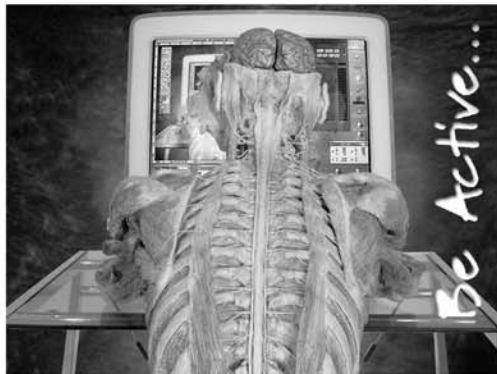




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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION



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In a constantly growing world where technology has exceeded its expectations tenfold, the active mind of South Africa's youth lies dormant behind screens of intelligence. The Medical Research Council recently found 45% of South Africa's population to be overweight or even obese. Perhaps the most alarming, is the fact that 20% of children under the age of 6 are overweight. (www.health24.com) No matter what the cause - be it school funding cuts, shortage of facilities, computers or the internet – kids today are not involved in enough physical activity to achieve and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Initiatives of Government and the Private Sector strive to provide classroom environments that are active and produce children who will maintain healthy habits of exercise and nutrition throughout their lives. **SPARK** (Sports, Play & Active Recreation for Kids) is an elementary school physical education research programme whose purpose is to reduce heart disease risk in youth and promote healthy lifestyles for the future. (www.foundation.sdsu.edu) **Nike Go Places** takes old worn-out athletic shoes and other footwear materials, grinds them up and turns them into sports and play surfaces. Locally, **Super Sport's Let's Play** initiative has recently started collecting used sports gear and equipment to be distributed to those who can't afford their own.

Sport education not only enhances physical health, but also improves the development of motor skills, leadership qualities and even teamwork which lends for better socially equipped youngsters. (www.sparkpe.org) The inclusion of teachers and parents in these type of activities, ensures for community involvement and greater awareness. These initiatives become a school-based solution to our nation's health care crisis.

South Africa has the privilege of hosting the **2010 Soccer World Cup** which provides the perfect opportunity to create sport awareness. Soccer can become the driver for getting kids active and out of doors. Some abandoned tennis courts have already been turned into soccer pitches. The willingness is there; it is time to provide the means. This dissertation hopes a Sport Centre for Marabastad will create a healthy community.

