowed time for natural development of talent and skill”* and *“you cannot expect a young person to develop the necessary skill for a sport that is new to them in 5 days ... sport development needs time.”*

As a result of short-term, talent identification focused programmes, there are skill gaps in the athletes who are absorbed into provincial and national teams based on the quota system. The following excerpts of a participant’s statement exemplify the skill gaps: *“They also know that they are in the team because they have to be (quota). Some of them are in the team because they have been through the system. But most of them who are in the group you can see the big difference in skill and understanding. It’s bad. They haven’t been developed like on their school level. Now they get selected above another good player into the provincial team and then you see the massive difference. They don’t feel good about it. It causes a big dropout rate.”*

#### *Subtheme 2.3: Support by external stakeholders*

Participants emphasised the role of federations and organisations as instrumental to the long-term development of skills: *“It is the responsibility of the organisation to enhance them (talent) through development programmes. At the moment it is like a blame game – it’s not our responsibility ...”*

The importance of support by external stakeholders (Burnett, 2010) in the process of sport development was highlighted by a participant: *“Most importantly sport development is not a one-man show, a lot of parties have to come together to ensure that the sport developmental programmes are structured, implemented, run and monitored in a manner that is not just a one-time thing, but that it happens continuously to create and to promote interest in those sporting codes (sports).”*

### **Theme 3: Talent identification versus skill development in sport development programmes**

Participants were knowledgeable and well informed about sport development programmes that are currently operational in Tshwane. Opportunities identified ranged from formal tournaments to the more informal programmes provided by NGOs. The absence of longer-term sport development programmes was an important theme which emerged from the data, as it highlighted the current talent identification focus of sport development programmes in the previously disadvantaged communities. There seemed to be a general consensus that for the most part, the most successful athlete would be an individual who has a natural inclination or orientation either for their chosen sport or for sport in general (Gray & Plucker, 2010). Therefore, an individual’s natural born ability would be directly

tied into their long-term success and ability to reach the highest levels of sport. For example, a participant stated: *“We are very conscious about the fact that our success is based on talent, so talent must be developed by the people who are themselves skilled...”*

The two central concepts under study - talent identification and skill development - were distinguishable by participants, in terms of time needed and results acquired. They remarked: *“I’m talking about the social aspects, the technical, tactical, mental aspect and physical aspects. It’s like a pentagon ... to me, talent identification isn’t just players that are already there and good, but who have the potential to become a good player”*.

Skills development was described as a longer-term approach that is more focused on the types of training that an individual would receive in order to amplify their skills. Another participant also commented: *“In the organisation I am involved in, it is the processes that we go through to create camps for potential players that we see have the capability to go through the players’ pipeline to face opportunities that will help them and grow them into being potential professional and elite cricket players in our country and system.”*

An important theme that emerged was that sport development or skills development initiatives are sometimes misrepresented with the narrative of developing individuals and their skills, as well as providing opportunities for participation. A participant tried to clarify his view as follows: *“Each and every officer at the festivals acts as talent identification scouts. We have talent identification processes throughout the country. Now as we speak, we have provincial technical officers and in the past we had head coaching in the provinces. They used to select talent. Bring them together and prepare them for SAFA inter provincial tournaments.”*

Skills development programmes are therefore used as talent identification opportunities, with the goal of scouting talented athletes. For instance: *“In terms of a local scale I also believed it is flawed. Instead of trying to improve the game from grassroots level upwards, as suggested by the Long-Term Athlete Development-Model (LTAD-Model), they want to start at the top level and work their way down. This will, in turn, ensure a good national team in the long-term, and generate more interest from new and potentially very talented players.”*

#### **Theme 4: Suggested amendments to the current approach to sport development in marginalised communities to facilitate skills development**

Respondents were almost unanimous in their response that not enough is being done and that more can be done to improve structures, to create more opportunities as well as sport programmes. A participant aptly remarked: *“More opportunities*

*need to be created to allow for skills development.*” The majority of participants expressed the need for development initiatives to be based on the true premise of the LTAD-Model.

One participant strongly expressed his belief that the application of the LTAD-Model is flawed and that the current top-down process should be amended to a bottom-up process: *“In terms of a local scale I also believed it is flawed. Instead of trying to improve the game from grassroots level upwards, as suggested by the Long-Term Athlete Development-Model (LTAD-Model), they want to start at the top level and work their way down. They believe that if they can create a good national team, they will create enough interest from younger players to commit to the sport on a long-term basis. They then proceed to do very minimal development at grassroots level, but just enough to ensure that there will always be talented players to choose from. They should start by completely changing their vision and mission. In my opinion they should start development from the grassroots level.”*

Research participants indicated funding as a barrier to sport development programmes in the previously disadvantaged communities studied: *“The barriers I would say is still resources even though NGOs and government SAFA try hard, but finance is a problem. If you’re talking of 52 million people and of them 20 million are kids 17 and younger - it is difficult.”*

New sponsorship partnerships were suggested as an alternative to finance sport development initiatives in marginalised communities, for example: *“You need someone who is really good at working with people. A people person who is business orientated who has entrepreneurship. They are looking for sponsors and I think that the other countries do have that ...”*

One of the leading suggestions revolved around developing a network between national federations to allow for the holistic development of young athletes: *“The main goal should be the development of the young athlete. Ball skills are transferable. Fitness is transferable. Yes, each sport has sport-specific skills, but we should stop thinking in that way. If it becomes a shared responsibility, more kids will benefit, and South Africa will ultimately be the better for it.”*

## **Conclusions and implications for sport policy**

The present study was conducted to fill a gap in sport development research on the approach used to develop sporting talents among young athletes residing in previously disadvantaged communities in Tshwane. It is acknowledged that the results of the study present only a partial view of the sport development landscape in Tshwane. This study was exploratory in nature, and more research is needed on the impact of sport development approaches in previously disadvantaged communities.



Research participants in the study play an integral role in the sport development decision-making process for previously disadvantaged communities in Tshwane. Even though participants conceded that there are challenges and shortcomings in the current offering, it was emphasised that sport development programmes are critical to facilitate a foundation from which athletes can be selected and placed into provincial, national and elite teams.

The results of the study suggest that the current sport development approaches in previously disadvantaged communities in Tshwane for athletes aged 7 to 18 years are aligned towards the use of talent identification principles rather than a longer-term skills development approach. Research participants acknowledged the benefits of a longer-term sport skills development approach, but emphasised that this approach is not currently feasible due to financial challenges. It is suggested that additional funding for longer-term programmes be sought from the sport federations and private funders.

The research results support the goals of working towards a ‘winning nation’, but are also applicable to creating an ‘active nation’, both of which are set as goals in the White Paper on Sport and Recreation (SRSA, 2012). An implication of the present study’s findings is that the Department of Sport and Recreation considers reversing the current talent identification and development processes to first focus on developing sport skills and thereafter to identify talent. It is recommended that this change of strategy be led by the Department of Sport and Recreation through the national federations until sport skill development opportunities presented at school level are equitable, regardless of their locations.

## **References**

- Ahmed, J.U. (2010). Documentary research method: New dimensions. *Indus Journal of Management & Social Sciences*, 4(1), 1-14.
- Bailey, R. & Collins, D. (2013). The Standard Model of Talent Development and Its Discontents. *Kinesiology Review*, 2(4), 248-259. DOI: 10.1123/kry.2.4.248.
- Bailey, R. & Talbot, M. (2015). Opportunities for ‘all ‘versus ‘gold ‘for sport and country: A South African discourse. In Bailey, R. & Talbot, M. (Eds.), *Elite Sport and Sport-for-All* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.) (pp. 105-119). London: Routledge.
- Balyi, I., Way, R. & Higgs, C. (2017). *Long-Term Athlete Development: Long-Term Athlete Development Follows Seven Stages*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Bowers, M. T., Chalip, L. & Green, B. C. (2010). Youth sport development in the United States and the illusion of synergy. In B. Houlihan & M. Green (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sports Development*. London: Routledge.

- Burnett, C. (2010). Sport-for-development approaches in the South African context: A case study analysis. *South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation*, 32(1), 29-42.
- Coutinho, P., Mesquita, I. & Fonseca, A. (2016). Talent development in sport: A critical review of pathways to expert performance. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 11(2), 279-293.
- Côté, J. & Abernethy, B. (2012). A developmental approach to sport expertise. *The Oxford Handbook of Sport and performance Psychology*, 435-447.
- Côté, J. & Hancock, D.J., (2016). Evidence-based policies for youth sport programmes. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 8(1), 51-65.
- Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Darnell, S.C. (2010). Power, politics and “sport for development and peace”: Investigating the utility of sport for international development. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 27(1), 54-75.
- English, C., Nash, C. & Martindale, R. (2018). The effects of structural change: An investigation into the South African cricket development pathway. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 10(2), 371-391.
- Ford, P., De Ste Croix, M., Lloyd, R., Meyers, R., Moosavi, M., Oliver, J., Till, K. & Williams, C. (2011). The Long-Term Athlete Development model: Physiological evidence and application. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 29(4), 389-402.
- Goodway, J.D. & Robinson, L.E. (2015). Developmental trajectories in early sport specialization: A case for early sampling from a physical growth and motor development perspective. *Kinesiology Review*, 4(3), 267-278.
- Gratton, C. & Jones, I. (2010). *Research Methods for Sports Studies* (2nd ed.). Routledge: London.
- Gray, H.J. & Plucker, J.A. (2010). “She's a natural”: Identifying and developing athletic talent. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 33(3), 361-380.
- Gale, N. K., Heath, G., Cameron, E., Rashid, S. & Redwood, S. (2013). Using the framework method for the analysis of qualitative data in multi-disciplinary health research. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 13(1), 117–120.
- Hamann, C. & Horn, A. C. (2015). Continuity or discontinuity? Evaluating the changing socio-spatial structure of the city of Tshwane, South Africa. *Urban Forum*, 26(1), 39-57.
- Henriksen, K., Stambulova, N. & Roessler, K.K. (2010). Holistic approach to athletic talent development environments: A successful sailing milieu. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 11(3), 212-222.
- Huish, R., Carter, T.F. & Darnell, S.C. (2013). The (soft) power of sport: The comprehensive and contradictory strategies of Cuba's sport-based internationalism. *International Journal of Cuban Studies*, 5(1), 26-40.

- Kallio, H., Pietilä, A.M., Johnson, M. & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic methodological review: Developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 72(12), 2954-2965.
- Knott, B., Fyall, A. & Jones, I. (2015). The Nation-Branding Legacy of the 2010 FIFA World Cup for South Africa. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 22(6), 569-595.
- Lub, V. (2015). Validity in qualitative evaluation: Linking purposes, paradigms, and perspectives. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 14(5), 1-8.
- Moodley, S.V., Matjila, M.J. & Moosa, M.Y.H. (2012). Epidemiology of substance use among secondary school learners in Atteridgeville, Gauteng. *South African Journal of Psychiatry*, 18(1), 2-7.
- Myer, G. D., Lloyd, R. S., Brent, J. L. & Faigenbaum, A.D. (2013). How young is “too young” to start training? *ACSM's Health & Fitness Journal*, 17(5), 14-18.
- Nia, M.E. & Besharat, M.A. (2010). Comparison of athletes' personality characteristics in individual and team sports. *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 5, 808-812.
- Nowell, L.S., Norris, J.M., White, D.E. & Moules, N.J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16, 1-13.
- Nxumalo, S.B. (2015). The fallacy of the term ‘the previously disadvantaged’. *Media for Justice*, Retrieved from <https://www.mediaforjustice.net/the-fallacy-of-the-term-the-previously-disadvantaged/>, accessed 6 November 2019.
- Penrose, B. (2017). “The right thing to do?” Transformation in South African sport. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 36(3), 377-392.
- Qu, S.Q. & Dumay, J. (2011). The qualitative research interview. *Qualitative research in accounting & management*, 8(3), 238-264.
- Richardson, J. (2018). The remarkable power of sport to bring about reconciliation. *The South African*, retrieved from <https://www.thesouthafrican.com/opinion/the-remarkable-power-of-sport-to-bring-about-reconciliation/>, accessed 12 September 2019.
- Schorer, J., Baker, J., Büsch, D., Wilhelm, A. & Pabst, J. (2009). Relative age, talent identification and youth skill development: Do relatively younger athletes have superior technical skills? *International Research Association for Talent Development and Excellence*, 1(1), 45-56.
- Shenton, A.K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 63-75.
- SRSA (2016). *Sport and Recreation South Africa, Annual Performance Plan. 2016/ 2017*. [online] Pretoria: Department of Sport and Recreation South Africa, pp.17, 18. Retrieved from: [https://www.srsa.gov.za/sites/default/files/SRSA%20APP%202016\\_17%20LR.PDF](https://www.srsa.gov.za/sites/default/files/SRSA%20APP%202016_17%20LR.PDF), accessed 7 November 2019.
- SRSA (2012). Department of Sport and Recreation SA. Transformation Charter for South Africa Sport. Retrieved from <http://www.srsa.gov.za/pebble.asp?relid=1438>, accessed 14 September 2019.

Stark, S., Lorenzo, T. & Landman, S. (2016). Shaped by place: Environmental influences on the participation of young cyclists from disadvantaged communities in professional cycling. *South African Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 46(2), 44-57.

Statistics South Africa (2011a). Atteridgeville. [http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page\\_id=4286&id=11387](http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=4286&id=11387), accessed 8 October 2019.

Statistics South Africa (2011b). Eersterust. [http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page\\_id=4286&id=11378](http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=4286&id=11378), accessed 8 October 2019.

Statistics South Africa (2011c). Mamelodi. [http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page\\_id=4286&id=11377](http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=4286&id=11377), accessed 8 October 2019.

Swart, K., Bob, U., Knott, B. & Salie, M. (2011). A sport and sociocultural legacy beyond 2010: A case study of the Football Foundation of South Africa. *Development Southern Africa*, 28(3), 415-428.

Tracy, S.J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight “big-tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851.

Vaeyens, R., Lenoir, M., Williams, A.M. & Philippaerts, R.M. (2008). Talent identification and development programmes in sport. *Sports Medicine*, 38(9), 703-714.

Vanhatalo, A., Jones, A.M. & Burnley, M. (2011). Application of critical power in sport. *International Journal of Sports Physiology and Performance*, 6(1), 128-136.

Visser, M.J., Makin, J.D., Vandormael, A., Sikkema, K.J. & Forsyth, B.W. (2009). HIV/AIDS stigma in a South African community. *AIDS Care*, 21(2), 197-206.

Walliman, N.S.R. (2016). *Your Research Project: A Step By Step Guide for the First-Time Researcher* (2nd ed.) (pp.15-78). London: Sage Publications

Williams, A. & Reilly, T. (2010). *Talent Identification and Development in Soccer*. London: Taylor & Francis. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02640410050120041>, accessed 17 September 2017.

Whitley, M.E., Gould, D., Wright, E.M. & Hayden, L.A. (2017). Barriers to holistic coaching for positive youth development in South Africa. *Sports Coaching Review*, 7(2), 171-189.

Whitley, M.A., Wright, E.M. & Gould, D. (2013). Coaches' perspectives on sport-plus programmes for underserved youth: An exploratory study in South Africa. *Journal of Sport for Development*, 1(2), 53-66.

Zeeman, J. (2019). Long Term Athletic Development. Retrieved from <http://www.saschoolsports.co.za/national/long-term-athletic-development.html>, accessed 25 September 2019.