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**EXPLORING THE EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCES  
OF  
STUDENTS, EX-STUDENTS AND PARENTS/CAREGIVERS  
OF A SPORT ACADEMY PROGRAMME**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
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## ABSTRACT

This case study explored the expectations and experiences that past and current students and parents/caregivers have of a secondary school sport academy programme. These programmes have become increasingly common in the New Zealand secondary school system and are diverse in operation and philosophical underpinning. Yet, despite their popularity, they remain relatively unexplored in terms of the experiences of young people who participate in them.

Current members of a secondary school sport academy programme were interviewed, together with parents/caregivers and a limited number of ex-students. The director and implementers of the programme were also interviewed. Furthermore, observations were completed and documentation gathered on the sport academy programme. Information collated was analysed using multiple data sources that included a combination of quantitative methods in relation to the questionnaires and qualitative strategies for the interviews, observations and documentation.

Analysis revealed that the sport academy was just one of a number of experiences contributing to a member's sporting achievement. Improvement in academic attitude and effort was also not significant. This was almost certainly due to the current selection criteria, as many of the participants had demonstrated athletic and academic talent prior to applying. Investigation of the expectations of the current and ex-members and their parents/caregivers showed that some of these had not been met, including components noted in the sport academy documentation.

A career in a student's chosen sport was not perceived to be a motive to be a part of the programme, but the camaraderie and similarities students shared being athletically gifted, were perceived as important reasons to participate. Self-confidence was an additional positive outcome. A number of concerns were raised by this research. Both the students and the parents/caregivers indicated that they would like NCEA qualifications established as part of the academic curriculum within the sport academy programme. Furthermore parents/caregivers preferred more involvement and communication with the sport academy director.

Results from the study support the contention that sport academy programmes are viable vehicles for those identified as athletically gifted.

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*Ehara tāku toa i te toa takitahi, i te toa takitini.*

Not by my strength alone, but by the strength of the many.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Chapter One: Introduction</b> .....  | 1  |
| <b>Chapter Two: Research rationale</b> .....  | 4  |
| 2.1 Meeting the needs of the athletically gifted in New Zealand:<br>A sport academy justification ..... | 4  |
| 2.2 The research problem .....  | 5  |
| 2.3 Why ask them? The importance of the student experience .....  | 6  |
| <b>Chapter Three: Literature Review</b> .....   | 9  |
| 3.1 Sport in New Zealand secondary schools .....  | 9  |
| 3.2 The sport academy phenomenon .....  | 11 |
| 3.3 Introducing the athletically gifted person .....  | 15 |
| 3.4 The importance of the student experience .....  | 23 |
| <b>Chapter 4: Methodology</b> .....   | 27 |
| 4.1 Ethics approval and procedures .....  | 28 |
| 4.2 Description of the selected school .....  | 29 |
| 4.3 Combining ethnography and case study research methodologies ...                                     | 30 |
| 4.4 Qualitative data analysis .....   | 32 |
| 4.5 Interviews .....  | 34 |
| 4.6 Collecting information about the sport academy programme .....                                      | 36 |
| 4.7 Individual interview participants: The implementation group .....                                   | 36 |
| 4.8 Focus group interview participants: Students .....  | 37 |
| 4.9 Questionnaires .....  | 39 |
| 4.9.1 Ex-participants .....   | 40 |
| 4.9.2 Parents/caregivers .....  | 40 |
| 4.10 Observations .....   | 41 |
| 4.11 Data analysis: Student reports .....   | 41 |
| 4.12 Summary .....  | 42 |
| <b>Chapter Five: Results and Discussion</b> .....   | 43 |
| 5.1 Section one .....   | 44 |
| 5.1.1 Description of the sports academy programme .....   | 44 |
| 5.1.2 The selection process: Identifying the 'complete package' ..                                      | 46 |
| 5.1.3 The philosophy: Supporting the athletically gifted .....  | 48 |
| 5.1.4 The aims of the sport academy programme .....   | 50 |
| 5.2 Section two .....   | 51 |
| 5.2.1 Analysing the research participants' experiences of<br>sport academy aim one.....                 | 51 |

|  |   |            |
|--|---|------------|
| 5.2.2  | Some missing components .....   | 59         |
| 5.2.3  | Analysing the research participants' experiences of sport<br>academy aim two .....              | 64         |
| 5.2.4  | Analysing the research participants' experiences of sport<br>academy aim three .....            | 73         |
| 5.3  | Section three .....   | 82         |
| 5.3.1  | Self confidence .....   | 83         |
| 5.3.2  | Adolescent identity development .....   | 85         |
| 5.3.3  | National certificate of educational achievement (NCEA)<br>qualifications .....                  | 92         |
| 5.3.4  | Parental involvement .....  | 94         |
| <b>Chapter Six: Conclusion .....</b>             |   | <b>97</b>  |
| <b>Appendices .....</b>                          |   | <b>101</b> |
| Appendix A: Information sheets .....             |   | 102        |
|  | Information sheet one .....   | 102        |
|  | Information sheet two .....   | 104        |
|  | Information sheet three .....   | 106        |
| Appendix B: Consent forms .....                  |   | 108        |
|  | Participation and access to achievement data<br>(current students and parents/caregivers) ..... | 108        |
| Appendix C: Questionnaires .....                 |   | 110        |
|  | Ex-students .....   | 110        |
|  | Parents/caregivers .....  | 112        |
| Appendix D: Draft questions for interviews ..... |   | 114        |
|  | Current students .....  | 114        |
|  | Implementers and director .....   | 117        |
| <b>References .....</b>                          |   | <b>118</b> |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Figure 1. Number of sport academies in New Zealand secondary schools.....   | 6  |
| Figure 2. Renzullis' three-ring model of giftedness .....   | 20 |
| Figure 3. A conceptualisation of athletic talent adapted from Renzulli's<br>three-ring model of giftedness (Ellis, Riley, & Gordon, 2003) ..... | 21 |
| Figure 4. Line graph showing averages of participants'<br>attitude and effort grades .....  | 74 |

## LIST OF TABLES

|           |   |    |
|-----------|---|----|
| Table 1.  | Student participants .....  | 37 |
| Table 2.  | Student participants interviewed .....  | 38 |
| Table 3.  | I/we feel that my/our child/ren will benefit greatly from this programme .....  | 52 |
| Table 4.  | It would help my/our child/ren to develop their athletic potential/talents .....  | 52 |
| Table 5.  | It would help me develop my athletic potential/talents .....  | 53 |
| Table 6.  | My/our child/ren has achieved better results in their personal sport/s because of this programme .....  | 54 |
| Table 7.  | I felt that I benefited greatly from the sport academy programme .....  | 55 |
| Table 8.  | I felt that I achieved better results in my personal sport/s because of the sport academy programme .....   | 57 |
| Table 9.  | While my/our child/ren has been in the sports academy programme I/we have noticed a positive impact on their attitude and effort in their sport/s .....         | 65 |
| Table 10. | While my/our child/ren has been in the sports academy programme I/we have noticed a positive impact on their desire to succeed .....                            | 66 |
| Table 11. | I believe that the sports academy programme had a positive impact on my attitude towards my sport .....   | 66 |
| Table 12. | I/we see my/our child/ren being an elite athlete as a possible career .....   | 69 |
| Table 13. | I saw being a professional athlete as a possible career .....   | 69 |
| Table 14. | Achievement levels for effort and attitude .....  | 73 |
| Table 15. | Averages of participant's attitude and effort grades .....  | 74 |
| Table 16. | It would help my/our child/ren in their academic progress .....   | 75 |
| Table 17. | It would help me in my academic progress .....  | 76 |
| Table 18. | While my/our child/ren has been in the sports academy programme I/we have noticed a positive impact on their attitude and effort in other school subjects ..... | 76 |
| Table 19. | I believe that the sports academy programme had a positive impact on my effort in other school subjects .....   | 79 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Table 20. I believe that the sports academy programme had a positive impact on my attitude towards school .....                              | 79 |
| Table 21. While my/our child/ren has been in the sports academy programme I/we have noticed a positive impact on their self-confidence ..... | 83 |
| Table 22. I believe that the sports academy programme had a positive impact on my self-confidence .....                                      | 84 |

## CHAPTER ONE:

### INTRODUCTION

In contemporary New Zealand society, to say that sport is important is a significant underestimation. Given the emphasis that New Zealand places on sport it might be assumed that New Zealand would have advanced and effective processes for identifying and developing sporting talent within the education system (Grant & Pope, 2000; Pope, 2001). In reality however, very little has been done to cater appropriately for athletically gifted young people, (especially young women) (Ellis, Riley and Gordon, 2003). Nonetheless, some secondary schools have introduced an approach that provides flexible and diverse opportunities for developing a students' sporting potential. This approach is called the Sport Academy Programme.

Sport academy programmes in secondary schools have become increasingly common. While they have received some attention in the media, in general, little is really known about their functioning. Tristram and Batty (2000) in a pioneering piece of research provided a basic description of the number and nature of sport academies in New Zealand. They discovered that sport academy programmes were implemented for a variety of reasons and were diverse in function. However, the growth of these programmes has generated curiosity amongst the secondary educational fraternity, with physical educationalists, sport administrators and school management now requiring further research to answer some of the in-depth questions (Tristram & Batty, 2000). For example, what aspects of a sport academy do students themselves value and what are their own views on the attention being given to their specific needs? Tristram and Batty (2000) concluded that the challenge is to translate the answers to those questions into actions that result in the sound and effective management of sport academies.

There has been very little empirical investigation into the establishment of sport academy programmes within secondary school institutions and the impact they have on those students who participate in them (Pope, 2001). Pope (2002) further concluded that studies have concentrated primarily on the implementation of programmes and the achievements of participants from the teachers' perspectives with

little attention being given to the student experience. However, the understanding of any new initiative can be enriched by considering the subjective experiences of the participants themselves (Pope & Grant, 1996). Furthermore, Clough, McCormack and Trail (1993) believed that young people have important perspectives on how their involvement in sport could be enhanced, leading to sport programme improvement.

Tristram and Batty (2000) stated that there are a variety of reasons as to why these programmes have been developed and implemented. One reason has been to support teenagers identified as athletically gifted. In the field of gifted education, the terms 'gifted' and 'talented' are no longer seen as a single entity or category, with recent definitions and theories moving towards multiple intelligences that acknowledge a diverse range of special abilities (Gagné, 1985, 1997a, 1997b; Marland, 1972; Ministry of Education, 2000, 2002; Renzulli, 1986a; Renzulli & Reis, 1997; Sternberg, 1991; 1995; Taylor, 1978, 1986; Working Party on Gifted Education, 2001). These definitions cast a wide net that takes into account achievers and potential achievers in many areas of giftedness and talent, including and apart from the intellectual. Therefore it is now more widely accepted that children who perform at a very high level may appear in every field of endeavour. These include, the creative thinkers, dancers, musicians, artists, mechanics and engineers (Cathcart & Dawson, 1995).

In recognition of this shift, the Ministry of Education (2000) identified the need to acknowledge the importance of the New Zealand sport culture. This has encouraged the promotion of physical abilities as one of the many areas of talent that relate to giftedness (Ministry of Education, 2000). This New Zealand perspective differs from some other areas of the world where athletics continues to remain outside the definitions of gifted education (Moltzen, Riley, & McAlpine, 2001). Earlier work by Gardner (1983) referred to this area of giftedness as bodily-kinaesthetic, while Marland (1972) and McAlpine and Moltzen (1996) have used the term psychomotor ability. There are a range of appropriate gifted approaches needed to meet the requirements of youth in secondary schools. Sport academies are an example of an appropriate approach to gifted student programme development that can facilitate the improvement of athletically gifted teenagers.

This research examined a particular sport academy programme by seeking the experiences of current and ex-students who have participated in the programme. As such, the research literature endorses the use of the student voice in supplying the experiences of those associated with the programme. The perspectives of the current and ex-members have been analysed to explore the impact the programme has had on their sporting achievement and academic attitude and effort.

Parents/caregivers of the sport academy participants were included to ascertain their expectations and to gain their impressions of the impact of the programme on their children. While many factors enable talented youth to flourish, the most important of these are related to the family and circumstances into which an individual is born (Tannenbaum, 1991). As such, parents/caregivers have provided a perspective that is often ignored by schools in programme evaluation and achievement, yet they have a unique and potentially more positive view of the strengths, individuality and special attributes of their children (Weinstein, 2002).

The director and the implementers of the sports academy were also included in the study. Interviews conducted with this group of research participants provided a description of the programme, selection process and course structure. Additionally they presented their perspectives regarding the philosophy of the sport academy.

This study shows that the exploration of the voices of current, ex-students and parents/caregivers can contribute enormously to the implementation, development and evolution of sport academy programmes. Additionally, their perspectives may provide sport academy implementers with the knowledge required to supply more quality experiences that assist athletically gifted adolescents in attaining their sporting dreams, while also preparing them academically for adult life (McInman & Grove, 1991). Consequently, sport academies may become viable vehicles that aid in the development of athletically gifted adolescents.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### RESEARCH RATIONALE

#### 2.1. Meeting the needs of the athletically gifted in New Zealand: A sport academy justification.

The impact of sport on the New Zealand culture has influenced New Zealand's liberal definition of gifted education. The New Zealand Department of Education (1986) initiated a move towards a multi-categorical approach that included eight areas of talent with the term 'psychomotor ability' being represented, however athletic giftedness still did not receive positive recognition (McAlpine & Moltzen, 1996). For this reason athletes are generally not included in the development of gifted education. This has resulted in many young sports people going undetected and therefore failing to benefit from the opportunities to pursue their talents within a gifted educational programme (Gross, 1993; Piirto, 1999).

Physical education in New Zealand has often been the curriculum area where identification of athletic talent has taken place. The *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 44) states that "the effective promotion and organisation of school sport should reflect the needs of students and ensure that all students have the opportunity to...participate to the highest level of their interest and ability."

While this curriculum approach is reasonably inclusive of giftedness, the majority of physical education programmes fail to satisfy the specific needs of the athletically gifted (Beashel, 2002). Yet inherent in the above statement is the belief that there is a need to cater for secondary school elite athletes. As Johnson (2000) stated:

as much as we should encourage participation in sport as a means to a healthier lifestyle, do we not also owe it to the young people of this country to encourage excellence and give them the best possible chance of achieving at the highest level? Is that not our social obligation too? (p. 39).

Beashel (2002) for example claims that an outstanding gymnast will need specialist coaching, equipment and facilities to fully develop their talent, a requirement that cannot be met inside the normal physical education curriculum. Ellis (1995) concluded that gifted students want more opportunities to develop their talents within the school, particularly in non-academic areas. In response to Ellis' comments, secondary schools in New Zealand have taken the initiative and established sport academy programmes to provide opportunities for secondary school students identified as athletically gifted.

## **2.2 The research problem**

According to Tristram and Batty (2000) secondary school sport academy programmes have become both numerous and varied in construction over the last few years. Their research attempted to establish sport academy growth by asking 'how many academy programmes were in operation in 1999-2000'. A brief survey was circulated to 353 secondary schools asking whether or not the school had a sport academy and, if so, what year the academy was established. However, with no form of registration or standardisation, there was an initial problem with the definition of a sport academy. Tristram and Batty decided to use a definition that captured the full range of programmes and ensured that the term academy remained reasonably broad. It was defined as "a sport organisation that allows athletes to specialise in sporting excellence whilst simultaneously continuing a more conventional academic approach to education" (Tristram & Batty, 2000, p. 16).

Over 90% of the schools responded. A total of 52 secondary schools indicated that they had a sport academy (16%) with another 19 schools signifying their intent to begin some form of sport academy programme by 2001. A further 13 schools stipulated that they were either interested in the results of the study or required more information as to how to set up a sport academy. The rapid growth in the number of academy programmes over the past ten years is illustrated in Figure 1.

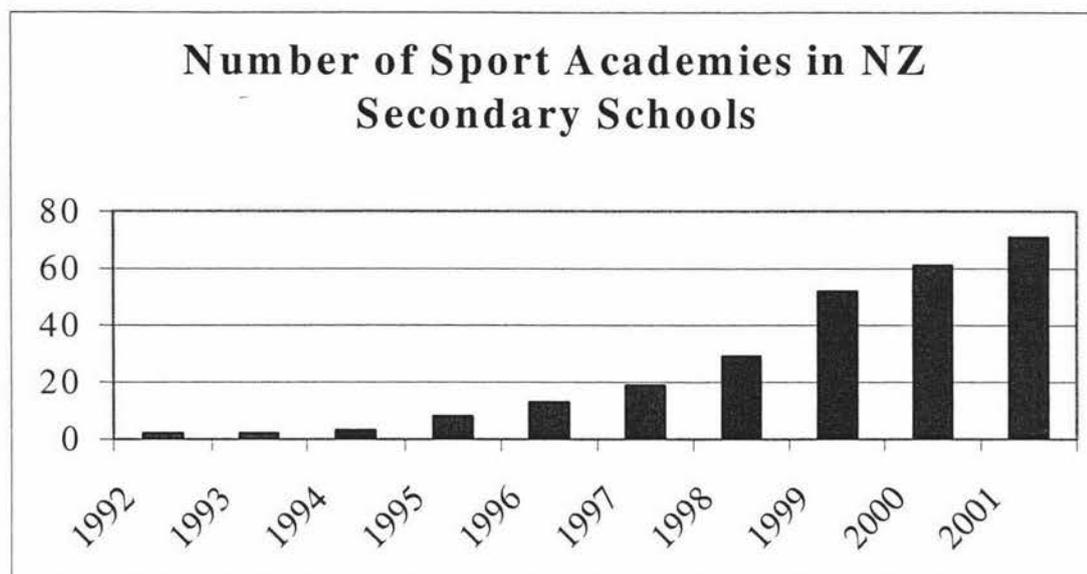


Figure 1. Number of sport academies in New Zealand secondary schools.

The reaction from those who are most closely associated with secondary school sport was one of surprise at the number of sport academy programmes in existence (Pope, 2001). Tristram and Batty (2000) stated that with a basic understanding of the number and type of academies in New Zealand, the challenge was to move on and investigate some of the more difficult questions. For example, what is the impact of the different types of academies on those who participate in them, both in terms of academic, sporting and social development? What impact do sport academies have on non-academy students in schools and their attitude towards sport and physical activity? What impact do sport academies have on secondary school sport as a whole, and what does the future hold for interschool competitions and minority sports? Answering these questions may result in the positive and effective management of sport academy programmes (Tristram & Batty, 2000).

### 2.3 Why ask them? The importance of the student experience

How sport is projected to students in secondary schools has seldom been a subject of critique by educationalists and academics (Grant & Pope, 2000; Pope & Grant, 1996). Earlier work completed by Pope and Grant (1996) stated that while there has been plenty of rhetoric about who delivers sport and the traditions upon which it is based,

its focus within this country and its effect on the young people of New Zealand has rarely been examined. This lack of study into the experiential aspect of learning from the student perspective has stemmed from the actuality that they are primarily treated as mere receivers of education (Grant & Pope, 2000). The meagre attention to this aspect of the learning process is addressed by Erickson and Shultz (1992) who stated that:

What has been most conspicuously absent from the recent research literature, a body of work that only partially approaches the phenomena of student experience of curriculum in a concrete and direct way, is the first person voice of the student (p. 468).

In their judgment, student experience has been conducted by researchers, teachers, educators, and policy analysts that consider relatively thin slices of classroom life, usually from a perspective other than the students. None of these slices have been multi dimensional enough to capture “subjective worlds as whole phenomena” (Erickson & Shultz, 1992, p. 466).

It is believed that students are an integral part of the learning process (Pope & Grant, 1996). They have been described as “active receivers and mediators of classroom events” (Mitman & Lash, 1988, cited in Pope & Grant, 1996) who control and define what they learn in part according to their interests and energies. Therefore, the content that is delivered through a curriculum and the manner with which it is taught is personalised by each student (Pope & Grant, 1996). While student experiences are subject to a variety of influences (and rarely sought as part of the evaluative process), Erickson and Shultz (1992) suggested that, “the daily construction of student experience is not understood” (p.471). The utilisation of interpretive research could help educators understand more about student experiences of learning.

In the area of giftedness and talent, Ellis’ (1995) research found that few studies have sought to identify the self-perceived needs of the gifted. Rather the needs have arisen as a result of investigations into other related aspects of giftedness, such as self-concept. However, valuable insights can be gained by asking those about whom the

decisions are being made rather than educators presuming what is best for the gifted. Furthermore, it is a key concept in maintaining student motivation and participation, leading young people by their own choice, in becoming more active and to continue in their chosen field of giftedness through life (Ellis, 1995). It is evident that the needs prescribed by others are not always the same as the self-perceived needs of the gifted. Opportunities must be supplied to pupils to talk about their personal experiences and voice their opinions and firsthand perspectives in education (Rogovin, 1998).

## CHAPTER THREE:

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the importance of sport in New Zealand, noting in particular, the lack of development for gifted athletes in secondary schools. Consequently, the sport academy programme is discussed as a possible scheme to aid in identifying and developing gifted athletes. A definition and a variety of examples of sport academy programmes are provided. The concept of the athletically gifted person is described using gifted education theory, noting in particular the elements that pertain to being identified as athletically gifted. Using work from Ellis et al. (2003) a model of athletic giftedness is presented. Finally, the importance of the student voice is discussed supporting that the experiences of students involved in sport academies can positively contribute towards the evolution of sport academy programmes.

#### 3.1 Sport in New Zealand secondary schools

Sport is a significant component of the New Zealand culture. Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) (2002) state that 95% of New Zealanders get more satisfaction from world-class performances by New Zealand sports teams or individuals than from similar successes by other Kiwi achievers (SPARC, 2002). For many people sport provides a sense of community, moral virtue and nationalism (Campbell, 1997). Additionally, the presence and success of our athletes on the world stage sends strong messages to the world about who we are and creates a sense of a national community and strengthens our national identity (SPARC, 2002). As Johnson (2000, p. 39) stated “sporting success has played a huge part in establishing New Zealand's sense of identity...a constant source of national pride.”

Earlier work by Stothart (1994) concluded that sport not only plays an important part of our identity as a nation but is also a significant component of our culture. Corbett (1995) also claimed that “sport is a significant component of our world culture”(p.15). Therefore, if a particular function of education is to transmit the culture or system of a

society, and as sport is part of our culture, then all young people in New Zealand have the right to participate in and learn about sport (Grant & Pope, 2000).

The Hillary Commission for Sport, Fitness and Leisure (Hillary Commission, 1999), reported that sport is a valued part of the education system and not just something that children do after school just for fun. As such schools play a major part in providing sporting opportunities for young people. Corbett (1995) concluded that sport is the “the cornerstone of physical education...when used properly, sport activities can and should promote educational objectives of physical education” (p.15). Arnold (1997) suggested that sport is laden with concepts, ethical principles and moral values that are universally applicable and justified as a form of education. Ross (1999) believed that the inventiveness taking place in schools will aid in removing students from the “strong encouragement to be a spectator rather than a player” to being able to “celebrate their physicality and develop their levels of physical competency in ways they enjoy and meet their needs” (p. 4).

Sharp (1999) suggested that a schools biggest reason for encouraging participation in sport is to get benefits in other areas. Gerritsen (1999) argued that sport encourages students to adopt a positive attitude to a healthy lifestyle, get along with their peers, or stay on at school when they are struggling academically. In many cases sports has taken the role that used to be provided by the church and family (Sharp, 1999). Pope and Grant (2001) declared that the attraction of sports at this age should be the inherent qualities which as Arnold (1994) stated “not only requires an understanding of the rules of sport, but an understanding of its skills, standards and excellencies as well as traditions, customs and conventions” (p. 79).

This change in the cultural nature of sport has heightened the debate regarding the appropriateness of sport as an educational vehicle. This debate on the place of sport in high schools can be seen as a continuum that Pope and Grant (2001) described as “maneuvering between advocates claiming it deserves elevated status within the curriculum and opponents claiming that it already receives too much attention” (p. 2). Therefore, secondary school sport requires a need to develop a more collegial environment and a range of alternative but appropriate strategies for youth that protect

the positive aspects of sport participation (Collins & Downey, 2000). Grant and Pope (2000) maintained that much of the issue of sport in education is about adapting current structures, and investigating the way in which sport is presented as an activity. Thus, sport by itself cannot be construed as good or bad, but rather the type of experiences provided for students in the programme labelled sport is of most importance (Grant & Pope, 2000).

The opportunity also exists for both parents and teachers to influence the nature and role of sports in the school. Grant and Pope (2000) commented that “if sport is to have potential as an educational tool, then those in schools charged with responsibility for this must make sure it is used for sane, exciting and fruitful means” (p. 65). Chris Saunders, the chairperson of the New Zealand Secondary Schools Sports Council supported that “we in secondary schools are the custodians of a national heritage that impacts very strongly on our culture, not just in sport. We must meet this responsibility” (Grant & Pope, 2000, p.65).

Historically, sport has remained outside the formal curriculum, however New Zealand secondary schools are moving towards a more liberal method of sport programme design that may reflect more closely the culture and needs of the students. Schools now possess the potential to develop sport programmes that allows the pupil to be central to the learning experience. Tristram and Batty (2000) highlighted that some secondary schools do perceive the positive impact of sport as an educational tool. These schools are attempting to adapt to the needs of their students, by implementing sport academy programmes.

### **3.2 The sport academy: A definition**

In a more traditional sense, the word *academus* is of Latin origin and has been used to describe the place where Plato conducted a formal educational environment for those who were inclined to attend his instruction and advocate skepticism (Pope, 2001). Pope (2001) stated that:

The popular usage of the term academy is restricted to an educational institution claiming to hold a rank between a university or college and a high school. The most common interpretation for a sports academy would appear to be that it is a place of special instruction and academic community (p. 8).

In a contemporary educational context, Tristram and Batty, (2000), defined a sport academy as “a sport organisation that allows athletes to specialise in sporting excellence whilst simultaneously continuing a more conventional academic approach to education” (p. 1). Tristram and Batty (2000) indicated that sport academy programmes have become numerous and varied in function. Several examples are provided of varying sport academies that have been implemented throughout New Zealand.

In 1994, Aranui High School in Christchurch employed Harry Westrupp as a student-job placement officer. He quickly identified that sport was the single motivator in his students' lives. Noticing other factors such as low retention rate and low employability of students, most of who were Maori or Polynesian, Westrupp established an alternative programme to combat these problems which differed from the mainstream academic syllabus. This programme used sport as the catalyst to promote and aid in changing students' attitudes, in order to make them more employable (Brett, 1997). In 1997 he implemented a programme that he aptly named the Sports Academy. From an initial cohort of 30 students, the senior academy system has grown to over 300 participants, where 16 predominantly sport or vocational senior academies are offered to students (Pope, 2002). Westrupp explained that:

Sport was only the vehicle it wasn't so much about sport, but the real values and principles behind sport that was important. We wanted to get our young people jobs, we don't attract anybody here, we don't offer them any money, we don't offer scholarships, we don't have money, but our retention rate of our own kids is now higher (Pope, 2002, p. 94).

While the Aranui Sports Academy was introduced as an impetus to retain senior students, the surfing academy at Raglan was conceived to allow students to focus on their elite surfing skills. At the same time these students complete a two-year certificated course that examines the academic and vocational aspects associated with surfing. Implemented in 1999 the surfing academy focuses on careers in the surfing industry and provides the opportunity to compete professionally. While there is no research to establish if students have reached their goals, the opportunities abound for those who fill the sixteen positions available (Pope, 2002). An example of those opportunities for instance, has been the academies selection to compete at the World Scholastic Championships. The Principal of Raglan Area School commented on the philosophy as “enhancing a student’s performance in the surf and utilizing that passion to make them a well-rounded individual but particularly focusing on their academic schooling” (Pope, 2002, p. 96).

In the South Island, the inland township of Cromwell hosts the Cromwell College Golf Academy. The college has had a successful history of achievement in the sport of golf, and in 2000 opened a golf academy. Later on that year the school academy team won the Otago and Otago-Southland championships and went on to finish fourth at the National Inter-collegiate championship. Students must demonstrate a passion for golf, attend over 70 practice sessions per year, compete in numerous tournaments throughout the province, and play and be coached regularly at Millbrook Resort, the towns 6230 metre golf course. Alongside their sporting commitments, the students must complete a full academic programme. While students are obviously encouraged to put in lengthy periods of practice, they are under no pressure from their coach of the programme, but because only the top four players gain selection, there is an incentive to put in the extra hours (Pope, 2002). As one student stated:

If you don’t feel up to practicing or you’ve got too much homework or something you just say to them you know, I can’t do it tonight but I’ll come out tomorrow night and they’re just fine. They’re not like pressuring you into doing it, they’re kind of letting you do it yourself... I’ve got to do all that by myself otherwise I’m going to get behind and not get anywhere it will just be a waste of time (Pope, 2002, p. 97).

Queen Elizabeth College in Palmerston North also implements a sport specific academy. The Netball Academy was established in 2001 to improve the students' attitude to learning and increase their commitment to study and school life (Erueti, 2001). The programme also provides an opportunity to obtain a National Certificate in Sport (2 Years). This is completed in conjunction with the Universal College of Learning (UCOL), formerly the Palmerston North Polytechnic. Additionally students complete their local umpiring badge and first aid certification. Only a few of the students were identified by the programme co-ordinator as having the potential to continue successfully in representative netball (regional and national level). However, the programme requests that students commit to learning at Queen Elizabeth College and offers continual study at the Universal College of Learning (UCOL). A student commented that "I never really liked school...but then I heard about the Netball academy here and now its like totally changed my outlook on things... I can actually achieve some qualifications while doing something I love...and who knows after here" (Erueti, 2001).

These examples of different sport academy programmes provide a general overview of the various forms they may appear. Sport academies have been developed and implemented for a variety of different reasons. Tristram and Batty (2000) list these reasons as:

1. Recognition of gifted sports people;
2. To improve the skill ability of student athletes;
3. Preparation for post-school careers;
4. Improve a students personal qualifications;
5. Assist in increasing school enrolments;
6. To raise the school profile within the community;
7. Alternative option to other rival sport academies.

From Tristram and Battys' list it is possible to identify that there are three distinct philosophies for implementing a sports academy programme. Firstly, a student centred approach that supports athletically gifted teenagers both physically and academically. Secondly for the attainment of qualifications to aid a students' prospects of further study or employability, and thirdly for school allure. Further

work conducted by Tristram and Batty (2000) identified that sport academy programmes could be categorised into academy models. These are the Talent Programme model, the Skill Development model and the Multiple-Clubs model. The academy studied in this research operates a Talent Programme, thus a full description is provided.

A sport academy that encompasses a talent programme philosophy according to Tristram and Batty (2000) has several distinctions from the Skill Development and Multiple-Club models. Firstly the talent programme is managed by a small committee or a couple of key people that carry out the decision-making duties. This committee often includes the Principal, Head of Department of Physical Education, a senior teacher and the Sport coordinator. Secondly, the sport coordinator, usually with some input from the Principal or the committee makes programme development decisions including athlete selection and development of high performance programmes. Thirdly is the absence of coaches, parents or other stakeholders in the decision making process (Tristram & Batty, 2000). Parents of the academy participants generally provide only a supporting role. The organisation of the Talent Programme involves the provision of information regarding the philosophy and its basic structure for parents and students of the programme. Of particular note, Tristram and Batty (2000, p. 17) concluded that “the focus is on the individual athlete and their development and they are provided with sports science information on topics such as nutrition and training techniques.”

This research examined a sport academy programme that resembled the Talent Programme model as described by Tristram and Batty (2000). According to the implementation group, this sport academy programme was constructed to assist athletically gifted students.

### **3.3 Introducing the athletically gifted person**

The concepts and definitions surrounding giftedness have changed dramatically over the past decades. Early works (e.g., Hollingworth, 1930, 1936, 1942; Parkyn, 1948; Terman, 1922, 1925; Terman & Oden, 1947) concentrated on intelligence as a central,

if not sole concept of giftedness (such as IQ). However contemporary scholars and researchers of giftedness have concluded that the field is undergoing a paradigm shift (see Bloom, 1985; Cskikzentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Feldhusen, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1995d, 1996; Feldman, 1980, 1986, 1991; Gallagher, 1991; Gardener, 1983; Sternberg, 1991, 1995; Sternberg & Davidson, 1986; Treffinger & Feldhusen, 1996). For instance, in the past decade, there have been attempts to distinguish between giftedness and talent to bring greater clarity and focus. Consequently, the terms gifted and talented have been used interchangeably and at times, as in the expression 'gifted and talented', they appear conjointly (Feldman, 1991; Gallagher, 1991; Treffinger, 1991; Treffinger & Feldhusen, 1996).

Contemporary gifted education theories have moved towards definitions that acknowledge a diverse range of special abilities and multiple intelligences (Gagné, 1985, 1997a, 1997b; Marland, 1972; Ministry of Education, 2000, 2002; Renzulli, 1986a; Renzulli & Reis, 1997; Sternberg, 1991; 1995; Taylor, 1978, 1986; Working Party on Gifted Education, 2001). These definitions have broadened the classification of achievers and potential achievers in a variety of areas, other than the academic. It has therefore become more acceptable that exceptionally able children may appear in every field of endeavour, including, dancers, musicians, artists, mechanics and engineers (Cathcart & Dawson, 1995). Gagné (2000) points out that the conceptual ambiguity of giftedness is reflected in the uncertainty that exists in the terminology. He warned that how giftedness, talent, or special ability is defined will have a significant effect on who is perceived as gifted.

In New Zealand, the recognition of the area of gifted education was endorsed by *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* which advocated that flexibility and individualisation be required for those who were identified as gifted and talented (Ministry of Education, 2000, p.35). Later, the Ministry of Education further acknowledged the field of giftedness (see 'Initiatives for Gifted and Talented Learners', Ministry of Education, 2002), proposing that National Achievement Goal (NAG) 1 (iii) be amended to include gifted and talented students. To promote the development of gifted education strategy a working party was established in May

2001 (Ministry of Education, 2002). The Working Party on Gifted Education submitted a report to the Minister of Education, declaring that:

All children have a right to an education that acknowledges and respects their individuality and that offers them maximum opportunities to develop their strengths and abilities. Gifted and talented children will flourish in a society that acknowledges and respects individual difference and recognises and celebrates the abilities of its most able (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 1).

As such the definition of giftedness that underscores contemporary practice in New Zealand is a pluralistic one with a variety of definitions adapted from Marland, Renzulli and Tannenbaum (Working Party on Gifted Education, 2001, Report to the Minister of Education, 2001, p.16). This liberal approach to gifted education along with New Zealand's emphasis on sport has seen the identification of the athletically gifted person.

Earlier work by Gardener (1983) concluded that there were several ways of viewing the concept of giftedness, including bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence. Later, Ramos, Ford and Gardener (1997) explicitly included athletes in their definition of talent, describing children who demonstrated gifted abilities in sports as having a "keen athletic ability in organised sports or in the playground" (p. 57). Gagné (2000) also supported the concept of the athletically gifted person defining these people as being able to transfer perceptual/motor abilities into athletic talents.

Research conducted by Bevan-Brown identified that the bicultural nature of New Zealand necessitates the recognition of athletic talent. She reported that the holistic perspective held by the Māori people of New Zealand, involves a multitude of different abilities and qualities including sporting prowess as a valued characteristic of Māori culture. Ellis et al., (2003) noted that while "physical ability was cited by only 1.25% of those interviewed in Bevan-Brown's research, sporting ability was recorded by the 10 most outstanding participants" (p.230).

Although these theorists use different labels to describe the athletically talented they are defined in general terms as manifesting in the following physical skills:

- Excellent control of body movement
- Excellent eye-hand coordination
- Ability to manipulate objects, puzzles, etc. with ease
- Ability to learn new physical movements with ease
- Strong sense of rhythm

Recent research conducted in the United Kingdom (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2002) looked at the identification of athletically gifted students in physical education classes. The Qualifications Authority stated that pupils who were talented in PE, sport and dance were likely to show many or all of the following characteristics:

- A high degree of motivation and commitment to practice and performance;
- The ability to be able to think 'outside the box', indicating creativity, originality and adaptability. Furthermore, they respond quickly to new challenges and situations often finding new and innovative solutions to them;
- Good decision-making and able to take the initiative, often showing high levels of autonomy, independence and leadership and be able to improve performance through leadership;
- Demonstrate a conceptual understanding, shown through the sophisticated selection and application of advanced skills in performance by actively forming and adapting strategies, tactics or compositions;
- Show a strong awareness of their body in space and be able to combine movements fluently, precisely and accurately in a range of contexts, thus demonstrating intelligence, independence, and thoughtfulness;
- Demonstrate the ability to reflect on processes and outcomes in order to improve performance, and understand the close and changing relationship between skills, fitness and the tactics or composition of their performance;

- Display particularly high levels of fitness for their age, in both specific and general areas and display a high degree of control and coordination of their bodies. For example they may display specific strengths in general areas, such as games activities or dance activities.

(Adapted from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2002)

Beashel (2000) stated that there is an obvious overlap between sport and physical education but their central focus is different. The aim of physical education is to educate the pupil, while sport may have many different purposes, for example, achieving excellence, gaining fitness, earning an income or pure enjoyment. While physical education is the curriculum area, the context of that curriculum takes place the majority of the time in sport lessons, thus recognition of the gifted and talented pupil is identified through sporting prowess. Therefore, within physical education when a gifted and talented pupil is identified it is generally a student who in physical education shows a high level of skill in sporting activities (Beashel, 2002).

There have been many gifted and talented models that have been designed to challenge and extend student thinking and feeling (see McAlpine 1995). McAlpine (1995) argued that each of the models contains a foundation for excellence in the field of gifted education, and provides ideals for which educators should strive. These models present similar and common characteristics that define some of the components found within a sport academy programme. Nevertheless, in searching for a model that best described the gifts of the athletically talented of New Zealand, Ellis et al. (2003), referred to work provided by Joseph Renzulli and his concept known as the *Three-Ring Model of Giftedness*.

According to Renzulli (1998) gifted and talented children are those who possess, or are capable of, developing a specific composite of traits and applying them to any area of human performance. These characteristics are above-average general and/or specific abilities; high levels of task commitment (motivation); and high levels of creativity (see figure 2 on next page).

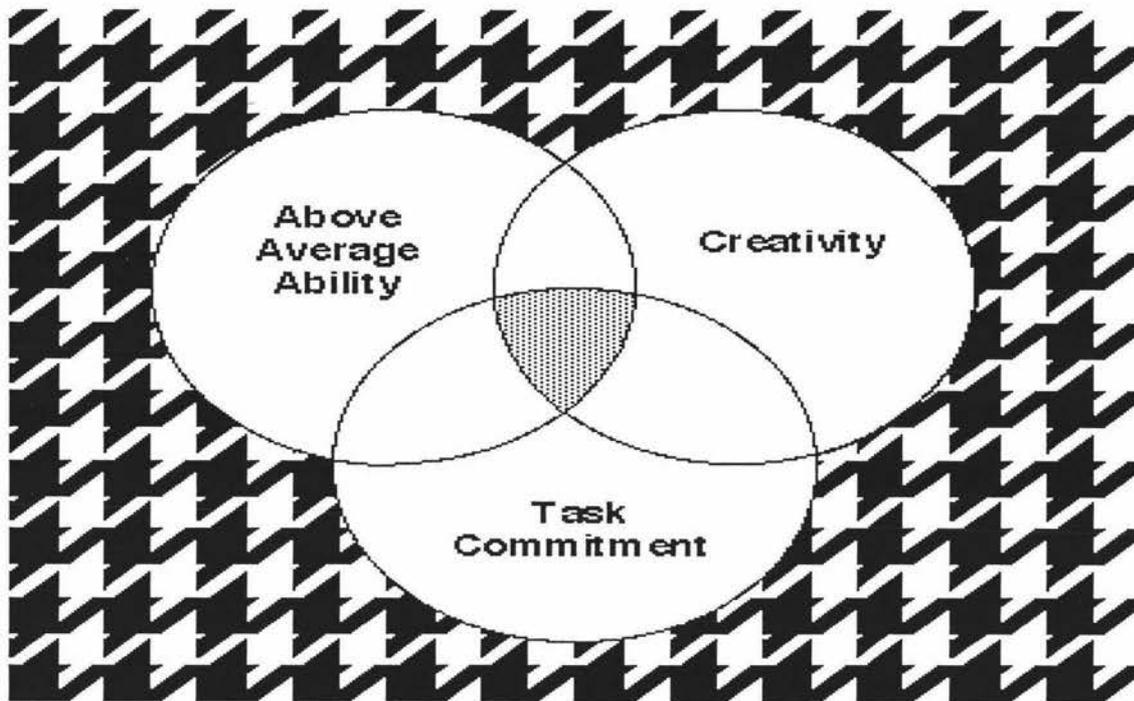


Figure 2. Renzullis' three-ring model of giftedness.

The first cluster of traits is *above average ability*. It is defined as the upper range of potential within any given area. Although it is difficult to assign numerical values to specific areas of ability, Renzulli (1998) identified that a person that is capable of performing or has the potential to perform within the top 15-20% of any given area of human endeavour is considered to have displayed above average ability.

The second cluster of traits that consistently has been found in creative-productive persons is a refined or focused form of motivation known as *task commitment*. Task commitment represents energy brought to bear on a particular problem (task) or specific performance area. The terms that are most frequently used to describe task commitment are perseverance, endurance, hard work, dedicated practice, self-confidence, and a belief in one's ability to carry out important work.

The third cluster of traits that characterizes gifted persons consists of factors usually lumped together under the general heading of creativity. Renzulli (1998) described *creative-productive giftedness* as those aspects of human activity and involvement where a premium is placed on the development of original material and products that are purposefully designed to have an impact on one or more target audiences.

Renzulli (1998) concluded that no single cluster makes giftedness, rather, it is the interaction among the three clusters that is the necessary ingredient for creative-productive accomplishment. The interaction of the three clusters is represented by the area where all three circles intersect. It is also important to point out that each cluster plays an important role in contributing to the display of gifted behaviours. He warns that a major inaccuracy that exists is that the identification procedures may overemphasize superior abilities at the expense of the other two clusters of traits (Renzulli, 1998).

Ellis et al., (2003) have adapted Renzullis' Three-Ring Model in creating a gifted philosophy that is unique to understanding the athletically gifted in New Zealand (see Figure 3).

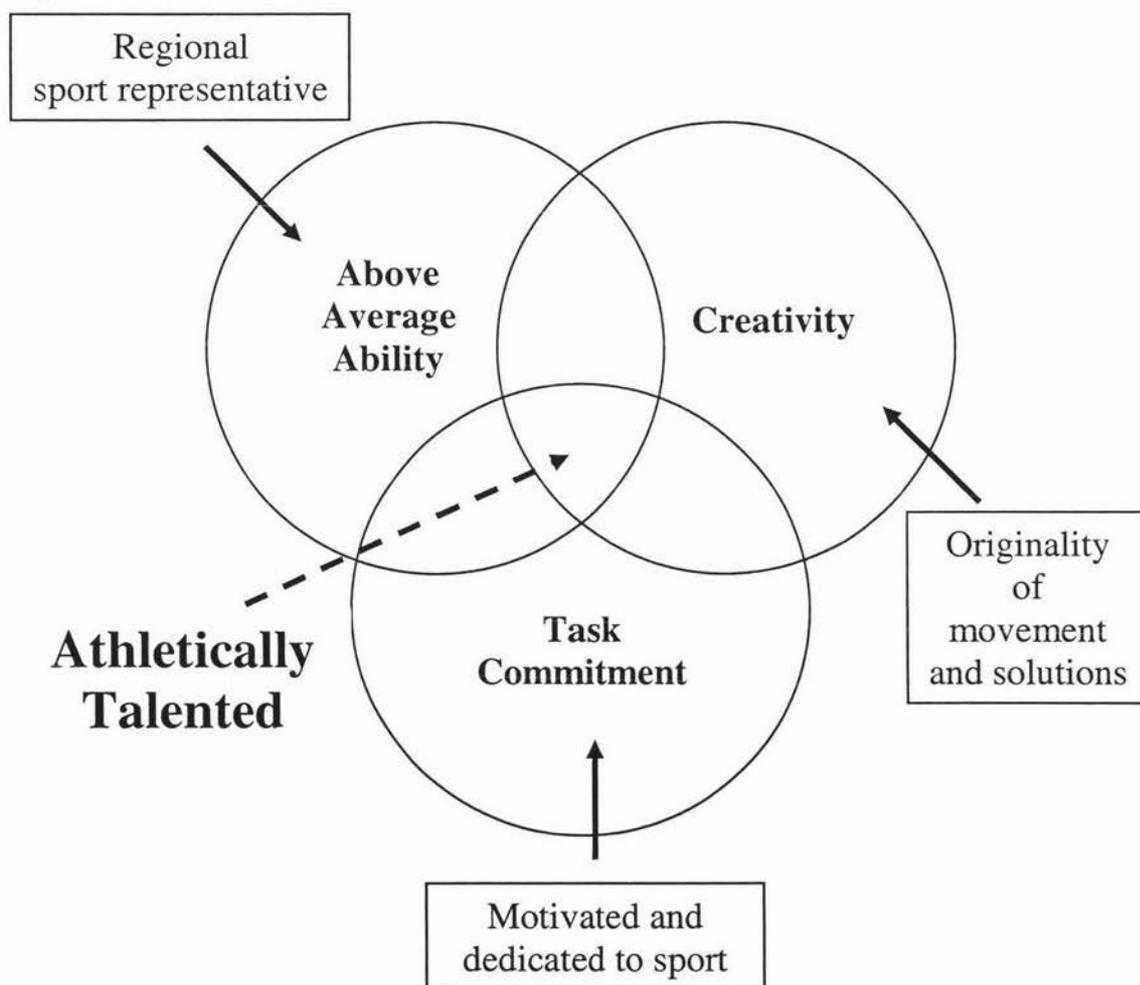


Figure 3. A conceptualisation of athletic talent adapted from Renzullis' three-ring model of giftedness (Ellis et al., 2003).

In applying this model to the sport academy phenomenon Ellis et al. (2003), identified that students:

must have been at least a regional representative of their sport, therefore displaying above average ability; they must show motivation, dedication, perseverance to their sport as well as their academic achievements, hence showing task commitment; and to a lesser degree they must show initiative in originality of movement and solutions, thus displaying creativity (p. 231).

While the majority of gifted programmes are by no means universal (Motlzen, 1999a), Ellis et al., (2003) demonstrate that Renzullis' three ring model lends itself as an appropriate model and justification in developing the gifts of athletes in sport academy programmes. This exemplifies Moltzens' (1998/1999) idea that young people who demonstrate gifted and talented characteristics in New Zealand have probably been born at the right time. However, he also warned that developing the talent of our gifted children has always been, and probably always will be, a controversial issue in New Zealand. He cautions that while the majority of New Zealanders admire the talent and motivation of the gifted, our egalitarian heritage and the belief that 'all people are created equal' competes with any celebration of achievement.

There is also the perspective that because athletes and athletic events serve to entertain the public, the public gladly pays for the development of those gifts (Rogers, 2001). But this is only true for a limited number of athletes and sports in New Zealand. As such, the development of athletic talent in the secondary school environment has been minimal at best, resulting in many young athletes being ignored (Gross, 1993; 2001). It is evident that the paradigm shift in New Zealand's stance on giftedness in the last decade has led to the increased acceptance of meeting the needs of the athletically gifted. Therefore, efforts have increased in schools to provide for these students through sport academy programmes.

### 3.4 The importance of the student experience

In the past and in the tradition of the oral culture, our ancestors told stories to make sense of the mysteries of the world, to pass cultural knowledge on from one generation to another, and to communicate norms, values, and shared understanding. According to Rogovin (1998) it has only been in the last century that this form of qualitative ethnographic methodology, referred to as the *narrative*, has been acknowledged as a way to understand an individual's experiences. Narrative accounts provide an added richness and complexity to understanding the social world as the processes, frameworks and structures that people use to make meanings of their experiences are openly previewed (Bruner, 1986; Grills, 1998). Sparkes (1999) stated that the narrative involves the telling, listening, and reading of stories allowing individuals to share their experiences adding to their understanding of their own lives and the lives of others. When well crafted, narrative accounts, spur the imagination, and through our imaginative participation in the worlds that we create we have a platform for seeing what might be called our 'actual worlds' (Eisner, 1997, p.264) more clearly, enhancing empathetic forms of understanding.

Larson (1997) commented that scholars within educational research have used narrative analysis over the last 25 years. However the empathetic form of understanding from the students' perspective within secondary schools and how they perceive and experience their world of learning remains to be systematically explored in research. The importance of using student accounts of their experiences is stimulated by the simple notion that interview studies that probe student experience are rare, and are generally authored by participant observers or by teachers themselves (Erickson & Shultz, 1992). Yet, student perceptions are an on going chain of events that begins in early childhood and continues through life (Haywood, 1991). Morgan and Morris (1999) stated that additional importance needs to be given to the contribution of the student perspective because "their views have been, and still are, relatively neglected" (p.3).

The principle argument given to the topic of student experience of learning encompasses the notion that students should be given the opportunity to define what

they learn according to their interests and energies (Pope & Grant, 1996) because they are the ultimate insiders and experts (Erickson & Shultz, 1992). As Erickson and Shultz (1992) state students are in a “one down position relative to adults” (p.482). If the student is visible at all in a research study, they are usually viewed from the perspective of an adult educator’s interests and epistemologies. Educators describe the student experience as ‘failing’, ‘succeeding’, ‘motivated’, ‘mastering’, ‘unmotivated’, ‘responding’, or having a ‘misconception’, rarely is the perspective of the student explored (Erickson & Shultz, 1992). Beynon (1985) also supported that “indeed, the pupil role has too often been presented as merely conforming to, or rejecting of, school demands.” (p.188). Research in education has unfortunately left little room for the points of view of the very persons who are the first level consumers of educational services (Pope & Grant, 1996).

Sparkes (1999) believed that there is a need to understand the lives and experiences of all those who are involved in education. Students’ especially need to be involved if school management are to understand the classrooms, schools, and school-communities they create. The reality is that young people are at the centre of the educational process, and are therefore in a good position to provide the kind of information which might allow schools and teachers to do better, leading to more productive teaching. Graham (1995) supported that evaluating student perceptions makes them become “customers” allowing teachers to view student likes and dislikes, providing an insight into how teachers are being received and how instruction can be improved. To achieve this, research involving discussions and perhaps comparisons with students and teacher views is necessary. Such a methodology that focuses on the interactive (e.g., processes, activities and acts) and the interpretive (e.g., definitions, perspectives, and meanings) aspects of the educational environment presents a commonsense view of educational practice, of what is most important to pay attention to in and about schools (Grills, 1998).

Pigdon and Woolley (1993) in their research referred to the concept of student voice as the *inquiry mode*. They argued that the student voice allowed learners to take control of their learning, to build on their prior knowledge, to make and test predictions, to organize information and to synthesize findings. These conditions encourage risk-taking, approximation, the exploration of patterns and relationships,

reflection on experience and an understanding of different interests, points of view and value positions (Pigdon & Woolley, 1993, p.16).

Other research looking at the benefits of having the student perspective expressed found that pupils experienced relevancy of learning, an empowered voice, meaningful skill building, and cultivated affirmation from adults and their peers (Zeldin & Price, 1995). Additionally, students demonstrated clarification of purpose, increased student cooperation and enjoyment of the learning environment (Sparapani, 2000; Zeldin, Kusgen-McDaniel, Topitzes, & Calvert, 2000). Loesch, Griffin, Petrides and Pratt (1995), and Follman (1998) concluded quality increases in student work along with better grades and heightened participation in classrooms. Further studies showed that meaningfully involved students have more positive relationships with teachers, and can be successful allies in the classroom (Houghton, 2001; Weiler, LaGoy, Crane, & Rovner, 1998).

However, while students are enthusiastic about voicing their perspectives regarding their education (Kaba, 2000; Patmor, 1998), school management staff are cautious in complying with such requests (Morgan & Morris, 1999). Morgan and Morris (1999) report that the staff involved in their research disapproved the use of the student voice as a means in their investigation stating that “children are not competent to judge the behaviour of adults” (p.4). However as Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace (1996) contend, pupils are clearly competent to perceive teachers behaviours accurately and are able to interpret them correctly:

What pupils say about teaching, learning and schooling is not only worth listening to but provides an important – perhaps the most important – foundation for thinking about ways of improving schools. Our broad summary of what pupils have told us in interview is that whilst teachers are for the most part supportive, stimulating and selfless in the hours they put in to help young people, the conditions of learning that are common across schools do not adequately take account of the social maturity of people (p. 1).

Beynon (1985) stated that while “more attention is being paid to pupil’s perspectives (how they view schooling and teachers and how they react, what they see as ‘ideal’,

'good' and 'bad' etc.)...it still remains a comparatively neglected topic, even in the work of those who have paid attention to pupil perspectives..." (p.188). Erickson and Shultz (1992, p. 483) also declared that "perhaps their voices are absent from contemporary discourse in education because they have not been asked to speak."

Student perceptions are an important tool to utilize in order to evaluate and create educational opportunities for programme development in secondary institutions. By having an understanding of student perceptions, teachers can more effectively meet student needs. The perspectives and voices of students themselves need to appear more prominently in research on teaching, learning, and curriculum if students' experience of curriculum is to become an object of serious attention by researchers.

### **3.5 Summary**

This chapter has discussed the importance of the sporting culture and its impact on the definition of giftedness in New Zealand. The lack of development for gifted athletes in secondary schools has seen the implementation of sport academy programmes as a possible system to aid in identifying and developing gifted athletes. However of vast importance has been the discussion of providing opportunities for students involved in sport academies to tell of their experiences. In doing so, students may positively influence how sport academy programmes may become more beneficial for athletically gifted adolescents.

The next chapter discusses the methodology employed for this study.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### METHODOLOGY

This study explored the experiences and expectations of the current and ex members of a secondary school sport academy programme. Parents/caregivers were invited to provide their expectations of the programme. The director and the implementers of the sport academy were also interviewed to provide information regarding the philosophy and description of the programme. Specifically the research objectives of this thesis were to:

1. Investigate and report on the underlying philosophies and the expectations held by the implementers and the course director.
2. Provide a description of the sport academy programme.
3. Investigate the stated aims of the sport academy programme.
4. Explore the expectations of the past and present members and the current members' parents/caregivers.
5. Report on the past and present members' experiences of the programme.
6. Report on the programmes perceived impact on past and present members'.

To achieve these research objectives a combination of case study and ethnography research designs were used (focus group/individual interviews and questionnaires). Quantitative data was also collected in the form of student school report records and likert scales within the questionnaires.

This chapter explains the ethical procedures encountered in completing the research. Literature supporting the case study and ethnographic research methods is provided. The justification in using interviews and questionnaires is also explained alongside the process of how those interviews and questionnaires were implemented and how the

data was analysed. A brief description is given of those participants who were interviewed or who completed a questionnaire. Lastly, an explanation of the data analysis process of the student participant reports is discussed.

#### **4.1 Ethics approval and procedures**

Ethics approval was received from the Massey University College of Education ethics committee. Written permission was received from the school Board of Trustees, Principal, and all teachers involved. Further written permission and consent to participate was gained from students over 16 years of age and from the parents/caregivers of children under 16 years of age. Clear guidelines were given to all participants regarding their involvement in the focus group interviews. These interviews were recorded using audio tape and consent was sought to do so. A draft interview schedule for all participants can be found in the appendices. All raw data including collation of data, observation data, transcribing audio tapes, and writing the final report was handled by the researcher. Pseudonyms were used throughout transcripts to aid in maintaining anonymity and preventing identification of the research participants. Copies were made of the tapes and the transcripts to ensure that the information was not lost.

Parents and ex-participants were approached separately to give their consent to be involved in the questionnaire process. The questionnaire participants all received an information sheet that clearly outlined the process of their involvement (see appendix). Informed consent was assumed if the questionnaire was returned. All data including both the qualitative and quantitative elements and writing the final report was handled by the researcher. Copies were not made of the questionnaires returned by the participants. These were destroyed at the submission of this thesis.

Participants were duly informed of their rights to take part or to withdraw at any point during the process of the conducted research. This was clearly stated in the information sheet (see appendix). All data was safely secured in a locked cupboard off site of the school chosen and accessible only by the researcher. All recordings

done on audio tape were erased. Field notes made during observations and transcripts were destroyed at the submission of this thesis. However, the school is to receive a summary copy of the report, and participants may request a copy of the results and conclusions, upon completion of the project. Furthermore, the researcher made every effort to ensure that the confidentiality of the participants was kept.

## **4.2 Description of the selected school**

The school selected for this study was the first secondary school in the area to implement a sport academy programme. The school roll at the time when this research was conducted was 1,239 students and had a decile rating of six. It is a coeducational secondary institution with a gender composition of 54.2% female and 45.8% male. There are a variety of ethnicities in attendance with Pakeha making up the majority of the student roll (70%), while Māori (18.5%), Pacific Island (2.6%), Asian (6.8%), and other (2.1%) ethnic groups complete the school register (Graham, 1995).

There are also three other academy type programmes within the school. A performance Music programme, the Music Technics Academy and a recently developed Dance Academy. The school places importance on academic, cultural and sporting achievement and the personal development of individuals (Education Review Office (ERO), November 2002). Education Review Office (November 2002) sustained that:

The board, management and staff continue to support a school culture where individuals are cared for and where individual differences are recognised and celebrated... the provision of the individual needs of students is a strong point of the school (Education Review Office (ERO), November 2002).

The school proximity and easy access made this particular programme a viable and sensible choice. Furthermore, it provided a programme that is perhaps closest to the community and media perceptions of a sport academy (Erueti, 2001).

### 4.3 Combining ethnography and case study designs

In the field of research *Case Study* is a generic term used for the investigation of an individual, group or phenomenon. While the techniques used in the investigation may be varied and may include both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the distinguishing feature of the case study is that it is used to study a single social phenomenon in a *unique* setting or situation in as intense and as detailed manner as possible (Salkind, 2000). Here in New Zealand the case study is considered to be a relatively new phenomenon in education where they are associated predominantly with the Special Education Service and their evaluations of individual pupils, usually in some sort of remedial context (Department of Social and Policy Studies, 2000, p. 41).

The principle argument for the case study methodology is that it provides a way of studying human events and actions in their natural environment with a specific focus on only one individual or one phenomenon. According to Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg (1991), this allows for very close examination and scrutiny and the collection of a great deal of detailed data. This permits the grounding of observations and concepts about a social action and the social structure in natural settings. The supporting argument here is that the researcher understands the social action in a manner that comes closest to the *action* as it is understood by the participants themselves (Feagin et al., 1991). Succinctly stated, there is simply no way to get a richer account of the complexities of the human systems evident in the phenomenon being researched (Salkind, 2000; Sturman, 1997).

Case studies encourage the use of combining different techniques to get the necessary information in an effort to answer “what is going on?” (Bouma, 2000, p. 91). These can be generated only through the use of multiple methods, which may include

interviewing, observing, and quantitative work (Massey, 1998). These personal accounts of qualitative data are referred to in research methodology as *Ethnography*, which is commonly used when a researcher wishes to describe a culture or way of life from a peoples' point of view (Massey, 1998). As such, almost all case studies involve interviews and ethnographic methodology, that is, the participants were given the opportunity to express themselves in their own words (O'Connor, 2004). Merriam (1998) believed that this approach is anchored in real-life situations and allows the researcher to examine the complexities of life in which people are implicated. It also enables a researcher to examine the ebb and flow of social life over time allowing the analyst to uncover the historical dimension of a societal setting (Feagin et al., 1991). Hegarty and Evans (1985) concluded that the social world is actively and routinely constructed by participants through such interaction, thus particular focus must be given to the uniqueness of a phenomenon.

Earlier work by Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis (1976) supported that case studies are a 'step to action' since they begin in a world of action and contribute to it. It may therefore contribute to the wider community especially in the area of democratic decision-making (Adelman et al., 1976). Later Merriam (1998) stated that case studies offer insights that help structure future research and may contribute to a disciplines' knowledge base and improve practice. When the case study method is used for this purpose it is referred to as evaluative research. However this differs from the traditional notion of evaluative research, where, instead the purpose of evaluation is to improve, not to prove (Stufflebeam, Foley, Gephart, Guba, Hammond and Merriman, 1971).

According to Isaac and Michael (1981), the statement to *improve* suggests that a judgement must be made regarding what constitutes *worth* or *value*. The term evaluation is typically associated with how effective or ineffective, how adequate and inadequate, how good or bad, how valuable or invaluable, and how appropriate or inappropriate a given action, process, or product is in terms of the perceptions of the individual who is involved within the programme. Harker (2001) added that in traditional evaluation, the success of a programme would have been measured in terms of the extent to which its goals had been achieved. This type of evaluation is known as summative evaluation. The secondary form of evaluative research

methodology is formative evaluation, where feedback can lead to improvement and further development of the programme. Evaluative research provides not only the means by which existing suppositions and theories can be tested, but also the capacity to develop new theoretical positions (Sturman, 1997).

Massey (1998) believed that a study that uses only one field technique (however exhaustively) does not constitute thorough qualitative research, since it can generate only one kind of data. As such researchers affirm that to understand, explain and to generalise or predict from a single example requires an in-depth investigation of the interdependent elements (Sturman, 1997). Massey (1998) warns that any attempt to generalise findings beyond the case itself should be regarded as suspect, since statistical random sampling is rarely a feature of ethnographic and case study research alone. Merriam (1998) also supported this by saying that the development of categories, properties and tentative hypotheses (as is involved with grounded theory) is a process whereby the data can gradually evolve into a core of emerging theory.

Qualitative research and specifically the case study method encompasses a wide variety of approaches and implementation strategies and can be seen more or less synonymous with almost any kind of qualitative research work (Hegarty & Evans, 1985). While some positivist theorists believe that case studies will never result in ground breaking basic research, case studies nonetheless reveal a diversity and richness of human behaviour that is simply not accessible through any other method (Salkind, 2000).

#### **4.4 Qualitative data analysis**

Qualitative research tends to produce vast amounts of information which then needs to be summarised. Bouma (2000) described that this summarisation is necessary for several reasons as the questionnaires, interviews, and the recorded observations are not self-interpreting. That is, the data collected via these methods is almost inevitably intuitive, hence the data is more of a reflexive, reactive interaction between the researcher and the interpretations of a social encounter (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison,

2000). A major way of dealing with the information collected through the qualitative techniques utilized, involved coding, classifying and constructing the data into themes (Bouma, 2000), the process of which is well documented (Burns, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Potter & Wetherell, 1997; Silverman, 1993, 2000). Miles and Huberman (1994) attach much importance to the coding of questionnaire and interview responses partially as a way of reducing what is typically data overload from qualitative data. Nonetheless, Kerlinger (1970) defined coding as the translation of question responses and respondent information to specific categories for the purpose of analysis.

There are several different methods that can be used to code the information that is gathered from questionnaires and interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In regards to this thesis, the process involved a combination of content analysis where there is a predetermined list of codes and grounded theory where there are no predetermined codes. More specifically, coding took the form of combining two methods referred to as the *Theoretical or Priori* method and the *Contextual* method (Weisberg, Krosnick, & Bowen, 1996).

The *Theoretical or Priori* method (Weisberg et al., 1996) involved developing codes based on the answers that the researcher expects in advance. Neuman (1991) describes this step in the coding process as selective coding. The semi-structured interview style with an interview guide (see appendices) was used to address the research questions related to the student's experiences in the sport academy programme. This allowed the content to be focussed on the crucial issues of the study giving greater flexibility yet allowing the coding responses to be manageable (Burns, 1997). Cohen et al., (2000) support that quite often questions are pre-coded, that is, each response can be immediately and directly converted into a category. This is beneficial in that the researcher may code a participants' response, as the information is being discussed or gathered.

The *Contextual* method (Weisberg et al., 1996) in contrast develops codes by grouping similar answers together after the information is collated. Neuman (1991)

describes it as “bringing themes to the surface from deep inside the data” (p. 422). This type of coding resembles what Morse and Richards (2002) refer to as ‘topic coding’ and what Neuman (1991) identifies as ‘open coding’. Topic coding identifies patterns in the responses of the research participants. Portions of texts that are associated with particular topics are then drawn together. Thus, when key features have been identified, it is possible to go back through the records and code various responses. It is then possible to report these themes, ideas and concepts that have been identified and then the data can be grouped and compared (Cohen et al., 2000). Weisberg et al., (1996) professed that researchers usually combine the theoretical/priori and the contextual/topic methods to develop code categories for qualitative research methods.

#### **4.5 Interviews**

The use of the interview in research marks a move away from seeing human subjects as simply controlled and data as somehow external to individuals, towards regarding knowledge as generated between humans through their conversations and interactions (Kvale, 1996). Interviews enable all participants (be they interviewers or interviewees) to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. In these scenes the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life, it is part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable (Cohen et al., 2000). Cannell and Kahn (1968, p. 527) defined the interview as “a two person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information, and focused by the content specified by research object is of systematic description, prediction, or explanation.” It involves gathering data through direct verbal interaction between individuals and has a variety of intentions. For instance, the interview may be used to:

- Evaluate or assess a person in some respect;
- Select or promote an employee;
- Turn effect therapy to change, as in the psychiatric interview;

- Test or develop hypotheses;
- Get the data, as in surveys or experimental situations;
- Sample respondents' opinions, as in doorstep of interviews.

(Cohen et al., 2000, p. 268)

According to Cohen et al., (2000) the research interview serves three main purposes. Firstly, it may be used as the principal means of gathering information having direct bearing on the research objectives. Tuckman (1972) says that providing access to what is inside a person's head makes it possible to mention what that person knows (knowledge or information), what a person likes or dislikes (values and preferences), and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs). Secondly it may be used to test hypotheses or to suggest new ones providing explanations to help identify variables and relationships. Thirdly the interview may be used in conjunction with other methods in a research undertaking. While interviews have many strengths and weaknesses they allow for greater depth than is the case with other methods of data collection. Alternatively, a disadvantage is that interviews are prone to subject and bias on the part of the interviewer and the discussions collected may be misinterpreted by the researcher (Cohen et al., 2000).

There are a variety of interview types that are available to the researcher. Kvale (1996) concluded that interviews differ in the openness of their purpose and their degree of structure. He also discussed that the varying types of interviews can be set up along a series of continua. These continua maybe conceptualized as exploratory or hypothesis testing, descriptive or interpretative, or whether they are cognitive focused or emotion focused. Cohen et al., (2000), supported that the issue is of fitness for purpose, as the more one wishes to gain comparable data (across people and across sites), the more standardized and quantitative an interview tends to become. Conversely, if a researcher wishes to acquire unique, non-standardized, personalized information about how individuals view their world, the more they should veer towards qualitative, open ended, unstructured interviewing. The implementers were interviewed individually, whereas the students were interviewed in what has become increasingly known in educational research as *focus group* interviews.

Focus group interviews were used with the current members of the sport academy programme. Focus groups were not only used as a way of learning about opinions to identify issues and attitudes of particular phenomenon, but also allowed the researcher to see how various people from the group responded to another individuals position (Bouma, 2000). Morgan (1988) commented that this form of group interview, is not typical of a backwards and forwards interface between interviewer and group, but is reliant on the interaction within the group to discuss a topic supplied by the researcher. As the participants react with each other, their views emerge, thus the participants rather than the researchers agenda can predominate (Cohen et al., 2000). Individuals are chosen from a specific population and brought together to discuss a particular given theme or topic and it is from the interaction of the group that the data emerges. This data may then be triangulated with more traditional forms of interviewing, questionnaire, observation etc. (Morgan, 1988).

#### **4.6 Collecting information about the sport academy programme**

There was very little documentation regarding the programme implementation process and statement of objectives. All of the information gathered concerning the sport academy was taken from the Sport Academy Pamphlet (2001). This was required to explore the objectives of the programme. This was the only document made available to the researcher. The description, reasons for implementation and philosophy of the programme was collated using interviews with the director and the implementers.

#### **4.7 Individual interview participants: The implementation group**

Four teachers (two male and two female) were approached to take part in this study. One teacher was the Head of Faculty Physical Education, two were Heads of Schools and the final participant was the Sports Academy Director. These four teachers were identified as being the group that originally implemented the sports academy program at the school. One interview was conducted with each of these participants. The interview focused on the development and implementation of the programme to establish its underlying philosophies and objectives.

#### 4.8 Focus group interview participants: Students

A maximum of two 15-20 minute interviews were conducted with those students who agreed to be involved with the research project. The first interview explored students experiences of the sport academy programme. The second interview was conducted if information collated from the first interview required clarification. Not all participants needed this second interview. 45 student participants were involved in this investigation. The total number of students approached was 48, however two females declined for unknown reasons, and one male was omitted from the research as he was absent, and was not present during the field work observations and interviews. The breakdown of the student participants is as follows:

Table 1

*Student participants.*

| Level (Year Group) | Students (n) | Male | Female |
|--------------------|--------------|------|--------|
| 9                  | 14           | 7    | 7      |
| 10                 | 13           | 8    | 5      |
| 11                 | 8            | 4    | 4      |
| 12                 | 7            | 3    | 4      |
| 13                 | 3            | 0    | 3      |

The student participants were interviewed in their year level (year group) so that they would feel comfortable in each other's company. This supports Morgan's (1988) theme of homogeneity of common background that he considers is an important principle for conducive and productive discussion. Furthermore, Cohen et al., (2000) state that focus groups operate more successfully if they are composed of friends because the group will discuss something that is usually only discussed amongst their peers. Table 2 on the following page, displays the samples of each year group.

Table 2

*Student participants interviewed.*

| Level<br>(Year Group) | Students (n) | Students |        |                 |
|-----------------------|--------------|----------|--------|-----------------|
|                       |              | Male     | Female | Interviewed (n) |
| 9                     | 14           | 4        | 7      | 11              |
| 10                    | 13           | 6        | 2      | 8               |
| 11                    | 8            | 3        | 3      | 6               |
| 12                    | 7            | 3        | 4      | 7               |
| 13                    | 3            | 0        | 3      | 3               |

As identified in the table above, not all students were involved in the interview process. These students were not approached for follow-up interviews.

While part of the interviews utilized an organised set of questions and themes, they were by purpose more qualitative in design. This enabled the participants to openly discuss their views of the programme and the potential areas of improvement and development. It was the researcher's intention to investigate the participant's interpretation of their experiences to give depth to the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and provide a solid description of the phenomena (Flick, 1998). While the researcher does not have direct access to the experience, the representations and descriptions of their experience is the essence of what the researcher seeks to capture (Mussel, 1998).

The interviews were transcribed fully by the researcher. Fully transcribing the interviews allowed for a more detailed immersion into the data and aided in analysing the information more thoroughly. Transcripts also meant less reliability on personal memory or notes (Silverman, 2000). Analysis was done by reading hard copies of transcripts and noting themes under both the pre-coded items and organising the information in 'similar packages' as further themes emerged.

All the information analysed was formulated using the coding procedures formerly described to identify patterns in the responses of the research participants. Portions of the texts from those responses that are associated with particular topics were drawn

together. As the interview questions prompted responses that were descriptive in nature no attempt was made to analyse them quantitatively. Thus, conclusions were drawn from salient themes of the narratives.

#### **4.9 Questionnaires**

The questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information. It provides structured data that can be administered without the presence of the researcher and is comparatively straight forward to analyse (Wilson & McLean, 1994). Cohen et al., (2000) stated that the researcher will have to judge the appropriateness of using a questionnaire for data collection, and, if so, what kind of questionnaire it will be. While the ethical issues raised in using a questionnaire are numerous (e.g., informed consent, rights to withdraw, guaranteed anonymity) attention has to be given to a number of considerations. For instance the researcher must reflect upon the structure of the questionnaire, how the respondents are to be approached, the explanations that are given to the respondents and the data analysis and reporting (Cohen et al., 2000).

A questionnaire may have either open questions, closed questions or a combination of both (Cohen et al., 2000). An open question enables participants to write a free response in their own terms. They then have the choice to explain and qualify their responses. Additionally, Likert scales may be implemented. These provide a range of responses to a given question or statement. Likert scales are considered to be very useful devices for the researcher, as they build in a degree of sensitivity and differentiation of response whilst still generating numbers (Cohen et al., 2000). Likert scales are widely used in research for they combine the opportunity for a flexible response with the ability to determine frequencies, correlations and other forms of quantitative analysis.

A combination of open questions and likert scales were used in this investigation. This is referred to as a mixed-methodology design and provided the researcher with the freedom to fuse a measurement with opinion thus combining both quantitative and qualitative information (Cohen et al., 2000). Additionally the researcher was able to generate different kinds of data that reflected the complexity of understanding a

particular phenomenon enhancing the understanding of the enquiry (Greene, Cacarelli, & Graham, 1989). This mixed method has several purposes. Firstly it provided and enhanced an empirically based instrument with some measure of objectivity (Young & Borgen, 1990). Secondly it addressed the subjective experience of the ex-participants time in the sport academy, and the parents'/caregivers' expectations to provide a deeper understanding of their perspectives of the sports academy (Kidd, 2002). Lastly, the combination of open questions and likert scales provided the opportunity for a flexible response with the ability to determine frequencies, correlations and other forms of quantitative analysis. As a result of this questionnaire design is referred to as a complementary design as it measured and described overlapping and different facets of a phenomenon (Greene et al., 1989).

#### **4.9.1 Ex-participants**

The researcher attempted to locate ex-participants of the program to invite them to participate in the research. Of the 20 ex-participants identified, only 14 could be contacted through postal addresses (using the directors and the implementers' knowledge and resources). These 14 participants were sent a questionnaire. Out of these 14, seven questionnaires (50%) were returned. The researcher did not follow up or attempt to locate the non-respondents.

#### **4.9.2 Parents/caregivers**

Parents were approached for their involvement and were contacted via letters of consent to complete a questionnaire. The parents of the 45 students participating in the research were invited to participate in this questionnaire. 22 questionnaires (48%) were returned. The information sheet (letter) that accompanied the questionnaire clearly outlined to the participants their rights in this research project. Informed consent was considered to be given with the completion of the questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this research combined both open questions and likert scales (a copy of the questionnaire can be located in the appendices).

#### 4.10 Observations

Bouma (2000) considers observation to be one of the most basic data collection techniques available to researchers. Several observations were made of the sport academy training sessions and general form time. This was a process that began with *non-participatory* and *naturalistic* observation techniques so that examination of the programme could be completed as unobtrusively as possible (Bouma, 2000, p. 179-180). At this stage of the observations focus was given to the meaning of the social interaction and organisation of the sport academy members. However, as the study evolved *participant observation* techniques were employed. This was completed to be “a part of the action” (p.179), allowing a fuller description of the student experience to take place. All observations were recorded using a simple data-collection technique in the form of field notes and coded using the methods discussed previously in this chapter.

#### 4.11 Data analysis: Student reports

The academic records (report cards) of the current and ex students of the sport academy were collated and analysed. Approval was sought from the school Board of Trustees, and the parents/caregivers regarding access to achievement data such as report forms and academic progress reports. This was outlined in both the formal proposals to the above groups and individuals and letters of consent to the parents/caregivers of the participants. Furthermore, all security policies the school had concerning either copying or taking academic data outside the confines of the school environment were adhered to.

The actual grades that the students attained were not analysed but rather their effort and attitude marks as perceived by their individual subject teachers were examined. The effort and attitude marks from each student’s previous and current achievement reports were collected and the average mark over the time that they had been a part of the sports academy programme was established. The individual average marks for each student were then prepared into the separate year levels e.g., all year nine students’ average marks were collated together, all year 10 students’ average marks were collated etc. The average mark for each of the year groups was then calculated.

The information and data collated is structured as general conclusions and findings, and depicted as a line graph in Chapter 5: Results and discussion, section two, pg 74. This ensured the prevention of identifying any particular individual and maintaining student anonymity and confidentiality.

#### **4.12 Summary**

This chapter has described the ethical procedures completed to conduct this study. Information was provided that discussed the combination of the case study and ethnography research methods to investigate the sport academy programme. Both the qualitative and quantitative strategies used to explore the expectations and experiences of the research participants have also been identified and supported with a theoretical base.

The following chapter provides and discusses the results of this research.

## **CHAPTER FIVE:**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter is separated into three sections.

Section one provides answers to research objectives one, two and three. Therefore a description of the sports academy programme is provided that defines the course content, selection process and the objectives. The philosophy of the sport academy programme as perceived by the implementers is also explored.

Section two investigates research objectives four, five and six. Consequently, the expectations and the experiences of the programme as held by the research participants are examined. Analysis of the programmes impact as experienced by the research participants' in regards to academic and sporting achievement is also reported.

Section three reports on the major themes that emerged from analyzing the research participant's experiences. Data from the parents/caregivers and ex-participants questionnaires, and the interview transcriptions from the student's and the implementation group identified four particular themes. The first theme concerned the impact of the programme on the current and ex-members self confidence. Secondly, the impact that the programme has had on developing the students identity. The third theme regarded the absence of NCEA Qualifications and the final theme concerned increasing the involvement and communication with parents/caregivers.

The report is presented using both quantitative responses from the questionnaires and the qualitative anecdotal recordings from the interviews to provide an in-depth analysis of the sport academy programme.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Section one**

Section one addresses research objectives one, two and three which are to:

1. Investigate and report on the underlying philosophies and the expectations held by the implementers and the course director.
2. Provide a description of the sport academy programme.
3. Investigate the stated aims of the sport academy programme.

The programme documentation is used to define the aims of the sport academy programme. Qualitative data in the form of interviews and anecdotal recordings from the director and the implementers is utilised to explore and explain the content, selection process and the philosophical underpinning of the programme.

#### **5.1.1 Description of the sports academy programme**

This sport academy programme was implemented in 1999. Permission was sought from the Principal and the Board of Trustees. The programme was initially proposed and then constructed by a team of teachers. This group of teachers, included the director of the programme (who is also a teacher at the school), made all of the decisions and modifications including selection of the participants. While there is limited documentation on policy and programme design, it was found that the sport academy provided:

1. A nationally and internationally recognised athletics, speed and fitness coach.
2. Spacious sports facilities and grounds (including a heated and covered pool, weights room and gym).
3. An individually tailored sports programme.

4. Academy members with an individual education programme (IEP) specific to their needs. This allows the students to follow a full academic programme while pursuing their sporting interest.
5. Access to elite coaching and motivation in consultation with the students own sports coaches.
6. Ongoing monitoring and testing of fitness levels.
7. The option to elect into the programme as a timetabled subject. This subject class covers sports science, testing and conditioning, skill acquisition and sport specific practice.

(Sport Academy Pamphlet, 2001, p. 2)

The programme consists of both theoretical and practical elements. The practical component is compulsory for all academy members and involves three 45 minute training sessions a week. Trainings begin at 8am and are based on four main areas; endurance, strength, speed and flexibility. A note is required for non-attendance. The director makes allowances for those students who may have engagements with additional sport trainings or extra-curricular activities (music, drama production etc). The implementers commented that:

*“there is a lot of conditioning work...base work...which is good and they have got to have that and I would say definitely that the fitness levels of those kids has gone way up and it must mean that in their specific sports areas they must do better because of that alone...”*

*“there should be more on skills but then again you are starting to get into the specific skills for your sport and it's not an easy one to organise...so from a certain point of view it is really more like a conditioning academy in a lot of ways...”*

The theory content covers sports psychology, anatomy and physiology, biomechanics, growth and development, training theory, sports nutrition, skill development, first aid, and performance profiling. These components are taught and discussed during a

timetabled option line which academy students may select as a subject option. This is not compulsory for academy members and takes up the same amount of time as a typical subject option of five hours per week. The completion of this theoretical component does not result in a formal qualification. The implementers comment:

*“We try to give them the basic kind of sports knowledge such as nutrition physiology and so on and goal setting...”*

*“they will cover some of the material theory wise that we would cover at NCEA level 1, 2, or 3 but I can't see any problems with that because that information needs to be reinforced all the time and the kids that I have had at NCEA level this year who have done the sports academy have had a little bit of an advantage I think because they say 'oh yeah we did cover this last year and now I get it...”*

### **5.1.2 The selection process: Identifying the ‘complete package’**

The implementation group state that an individual is selected primarily on their excellence in a particular sport, the benchmark being provincial representative level. Work provided by Ellis et al., (2003) of athletically talented females commented that provincial level participation in any sport or activity demonstrates *above average ability* as described by Renzullis’ (1998) Three Ringed Model. The implementers of the sport academy programme endorse that they wanted to employ a course that would meet the special needs of those who were identified as being athletically gifted. This concurs with the completion of earlier work by Tristram and Batty (2000). They identified that there are basically three distinct ideologies for initiating this type of programme. Firstly, recognition of athletically talented and gifted athletes; secondly for the attainment of qualifications; and thirdly for school appeal. The implementers were adamant that they wanted to provide an opportunity to foster, support and enhance their pupil’s talents and gifts both physically and academically. They stated that:

*“There was a kind of a perceived need... there was a small nucleus of sporting excellence that we recognized.”*

*“Development and support for the gifted happens in the academic area of school and I see it for the same for sports so I have no qualms of its existence here about it because it can coexist and it does coexist...”*

Furthermore applicants must display a positive attitude, that is, they have ambitions and the ability to set high goals and aspire to them. They must also be able to demonstrate reliability and work to their capacity in both their individual sport and academic studies. Candidates must submit a curriculum vitae that provides information of their academic and sporting history. References from current coaches and/or teachers are mandatory. An interview process is conducted for new applicants. Current students who wish to remain in the programme must re-apply but are not subjected to an interview. As the director of the programme explained:

*“The key thing is that they are committed and wanting to succeed and then we want to help them... if they’re not committed and they don’t want to succeed and their interests are elsewhere then for their benefit and our benefit its best that they do go and do other stuff and that’s fine...”*

Implementers supported that a positive attitude and ambition are important characteristics saying that:

*“We started looking at the kids who were already motivated...we would ask them questions like what is it that you want to be? What is it that you want to do? How are you going to achieve that...and we were looking for answers like I wanted to be the best...”*

*“We are also looking for quite a good work ethic and to see that they are contributing in the school and we can tell this by the references that they have and that kind of tells us how serious they are about participating in the programme.”*

In searching for the right attitude and commitment to the programme, the implementers identified that many of the students were either currently or had been involved with an accelerated academic programme as well.

*“The idea was to look at kids who were achievers, proven achievers... but not necessarily academic, but coincidentally a lot of the kids are I would go as far to say that at least half of the kids have that...”*

*“We have had some outstanding athletes...possibly the difference with other academies is that our students had to be really strong academically as well.”*

*“I mean I guess a lot of them as you would have found are academically able. For example the students who are doing the best in this years Sixth Form PE are the sports academy people...they have just got that application of time management [as] they are doing a lot with their lives...they have put a lot in and they just seem to be on the ball with it...”*

### **5.1.3 The philosophy: Supporting the athletically gifted**

The implementers believe that the philosophical underpinning of the programme is to develop a support structure for young athletes in an attempt to combine the importance of academic and sporting success. The sport academy information provided earlier stated that the programme “allow[s] the students to follow a full academic programme” (Sport Academy Pamphlet, 2001, p. 2) and to provide support for the gifted athlete by “decreasing workload and/or pressure by helping members find a balance between their sporting, academic and family commitments” (Sport Academy Pamphlet, 2001, p.2). Therefore, it is mandatory that the participants’ continue a normal academic workload. This amalgamation of priorities added to the perceived need to provide for the athletically gifted. The director explains:

*“...we had noted a few things, particularly those students who were having difficulty balancing sport, cultural activities and academic study and we saw a lot of students under a great deal of stress. We were establishing the academy*

*to allow students to achieve their goals in sport while saying to them that academic achievement was important also.”*

The implementers also established their position in this matter:

*“What we wanted to do was to provide some time and certainly improve their fitness level their base level and get that training so that at night time they can concentrate on their studies and their homework...”*

*“We had kids that were heavily involved in music and the academic side so what we're trying to do is establish a situation where their lives would be a little bit easier...we sort of approached it from the same situation as what we would cater for handicapped children and provide for the students and cater for their needs... here we have other special needs kids whose needs were different they needed time amongst anything else to do their academic stuff while trying to keep involved in their sports...so that is the kind of ethos that we wanted to achieve in the Sports Academy and we're trying to continue...”*

*“We were trying to get the holistic all rounded thing with a support plan while they were training so if they were getting up for a swimming at 5:00 or 6:00 a.m. they had sports academy time to catch up on homework as well.”*

It is evident in the above narratives that there is support offered to those members who select the timetabled option of the sport academy to complete homework or assignments. This assistance allows the sport academy members to continue their academic work when they have heavy training schedules either before or after school. Therefore, the philosophy behind the implementation of the sports academy follows the ethos of providing a conducive environment for elite athletes to pursue their sporting aspirations alongside an academic programme that will prepare them for life.

Information from the sport academy pamphlet summarises what the programme attempts to provide for the members:

- Introduce a support structure for young elite athletes.
- Combine the importance of academic and sporting success.
- Provide athletes with the theoretical knowledge and skills to develop and enhance their personal sporting talents.
- Present a subject that involves sport specific training and a sport theory academic programme.

(Sport Academy Pamphlet, 2001, p. 2)

Thus the intent of the implementers and the director was to identify and develop both the physical ability and theoretical knowledge in a students' personal area of sporting expertise. Additionally they aimed to decrease workload and/or pressure by helping members find a balance between their sporting and academic commitments.

#### **5.1.4 The aims of the sport academy programme**

The sport academy programme state that it specifically aims to provide a supportive and conducive environment that allows members to:

- Achieve at a higher level in their chosen discipline or sport.
- Demonstrate a desire to succeed in their chosen field.
- Demonstrate an excellent attitude towards school.

(Sport Academy Pamphlet, 2001, p. 2)

Analyses of the past and present student's experiences are provided to ascertain if these aims have been met. Parents/caregivers also provide their perspectives of the impact that the sport academy programme has had upon their child/ren as members of the programme.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 5.2 Section two

This section attempts to answer research objectives four, five and six which are:

4. Explore the expectations of the past and present members and the current members' parents/caregivers.
5. Report on the past and present members' experiences of the programme.
6. Report on the programmes perceived impact on past and present members'.

The expectations of the current members, ex-members and parents/caregivers are identified. Analysis of the data reports if these expectations have been met. Furthermore, this report provides an exploration of the experiences that the current members and ex-members had during their time in the sport academy programme. Completed questionnaires provide the perspectives of the parents/caregivers to identify the programmes impact on their child/ren. The qualitative data is used to determine the impact of the programme upon the student's who have participated in the sport academy. The aims of the sport academy programme are used as sub-headings to aid the reader in comprehending the data.

#### 5.2.1 Analysing the research participants' experiences of sport academy aim one

This first aim is arguably the most significant as it potentially demonstrates the academies success in contributing to a members sporting achievement. Aim one states that upon being accepted into the academy programme participants must continue to "achieve at a higher level in their chosen discipline or sport" (Sport Academy Pamphlet, 2001, p. 2).

Testimonials and interview narratives, gathered from the current participant's experiences and expectations were analysed. Ex-participant's questionnaire responses were explored to verify their experiences and expectations of the programme. Additionally data collated from the parents/caregivers questionnaires were used to ascertain their expectations and the impact regarding the sports academy programme on their child's/children's sporting achievements. This section also identified aspects of the programme that were absent, yet were overtly stated in the programmes information prospectus.

The first set of questions established if parents/caregivers thought that their child/ren would benefit from the programme. Tables 3 and 4 below indicate that parents/caregivers had a confident approach to the programme and expected that it would develop their child's/children's athletic talents.

Table 3

*I/we feel that my/our child/ren will benefit greatly from this programme.*

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | No Indication |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| 0                 | 4        | 1         | 13    | 4              | 0             |
| 0%                | 18%      | 4%        | 60%   | 18%            | 0%            |

Table 4

*It would help my/our child/ren to develop their athletic potential/talents.*

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | No Indication |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| 0                 | 0        | 0         | 10    | 11             | 1             |
| 0%                | 0%       | 0%        | 46%   | 50%            | 4%            |

Additionally, this question was also given to the ex-members of the programme to identify their expectations regarding the development of their athletic talents.

Table 5

*It would help me develop my athletic potential/talents.*

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | No Indication |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| 0                 | 0        | 0         | 2     | 5              | 0             |
| 0%                | 0%       | 0%        | 29%   | 71%            | 0%            |

The positive reaction as depicted in the previous tables attests that the research participants clearly support that the development of athletic talent influenced their decision for being involved (either as a member or as a parent/caregiver) in the programme. 96% of parents/caregivers either agreed or strongly agreed commenting that:

*"...this programme would provide focus and discipline to my child's participation in their activity."*

*"He would get individual help to attain his goals in sport."*

*"This question describes our position on why we agreed to our child being involved."*

*"We hoped the programme would provide our child with a development programme that would strengthen his skills in his chosen sport and also help fit fitness training into his academic schedule."*

*"We saw a combination of his school work and physical skill being fostered... a balance in his life of activity and academic studies."*

Furthermore, 100% of the ex-members either agreed or strongly agreed stating that:

*"I enrolled so that I could improve my sporting performance and knowledge of sport science."*

*“...that the sport academy would give specialised training in my individual sport.”*

Current members of the programme shared their perspectives:

*“People had suggested that you would be able to develop your sport... and that if you want to be successful in your sport then you might want to be part of it.”*

*“I joined so I could improve in my sport and to be better...”*

*“I joined the academy because I had ambitions to be a top sports person and I thought it would be a good opportunity to just expand and get better at what I do...”*

However, when parents/caregivers were asked if their child/ren had benefited from the programme, analysis of their questionnaire responses were mixed. Table 6 below portrays this perspective.

Table 6

*My/our child/ren has achieved better results in their personal sport/s because of this programme.*

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | No Indication |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| 1                 | 2        | 8         | 7     | 3              | 1             |
| 4%                | 8%       | 36%       | 32%   | 14%            | 4%            |

Table 6 shows that 48% of parents/caregivers indicated that they had either strongly disagreed, disagreed or were undecided on whether the programme actually benefited their child’s/children’s sporting achievements. As some parents/caregivers stated:

*“My son has achieved a lot not necessarily because of the academy programme – but rather through his individual input and specialist help from his sport.”*

*“I really believe that the students have achieved because of their own desire.”*

*“Can’t really say because the physical side of our sons sport is not being practiced at school. He does this after school at his gym.”*

*“They are already very motivated and keen so personally I don’t think they have reached the results they have achieved because of the sports academy.”*

This position is shared by the ex-participants of the programme. Analysis of their questionnaire responses below demonstrates their perspective.

Table 7

*I felt that I benefited greatly from the sport academy programme.*

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | No Indication |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| 0                 | 0        | 3         | 2     | 0              | 2             |
| 0%                | 0%       | 42%       | 29%   | 0%             | 29%           |

Table 7 above depicts that ex-members feelings were similar to the parents/caregivers responses with only 29% of the recipients agreeing that they had benefited from the sport academy programme.

Several current members also expressed that their individual achievements came about through personal dedication and effort and not essentially because of the academy training programme. They commented that:

*“I got pretty good achievement’s this year when I made the team but I don’t think that was because of the sports academy...”*

*“I don’t know whether it’s because of what I do in the academy or the personal trainings that I do.”*

*“It’s like some of us are training really hard outside of the sports academy anyway and it’s hard to tell whether it’s just the academy...”*

As identified in the narratives some current students do not attribute their personal successes to the sports academy. This data challenges the perceptions that the current members, ex-members and parents/caregivers have concerning the sports academy role in creating sporting success. Furthermore it questions whether the sport academy programme encourages participants to “achieve at a higher level in their chosen discipline or sport” (Sport Academy Pamphlet, 2001, p. 2). Further analysis from both past and present students identified that this may be because there are other variables that contribute to their sporting achievement, for example, personal trainings. Analysis of their experiences identified these variables making it difficult to identify the sport academies contribution to a members “achieve[ment] at a higher level in their chosen discipline or sport” (Sport Academy Pamphlet, 2001, p. 2). However further development strategies are required if present and future participants are to get the most benefit in terms of sporting achievement.

The director commented nonetheless that “achiev[ing] at a higher level in their chosen discipline or sport” (Sport Academy Pamphlet, 2001, p. 2), may involve an individuals’ sustained position in a regional side or selection into a national squad or the attainment of awards (rather than the selection into a sports team) at a level that is accomplished by only a small percentage of individuals in New Zealand (such as specific dancing awards). Acknowledgements of a participant’s achievements are processed through the completion of what the director refers to as a ‘skite sheet’.

This skite sheet is a continual record of the gifted individuals’ accomplishments and is transferred into a fortnightly newsletter. It then provides an opportunity for the gifted athlete to be acknowledged by the school and the wider community. While the general intention of this newsletter is to keep the community informed of the achievements of its athletically gifted students there is a perception that it

superficially and without reason amplifies the success of the sports academy as a programme. As one student stated:

*“When our achievements are put into the notices it's like the sports academy is taking the credit for our personal development.”*

One parent also noted:

*“...the academy gets all the ‘glory’ when really it was my son’s hard work!”*

However, Table 8 below indicates that while 29% of the ex-participants were undecided, 42% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they had achieved better results by being a part of the programme.

Table 8

*I felt that I achieved better results in my personal sport/s because of the sport academy programme.*

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | No Indication |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| 0                 | 2        | 2         | 2     | 1              | 0             |
| 0%                | 29%      | 29%       | 29%   | 13%            | 0%            |

Analysis of ex-members questionnaires supported that:

*“It taught me to focus on my primary sports.”*

*“I am still working on my career hopes and feel that the skills I have learnt have helped me so much.”*

Some current members concurred with the ex-member’s commenting on the positive correlation the sport academy programme has had on their individual success. More specifically areas such as general fitness and the strength training regime were identified:

*“It has had a positive effect on my achievements I never thought I would get as high as I have and that's probably from a lot of the training we do in the academy.”*

*“Yes definitely...I mean especially last year the thought of me being in the sports academy made me want to achieve more.”*

Analysis of the data identifies that it is difficult to discern if the sport academy contributed to the current and ex member's sporting achievement. Elements such as specific trainings with their coaches and/or instructors, additional individual training sessions, specialised training camps (organised through their sport affiliation) and parental support are factors that participants noted that helped them achieve their goals. In a way a school can be irrelevant in the development of athletic talent continuing not to undermine it, but neither specifically nurturing it any particular way (Frydenberg & O'Mullane, 2000). There are simply more variables to consider that could have contributed to a sport academy members sporting success.

Despite the difficulty with establishing if the sport academy programme contributed to a member's sporting achievements, some current students and parents/caregivers felt that there has been no detrimental effect of the programme on their sporting success. This was made apparent when students were asked if they were “worse than before”.

*“I haven't really been able to tell but probably not... it hasn't got worse it's just the same...”*

*“no... because every year you grow and improve...”*

*“it hasn't been detrimental in any way shape or form...”*

Parents/caregivers also commented that the existing training regime could not be construed as detrimental to their child's/children's sporting success.

*“This programme allows our child to maintain a good level of fitness...”*

*“It provides extra tuition in nutrition, sport fitness training...”*

While the sport academy can accept, to be fair, a minimal amount of credit in contributing to a participants sporting development, it is evident that the programme is not detrimental to their sporting development.

### **5.2.2 Some missing components**

Analyses of the research participant’s interview and questionnaire responses identified two aspects of the programme that were noticeably absent; specialist coaching and fitness testing and assessment. This is an interesting finding considering that the sports academy states that it aims to provide:

1. Access to elite coaching and motivation in consultation with the students own sports coaches.
2. Ongoing monitoring and testing of fitness levels.

(Sport Academy Pamphlet, 2001, p. 2)

Firstly, the sport academy programme stated that it provided a forum for students to have access to elite athletes or coaching in their particular activity and receive specific training for their needs. However, parents/caregivers noted that:

*“We expected that our child would receive personal one to one development in their chosen sport.”*

*“The instruction in skills on the preferred sport has not happened.”*

*“Sometimes they need to meet a famous person to show them that they also can do it.”*

*“The sports academy should make an effort to honour their pledge of having specialised people coming in for their chosen sports.”*

*“His basic physical needs have been taken care of, but he hasn’t had any one on one with a sportsperson in his field.”*

*“While the academy provides extra tuition in nutrition, and general sport fitness training, we feel it does fail in providing specialised tuition in chosen sport.”*

Some the current student’s also supported this belief, indicating that they had expected individual development in their specific sport.

*“I expected the actual sporting side of it to be a lot more intense... it was sort of said that you would be getting extra coaching and stuff for your specific sport...that was one of the things that sort of attracted me but that didn’t happen...and I also expected that it would be a lot more specific to my sport but yeah its pretty general really.”*

Despite the data provided by the members and the parents/caregivers involved in the research, the director explained that:

*“We don’t deal with specifics and the specific skill development that is entirely the coaches’ role... we simply try to assist with general physical preparation or how to develop strength, flexibility and speed. I’ve always treated physical preparation as a problem solving exercise that is “ok what are you doing this for? What are your movements and how can we strengthen those movements? What stabilising muscles do we use and how can we develop those? The problem I have is that people who don’t link the game with the general preparation with a series of exercises that are specific to their own sport. So what I have tried to do is turn the thing back to the athlete to be a thinking*

*player to be a person who thinks about their personal needs and development...*"

An implementer also commented regarding the absence of sport specific development:

*"Perhaps there should be more on skills but then again you are starting to get into the specific skills for your sport and it's not an easy one to organise...so from a certain point of view it is really more like a conditioning academy in a lot of ways..."*

Moltzen (1995) believed that for talent to develop there must be optimal experiences that will sustain the talented teenager and that they be kept interested and supported by a respected adult. Csikszentmihalyi et al., (1993) commented that talented teenagers like people who are supportive and model an enjoyable involvement in a field. Moltzen (1995) noted that these interested observers maybe the single most important factor in the success or failure of talent realisation.

Sytsma (2001) confirmed that a specialist role model has the ability to improve a student's chances of growth, success, and personal satisfaction. Similarly, this specialist role model may assume more responsibilities for coordinating and focusing efforts, stimulating ideas, making students aware of the possibilities providing an insight about how to accomplish what a young athlete needs and wants to learn. As such students become increasingly responsible for the direction, coordination, and challenge levels of their own athletic development. Sytsma (2001) found that when students are coached or guided with their individual interests and talents in mind, their passion for learning increases, allowing for a self-realisation experience invoked through the encouragement of ideas, insight and creativity. The director and the implementers identify some of the concerns related to this issue:

*"I think we need to bring in the outside help because there are a lot of people out there who would be willing to help I am sure...we have had some awesome*

*people on our staff who have come in and we haven't used that to our advantage... and a lot of it has got to do with time tabling and stuff like that there needs to be more use of expertise on the staff for sure and that would probably be an advantage for the academy..."*

*"I think having specialist athletes come in would be the ideal situation and I think initially that is what the programme was set up to do, that we would get the coaches in for the specific sports unfortunately the budget doesn't cover the minimum fees for some of the nationally recognised athletes."*

*"Part of the process which makes it hard is that people are busy, athletes in the community, parents - so there are two basic fundamental problems people are busy and the time tabling of the sports academy to get all the students together at one time and that has been a nagging problem..."*

Ellis (1995) stated that it is essential that the gifted have access to appropriate resources and people to foster development. She continued to say that these students need exposure to appropriate role models, communication with those talented and successful in the field, as well as the opportunity to test their own talents and skills. Moltzen (1995) agreed that educational planning should make every effort to set goals that correspond with a students' present aspirations and to match learning experiences as closely as possible to their ability.

The second component that was absent is the continual assessment of physical fitness and skills. Current students believed that such evaluation can aid them to identify areas in which they could perhaps work on in the academy training programme. As a group of year 12 students explained:

*"I reckon there could be more testing of us like...remember back in 3<sup>rd</sup> form we had to do 3km runs and stuff..."*

*"yeah that was cool..."*

*"we use to be able to monitor how fit we were...but we've sort of like stopped doing that now..."*

*“yeah then at least you could use that as your training and work harder towards that time or something...”*

Parents/caregivers also shared their perspective of this apparent deficiency of the sport academy. They commented:

*“Having already a reasonable self disciplined child with experience of training programmes specific to sport we are expecting too much from this programme for our child. We expected progressive extension not general fitness pertinent to any sport.”*

*“...we would have liked to see testing to be done at intervals so that progress can be charted.”*

*“We expected progressive extension that would be monitored...”*

*“They would get a development programme that would show where he needs to strengthen his skills in his chosen sport.”*

Sleivert and Stewart (1996) suggested that there are a variety of tests to assess an athlete's physical condition. Assessment of an athlete's performance is vitally important to evaluate and identify their strengths and weaknesses. This information can then be used to formulate an appropriate training programme specific to their sport or activity. It also provides a baseline measurement for goal setting and subsequent evaluation of whether athletes have reached their training goals (Sleivert & Stewart, 1996). The most difficult aspect of fitness assessment is identifying the appropriate tests for the fitness components considered important for the specific sport and activity and then implementing a training regime that would best reflect beneficial gains in those areas.

Analysis has shown that the sport academy programme has reneged on two of its stated provisions. Therefore data gathered regarding the expectations of the research participants identified that the sport academy programme has not met some of the expectations concerning the development of sporting ability.

### **5.2.3 Analysing the research participants experiences of sport academy aim two**

This segment of the report analyses the experiences of the research participants in regards to aim two. This aim states that students must “demonstrate a desire to succeed in their chosen field” (Sport Academy Pamphlet, 2001, p. 2). The concepts of attitude, goal setting and motivation are defined. Career goals are also explored to identify whether this was a motive to be a part of the sport academy and therefore influenced a member’s desire as noted in aim two above.

As described in section one of this chapter applicants’ are selected primarily on their excellence in a particular activity at provincial representative level, however their *desire* is also considered. The director elaborated that informal procedures are utilised, thus, the operative word in aim two seems to be *demonstrate*. He explained for instance that informal assessment methods might involve the demonstration of attendance to trainings. For example arising early to be at school by 8.00am demonstrates commitment to the academy, commitment to your activity and a commitment to work. This is an overall demonstration of positive work ethic. Secondly a demonstration of the amount of effort an athlete is putting into their training sessions may be used as an indicator, again the athlete demonstrates their attitude to be persistent and patient in order to achieve to their potential. Lastly, it may involve a demonstration of their continued success in their selected activity e.g., further selection into representative teams or a national squad or the achievement of higher awards. An analysis of the student experiences provided defines the desire and attitude they demonstrated towards their sport while being in the sport academy programme.

*“Yeah when I was just a regional level athlete I reckon it [the sport academy] gave me that little competitiveness inside me...”*

*“I have a more positive attitude towards training I really want to do it... more motivated to do it for myself.”*

*“It’s got me thinking that I’m in the sports academy I’m supposed to be an elite athlete and that’s what makes you train harder...it was the pressure that made me be where I am...I probably wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for the academy... yeah its positive pressure...”*

Parents/caregivers also supported that there have been positive changes in their child’s/children’s attitude towards their sport.

Table 9

*While my/our child/ren has been in the sports academy programme I/we have noticed a positive impact on their attitude and effort in their sport/s.*

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | No Indication |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| 0                 | 3        | 6         | 11    | 2              | 0             |
| 0%                | 14%      | 28%       | 50%   | 8%             | 0%            |

Table 9 above indicates that only 14% of parents/caregivers disagreed that they have seen a positive influence in their child’s/children’s attitude and effort.

Additionally, over 60% parents/caregivers noticed a change in their child’s/children’s desire to succeed in their sport (table 10 on following page).

Table 10

*While my/our child/ren has been in the sports academy programme I/we have noticed a positive impact on their desire to succeed.*

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | No Indication |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| 0                 | 0        | 8         | 12    | 2              | 0             |
| 0%                | 0%       | 36%       | 56%   | 8%             | 0%            |

Parents/caregivers commented that:

*“The sport academy has been valuable to my son to develop a culture of success and hard work in sport...”*

*“The sport academy has given my son a focus.”*

*“My daughters’ attitude to life has been completely turned around by being in the sport academy.”*

Table 11 below depicts the reactions of the ex-participants when they were approached with the same question. 72% of them reported that the sport academy programme had a positive influence on their attitude towards their sport.

Table 11

*I believe that the sports academy programme had a positive impact on my attitude towards my sport.*

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | No Indication |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| 1                 | 1        | 0         | 3     | 2              | 0             |
| 14%               | 14%      | 0%        | 43%   | 29%            | 0%            |

Unfortunately the questionnaire responses were insufficient to explore the attitudes of the 28% of ex-participants who felt that the academy programme did not improve their attitude. However one ex-participant of the academy commented that:

*“You will only get what you want in sport if you are willing to work for it. My time in the sport academy really showed some of the really bad attitudes of others... many rely on talent alone and had no work ethic.”*

The director (2001) of the sports academy programme also testifies that the applicant must display a positive attitude, that is, they have *ambitions* and the ability to set high goals and aspire to them. He commented:

*“We try to give them the building blocks but they have to build their own wall...and that’s where some of them succeed very well and some of them don’t...”*

This identifies the importance of being able to set appropriate and realistic goals, and to achieve them. This may manifest itself in different ways, such as being more competitive and being more motivated to compete at the top level. Therefore, analysing a sport academy participant’s desire to succeed has invoked concepts such as motivation, competitiveness and positive pressure, all of which were prevalent in the research participant’s responses.

Cashmore (2002) stated that motivation, competitiveness and positive pressure are concepts closely associated to goal setting. For example, motivation is an “internal state or process that energises, directs and maintains goal directed behaviour” (p. 176). Competitiveness is defined as a desire to strive for success in competition (Gill, Dowd, Williams, Beaudoin, & Martin, 1996). According to Gill (2000), a goal is that which an individual is trying to accomplish, a standard of excellence. Additionally a goal typically refers to a specific level of proficiency on a task, usually within a time limit (Locke, Saari, Shaw, & Latham, 1981).

While this is commonly known throughout the sporting world, Cashmore (2002) concluded that commitment is one of four main attributes required in becoming a successful athlete. He continues to purport that highly committed athletes reach their goals regardless of whether they are hard or easy. Renzulli (1998) in his work with gifted people referred to this character trait as *task commitment*. He concluded that this trait is found in creative-productive persons and is a refined or focused form of

motivation. The terms that are most frequently used to describe task commitment are perseverance, endurance, hard work, dedicated practice, self-confidence, and a belief in one's ability to carry out important work. As such the achievement of a participant's goals could also function as an indicator in demonstrating a desire to succeed in their chosen field.

Parallel to the discussion provided previously regarding a *desire to succeed* and goal setting, the motives for applying to be in the sport academy programme were also explored. These motives were explored to ascertain if students enrolled into the programme with the expectation that the sports academy may help them in achieving their goal of becoming a professional athlete and attaining a professional career in sports. Some current students commented that they saw the sport academy playing a part in potentially reaching this goal:

*"There is quite a bit of money in Europe where you can play [the sport]. I see the sports academy playing some kind of role towards that goal...like applying for a professional league and they see that I was a part of a sports academy... just on paper."*

*"I probably have a goal of playing [the sport] and earn some money and I thought the academy could help me there by acting as an 'agency'...you know...like get me into the right circles and trials."*

*"Yes...I see myself becoming a professional athlete one day..."*

Similarly, a group of year 9 students were adamant that the sports academy would definitely help them in seeking a professional career as an athlete:

**Researcher:** "Do you see yourself one day becoming a professional athlete?"

**Students:** "yep..."

**Researcher: “Do you think the sports academy is going to help in your career?”**

*Students: ‘YES...’*

Parents/caregivers were also questioned to identify if a career in professional sports was a motive for enrolling their child/children into the academy programme. However their responses contradicted the previous student’s comments. Table 12 below shows that 77% of parents/caregivers (including those who did not make an appropriate selection) did not have an expectation that their child would potentially become a professional athlete.

Table 12

*I/we see my/our child being an elite athlete as a possible career.*

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | No Indication |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| 1                 | 4        | 5         | 4     | 1              | 7             |
| 4%                | 19%      | 23%       | 19%   | 4%             | 31%           |

Ex-participants of the programme had similar views to the parents’/caregivers’ responses with 72% indicating that being a professional athlete was not a reason to be involved in the sports academy programme (see table 13 below).

Table 13

*I saw being a professional athlete as a possible career.*

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | No Indication |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| 1                 | 2        | 2         | 1     | 1              | 0             |
| 14%               | 29%      | 29%       | 14%   | 14%            | 0%            |

It is interesting to note that in Table 12, 23% of the parents/caregivers indicated that they saw professional sport as a possible career for their child/ren. This was also shared by 28% of the ex-participants as indicated in Table 13. However, contrary to this data are those senior students (years 11, 12 and 13) who have goals of one day being a professional athlete in their specific activity but who strongly opposed the

notion of enrolling in the course as a route in becoming a professional athlete. These students stated that while there was money to be gained in their sports it would take time and commitment outside of the sports academy to achieve this goal. One student supports this philosophy and stating that:

*“One of the main things about the sports academy was um...I always thought that I would never need to do study or anything because I was going to make it as a runner, but being in here I have finally realised that for athletics you know you gotta be in the top 3 runners in the world to actually make any money so I’ve been able to face my life like I’ve started to pick up my grades and stuff so I’ve had a plan of what I was going to do.”*

An identified need for the gifted adolescent are those aspects associated with career development. Ellis (1995) showed that gifted adolescents require assistance in planning and attaining career goals. In particular help is needed to narrow their choices, focus their aspirations, and assess the options available for study and/or careers in their areas of interest. In discussing students’ aspirations in attaining a sporting career, the director argues that he is there to support the athlete in achieving their goals, even if one of their goals is to make money. However, he is resolute that the academy does not set an unrealistic expectation to provide a programme that will see the participants becoming professional.

*“People were telling us that they didn’t need Maths, Science and English because they were going to have a Super 12 rugby contract which was patently not going to be the case or they were going to play golf professionally and earn as much money as Tiger Woods...we were establishing the academy to allow students to achieve their goals in sport while saying to them that the likelihood of making money in sport is not great and if your goal is to make money then you would be better off becoming a doctor a lawyer or an accountant...”*

Ross (1999), warned that the aspirations that secondary school students and their parents may have about their children achieving professional status in their sport has derived from 'over the top lauding' of successful sports people and the look of professional sports as a career. He argued that this advent of professionalism has given young people an unrealistic impression of sport that fails to recognise that only an elite few will ever benefit from professional sport. Collins (1997), commented that the number of sport career opportunities in this country, are quite limited. David Kirk (1997) also confirmed that in his experience as both an elite rugby player (and now businessman) sport has an immediacy that "attracts kids with short attention spans" (p.36). He cautioned that in a five year professional rugby career one can gross a million dollars, however pursuing that at the expense of tertiary education and job experience that may get you a job paying \$100,000 a year for 30 years, playing professional rugby is still a poor financial deal (Kirk, 1997). Brian Lochore (1997) supported that:

The ones I worry about are the ones who - the day they finish rugby or are dropped or not picked and the income stops - will not be trained for anything...sporting dreams mustn't blind youngsters to preparing properly for life (p. 36).

Freeman (2000) concluded that while all babies are born with potential it is clear that only some develop this to their full extent and fewer still to a recognizable level of excellence. Therefore, only an elite few may ever be able to benefit from professional sport. Winner and Martino (2000) declared that highly gifted children often face a crisis at adolescence, as it is the time when a gifted teenager must make the transition from what these theorists refer to as 'little-c' creativity to 'big-C' domain creativity. They say that:

Gifted children are creative in the 'little-c', meaning that they solve problems in novel ways and make discoveries about their domain on their own. 'Big-C' domain creativity in contrast involves 'changing the domain'. There is considerable evidence that children do not make domain-altering changes until

they have worked for at least 10 years in the area. Thus, children by definition cannot be 'big-C' domain creative (Winner & Martino, 2000, p.95).

Therefore, it is extremely difficult to predict those gifted children who will make the transition into professional sport status and those who will not (Winner & Martino, 2000).

The data gathered from this section indicates that while the term *demonstrate a desire* may be vague, many of the participants believed that being in the academy has made them focus more on their goals to do whatever it takes to be the best they can. This has been a positive unseen outcome of the sports academy for both parents/caregivers and some of the current members.

This section has also identified that because sport academy programmes cannot be developed in isolation from society, students will be subject to many of the images about sports and what it represents. This will undoubtedly create an unrealistic picture for young people. Collins (1997) warned that for the majority of those young people intending on a professional career in sports, employment prospects in their field are highly unlikely. The director has spoken frankly about this topic discounting that this is one of the reasons for implementing this particular sport academy. He stated that:

*"I think that we need to keep our feet on the ground lets keep our culture going lets keep our academics going lets keep our sport going...per chance if we get good enough so that it can pay our bills then that's great. But if you're coming from a 'I wanna make money in sport' then that's the wrong motivation..."*

Analyses in this report showed that while a minority group of parents and participants expect that a career opportunity as an outcome of the programme, for the majority it is perceived as a complimentary benefit and was not a motive to be a part of the programme.

### 5.2.4 Analysing the research participants experiences of sport academy aim three

This section examines the experiences of the research participants in regards to current and past member's attitude, work ethic, behaviour and participation in academic classes. This is completed in accordance with aim three which states that students should "demonstrate an excellent attitude towards school" (Sport Academy Pamphlet, 2001, p. 2). According to the implementers and the director, those who apply to be a part of the sport academy programme must be able to demonstrate reliability and an ability to work to their capacity in both their individual sport and academic studies. For selection into the programme, this information is provided in the students' application documents by means of references from both their previous school academic reports and coaches.

In order to ascertain whether the sports academy programme has had an impact upon the participant's *attitude towards school*, an analysis of information regarding the students' academic record was conducted. It is important to restate that the actual grades that students attained were not analysed but rather their effort and attitude as perceived by their teachers as indicated in their personal progress reports (see Chapter 4: Methodology, *Data analysis: Student reports*, pp. 41-42). The report achievement levels for effort and attitude is marked using a 1 – 5 scale as shown in table 14 below.

Table 14

*Achievement levels for effort and attitude.*

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 5 | Works to high standards, co-operative and considerate. |
| 4 | Always works well and is keen to succeed.              |
| 3 | Is co-operative and works well.                        |
| 2 | Can work well but needs to make greater effort.        |
| 1 | Unco-operative and with little interest.               |

Table 15 displays the average grades of *attitude and effort* for each current year group during the time they were involved within the sport academy programme. Figure 4 depicts this information.

Table 15

*Averages of participant's attitude and effort grades.*

|                 |        | Year | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
|-----------------|--------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Year of student | Symbol |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 9               | ◆      |      | *    | *    | *    | *    | 4.2  |
| 10              | *✱     |      | *    | *    | *    | 4.4  | 4.3  |
| 11              | ✕      |      | *    | *    | 4.2  | 4.3  | 4.5  |
| 12              | ■      |      | *    | 4.6  | 4.7  | 4.6  | 4.7  |
| 13              | ▲      |      | 4.3  | 4.2  | 4.5  | 4.5  | 4.5  |

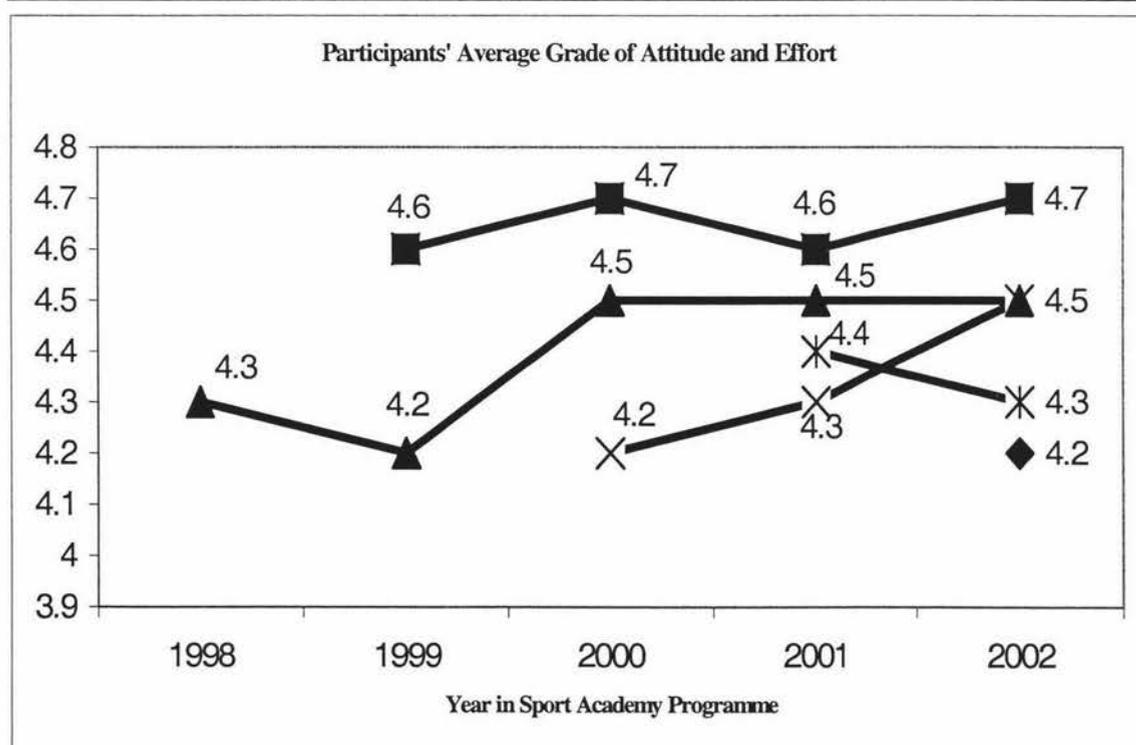


Figure 4. Line graph showing averages of participants' attitude and effort grades.

Figure 4 identifies that although there are both negative and positive changes in the participants' attitude and effort on their academic study during their time in the sports academy programme, the differences are so minor that it would be difficult to state the exact reason for these changes. Perhaps more important is that student attitude and effort remained relatively stable over the period of time that the students were a part of the sport academy programme. The students provide a variety of feelings on this aspect of the research, they commented that:

*"I have got better marks but it's not because of the sports academy I think it was because I have better teachers than last year."*

*"umm...no not really cause I already work quite hard..."*

*"I wouldn't really be able to make a comment because I don't know what I would be like without the academy or what I was like before... it's a pretty different thing from intermediate school so probably not really."*

*"I'm a disciplined person, so whatever I do I do to the best of my ability and with the sports academy it doesn't change. If I wasn't in the sports academy I don't think my attitude would change towards other things...I'm not really an academic person and being in the sports academy hasn't really helped me in that sense."*

When parents/caregivers were asked if being in the sport academy would improve their child's/children's academic progress only 32% indicated that this was a motive for their child/ren to be a part of the programme.

Table 16

*It would help my/our child/ren in their academic progress.*

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | No Indication |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| 1                 | 4        | 4         | 4     | 3              | 6             |
| 4%                | 19%      | 19%       | 19%   | 13%            | 26%           |

One parent commented:

*“We naturally thought that this would be positive part of our son’s development because continued academy membership is dependent on academic progress.”*

Likewise, only 14% of ex-members saw the development of academic progress as a motive to be a part of the sports academy programme.

Table 17

*It would help me in my academic progress.*

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | No Indication |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| 4                 | 0        | 2         | 1     | 0              | 0             |
| 57%               | 0%       | 29%       | 14%   | 0%             | 0%            |

In addition to this parents/caregivers were unable to distinguish whether the sports academy has had an impact on their child’s/children’s attitude towards school. Table 18 below shows that 68% of parents/caregivers either disagreed, strongly disagreed or were undecided on whether the programme had any impact on their child’s/children’s academic attitude or output.

Table 18

*While my/our child/ren has been in the sports academy programme I/we have noticed a positive impact on their attitude and effort in other school subjects.*

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | No Indication |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| 1                 | 3        | 11        | 5     | 2              | 0             |
| 4%                | 14%      | 50%       | 23%   | 8%             | 0%            |

Parents commented that:

*"There have been no benefits for my child other than physical development."*

*"Our child is already strong in these areas."*

One reason that may explain the minimal change in a students' attitude and effort data in other subjects, rests in the philosophy of the selection process. As described in the selection process, many of these students demonstrate *an excellent attitude towards school* before entering into the programme. Thus the implementers may in fact be pre-selecting the 'crème of the crop', making it difficult to measure a student's success considering that the students are already successful and outstanding to begin with. Betts and Neihart (1988) formulised categories for the characteristics of gifted adolescents' and refer to students who have this well-roundedness as *Type 1: The Successful*. It is this label that appears to fit the sports academy participants. Betts and Neihart (1988) stated that:

The students in this group are the ones who are most likely to be identified as gifted and who will be selected for special programmes. These students do well at school, learning with ease, maintaining high standards in their class work. Teacher approval is extremely important to these students, so they rarely exhibit behaviour problems. These are the students who it is often perceived will make it on their own. While they may be bored at school they do enough to gain affirmation for their achievements, and this affirmation ensures positive self-images. They are socially well adjusted and liked by their peers (Betts & Neihart, 1988, p.251).

Other studies suggest that sports participation positively affects academic performance (Finn, 1989; Marsh, 1993). Research that has examined the relationship between sports participation and academic success in colleges throughout the United States indicate that athletes as a group do have a modestly higher grade point averages (GPA) and greater aspirations than those who do not participate in sports. Earlier research revealed that male athletes scored higher in the achievement and educational aspirations than their non-sport oriented counterparts (Aivoldi, Peterson, & Webb,

1967; Connor, 1954; Eidsmore, 1963; Phillips & Schaefer, 1971; Rehberg & Cohen, 1975; Rehberg & Schaefer, 1968; Schaefer, 1969; Schaefer & Armer, 1968; Schaefer & Rehberg, 1970; Spreitzer & Pugh, 1973). More recently Fejgin (2001) studied 22,700 students and found that young people who were more involved in school sports showed that they had higher grades, higher self concept, more internal locus of control, higher educational aspirations, and less discipline problems in school. Additionally Griffin (1998) provided examples of several students that explicitly indicated the positive impact of sport involvement. One student commented that, "sport has helped me manage my time better, makes me more disciplined, gives me a reason to go to school, cut the boredom, and just generally give me a more positive attitude toward school" (Griffin, 1998, p. 42).

Student interviews supported research provided by Griffin (1998) and expressed that the sport academy programme gave them the skills to be better students by teaching them to work hard to accomplish their goals. Students also spoke about time management and how being in the programme helped them to organize and manage their time better. This has been beneficial in the development of their attitude and therefore has had a positive impact on other areas of school. Student commentary explained that:

*"I have! I work harder because I know that if I don't I might get kicked out...so it has been good for me... I haven't had one detention this year... not one!"*

A year 13 student specifically identified that:

*"My attitude improved just from being in the sports academy."*

Similarly a year 12 student supported that:

*"I think that what the sports academy has helped me out with has been the motivation to do well in my other subjects."*

Parents/caregivers that agreed or strongly agreed that their child's attitude in school had improved (see table 18, p. 83) commented that:

*"The sport academy has given my son a focus, when others his age sleep in late in the morning he is up early and keen to go [to school] because he has the sport academy."*

*"My son has often commented that the sport academy is the only subject he learns and is kept interested in at school..."*

Table 19 shows that 43% of ex-participants indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed, that the sport academy had an impact on their effort in other school subjects.

Table 19

*I believe that the sports academy programme had a positive impact on my effort in other school subjects.*

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | No Indication |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| 1                 | 3        | 0         | 2     | 1              | 0             |
| 14%               | 43%      | 0%        | 29%   | 14%            | 0%            |

However when asked if there was a positive impact on their attitude to school (table 20), 58% of ex-participants indicated an optimistic response that supported the comments made by parents/caregivers of current students.

Table 20

*I believe that the sports academy programme had a positive impact on my attitude towards school.*

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | No Indication |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| 0                 | 1        | 2         | 2     | 2              | 0             |
| 0%                | 14%      | 29%       | 29%   | 29%            | 0%            |

As one ex-participant commented:

*“I just think it was a wonderful thing for me and my sport...I think its good to have classes like this with all elite sports people, very good for goal setting and time planning.”*

Analysis of the experiences provided by the research participants regarding aim three of the sport academy provides an interesting discussion as two implicit assumptions can be clearly identified. Firstly, sport could be a motivator to keep grades up so that students could remain academically eligible to retain their membership in the sports academy. Thus, to remain in the sports academy demonstrating an excellent attitude towards school may mean that the student maintains an appropriate level of academic achievement and grades and that truant behaviour such as unexplained absenteeism and inappropriate class behaviour would need to be non-existent. Any behaviour incongruent with this expectation may see the student omitted from the sport academy.

Secondly, it could be that involvement in sports could in fact detract from an individuals' academic output (Griffin, 1998). There is always the potential for tension between the competing demands of academic and sporting activity. Therefore, a potential conflict exists between school and sport and this conflict can easily arise between examination commitments and important sporting commitments (Beashel, 2002). It could be that these youngsters would have done even better in their studies if they hadn't participated in sports (Griffin, 1998). Sport might have brought them down academically, but they were so much better to begin with that they still came out on top of the non athlete group in school performance. Other research identified that excessive time demands, pressure on athletes to perform, and travel schedules, and the existence of anti intellectual sports subcultures accounts for bad grades and low graduation rates (Yiannakis, McIntyre, & Melnick, 1993). Furthermore, the goal of becoming a professional athlete interferes with educational achievements (Collins, 1997). Therefore, participation in secondary school sport may distract an athletes' focus from their academic goals because of the extra time given to sporting activities. Consequently, athletes do not attain the grades they could potentially get if they were not involved within sport.

In regards to the sport academy these two assumptions and arguments maybe unfortunately and equally erroneous, as members of the programme are provided the opportunity to opt into the sport academies timetabled allocation to complete work. In addition outstanding students who demonstrate excellence both academically and sporting are perhaps pre-selected. Hence, because of these two factors it might be that this study has shown these students either come to the sport academy with the ability or they are offered the support to cope with the dual pressure of maintaining academic and sporting success.

Exploring the experiences of the past and present sport academy members identifies that during their time in the sport academy their academic attitude showed a positive effect, for some of the other members very few or no benefits have been identified. For the majority of the current members it was not considered a motive to be a part of the sport academy, and yet some students reported that this was a major factor for their participation in the programme. The quantitative data displays minimal changes, whilst the qualitative data identifies a myriad of factors. Therefore, it is hard to establish a position between the opposing opinions in this debate, as they are based on assumptions that go well beyond the results of this study. However, it appears that participation in the sport academy provided some kind of positive experiences. It is necessary to look at the relationship between participation in these programmes, educational aspirations and educational attainment of which academic grades are but a part (Fejgin, 2001; Miracle & Rees, 1994).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 5.3 Section three

This section reports on the major themes that emerged during analysis of the qualitative data. The topics that emerged concerned the development of the ex-members and the current members self confidence and if this was observed by the parents/caregivers. There was a significant amount of data collected regarding the subject of identity and this is described using adolescent identity theory. The research participants argued that this was a key motive for being a part of the sport academy programme.

The idea of having qualifications as a part of the sport academy is mentioned, alongside the notion of parental involvement in the sports academy as active participants rather than passive observers. More notably parents/caregivers discussed the importance of increasing the communication between the academy director and themselves considering their child's/children's athletic development.

Thus, Self Confidence, Identity, NCEA Qualifications and Parental Involvement are used as sub-headings for easier comprehension of the data for the reader.

### 5.3.1 Self confidence

Self-confidence is expressed more concisely in the field of sport psychology as 'self-efficacy'. Earlier studies concluded that self-efficacy is situation-specific, meaning that an individual believes that they are competent and can do whatever is necessary in a specific situation (see Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1986). Danish, Nellen and Owen (1996) believed that sport has the potential to enhance character development and to enable people to enjoy themselves in the process. As such self-efficacy can be a planned outcome of sports. This occurs when athletes compete against themselves and, more specifically, against their own potential and goals. Gill (2000) supported that the most consistent difference between elite and less successful athletes' is that an elite athlete possesses greater self-confidence. Furthermore, Brettshneider and Heim (1997) concluded that sport provides a means for the development of positive physical self-confidence.

When parents/caregivers were asked if they had seen an increase in their child's self-confidence, 77% either agreed or strongly agreed (table 21 below).

Table 21

*While my/our child/ren has been in the sports academy programme I/we have noticed a positive impact on their self-confidence.*

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | No Indication |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| 0                 | 0        | 5         | 14    | 3              | 0             |
| 0%                | 0%       | 23%       | 63%   | 14%            | 0%            |

Parents/caregivers supported the findings from table 21 above:

*"Their confidence is built through the additional physical training to their own sport with a focus of working together - like a team."*

*"We feel that this programme has nurtured her self esteem and confidence through achieving the goals she has set for herself."*

*“The appreciation they get from other kids achievements...they do feel special – good for their self confidence.”*

These comments provided by parents/caregivers highlights that although sport competitions offer both success and failure, being admitted into any sport programme recognises that an adolescent has some kind of physical capability or skill. The high social status of high school athletes, together with physical skill of self, may also enhance an athletes self-esteem (Coleman, 1961; Snyder & Spreitzer, 1990). Griffin (1998) also found that recognition of athletic talent is associated with some social rewards, which probably helps to develop a more positive self-concept. Rehberg and Cohen (1975) hypothesized that self-esteem may serve as an intervening variable between athletic participation and high school academic orientation. According to this idea sport enhances self-worth of participants, who respond by raising their scholastic performance and educational aspirations.

Ex-members’ expressed a range of views, however, 58% of them indicated that they experienced a positive impact on their self-confidence. The remaining percentage indicated a neutral position (table 22 below).

Table 22

*I believe that the sports academy programme had a positive impact on my self-confidence.*

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | No Indication |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| 0                 | 0        | 2         | 2     | 2              | 1             |
| 0%                | 0%       | 29%       | 29%   | 29%            | 13%           |

A small number of current sport academy students also supported that the sports academy programme had a positive impact on their self confidence. They commented that:

*“I’ve become a lot more confident...”*

*“I have got a lot more confident because I know where I’m heading and no one is going to stop me!”*

There were some students however that commented that there wasn’t enough emphasis on this specific personality quality. They maintain that they were confident beforehand and that this skill was fostered as a natural outcome of an adolescent’s maturation.

According to Gill (2000), self-perception is among the most active research areas. Findings and conclusions offer practical suggestions for enhancing performance and exercise as well as maintaining health-related activities. Exploring the experiences of the research participants has highlighted the beneficial aspect of self confidence in sport academy programmes. There is a need to cultivate with careful guidance the elements of athletic development that will encourage a positive self-confidence.

### **5.3.2 Adolescent identity development**

Adolescent identity is the beginning of a lifelong process of refinement in personal commitments. Erikson (1950; Erikson, 1968) was the first to recognize identity as the major personality achievement of adolescence and as a crucial step toward becoming a productive and happy adult. Erikson called the psychological conflict of adolescence *identity versus identity/role confusion*. Described as a crisis, this temporary period of confusion and distress would see the adolescent experiment with alternatives before settling on values and goals. However, while identity development maybe dramatic and disturbing for some, for most young people it is not (Berk, 2001). Due to the situational context changes of an adolescent, defining and understanding identity has become ‘increasingly fluid’ (Berk, 2001, p.136). When there is a change in a young person’s life the possibility for reformulating identity exists and as a result contemporary definitions are not stable concepts that are fixed or permanent (Cashmore, 2002; Grotevant, 1998). As such current theorists no longer refer to this process as a crisis (Berk, 2001; Grotevant, 1998). Exploration better describes the

gradual, and meaningful approach to adolescent identity formation (Moshman, 1999). For most adolescent athletes, sport is an area in which they can clearly define themselves (Danish et al., 1996).

Marcia (1980) developed four categories, which show an adolescents progress in formulating a mature identity, these are; identity achievement, moratorium, identity foreclosure, and identity diffusion. *Identity Achievement* individuals are committed to a clearly formulated set of self-chosen values and goals. Additionally, they feel a sense of psychological well-being, and of knowing where they are going. Individuals who fall in the *Moratorium* category (meaning 'delay or holding pattern') have not yet made definite commitments as they are in the process of exploration. They gather information and try out activities, with the desire to find values and goals to guide their lives (Berk, 2001).

An *Identity Foreclosed* individual has committed themselves to values and goals without taking time to explore alternatives. Instead, they accept a ready-made identity that authority figures (usually parents but sometimes teachers, religious leaders, or romantic partners) have chosen for them. Lastly, those adolescents who are defined as *Identity Diffused* individuals lack clear direction. They are not committed to values and goals, nor actively trying to reach them. They may have never explored alternatives or have found the task too threatening and overwhelming (Berk, 2001).

Identity achievement best describes the identity stage of the majority of the sport academy participants. These young people are actively exploring their potential and have a high sense of self-esteem as has been identified earlier. Josselson (1994) and Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, & Orlofsky (1993) supported that these students are more likely to think abstractly and critically, report greater similarity between their ideal self (what they hope to become) and their real self, and are advanced in moral reasoning. There are a wide variety of factors that influence identity development, however, personality is particularly important alongside a flexible and open-minded approach to grappling with competing beliefs and values (Berk, 2001).

In the field of giftedness, the needs of gifted children are the same as those of other children, however some needs and problems, appear more often among gifted children. Buescher and Higham (1990) found that there are a range of problems that gifted children may encounter. These may manifest themselves as perfectionism, competitiveness, unrealistic appraisal of their gifts, or rejection from peers. They may be confused due to mixed messages about their talents, have additional parental and social pressures, as well as problems involving unchallenging school programmes or increased expectations. Freeman (2000) found that gifted children are sometimes susceptible to extra pressure to be continually successful. Therefore it is likely that the gifted child may suffer from false stereotyping along a spectrum that varies from expecting them to be emotionally handicapped to being perfect in every respect. Their fear of failure and feelings of failure and of disappointing others expectations are likely to develop, with possibly negative emotional consequences for life (Freeman, 2000).

Miraca (1998) concluded that gifted children recognize how other people's behaviour towards them changes when their difference becomes evident. For the gifted adolescent, being able and therefore different tends to conflict with the need for acceptance among their peers (Ellis, 1995). Accordingly, the gifted child attempts to manipulate the information others have about them by skillfully adapting their behaviour and performance to conform to the social and educational norms of their age group (Miraca, 1998). To protect themselves from peer rejection, highly gifted children can become masters of camouflage, concealing and shielding their developing identity behind a more acceptable facade (Miraca, 1998). Another problem that creates adjustment difficulties for gifted children is that they are often surrounded by same-age peers, who have little in common with them in terms of their abilities and emotional maturity, adding to the difficulty in forming relationships with their same age peer group (Miraca, 1998). However, these theories are not supported in this research. As some of the student's stated:

*"My friends don't really see me as different."*

*“Friends are friends...they hassle me a little but they’re really supportive otherwise.”*

*“No they don’t really care about that... it’s just for me really...”*

Implementers commented that:

*“they are expected to be role models for the class... if you’ve got a couple of sports academy kids in your class it lifts the level of the class...so I must admit there are some positive spin offs...”*

*“I think that they are sort of revered by their friends [and] they see them succeeding so there is a little bit of the ‘you know you are lucky’ but they’re not going to hate you for it.”*

The analysis of this data supports work completed by Danish et al. (1996), identifying that sports can have a positive impact on a young person’s identity development. Analysis of the student interviews reinforces the high social status of high school athletes and that this status is associated with some social rewards rather than rejection (Coleman, 1961; Griffin, 1998; Snyder & Spreitzer, 1990).

Research regarding the value of sports has centred on the development of identity and feelings of competence among adolescents (Danish, 1983; Danish, Kleiber, & Hall, 1987; Danish et al., 1996; Kleiber & Kirshnit, 1991). This report supports the positive impact of sports on the development of identity. However of great importance is the placement of students in a gifted programme that allows them to have access to other people with whom they may identify with (Miraca, 1998). Furthermore common interests in a talent area can create a bond that underlies relationships within the peer group. This concept is supported by other research that suggests that decisive factors for formulating one’s peer group include similarity in likes and dislikes, reciprocity, compatibility, physical proximity and ones potential status (Gross, 1989, 1993; Miraca, 1998; Silverman, 1997; Silverman, 1999; Swiatek, 1995). Analysis of parents/caregivers commentary highlighted this aspect.

*“It is good for the children to be with other elite athletes who on the whole are very focussed and motivated. It may help other talented children by being with such athletes.”*

*“It has allowed our child to associate with other people who were motivated and wanting to succeed which we thought would have positive repercussions on our child.”*

*“The sports academy is valuable for the students to develop a culture of success and hard work in sport as they mix together as the sport academy.”*

Implementers commented that:

*“I suppose there is what I would call a type of camaraderie really... there is a real good feel among that group... they identify with one another... there is a lot of support there that might not be kind of direct or overt...the support for each other which kind of lifts them...”*

*“...one of the things that is not necessarily measurable is that these kids feed off being with other kids of a like nature who have had success...”*

Close scrutiny of the parents/caregivers and implementers comments identified the concept referred to by Osterman (2000) as a *Sense of Belonging*. This pertains to the creation of a community and consists of four elements; membership, influence, integration and fulfilment of needs, and a shared emotional connection. Osterman (2000) declared that it is the teacher and school’s responsibility to encourage the development of a community. Furthermore the social context plays a significant part in determining whether individual needs are satisfied. A sense of community and belonging is an important factor in the understanding of student behaviour and performance. Osterman (2000) concluded that when student needs are not satisfied within the educational setting there is a diminishment in motivation, impaired development, alienation and poor performance.

However Osterman (2000) argued that there is little evidence demonstrating that a sense of belonging is directly related to achievement, but believed that the experience of this social learning is associated with more positive attitudes toward self and others. Students exhibit a willingness to be more supportive, considerate, and accepting of others. They also demonstrate a stronger sense of their own social competence and are more likely to interact with peers and adults. Furthermore, students fostered in a social learning environment perceive themselves to be more competent and autonomous and have higher levels of intrinsic motivation, leading to positive attitudes toward school, class work, teachers, and their peers (Osterman, 2000). The sense of belonging and identity that the sport academy members have was evident in their interviews:

*“Here I’m with people who are like me and we share similar interests...it’s better than my PE class.”*

*“I wanted to be around people who were like me...and who were good at sports so that I could be supported in what I do...”*

*“It was really good to be in a class where everyone thought the same as me... they had the same goals as me...they wanted to be the best and I could talk to them and they could help me with my training and everything.”*

The camaraderie that students share is a strong contributor to their choice of being in the academy. The relationships they build from being in a group that is ‘like-minded’ in aspirations and athletic giftedness provides an environment where they can be themselves, and discuss their achievements and their goals (see Gross, 1989, 1993; Miraca, 1998; Silverman, 1997; Silverman, 1999; Swiatek, 1995). Additionally the interaction that students experience aids in the construction of their identities (Grills, 1998). Earlier work completed by Campbell, Cotterell, Robinson and Sadler (1981) hypothesized that the greater inclination to participate in a more challenging educational environment would foster certain positive aspects of personal and social development. Brewer et al. suggested that individuals who establish a strong athletic identity do so through the development of skills, confidence, and social interactions

during sports. Thus an adolescent's self-description and expanded sense of self-esteem provides the cognitive foundation for identity development (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993; Marcia, 1980).

Lave and Wenger's (1991) work on situated learning emphasised the importance of learning occurring in meaningful social contexts. They believed that the key focus is the relationship between learning and the social situations in which it occurs. "Learning is located squarely in the processes of co-participation, not in the heads of individuals" (p.13). Rather than asking what kinds of cognitive processes and conceptual structures are involved, they asked what kinds of social engagements provide the proper context for learning to take place. Lave and Wenger (1991) argued that learning is a social practice in which a person shapes their identity and their relationship with others and their society through learning the ways of behaving, values, knowledge, that is the social practices, of their occupation (their community of practice) (Tinning, Kirk, & Evans, 1993).

Within the school situation these interrelationships are often not fully acknowledged or incorporated into teaching and learning "conventional theories of learning do not offer a means for grasping (the importance of) their interrelations" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.55). The complexities of the learning environment is sometimes ignored in teaching with focus being on the transmission of knowledge, or in the case of sports the teaching of skills, becoming the only measure of success. The theory of situated learning emphasises comprehensive understanding involving the whole person rather than the simple receiving of a body of factual knowledge or the learning of isolated skills. Thus the literature provided here sustains the conclusions of Collins and Downey (2000) regarding identity development. They stated that, "over the years numerous reports have argued how good sports can be a significant activity in the lives of young people and provide a sense of identity, belonging and unity" (Collins & Downey, 2000, p. 320)

Evidence indicates that when sport is positively implemented in a conducive environment as provided by sport academy programmes there may be other constructive facets that go along with the sports involvement rather than something

inherent in the actual sports activity itself. This section concurs that peers may be a significant instrument for influencing athletic talent development.

### 5.3.3 National certificate of educational achievement (NCEA) qualifications

A pertinent theme that stemmed from the parent questionnaires and student interviews highlighted the concern that National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) qualifications were not available in the sports academy theory sessions. This has led to some of the students having to forego the sports academy as a theory class option and selecting subjects where they could attain the appropriate number of credits for their academic qualifications for their respective year/level. When students were asked if NCEA qualifications were considered a good idea they stated that:

*“yeah that would be a great idea...I would’ve definitely stayed in and stuff...”*

*“yeah...I think that if you came out with something it would be really beneficial...”*

*“yeah you don’t get anything for it...you don’t come out with unit standards or a certificate or anything so that would be a good thing the sports academy could do.”*

*“It could probably be a little bit better if you did come out with some kind of qualifications yeah that would be pretty good.”*

Parents/caregivers also noticed the absence of formal qualifications:

*“Some expectations are met but the training programme is very general not suited to individuals needs and there are no NCEA papers on offer next year in this area.”*

*“We are disappointed that there are no NCEA papers in theory relating to sport on offer and this is why our child changed that option this year as that [subject] is far more useful.”*

*“The negative side of the sport academy is that there are no NCEA credits for the sport academy. As a result of this many students have left the sport academy.”*

However the implementers provided a different perspective regarding the attainment of NCEA qualifications stating that:

*“No I don’t want the sports academy to go down the qualifications line...I think that as teachers we spend more time assessing and less time educating so I want to keep right away from that NCEA type constantly monitoring measuring...”*

*No...I don't think that we are big on making the sports academy a qualifications thing if you like... these kids by and large are getting pretty well qualified...that is they are supported pretty well by the other areas of the school.”*

*“There is a place for it [NCEA] I mean if you look at it outside of school we could start gearing up working towards unit standards or NCEA levels which will take them into the diploma of sport and rec...I'd definitely think there is a place for that for at least the kids coming out with something...”*

It is apparent that the current students and parents/caregivers share similar feelings about this part of the sport academy programme. However, the implementers and the director are resolute in their view in keeping the programme 'free of' NCEA qualifications. Further analysis of the implementers' interviews provided a stronger philosophical stance as to why NCEA qualifications may not be instigated.

*"we don't want to take up the whole idea of the support for study...I mean we want to maintain that we are supporting their normal academic study and not adding to it..."*

*"I know there has been some pressure in the past regarding some kids coming out with some credits and beginning qualifications from that...how that pans out will have to be decided when we have time to re-evaluate the academy"*

The philosophical underpinning of the programme is required to be defined to aid in explaining the directors and implementers perspectives. The sport academy programme was never formulated to help student members increase their scholastic ability or academic workload but rather to help them maintain a balance between their normal school academic subjects and sporting lives. As such it remains to be seen as quoted above whether the implementers and the director will "re-evaluate the academy" and consider the concerns provided here by both parents/caregivers and their child/ren who are a part of the sport academy programme.

#### **5.3.4 Parental involvement**

In general parents/caregivers supported their child's/childrens decision to be a part of the sports academy programme as long as their child/ren indicated that they wished to be involved. Freeman (2000) believed that provision starts in the family and that parents need to make the effort if their children are to take advantage of the opportunities that exist around them. Frydenberg and O'Mullane (2000) report that parents of talented athletes, musicians and scholars, demonstrated qualities such as

emphasising excellence, doing one's best, winning, and persistence to achieve (Bloom, 1985).

Frydenberg and O'Mullane (2000) researched the reflections of five young talented people illustrating the impact of the self, the family and the school in the successful development of their abilities. While the five talented people came from a variety of different backgrounds (business, sport, music, creative arts and medicine), Frydenberg and O'Mullane (2000) identified that there were some commonalities in the nature of the factors impinging on their success. One commonality between these talented people was that they supported the development of their athletic talent. An athletically gifted individual in Frydenberg and O'Mullane's (2000) research was a champion marathon swimmer. She began swimming at the age of eleven and went on to claim national and international titles. Her reason for beginning swimming was suggested by her parents as a way to lose weight and improve her fitness. This athlete attested that "my dad is a backstop which is like the Rock of Gibraltar. Both my mum and dad are always there for me. I guess that is what has made me this way" (Frydenberg & O'Mullane, 2000, p. 84).

Van Tassel-Baska (1989) maintained that the three greatest potential spheres of influence on talent development are the home, the self and the school, with the home being the most critical. The need for greater parental/caregiver involvement and communication with professional development was commented on by a number of parents/caregivers. Parents/caregivers comment that the support structures for their child's/children's development could be improved and state that there should be more parental involvement and communication between them and the programme director. They commented that:

*"Maybe more family involvement. A chance to develop social support group with other parents..."*

*“Communication with parents could be improved so that parents are more aware of programme/goals/progress and where they can support.”*

*“There has been no communication with us re: programme or progress...this needs to be addressed.”*

One implementer agreed with the views of the parents/caregivers saying that:

*“If you look at some of the parents of the students who are in the academy there are some really knowledgeable people in each of the specific areas and sports. I believe parents are a great support because that’s where it starts...if anything that should be our first point of contact. They are the motivators at home...you have got to work alongside the parents if you want to keep that motivation going because there are going to be times when the kid hits a trough and they don’t want to get up for training and we can’t do it as a teacher, we’re not at home we can’t get them up and out of bed so yeah I definitely think we need to keep the parents involved or get them involved more...”*

Throughout this report parents/caregivers have identified that they have applicable suggestions on how best to cater for their child/ren. Yet they are often disregarded in studies of programme evaluation and achievement. However there is substantial evidence of the relationship between the family and the environment, the nature of parental/caregiver involvement in school, and a child’s competence in their chosen discipline (Weinstein, 2002). Furthermore, because parents/caregivers have a long-term stake in their child’s development they potentially have a more positive view of their strengths and individuality of their children, noting in particular the unique and special attributes of their children (Weinstein, 2002).

## CHAPTER SIX:

### CONCLUSION

Sport academy programmes in New Zealand secondary schools are an exciting and challenging development. Analysis of the directors and the implementer's interviews present the philosophy of one such programme. Conclusions drawn from the experiences of the past and present members and parents/caregivers perspectives provide an insight into their opinions of the programme. Consequently, the researcher has attempted to address whether the sport academy participants (both past and present):

1. Achieve[d] at a higher level in their chosen discipline or sport;
2. Demonstrate[d] a desire to succeed in their chosen field; and,
3. Demonstrate[d] an excellent attitude towards school.

(Adapted from the Sport Academy Pamphlet, 2001, p.2)

Identifying whether the sport academy accomplishes these aims presents some difficulties. Demonstrating a desire to succeed in their chosen field, for instance was evaluated utilising the informal processes indicated by the director and the implementers. These processes were exemplified by a student's retained position in a representative team, selection for a national squad or the attainment of specific awards in their area. While these achievements do demonstrate an academy members desire to work hard towards their goals, the process of achieving these goals has involved specific training with their coaches and parental support outside of the sport academy programme. Therefore, this report has identified that the sport academy programme was only one of many factors that contributed to the complete success of a current member's sporting achievement and academic attitude. For that reason, research that studies the cumulative impact of a range of influences over the course of a student's school and athletic career, from entry to exit, is required to provide an improved perspective into the overall impact of sport academy programmes.

It has been noted in an earlier chapter of this thesis, that the selection process played a part in pre-determining the success of the sport academy. The students chosen to be a

part of this programme were well rounded adolescents who demonstrated a balance in both their sporting and academic lives and were reasonably successful upon entry into the programme. As a result, it has been difficult to clearly define the overall impact of the programme and to assess the success of the programme just by analysing a students sporting and academic achievements, given that these students were gifted in one or both areas to begin with. It appears, however, that being in the academy programme is not detrimental to either the participants' sporting success or academic attitude.

A strength of this thesis has been in articulating the voices of those involved with the sport academy programme. The involvement of both current and ex-members, and parents/caregivers of those students presently involved has provided an opportunity to explore a frequently ignored perspective on these programmes. Research has long prioritised the viewpoint of educational administrators over the perspective of the participants, largely neglecting those who are the recipients of expectations in schooling. Weinstein (2002) stated that if research models of expectancy processes were to include student expectations more often, much could be learnt about their understanding of the school experience. As such this report supports work completed by Moon (1995) who investigated the effects of a gifted programme on the families of participants and how this programme created changes in the family systems. She concluded, "the multiple case methodology used for this investigation also highlighted the fact that a single enrichment program can be perceived quite differently by different children and their families" (p.207).

This study identified that when gifted adolescents had the opportunity to discuss their expectations of education they recognized that they had specific needs, due to their sporting success, as they are under pressure to perform successfully within daily school life and sport. Therefore sport academy programmes may aid the athletically gifted by helping them to understand and maintain a balance between their academic work and sports training. Both the current members and their parents/caregivers identified that they wanted specialist people involved that were pertinent to the development of athletic talent. These key people could provide support for their specific physical gifts and aid them with the pressures of balancing academia with

sporting success. However, the implementers stated that the sport academy programme was confined by the institutional fiscal limitations of the school, and thus the funding for such expertise was minimal. The Ministry of Education (2002) stated that a new 1.2 million per year contestable funding pool would be provided to aid in the set-up of programmes that improved outcomes for gifted and talented learners, with particular focus on addressing the needs of secondary schools. While New Zealand's definition of giftedness is a pluralistic one (Working Party on Gifted Education, 2001, Report to the Minister of Education, 2001, p.16), it will be interesting to see whether this fund can be used for programmes that promote athletically gifted courses such as sport academies.

Of great importance in the findings of this investigation was the effect of positive peer relationships, in that students' peers may be a significant influence on the development of their academic and creative talent. What these young athletes experienced during the time they were a part of the sport academy programme was a powerful contributor in developing their sense of identity and their framework for assessing and valuing their talents and gifts. Additionally, athletically gifted adolescents can act as positive role models to motivate other students.

While schools have a crucial role to play in the identification and development of athletic talent, this report clearly demonstrated there are many other parties closely involved in their progress. Findings from the data gathered from parents/caregivers showed that they have valuable suggestions on how best to cater for their children. Of particular note they recommended that there be improved communication between those working or involved with their children's athletic improvement. Thus parents/caregivers, sport academy directors, teachers and coaches may need to meet regularly to formulate strategies that identify these adolescent's athletic strengths and weaknesses, to formulate action plans for improvement. Furthermore, parents/caregivers could contribute to planning around 'hotspots' or 'clashes' in their child's/children's calendar year, to provide the best preparation for commitments to competitions, training, school activities and exams. Tannenbaum (1991) supported

the creation of an interactive environment involving the family, school, the peer group and the community.

This research makes a valuable contribution into the understanding of the role of sport academies. Some findings will be useful to parents/caregivers, teachers and administrators of secondary schools as they plan to ensure that all parties contribute to the ultimate success of the athletically talented. Other results may be useful to researchers in providing information for larger and more comprehensive studies of the development and promotion of the athletic talents of adolescents. The study of this programme identified that there is not only a need to celebrate the success of young sportspeople but to also assist the smooth passage of their sporting careers alongside their academic preparation.

Exploring the participants' experiences of this sport academy has provided valuable information and indicated many positive aspects that will ensure a smooth passage is achieved. Therefore, sport academies are a justifiable means to specifically meet the needs of athletically gifted adolescents in New Zealand secondary schools. As one student commented:

*“... that is the best thing about the academy...being able to speak to people who want to be the best but because a lot of people out there will just laugh at you when you say I want to be the national champ I want to be the man you know people will say he's got such a big head...but in here where people feel the same they can support you and they are interested in what you do.”*

**APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A: INFORMATION SHEETS

### Information sheet 1

#### **Submission to the Board of Trustees, Principal, HOD Physical Education, Teacher in charge/director for participation in the research.**

Tēnā koe/koutou

My name is Bevan Erueti and I am the Graduate Assistant for the Department of Health and Human Development at the Massey University College of Education. I am in the final year of completing my Masters of Education with an endorsement in Physical Education and at present am enrolled in a research thesis.

I am writing to seek approval from \_\_\_\_\_ to implement my research project. I would like to conduct my research on the Sports Academy programme that is being currently operated at Freyberg High School. My focus will be on the students, ex-students and parents/caregivers expectations and experiences of the programme. Additionally, the implementation group will be interviewed to explore the philosophical underpinnings of the academy.

During the period in which the research would take place, the academy programme would continue to function unimpeded and would involve the senior students of the course. I would need to complete a maximum of two 15-20 minute interviews with each student. I would also need to interview the Principal, the implementers and the course director. These interviews would be approximately 30 minutes in duration. All members who agree to participate will be interviewed and these interviews will be recorded on audio tape. I will make every effort to ensure that the confidentiality of the participants will be kept. A pseudonym will be used throughout transcripts to assist in maintaining anonymity and preventing identification of the subjects. The parents/caregivers of the current students will also be invited to complete a questionnaire. All participants receive an information sheet (see attached) explaining their rights as participants and informed consent will be attained through the consent agreement forms that will be distributed prior to the beginning of the research project.

I am also requesting that I have access to the students (participants of the research project) achievement data such as report cards and academic progress reports. The reason for this request is that the analysis of this information will facilitate in completing an important research objective six that involves:

**6. Report on the programmes perceived impact by using data gathered from the past and present members' experiences and achievement data.**

The information and data collated will be displayed as general conclusions and findings, in an attempt to prevent individual recognition of achievement information. Once again I would make every effort to ensure that anonymity and confidentiality of the participants is kept. Furthermore, if this request were approved I would adhere to any policies that the school may have concerning copies being made or data leaving the confines of the school environment.

I have sought the approval of the parents/caregivers and the students who are involved in this project to access their reports. I am also seeking Board of Trustee approval for access to reports of students who give their permission.

The information gained from this research project will be used for the completion of my thesis and possibly for journal articles and conference presentations. This report can be copied and provided for you on request.

Please find attached a brief synopsis of my research proposal and the information and consent forms that the students are required to complete before the research is to begin. Do not hesitate to contact me at the details below if you have any queries. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Nāku noa,

**Bevan Erueti**

Phone: Hm - (06) 357 8485  
Wk - (06) 356 9099 extn: 8892  
Mobile - (021) 178 7994  
Email: [B.Erueti@massey.ac.nz](mailto:B.Erueti@massey.ac.nz)

## Information sheet 2

### Submission to the current students for participation in the research.

Tēnā koe,

My name is Bevan Erueti and I am the Graduate Assistant for the Department of Health and Human Development at the Massey University College of Education. I am also in the final year of completing my Masters of Education, with an endorsement of Physical Education.

As a requirement to finishing my Masters degree I am to conduct a research project and I have approached your school to assist me in this objective. The area in which I plan to do my research is within the Sports Academy programme that is being currently operated in your school. I am particularly interested in how the programme has benefited you as participants in regards to your academic performance and sporting achievement. Furthermore, I wish to find out if the programme has met any expectations that you may have. I am inviting the senior students of the class to participate in this project. You have the opportunity to either agree, or decline to participate actively **by indicating your decision on the consent form and returning it back to your form teacher.**

Being a participant in the research would involve **TWO** (maximum) **15-20 minute interviews each**. These will be recorded on audio tape and then transcribed by myself. Your name would not be used during the writing process and every attempt will be made to ensure you will not be identified so that you remain unidentifiable. The information gained from this research project will be used for the completion of my thesis.

#### As a potential participant, you have the right to:

- Decline to participate;
- Refuse to answer any question;
- Withdraw from the research project at any time;
- Ask questions about the project at any time during participation;
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- Be given access to a summary of the findings of the study upon completion;
- Decline to have your interview audio taped;
- Ask for the tapes to be wiped, returned to you or allow the tapes to be kept at the completion of this project. If kept they would not be used for teaching or any other purpose other than this research.

Furthermore I am seeking approval from you to have access to your school reports and academic progress reports. The information and data collated from these reports will be displayed as general conclusions and findings to prevent you from being identified. Additionally I would adhere to any security policies that the school may have if any copies are made or if the data leaves the confines of the school environment. You have the opportunity to either agree, or decline **by indicating your decision on the consent form and returning it back to your form teacher.**

Please read the consent form carefully and be sure that your parents/caregivers also sign it. I will make contact with those who are interested in actively participating in the research project when I return.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me at the details below. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Nāku noa,

**Bevan Erueti**

Phone: Hm - (06) 357 8485  
Wk - (06) 356 9099 extn: 8892  
Mobile - (021) 178 7994  
Email: [B.Erueti@massey.ac.nz](mailto:B.Erueti@massey.ac.nz)

### Information sheet 3

#### Submission to the ex-students for participation in the research.

Tēnā koe,

My name is Bevan Erueti and I am the Graduate Assistant for the Department of Health and Human Development at the Massey University College of Education. I am also in the final year of completing my Masters of Education, with an endorsement of Physical Education.

As a requirement to finishing my Masters degree I am to conduct a research project and I have approached your previous secondary school to assist me in this objective. The area in which I plan to do my research is within the Sports Academy programme that you were a part of at Freyberg High School. I am inviting the ex-students of the Sports Academy programme to participate in this project. I am particularly interested in how the programme benefited you as participants in regards to your academic performance and sporting achievement. Furthermore, I wish to find out if the programme met any expectations that you may have had either before or during the time that you were involved in the programme.

Being a participant in the research would involve completing the questionnaire that accompanies this letter. The completion of the questionnaire will indicate that you have given informed consent. If you do not wish to be involved could you please return the blank questionnaire in the envelope supplied. I will be following up on those participants who do not return the questionnaire.

#### As a potential participant, you have the right to:

- Decline to participate;
- Refuse to answer any question;
- Withdraw from the research project at any time;
- Ask questions about the project at any time during participation;
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- Be given access to a summary of the findings of the study upon completion;

Furthermore I am seeking approval from you to have access to your old school reports and academic progress reports. The information and data collated from these reports will be displayed as general conclusions and findings to prevent you from being identified. Additionally I would adhere to any security policies that the school may have if any copies are made or if the data leaves the confines of the school environment. You have the opportunity to either agree, or decline **by indicating your decision on the consent form and returning it back to me along with your questionnaire in the envelope required.**

Please read the above carefully and be sure that you understand the processes that have been explained.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to receiving your response soon.

Nāku noa,

**Bevan Erueti**

Phone:       Hm    - (06) 357 8485  
              Wk    - (06) 356 9099 extn: 8892  
              Mobile - (021) 178 7994  
Email:       [B.Erueti@massey.ac.nz](mailto:B.Erueti@massey.ac.nz)

## APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORMS

### Participation and access to achievement data (current students and parents/caregivers)

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I understand I have the right to decline access to my report cards and ask for any information already collated to be withdrawn from the research data.

I understand that during the research process, no individual will be given any information that has been provided by myself and that I will not have access to information given by other participants.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

|                |
|----------------|
| <b>Student</b> |
|----------------|

I **DECLINE / AGREE** to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

**Signed:** .....

**Name:**.....

**Date:**.....

|                         |
|-------------------------|
| <b>Parent/Caregiver</b> |
|-------------------------|

I **DECLINE / AGREE** that \_\_\_\_\_ can participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

**Signed:** .....

**Name:**.....

**Date:**.....

**Access to School Reports****Student**

I **DECLINE / AGREE** that the researcher can access my personal achievement data under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signed:** .....

**Name:** .....

**Date:** .....

**Parent/Caregiver**

I **DECLINE / AGREE** that the researcher can utilise my child's personal achievement data under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signed:** .....

**Name:** .....

**Date:** .....

## APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRES

### Ex-students

#### Instructions

- **DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON THIS FORM** (this information is entirely confidential).
- Fill in the information spaces below before starting.

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Gender: MALE / FEMALE** **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Year/s in Sport Academy (please circle):** 1998 1999 2000 2001

- Any questions you do not wish to answer may be left blank.
- Circle the most appropriate response
- The definitions for each category are given in the following table.

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| 1                 | 2        | 3         | 4     | 5              |

I enrolled in this programme because:

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. I saw being a professional athlete as a possible career. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. It would help me develop my athletic potential/talents.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. It would help me in my academic progress.                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. Other (please comment) -                                 |   |   |   |   |   |

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What were your expectations of the sport academy before you joined?

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Were these expectations met? (circle one) YES / NO

I felt that I benefited greatly from the sport academy programme. 1 2 3 4 5

I felt that I achieved better results in my personal sport/s because of the sport academy programme. 1 2 3 4 5

I believe that the sports academy programme had a positive impact on my:

- |                                     |   |   |   |   |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Effort in other school subjects. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. Attitude towards school.         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. Attitude towards my sport.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- d. Self-confidence. 1 2 3 4 5  
 e. Ability to relate to peers. 1 2 3 4 5

I was happy with the course content and what the programme involved. 1 2 3 4 5

What influence or impact do you believe the sports academy programme has had on your involvement in sport since leaving Freyberg High School? (Please comment).

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I would recommend the sports academy to a friend. 1 2 3 4 5

If given the opportunity to speak to other people about this programme what would you tell them?

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Are there any additional comments you would like to make regarding the impact that the sports academy programme has had on you.

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THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS  
 QUESTIONNAIRE.

## Parents/caregivers

### Instructions

- **DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON THIS FORM** (this information is entirely confidential)
- Fill in the information spaces below before starting.

**Gender:** MALE / FEMALE

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Any questions you do not wish to answer may be left blank.
- Circle the most appropriate response
- The definitions for each category are given in the following table.

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| 1                 | 2        | 3         | 4     | 5              |

I/We enrolled my/our child in this programme because:

- a. I/we see my/our child being an elite athlete as a possible career. 1 2 3 4 5
- b. It would help my/our child to develop their athletic potential/talents. 1 2 3 4 5
- c. It would help my/our child in their academic progress. 1 2 3 4 5
- e. Other (please comment) -

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---

What were your expectations of the sport academy before you enrolled your child?

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Have these expectations been met? (circle one)

YES / NO

Please comment:

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I/We feel that my/our child will benefit greatly from this programme.

1 2 3 4 5

My/our child has achieved better results in their personal sport/s because of this programme. 1 2 3 4 5

While my/our child has been in the sports academy programme I/we have noticed a positive impact on their:

- a. Attitude and effort in other school subjects. 1 2 3 4 5
- b. Attitude and effort in their sport/s. 1 2 3 4 5
- c. Desire to succeed 1 2 3 4 5
- d. Self-confidence. 1 2 3 4 5
- e. Ability to relate to others. 1 2 3 4 5

I/We are satisfied with what the sports academy programme provides for my/our child 1 2 3 4 5

I/We have a good understanding of what the programme involves. 1 2 3 4 5

I/We would recommend to other parents to investigate this programme if their child was athletically talented. 1 2 3 4 5

If given the opportunity to speak to other people about this programme what would you tell them?

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I/We intend on keeping my/our child in the programme while they continue to attend Freyberg High School? YES / NO

If not, why?

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I/We are happy with the decision that I/we have made to enrol my/our child in the sports academy. 1 2 3 4 5

Are there any additional comments you would like to make?

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THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

## APPENDIX D: DRAFT QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

### Current students

The questions are based under four specific headings in an attempt to adhere to the objectives and the research aims of the thesis project.

**Key:**

- Additional concepts to probe.

### 1. Introduction

---

What year (form) are you in?

- Age.
- Experience in academy.
- Length/period of time spent in the programme.

What sports are you involved in?

- Level of ability.
- Sporting background /achievements.

How are you progressing in your other school subjects?

- Work ethic.
- Effort.

Which subjects do you like? Which subjects are important to you? Why?

- Attitude.

### 2. Expectations

---

Why did you apply to be a student in this programme?

- Expectations.
- Assess what had they heard.

What do you do in class?

- Personal involvement.
- Theory and practical components.
- Content knowledge increase.

Are the staff supportive?

- Helpful.
- Knowledgeable/appropriate.
- Do they cater for their needs?

Is it better/worse than you expected?

- In what ways?
- How?
- What surprises have there been?
- Is it what you expected

What things would you change about the programme?

- Content – Theory or Practical.
- Training schedule.
- Selection process.
- Increase or decrease of programme time allocation.
- Staff.

### 3. Impact

---

Tell me what do you know about the body?

- Assessment of content knowledge.
- Increase of knowledge re: the body/training benefits/nutrition etc.

What improvements have you noticed since you have been in this programme?

- Transfer to other school subjects.
- Sporting achievements.
- Content knowledge.
- Attitude and effort.

Do you feel as if you are treated differently by your friends, family, teachers, or coaches, because you take this subject?

- Elitism?

How has this subject benefited you in terms of character development? What qualities do you think you have now that you didn't have before?

- Effect on personal: confidence, communication, attitude, friendliness, approachability and sociability.

Do you find that you still have time to do the normal teenager things?

- Effect on social wellbeing and development.
- Prioritising between future and present goals.

Is this subject a priority for you? Why?

- Attitude towards programme.
- Personal philosophy of programme.

### 4. The Future

---

What career would you like to pursue?

Do you see yourself one day becoming a professional athlete?

Is this subject beneficial in terms of reaching some of your long term goals?

- Goal Setting.

What would you suggest to a new student who was looking at selecting this subject?

- Personal beliefs of the programme.
- Expectations.
- Personal benefits.

Do you think that all schools should have a programme like this?

- Personal beliefs of the programme.
- Benefits.

## Implementers' and the director

When did you first receive the idea to implement this type programme?

- Instigators.
- Main people involved with its introduction?

What type of research did you do to formulate and help you with the development of your programme?

- Background work/research to establish programme.
- Other programmes utilised.
- Formulate expectations of programme.

What year did it start?

- Stated objectives.
- Programme goals.
- Policy documents.

What kind of response did you receive from the school (staff) and the community?

- Concerns.
- Community perception.
- Affect on the community and the school.

Why is it implemented?

- Personal understanding and philosophy.
- Issues about delivering the programme.
- The focus of the programme.

Are the students of this programme treated any differently than other student here?

- Elitism.

What state do you see this academy in the next 5 – 10 years?

- Developments.
- Extension into other programmes and/or subjects, e.g, Music/Art.
- Capacity/intake.
- New programmes that are sport specific.
- Future aspirations.

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