

**Understanding the Nature of Talent Identification and  
Development in the Nigerian Context**

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## **Abstract**

In recent times, the sports sector across the globe has attracted economic interests both from the public and the private sector. For example, the cost of hosting the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil was estimated at over \$14.5 billion, with huge investments made into renovating old stadia and building new ones in preparation for the games. Similarly, the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow generated over 5,000 jobs and apprenticeships for the locals, £200m worth of contracts to local firms, £198m investments in sporting facilities, and £700m worth of transport-related infrastructural development. It is thus clear that sport has assumed more relevance in society than merely serving the purpose of recreation and leisure such that stakeholders now commit resources into sport performance improvement. Consequently, countries (particularly, those in Europe, Australia and North America) consider the sports sector among the key factors of social and economic development.

Given the considerably large youthful population of Nigeria, it is possible to take advantage of sports to advance social and economic wellbeing of the people. It is however regrettable that the Nigerian government does not appear to have realised the potential opportunities a robust sports economy could provide for a nation in the quest for social, political and economic development. The opportunities provided by sports for social and economic growth will not be fully grasped unless efforts are made to create effective talent development frameworks; unfortunately, anecdotally at least, the reality on the ground suggests that the contrary is the case in Nigeria.

Previous research investigating the process of talent identification and development has highlighted a number of features of effective talent development environments. Research informing these guidelines and principles comes from a variety of research activity including understanding the nature of the talent development pathway, the characteristics of successful

and developing athletes, the features of effective coaching and support environments, factors of effective talent transfer, and effective talent development policies. However, it is important to note, that the current TID literature is based predominantly on European, Australian and North American studies. This is particularly important given that there is strong evidence to suggest that TID is culturally and context specific. Certainly the specific context must be taken into consideration when transferring and/or using recommendations (either research or applied) from one context to another. Since there has been very little work carried out within a Nigerian context, this thesis aims to take a broad examination of the nature of talent identification and development processes within a Nigerian context. This is with the aim of understanding potential barriers to TID and facilitating effective practice to aid successful talent development within Nigeria.

To address these objectives, three studies were carried out. First, a literature review examined the relevant TID literature in relation to the specific context of TID in Nigeria, taking into account the role(s) of important stakeholders (i.e. coach, parents, teacher, siblings, and peers). Based on the lack of evidence from the Nigerian environment and the exploratory nature of this thesis, three qualitative studies were designed and implemented to examine a broad, in-depth perspective of the nature of athlete and sports development in Nigeria. These three studies included the elite athletes' perspectives of the nature of talent identification and development, the elite coaches' perspectives and finally the community stakeholders' perspectives. A total of 21 participants (i.e. 8 elite athletes, 7 coaches and 6 community stakeholders) were purposefully sampled and interviewed to provide triangulated, and informed perspectives on the specific nature of TID in Nigeria.

The data revealed a number of challenges to effective TID in Nigeria including, lack of policy implementation, corruption, poverty, and family resistance, as well as poor

infrastructure for sports development. Furthermore, luck played a large role in successful development, especially due to the ad hoc nature of access to coaching and supportive people in the community (e.g. head teachers). Interestingly, in case successful development, the extremely challenging circumstances faced by athletes attempting to develop their sporting potentials acted as a mechanism to develop their mental resilience and independence, which facilitated success. Furthermore, findings suggest that widespread cultural practice through early years (e.g. festivals, physical labour) developed a general physicality among Nigerian children, which could serve as bedrock of TID, if the other talent development environments were put right.

## **Author's Declaration**

Edinburgh, 2015

I hereby declare that:

- a) I have composed this thesis
- b) This thesis is my own work and,
- c) This work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified

Adeboye Israel Elumaro

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### **List of abbreviations**

TID	Talent Identification and Development
RCCG	Redeemed Christian Church Of God
FIFA	Federation of International Football Associations
UN	United Nations
NSC	National Sport Council
NIS	National Institute of Sports
SDTI	Sport Development and Training Institute
NGB	National Governing Body
SSC	State Sport Council
NSSF	Nigerian School Sports Federation
USA	United States of America
DMSP	Development Model of Sports Participation
PCDE	Psychological Characteristics of Developing Excellence
RAE	Relative Age Effect
TDE	Talent Development Environment
TD	Talent Development
TV	Television
MON	Member of the Order Of Niger
PE	Physical Education
TI	Talent Identification
NUGA	Nigeria Universities Games

IHSC	Inter-House Sport Competitions
PRO	Public Relation Officer

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## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

### **1.1 Athletes and Sports Development in Nigeria**

In the recent years, Nigerian athletes and national teams have recorded notable achievements at various international competitions, considering the state of athletes and sports development in the Nigerian context. At the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow for example, Team Nigeria emerged 8<sup>th</sup> position in the overall medals table having won a total of thirty-six medals, including eleven gold, eleven silver and fourteen bronze. Similar achievements in the past include, winning the 2013 Africa Nation's Cup in South Africa and lifting the 2013 FIFA Under-17 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates for a record fourth-time in the history of the competition.

Given the relative lack of investment, Nigeria's performances on the world stage might not be a true reflection of the status of sports development programmes or Talent Identification and Development (TID) processes in the country. The concerns about the extent to which Nigeria's sport performances reflect the level of commitment to sport development have been previously documented (e.g. Toriola et al., 2000; Duru, 2001; Kulayo; 1994; Morakinyo, 2000; Busari, 2014; Oputah, 2014) based on inconsistencies between sport development policies and their implementation (Aibueku & Ogbouma, 2013).

While the Nigerian authorities have shown continued interests in sports development by drawing policies and procedures to guide practice (Adesanjo, 1997) and setting up sports management structures (Aibueku & Ogbouma, 2014), implementation of successive sports development plans is plagued with political and economic problems (Toriola, *et al.*, 2000; Aibueku & Ogbouma, 2013). As a result, very little is being done in terms of building sport infrastructure, funding athletes' development programmes and supporting sports development research (Ajiduah, 2001). Despite the poor state of sports development

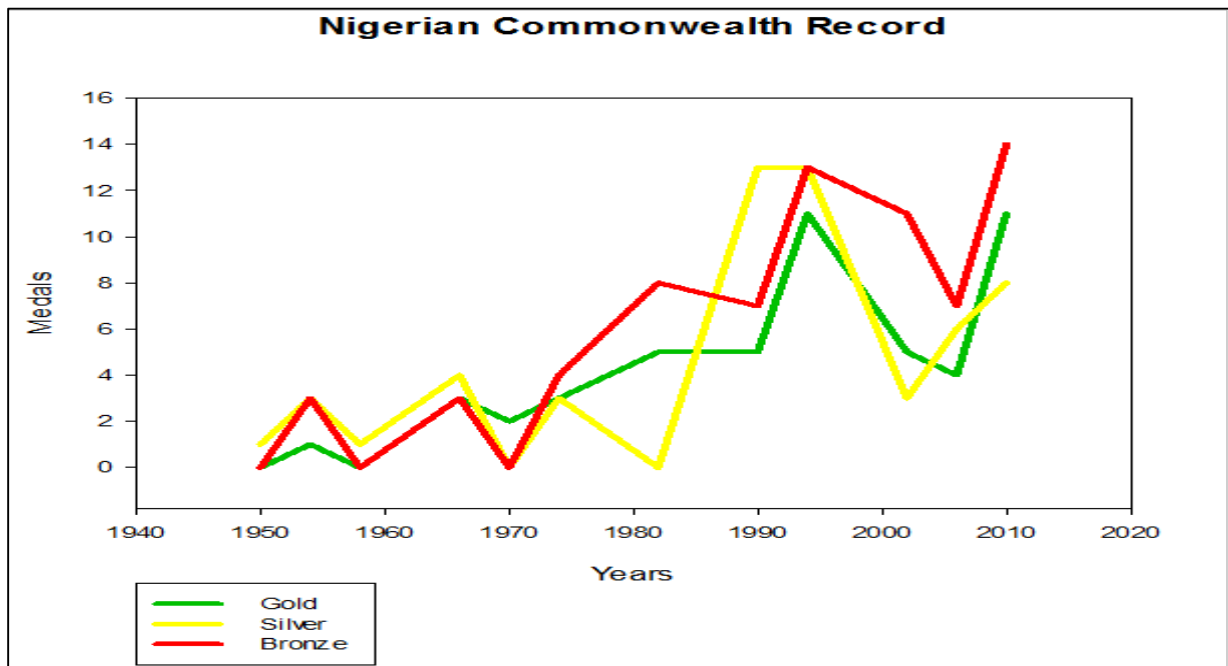
environment, many Nigerian athletes and teams swim against the tide to record notable performances on the international stage. Thus, it will be interesting to explore the factors underlying the achievements of Nigerian sports men and women at international competitions.

At a glance, it is easy to discern fluctuations and high level of volatility in the performances of Nigerian athletes and teams. In many instances, all the successes recorded in a season would be lost by the end of the following season and in some cases, the reverse is the case (Amorose & Horn, 2000). For instance, the Nigerian national football team failed to qualify for the 2012 Africa Nation's Cup jointly hosted by Gabon and Equatorial Guinea but bounced back to win the Africa soccer fiesta the following year in South Africa. Similarly, Team Nigeria was unable to secure a single medal at the London 2012 Olympics; however, the Nigerian contingent recorded the country's second best performance at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow 2014 (two years later). However, despite the fluctuations in Nigeria's performance on the international stage, records (e.g. the number of medal won at the Commonwealth Games) indicate an upward trend in international performance as shown in Figure 1.1.

The fluctuations in performance might not be surprising when considered against the backdrop of several limitations identified with athletes and sports development in Nigeria including, lack of clear objectives, poor legislation, lack of organisation, poor implementation of sports policies, inadequate physical resources, lack of on going research and evaluation, as well as personnel issues (Krotee and Waters, 1998; Makinde, 2005; Shehu, 2000; Ugwu, 2002; Uwakwe, 2005; Olawale, 2007; Olukunle, 2008; Aluko & Adodo, 2011; Asiyai, 2012; Christopher, 2014).



**Figure 1.1: Numbers of medals won by Nigeria at the Commonwealth Games between 1940 and 2010**



In light of the challenges of athletes and sports development as well as the fluctuations and unpredictability of performance, it is unsafe for Nigeria to rely on its previous achievements as evidence of sport success longevity. However, it may be that these sporadic performances can be taken as an indication that the country has the potential to become the “Giant of Africa” in sports if the necessary investments are made towards building the framework for sustainable sports development.

## **1.2 An Overview of the Nigerian Sporting History**

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a former British colony situated in the West African sub-region with a population of 173,615,000 (UN estimate, July 2013) making it the largest black nation in the world, as well as the 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> most populous nation in Africa and the world respectively. In terms of geographical location, Nigeria is bordered by Cameroon to the East, Republic of Benin to the west, Chad and Niger Republic to the North, and the Gulf of Guinea to the South. Nigeria has been through several tempestuous periods including (but

not limited to) a civil war, prolonged era of military rule (Utomi, 1985; Ibeanu, 2000; Anugwom, 2001; Badmus, 2006), economic misfortunes due to misrule and high levels of corruption perpetuated by the political leadership (Aliyu & Chukwudi, 2015; Omoyibo, 2013; Faloore, 2009) and very recently, terrorism in the northern parts of the country (Adenrele, 2012). Nigerians are generally lovers of sport, and sport has the potential to play some unifying roles among the over 173million people, 400 ethnic groups in the 36 states of the federation (Toriola, *et al.*, 2000).

Pre-colonial Nigerian societies cultivated several sporting activities as part of the social culture. Sports featured prominently in festivals and ceremonies; men and women competed in many activities including wrestling, boxing, dancing, and acrobatic display, to entertain the people (Ikulayo, 1994). Later on, the British Christian Missionaries included sports in form of recreational activities in schools, i.e. they organised sporting competitions as part of activities to mark the British Empire Day celebrations. In 1910, the then Director of education in the Southern Province of Nigeria, Mr. E.G. Rowen instituted the first inter-school competitions in the country; the competitions were extended to Eastern Provinces in 1919 (Toriola, *et al.*, 2000).

The first inter-collegiate competition was organised in 1933 where college students competed for the “Grier Shield” donated by Selwyn Grier, the Director of Education for the Eastern Provinces. The “Hussey Shield” aimed at uniting the Southern and Northern Nigeria, which was named after the National Director for Education, Mr. E.R.J. Hussey also started the same year.

Nigeria’s first appearance in the Olympics was in the 1952 Olympics held in Helsinki, Finland. Nigeria went on to host the second All-Africa Games in 1973 and has since then continued to participate in major international competitions as well as organizing local

sporting events.

Sport management in Nigeria is the prerogative of the Ministry of Youth and Sports presided over by a Minister of the Federal Republic. Notwithstanding, there are other agencies of government engaged in the many activities of the sport sector at the federal level including, the National Sport Commission (NSC), the National Institute of Sports (NIS), and the Sports Development and Training Institute (SDTI). Similarly, there are national governing bodies (NGBs) for individual sporting event whose activities collaborate with those of the several government agencies of sports. However, the concentration of these agencies and NGBs at the federal level has been viewed as having adverse effects on grassroots sports development (i.e. Toriola *et al.*, 2000; Omoleke, 2010; Momodu, 2012).

At the State Governments level, there are State Sports Councils (SSCs) in the 36 States of the federation including the Federal Capital Territory, the SSCs organise (i.e. on an ad hoc basis) sporting events among schools in collaboration with the Ministry of Education in their respective States, with the direct involvement of the Nigerian School Sports Federation (NSSF) which is responsible for the organization of competitive sports at the secondary school level. It is however regrettable that at the Local Government level, which is the closest level of governance to the people among the three tiers of government, there is little or nothing going on in terms of organization and administration of sporting events (e.g. Momodu, 2012; Adamolekun, 1990; Aibueku & Ogbouma, 2013). This situation has left sporting development at the grassroots level to the mercy of individuals, and sometimes, organisations whose activities (where they exist) are at best inconsistent, and largely unregulated and as such do not conform to the acceptable standards (Shehu, 2000; Aibueku, 2002; Olukunle, 2008; Makinde, 2005). For instance, it is important to set legal requirements for coaching in order to ensure that checks are carried out to ascertain the suitability of the

person aspiring to work as a coach. Similarly, the authorities should develop a code of ethics for coaching to regulate practice in the profession.

### **1.3 National Sports Policies and Implementation**

It worthy of note, that as far back as 1989, Nigeria has developed a National Policy on sports development and also published the guidelines for its implementation. The documents identified four distinct objectives of sports development, such as, voluntary organisations; research and planning; education and training; mobilization of resources (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1989a, 1989b). However, the lack of implementation of this policy has stalled the development of sports in Nigeria (Aibueku, 2002). Parts of the problems identified with poor or non-implementation of the National Policy on Sports include inadequate funding, lack of sports facilities, poor coaching education system, inadequate sport coaching personnel at the grassroots level, lack of research based practice, as well as, lack of proper monitoring and documentation of sporting activities (Toriola *et al*, 1997).

Sports development has always been included in the various national development plans; however, the successive governments have been noted to be lacking in the desire to implement the various sports development policies (Shehu, 2000). For example, the philosophy of the current national sports policy of Nigeria is “to encourage participation in sport as an avenue for enhancement of health, exhibition of innate physical attribute, expression of talents, skills and alleviation of poverty (Federal Ministry of Youths and Sports, 2009, pp4). While the philosophy featured the expression of talents and exhibition of innate physical attributes among the goals of sports development, it is clear that the document does not place significant importance on high performance and expert development (Ericsson *et al.*, 1993; Hellandsig, 1998; Foran, 2001; Starkes *et al.*, 2003) which are key requirements for achievement in the highly competitive international performance environment. Similarly,

the mission statement of the policy document focused on the participation in sports as a means of improving quality of life and not necessarily the development of high performance and expertise in sports which would enable Nigerian athletes and teams to compete with their peers from other sporting nations.

Furthermore, a review of the national sports policy revealed some ambiguity in the responsibilities obligated to the three tiers of government (i.e. federal, state, and local government authorities). For example, the policy identified the obligation of the federal government to include the creation of a conducive environment for participation in sports; identification, nurturing and development of talents through a national elite development programme; these obligations were duplicated among those of the state government. Consequently, the lack of clarity of purpose and duplication of functions has been identified among the barriers to effective talent development in the Nigerian context (Toriola *et al.*, 2000; Aluko & Adodo, 2011; Christopher, 2014).

Similarly, the current national sports policy stated that the three tiers of government should devote five per cent of their total budgetary allocations for sports into the maintenance of the sporting facilities within their jurisdictions. This policy statement is indicative of the level of knowledge of the sports administrators/managers (i.e. the policy makers) on the role of functional facilities in effective talent development, because just five percent of the budget for sports will be inadequate to provide access to quality sporting facilities for the vast youthful population of Nigeria. Hence previous studies have identified lack of facilities among the challenges to sports development in Nigeria (Kulayo, 1994; Akarah, 2012; Eze, 2015; Aibueku & Ogbouma, 2013). Due to the incoherence in the provisions of the national sports policy and the observed anomalies in the sports sector, it is necessary to reconsider the motive, processes and goals of sports development in Nigeria in order to establish clear

directions for sports men and women and other stakeholders in the sports sector.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Thesis**

Sports today have assumed more prominent status in the society than merely serving the purpose of recreation and leisure (Gratton & Henry, 2002; Sam & Hughson, 2011). Like in other professions, the sport sector has developed to full capacity for job creation and income generation (Zimbalist, 2002) with many more people across the globe engaging in sports and games, performing various roles at different levels (i.e. athletes, coaches, scientists, investors, journalists, managers). Consequently, nations around the globe now consider sport to be crucial to social life and in the process of nation building (Fort & Maxcy, 2003); therefore, governments make direct policies and programmes targeted at further unlocking sporting potentials among their citizens (Houlihan, 2014). Considering the vast youthful population of Nigeria (Olukunle, 2008), it will be reasonable to suggest that sports development would make contributions to economic development of the nation. Athlete and sport development is a very important tool for the attainment and sustenance of world-class levels of competitive performance.

Since available evidences revealed a lack of clear pathways for talent development in Nigeria (Omolawon & Ibraheem, 2011; Oby, 2012; Ezomoh & Amasiatu, 2012), coupled with the instability of policies and procedures, over politicization of sporting appointments, poor implementation of developmental plans, and the lack of research-based practice in the sport sector (Elendu & Okanezi, 2013; Moronkola & Oyebami, 2007) and the resultant decay in sports management which has lead Nigeria to an unenviable position among sporting nations, it is high time Nigeria adopted evidence-based approaches to sport development.

There is very little evidence with regards to what is currently happening in Nigeria, and practice is not systematic or evidence based. As such this thesis aims to form an evidence

base for 1) understanding talent identification and development theories, evidence and models, within a Nigerian context, in order to establish what constitutes effective practice within talent development environments and how this may apply to Nigeria; 2) explore the nature of athletes and sports development in a Nigerian context; 3) appraise the socio-cultural factors of TID in Nigeria; and 4) make recommendations on best practice in effective TID in Nigeria.

### **1.5 Outline of Research**

To address the objectives of the thesis, a research plan highlighting three separate studies was developed to carry out an holistic investigation of the nature of talent identification and development in Nigeria; these studies are presented in chapters 4, 5 and 6. To begin with, chapter 2 presents a overview of the current literature on established models, stages, processes and factors of effective talent identification and development in sports, in order to evaluate to what extent the existing literature of TID is relevant for the Nigerian context, and also to avoid the dangers of cross-cultural application of TID research and or practice without having properly accounted for contextual differences (e.g. Collins & Bailey, 2013). The first study addresses the first objective of the thesis and serves as a foundation for the subsequent investigations by examining the literature with regards to it's cultural relevance to Nigeria and therefore formed the basis for the direction and procedures of the following three studies, which present qualitative, broad understanding of the nature of TID in Nigeria from different stakeholder perspectives.

The first qualitative study of this thesis presented in chapter 3 focuses on the perceptions of Nigerian elite athletes on the nature of athletes and sports development in Nigeria. Retrospective interviews were used to explore the experiences of members of the Nigerian contingent at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. An inductive analysis of the

interviews gave a general overview of the challenges to sports development in Nigeria and unearthed the role of the family, the coach, the government, as well as the personal commitment of athletes to development. As a critical factor in talent development, the elite coaches' perceptions of TID within the Nigerian context was explored in chapter 4 through another qualitative study.

The third and final qualitative study presented in chapter 5 explores the socio-cultural perspective of Nigerian communities and the interface between social belief/practices and talent development, building on the existing understanding from the previous two qualitative studies (i.e. athletes and coaches studies). The three qualitative studies provide triangulated evidence of the nature and context of talent identification and development in Nigeria and give insights into the challenges of athletic development and the characteristics of successful talent development among Nigerian sports men and women. Chapters 3,4 and 5 addressed the second and third objectives of the thesis.

Finally, Chapter six focuses on the fourth objective of the thesis by advancing a general discussion of the findings of the studies mentioned above, and providing guidance on their implication for practice and future research into athletes and sports development in Nigeria. Also, the limitations of the studies of the thesis are highlighted and recommendations are made for best practice and advancement in Nigerian sports development. It is hoped that the series of studies presented in this thesis will contribute to the talent development discussion by 1) bridging the gap between the current literature and practice within the Nigerian context, 2) building on previous work, providing initial understanding of TID processes within a Nigerian context, and 3) providing implications for future research and applied practice.



## **Chapter 2 - The Nature of Athletes and Sports Development; An overview of current Literature**

### **2.1 Introduction**

While Nigeria can be said to have achieved relatively good results from participation in international competitions such as the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and the under 17 Football World Cup, considering the state of sports development in the country, it is clear that all is not well with the environment and procedure for talent development in sports. For example, chapter 1 highlighted some deficiencies with the nature and process of athletes and sports development in Nigeria including poor implementation of sport policy and the lack of infrastructure for sports participation and talent development in sports (Toriola *et al.*, 2000). With a vast youthful population, it would appear that Nigeria has the potential to raise more sporting talents than the country currently has, if the environment is supportive of TID in sports.

Other limitations have been identified with athletic development in the Nigerian context. For instance, there are issues with availability of, and access to sporting facilities across Nigeria communities (Olajide, 2004), to the effect that developing athletes and their coaches either improvise for the facilities needed for training or train without them. Similarly, it appears that there are no clear procedures / pathways for sports development in Nigeria to guide athletes in terms of their progression (Ajiduah, 2001). Such an environment would make it difficult for developing athletes to set, pursue and achieve developmental targets because there is no clear picture of what the future has in store or what may meet the athletes at the next state of development. The Nigeria government have not shown significant commitment to sports development when compared to other nations that occupy dominant

positions in international sports (e.g. Toriola, 2000). For any country to achieve sustainable development in the sports sector and increase the competitiveness of sports men and women, the development of effective talent development environments (e.g. Martindale *et al.*, 2007) is imperative.

The aim of this chapter is to identify and examine key issues and factors of TID in sports that are prevalent within the established literature of TID, and provide a culturally specific examination of the extent to which these findings may be relevant to a Nigerian context. It is hoped that the review will give insights into the challenges and strengths of the Nigerian environment and also identify factors that may be a priority in relation to facilitating successful development. Furthermore, it is expected that this review will identify research gaps and areas that need further investigation to help understand TID within the Nigerian context. This will help in forming the basis upon which the subsequent studies of the current thesis are developed.

## **2.2 Research in Talent Identification and Development**

Talent identification and development is a popular topic among sports stakeholders in countries that seek to improve their competitiveness both at local and international sports (Vaeyens *et al.*, 2008). It is the process by which young people and youths with potentials in sports or other domains (e.g. music) are discovered and assisted to achieve expertise in domains where their talents are relevant (e.g. Bloom, 1985). TID is significantly important to sporting success because without talent refinement, it might be difficult if not entirely impossible for performers to get to the peak of their sporting careers (Moesch, 2011; Ifeoma, 2015). The aim of TID is not just to identify the best from the rest, but more about helping people to discover what they can do and helping them to accomplish it (MacNamara &

Collins, 2012). While Nigeria is yet to develop formal procedures for TID, other countries (e.g. United Kingdom, Australia, USA and Canada) have achieved the position of dominance in international sports through the development and continuous review of their TID procedures (e.g. Bloom 1985; Cote, 1999; Balyi & Hamilton, 1999; 2004; MacNamara *et al.*, 2008). Though the development of formal TID models and procedures may not alone determine success in TID, but at least, it is an indication of the passion, value and commitment to sports in such countries. Therefore, research in this area is predominantly engaged in activities designed to unearth the factors of expertise development in sports.

### **2.2.1 Staged approach to TID**

One of the early empirical studies into the nature and process of talent development was conducted in the United States in the mid 1980s (i.e. Bloom, 1985). The study interviewed 120 successful professionals across three domains (i.e. sport, science and arts) and highlighted similar phases of expertise development in the three domains involved in the study. Three stages of development were identified including the early years (i.e. Initiation), the middle years (i.e. Development) and the later years (i.e. Mastering). The study reported that inter-phase progression (e.g. transition from the initiation phase to the development phase) was determined by the achievement made during each stage – Bloom (1985) is largely regarded among the foundations of academic research in talent development. Bloom's staged model of talent development has been supported by subsequent studies on talent development (e.g. Monsaas, 1985; Scanlan *et al.*, 1989; Cote, 1999; Cote & Hay, 2002; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002), some of which in fact, expounded the Bloom's model.

Similarly, Cote's (1999) study of the influence of the family in the development of sporting talents identified three stages of development similar to those highlighted in Bloom

(1985). Cote's study was based on the theoretical framework presented by Ericsson and colleagues (1993) that the development of expertise in sports involves working within three types of constraints including motivation, efforts and resources. The three stages identified by Cote (1999) are the sampling years, the specializing years and the investment years.

Furthermore, Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) expounded the number of stages of athletes' advancement from novice to elite performance from three to four. The authors interviewed four male and two female Olympic medalists on the nature of their development and highlighted four stages of development such as the sampling years, the specializing years, the investment years and the maintenance years. Durand-Bush and Salmela also identified important factors of successful talent development in sport including socio-cultural factors (e.g. the role of parents, coaches, friend/teammates, supporting staff and other athletes), personal characteristics (e.g. self-confidence, motivation, creativity and perseverance), training (i.e. technical, tactical, physical and mental preparation) and competition factors (e.g. planning, evaluations, coping with pressure, expectations, and adversity, and focusing on the process rather than the outcome of events).

While the various staged models of talent development have been successful in identifying the phases of athletes' progression from novice to expert performance as well as the key transition points and the factors of effective inter-phase progression (e.g. Bloom, 1985; Cote, 1999, Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002), the staged models have been criticised for being short sighted on the multidimensional and dynamic nature of talent, which make the process of development more individualistic than a mere group progression from one stage to the other (e.g. Abbott & Collins, 2004; Elferink-Gemser, Visscher, Lemmink & Mulder, 2004; Vaeyens *et al.*, 2008; Martindale, Collins & Daubney, 2005). For example, Abbott and

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Collins (2004) while highlighting the not static but dynamic nature of talent, emphasized the importance of identifying and promoting the capacity of the child to develop as well as the crucial role of psychological factors in developing expert performance in sport. The authors contend that effective talent development is more determined by the behaviours of athletes and their pattern of interaction with the development environment, and also the ability to maximize development opportunities.

## **2.2.2 What does it take to become an expert athlete?**

**2.2.2.1 Deliberate practice.** The term ‘practice makes perfect’ is popularly used to illustrate that it takes repeated practice (i.e. hard work) over a long period of time to develop expertise in any domain of development (e.g. sport, music). This assumption is rooted in early investigations of the factors of performance differences between individuals (e.g. Chase & Simon, 1973). In their study of the perceptual-cognitive differences between experts and novice chess players, Chase and Simon (1973) reported that the differences between skill levels among players are not determined by the possession of a superior memory capacity but the capacity to arrange a range of information into meaningful pieces of information. Therefore, the authors suggested that differences in the skill levels among the chess players in their study were due to the amounts of time spent in training and playing.

Subsequently, several studies have investigated the relationship between the amount of accumulated practice time, and the levels of sporting achievement (Ericsson *et al.*, 1993; Starkes & Hodges, 1998; Baker, Cote & Abernethy, 2003; Ericsson, 2003; 2004; 2008; 2006; 2015; Keith & Ericson, 2007). Based on the idea of Chase and Simon (1973) that expertise in any domain is associated with the amount and type of training accumulated in that domain, Ericsson and colleagues (1993) defined deliberate practice as a regimen of effortful activities

designed to optimize performance improvement. The tenets of deliberate practice are consistent with the facts that the long road to the top is not smooth, but rather laced with many challenges (Collins & MacNamara, 2012) and thus requires committed efforts and attentions that do not result in any immediate reward (social, material, or financial), and are intended for performance enhancement and not enjoyment.

Research in several sports including hockey, martial arts, wrestling, middle distance races, and figure skating have demonstrated that successful athletes can be differentiated from less successful athletes based on the amount of accumulated hours of deliberate practice (e.g. Ericsson et al., 1993; Starkes et al., 1996; Hodges & Starkes, 1996; Starkes & Hodges, 1998; Hodge & Deakin, 1998); Young & Salmela, 2002). Ericson and Colleagues suggested that it takes ten years or 10,000 hours of deliberate practice for a beginner in sport to progress from being a novice to become an expert performer, thus the framework of deliberate practice indicate that successful expertise development requires athletes to specialize early in their specific sport; begin deliberate practice from a young age; so that they can accumulate enough hours to achieve world-class performance in their sports.

**2.2.2.2 Issues with deliberate practice.** Though the proponents of deliberate practice made significant contributions to the TID discuss in terms of motivating athletes and their coaches to make the necessary commitment towards effective talent development, certain limitations have been identified with the deliberate practice framework. For example, while the need for early specialization required in the framework of deliberate practice (i.e. Ericsson *et al.*, 1993) may be supported in sports that require the attainment of peak performance before puberty (e.g. gymnastics), it has been reported in other sports (e.g. volley ball, hockey, long distance running) that athletes who participated in a variety of sports while

they were young (i.e. did not specialize early) still achieved elite performance in their adulthood (e.g. Cote & Jessica-Fraser, 2008). Therefore, the idea of early specialization as proposed in the framework of deliberate practice deserved a second look.

Secondly, Ericsson and colleagues (1993) assumed that the earlier the age of initiation into sport participation and the commencement of deliberate practice, the better the chances of achieving elite performance. Thus, the authors suggest that aspiring athletes need to start deliberate practice at a young age in order to realize their sporting potential. As with early specialization, research (e.g. Cote and Jessica-Fraser, 2008) argued that starting deliberate practice at a young age is not required for adult-peak sports. Therefore, early specialization and early commencement of deliberate practice might only be necessary in early peak performance sports (e.g. gymnastics) because the available time within which athletes must accumulate the quality and quantity of practice necessary for world-class performance is shorter, and would not have mutual benefits for other sports where peak-performance is achieved in adulthood (e.g. golf). Similarly, Cote, Baker and Abernethy (2007) contended that the deliberate practice framework does not take into consideration the health and psychosocial implications of physical training, and that little concerns are given to the appropriateness of deliberate practice to the stage of development (i.e. age) of the young athletes.

**2.2.2.3 Deliberate Play.** Deliberate play refers to activities that young people freely choose to be involved in with no strict regulations enforced by adults (e.g. Cote *et al.*, 2007), such as playing with peers on the street or in their backyard. Unlike deliberate practice, deliberate play activities provide immediate rewards (e.g. enjoyment and self-satisfaction) and intrinsic motivation for athletes, and thus encourage more commitment to talent

development. Cote, Baker and Abernethy (2007)'s Developmental Model of Sports Participation (DMSP) identified three stage of development in sport including Childhood/sampling years (i.e. age 6-12), early adolescence/ specializing years (i.e. age 13-15), and the stage of late adolescence/ investment years (i.e. age 16 and above). As opposed to deliberate practice, Cote and colleagues proposed that the sampling years should involve significantly more deliberate play and involvement in other sports than deliberate practice (i.e. ratio 80:20), and that the investment years involve more deliberate practice than deliberate play (i.e. ratio 20:80), while the early adolescence stage is characterized mainly be the transition form childhood to adulthood.

The DMSP is founded on the three assumptions that successful athletes sample various sports in their childhood instead of specializing in one sport; that successful athletes engage in more deliberate play than deliberate practice during their childhood; and that successful athletes engaged in more deliberate practice than deliberate play only in adult performance (e.g. Cote *et al.*, 2007; Cote & Jessica-Fraser, 2008). Deliberate play as presented in the DMSP is supported by several other studies in TID (e.g. Bloom, 1985; Cote, Baker & Abernethy, 2003; Balyi & Hamilton, 2004; Baker, 2005) that highlight the importance of making participation at the early years enjoyable and fun for developing youngsters in order to stimulate their passion and interest for TID. Further investigations into the relationship between deliberate practice, deliberate play and sporting success highlight the need for engagement in diversified sporting activities in the early years (e.g. Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2001; Baker and Cote, 2005; Cote, Baker & Abernethy, 2007; Baker & Cobley, 2008).

One significant contribution of deliberate play and involvement other sports in the early years of participation to talent development is that a generalized engagement in sports

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at the early stage would increase the level of motivation among young athletes (e.g. Cote *et al.*, 2007; Baker & Cobley, 2008; Cote & Fraser-Thomas, 2008). Cote and colleagues (2007) argued that unstructured play activities would give young athletes immediate gratification in term of enjoyment, and thus prevent the occurrence of burnout; the sense of enjoyment children have during play activities would motivate further engagement in sports and future commitment to talent development. (e.g. Baker & Cobley, 2008). However, having experienced generalized participation in diverse sports during the sampling stage, Baker and Cobley (2008) emphasized that athletes then need to engaged in sport specific training (i.e. deliberate practice) during the investment stage (i.e. late adolescence years).

In summary, research in the area of deliberate play and deliberate practice (e.g. Cote *et al.*, 2007; Cote & Fraser-Thomas, 2008; Baker & Cobley, 2008) recommend that a blend of deliberate practice, deliberate play and involvement in other sports (i.e. generalized early participation) accumulated for ten years or 10,000 hours is important to effective talent development.

## **2.2.3 Individual characteristics associated with sporting success**

**2.2.3.1 Personality traits and sporting success.** Early research into the psychological factors of TID was focused on identifying the personality traits that can distinguish between successful and unsuccessful athletes such as personality differences between successful and unsuccessful athletes, and the role of personality traits in sporting achievement (e.g. Nicholls, 1984). However, while personality traits may account for the attitude of athletes under given circumstances (e.g. Ismaili *et al.*, 2013) personality differences do not explain a larger amount of variance of why someone succeeds in his/her sporting career, and the other person did not (e.g. Rowley *et al.*, 1995). One clear indication of the limitations of predicting sporting

success with personality traits is the fact that majority of successful athletes across sports do not appear to share a common set of traits (e.g. Krolla, 1967).

Instead, Collins & Abbott (2004) argued that mental skills such as goal setting, performance evaluation, as well as having realistic plan towards development could combine to predict sporting achievement. Furthermore, previous studies of the relationship between personality traits and sporting success have produced inconsistent and ambiguous findings, which are unusable to TID practitioners (e.g. Vealey, 1992). Consequently, focus in TID have shifted from personality attributes to psychological behaviors that can facilitate successful development; athletes, coaches and other stakeholders therefore develop strategies to identify the psycho-behavioral factors of effective talent development in sports and the mechanisms to develop them (Abbott & Collins, 2004; MacNamara *et al.*, 2008; MacNamara *et al.*, 2010).

**2.2.3.2 Self-regulation.** While personality variances have not successfully differentiated between successful and less successful sport performers, there is evidence that some psychological behaviour can facilitate successful talent development in sports. One example of such psychological behaviours is self-regulation (i.e. the ability to set one's priority and then channel available resources towards the achievement of set goals). The process of self-regulation involves the development and deployment of mental skills like self-evaluation, self-organization and transformation, goal setting, self-reflection, records keeping and self-monitoring, structuring one's environment, self-consequences, rehearsing and memorizing tasks, seeking social assistance, and reviewing records (Zimmerman, 2013; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1996; Cleary & Zimmerman, 2001; Petlichkoff, 2004; Nesbit, 2012). Early research has identified self-regulation among behaviours facilitative of successful learning (e.g. Zimmerman, 1986) and successful talent development in sports (e.g.

Kirschenbaum, 1984).

Zimmerman (2013) highlighted the stages of self-regulation to include observation (where the learner is motivated by vicarious reinforcement and learns through role modelling); emulation (where direct/social reinforcement motivates the learner perform task corresponding to those of the models); self-control (the learner develop automatization through structured tasks and is motivated through self-reinforcement); and finally, self-regulation (where the learner is motivated through self-efficacy beliefs to adapt to high standards of tasks performance).

Over the decades, there has been growing evidence that self-regulation constitutes an important factor of development across domains (e.g. sports, education). For example, in the Cleary and Zimmerman's (2001) study of expert, non-expert and novice basket ballers, the authors reported that expert basket ballers adopted more self-regulatory strategies in training than non-experts and novices. Similarly, Kitsantas and Zimmerman (2002), in their study of expert, non-expert and novice volley ballers reported that volleyball experts displayed better use of self-regulatory strategies (e.g. goal setting, planning, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, attributions and adaptation) compared to non-experts and novices. The authors also reported that self-regulation measures predicted up to 90 percent of the variance in women's volleyball serving skills. Additionally, Petlichkoff (2004) identified self-regulation as a characteristic of effective talent development in sports; according to Petlichkoff, successful athletes have the ability to evaluate their progress and make the necessary adjustment to training and practice. Therefore, athletes who are self-regulated are likely to make more progress compared to those who cannot take independent decision and develop self-improvement strategies towards the achievement of their developmental goals (Schunk, 1990; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1996;

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2005).

Self-regulation is one of the key changes in roles and responsibility of athletes and other significant persons (i.e. parents, coaches) as athletes move up the ladder in the staged models of TID (e.g. Bloom, 1985; Cote, 1999). For example, at the beginner stage, parents play more roles in creating sporting interest in the child, taking the child to training and providing moral support and encouragement to motivate the child's commitment to talent development (e.g. Cote, 1999). However, as the athlete progresses towards mastering or expertise, there is more autonomy in terms of the athletes' need and how to achieve what is required; thus, athletes' ability to monitor their progress, control their emotions, focus on self-improvement, and seek support is important to successful development (MacNamara & Collins 2012). It will be interesting to see the role of self-regulation in talent development in the Nigerian context; this is because, most of the external factors of successful development are either unavailable or inadequate in the Nigerian environment (e.g. Toriola, 2000; Ajiduah, 2002), so it may well be that Nigerian athletes achieve success through the development and deployment of psychological factors like commitment and self-regulation, especially since self-regulation has been shown to have cross-cultural relevance (e.g. Pitkethly & Lau, 2015).

**2.2.3.3 Personal Commitment.** Another psychological behaviour associated with successful talent development in sports is the commitment of athletes themselves to their developmental goals. Personal commitment in sports refers to the desire and determination to persistently pursue a career in sport, over a long period of time, and till the objectives of that endeavour is achieved (e.g. Scanlan & Simons, 1992). Commitment to sport development is driven by sport enjoyment i.e. a positive affective response to sport experience that reflect general feelings of pleasure, fun and liking; involvement opportunities i.e. valued

opportunities that sport participation presents to athletes; and personal investments i.e. the amount of resources that athletes already put into talent development which would amount to waste if participation is not continued (Scanlan *et al.*, 1993). Other factors of sport commitment identified by the authors include social constraints and involvement alternatives. Commitment to talent development in sport may involve neglecting other aspects of life, and the formation of the athletic identity (Brewer, Van Raalte & Linder, 1993) that makes committed athletes focus mostly on sport participation in order to maximize their sporting potentials.

Previous studies acknowledged the importance of commitment to successful talent development (e.g. Scanlan, Carpenter, Schmidt, Simons & Keeler, 1993; Martens & Lee, 1998; Horton & Mack, 2000; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004; Martindale *et al.*, 2005). For example, research has demonstrated that successful athletes are more committed to their training and development than athletes with lesser sporting success (e.g. Karoly, 1993; MacNamara & Collins, 2008; Abbott & Collins, 2004; Petlichkoff, 2004; Yperen, 2009). When athletes are committed to TID in sports, they would invest their time and resources into activities perceived to make meaningful contributions to progress, and avoid activities that can distract their attention from talent development or hinder continuous progress (Abbott *et al.*, 2005).

Furthermore, committed athletes are most like to cultivate a growth mindset, which is the belief in one's ability to achieve certain developmental goals through hard work and commitment (e.g. Dweck, 2008). According to Dweck (2008), athletes who have the growth mindset show positive behaviour towards training, and the quest for knowledge as well as ability to react positively to setbacks or negative feedback. This behaviour (i.e. commitment)

is related to the psychological characteristics of developing excellence that have been associated with successful talent development (e.g. MacNamara & Collins, 2008).

**2.2.3.4 Psychological characteristics of developing excellence (PCDEs).** High achievers in sports have been identified to possess certain mental characteristics that differentiate them from their less successful counterparts (e.g. Ericsson & Charness, 1994; Moore et al., 1998; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Abbott & Collins, 2004). For example, Abbott and Collins (2004) identified psychological factors of effective talent development including goal setting and goal commitment, motivation, imagery, self-efficacy, and realistic performance evaluation; these mental elements have been found to make key contributions to effective TID (e.g. Orlick & Partington, 1998; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002).

A body of research into the psycho-behavioural factors of sport performance have produced consistent findings that psychological variables, and in deed, psycho-behavioural factors are critical to the process of developing and sustaining world-class performance in sports (e.g. Abbott & Collins, 2004; MacNamara, Holmes & Collins, 2006; MacNamara, Holmes & Collins, 2008; MacNamara & Collins, 2009; MacNamara & Collins, 2011; MacNamara & Collins, 2013; MacNamara, Button & Collins, 2010a; 2010b; MacNamara & Collins, 2010). For example, MacNamara and colleagues (2010a; 2010b) in their study of successful performers associated certain psychological skills and behaviours termed the Psychological Characteristics of Developing Excellence (PCDEs) with the actualization of sporting potentials.

The PCDEs comprise both trait characteristics (i.e. the tendency to act or react in certain manner) and the state-deployed skills (I.e. the capacity to do 'X' when 'Y' happens). Therefore, the PCDEs encompass both mental skills (e.g. realistic performance evaluation,

imagery, goal setting), attitudes (e.g. commitment) and emotions (e.g. motivation) that determine how athletes interact with the environment of development and interpret events and elements of the environment in order to maximize available opportunities for development (Abbott & Collins, 2004).

The development and deployment of the PCDEs is key to the way athletes react to occurrences they perceive to be either facilitative of, or debilitating to development (e.g. Cote & Hay, 2002) and how they exploit the opportunities available in the environment for the actualization of their potential. Thus, the PCDEs have been considered as a causative factor of sporting success (Abbott & Collins, 2002). Also previous research highlighted the facilitative role of challenge in the development of sporting talent (e.g. Collins & MacNamara, 2012; McCarthy & Collins, 2014). For example, Collins and MacNamara (2012) argued that aspiring elites could benefit from facing environmental challenges to TID as such experiences are facilitative of mental toughness and resilience, which are important to cope with the challenging nature of elite performance. In fact, the authors argued that most of the efforts to counter the effects of naturally occurring stressors in the talent development environment might be misdirected; this argument gives more credence to the critical role of PCDEs in talent development.

### **2.3 Environmental factors of TID**

The discussion about ‘nature’ and ‘nurture’ and their influences over expertise development in any performance domain started about one and a half centuries ago from Francis Galton’s inquiry into the laws and consequences of hereditary genius (Galton, 1869). And ever since, the debate over the role of innate characteristics and environmental factors in the enhancement of performance across several domains including sport has been

unrelenting among performance enhancement researchers. In a sporting context, research (e.g. Horton, Baker, Robertson-Wilson & Wall, 2003; Baker *et al.*, 2003) has postulated that expertise development is determined by successful interaction between biological, psychological and sociological constraints, and as such, it is imperative to give appropriate attention to the social and environmental factors of talent development in sport; this is the major pursuit of this section of the review. Below is a discussion of some of the environmentally relevant issues in talent development.

### **2.3.1 Relative age effect**

The relative age effect (RAE), defined by Barnsley and Thompson (1985) as the differences in age among children born in the same calendar year has been identified among environmental factors of the evolvment of latent potential to expertise in sports. In many sports, talent developers group children by their age in order to provide a leveled playing ground for competition and assessment, and to eliminate the possibility of one child taking advantage over another on the account of age, however, it has been suggested that the very essence of such grouping is defeated by RAEs (e.g. Barrow & McGee, 1977; Barnsley & Thompson, 1985; 1988; Baker *et al.*, 2003). For example, in hockey where children are grouped by their year of birth, children born at the beginning of the year (i.e. January) would be almost a year older than those born at the end of the year (i.e. December) and therefore, the ‘early comers’ have relative age advantage over the ‘late comers’. The RAE was reflected in Barnsley, Thompson and Barnsley’s (1985) Canada based analysis of the birth dates of players on the Ontario hockey league, western hockey league, and the National hockey league in the 1982/1983 season.

Research in RAE have demonstrated that the phenomenon, though popular in the game



of hockey, is not limited to one sport (i.e. hockey) or one culture (i.e. Canada), but that RAE is equally relevant across other sports, especially, strength based sports. Whereas, sports that require flexibility (e.g. Gymnastics) have been shown to have a reverse RAE where those younger in the year excel because they tend to be smaller and lighter than their older counterparts. For example, Cobley, Baker, Wattie and McKenna (2009) investigated the RAE in 14 sports across 16 cultures and found the effects of age grouping in all variables of the studies (i.e. sports and cultures). However, the pattern of effect may vary from one sport or/and culture to another. For instance, in the case of Hockey in Canada, children born earlier in the year (e.g. January, February and March) have relative age advantage over those that were born later in the year (e.g. October, November and December), whereas, in the case of football in Brazil and Germany, children born in August, September and October have advantage over those born earlier in the year; this difference has been correlated with the cut-off dates in the countries mentioned (e.g. Musch & Grondin, 2001).

The underpinning explanations for RAE include both physiological, psychological as well as environmental factors. For example, research (e.g. Barnsley *et al.*, 1985; Barnsley & Thompson, 1988) argued that older players within an age group were stronger, bigger, faster and more coordinated than their younger counterparts, and as such, are more likely to be recruited into higher competitive teams where they would have access to more and better coaching, facilities, funding and competitions compared to the rest of the group (i.e. younger players among the group). The improved access to better environment and more training opportunities are key to expertise development in sports (e.g. Ericsson *et al.*, 1993).

In a more recent study, Andronikos, Elumaro, Westbury and Martindale (2015) proposed some mechanism to check RAE. In their qualitative study of the existence,

mechanisms and possible solutions to RAE, the authors identified mechanisms that could be used to minimize RAE such as controlling the categories used to group athletes within sports (e.g. age, weight, size and skill), as well as recognition and prioritisation of long-term development over short term win focus. While this suggestion remains new and is yet to be tested, RAE in sports continues to be a relevant discussion among researchers and practitioners in talent development.

### **2.3.2 Effect of birthplace on TID**

Birthplace (i.e. the town/city where a person is born and or raised) has been observed to influence the chances of developing world-class performance in sport. In a North American based study of the relationship between where a person was born/raised and the person's chances of successful talent development across several sports (e.g. golf, football, hockey, baseball, and basketball), it was reported that the size and population of place of birth could influence athletic development (i.e. Côté, Macdonald, Baker & Abernethy, 2006). Cote and colleagues noted that a person born/raised in a city of between 50,000 to 100, 000 people has significant advantage in talent development over people who were born/raise in cities where the population is lower or higher than 50,000 to 100,000 bracket.

One underpinning factor of the birthplace effect on TID is that people who live in big cities with high populations may have issues with availability and sufficiency of facilities as well as getting into such facilities (e.g. because they would be far away from homes), whereas, in the small cities, there may not be problem with availability and access to facilities but fewer people would mean fewer competitions (e.g. Seaton, Marsh & Craven, 2009; Horton, 2012). Nigeria has a mixture of large and small cities; with some cities having millions of residents (e.g. Lagos - 5.195 million, Kano – 2.167 million) while others are far

lesser in population (e.g. Lokoja – 60, 579 people); It will be interesting therefore, to see how the birthplace effect will play out in the Nigerian context.

### **2.3.3 The role of the family in TID**

Research in TID has consistently acknowledged the important role of the family in the process of turning a child's potential to become, into actually becoming a world-class athlete (Bloom, 1985; Cote, 1999; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002). For example, in the three stages of development identified by Bloom and colleagues (1985), parent were reported to occupy key position, and played differing roles in the development trajectory of experts. During the early years, parents occupied a leadership position where they provided the initial opportunity to participate in sport and sought the first coach to help the development of the child's potential. Bloom and colleagues noted that not only did parents provide supports and encouragement for the child's development, but also that they were also directly involved in training and practice sessions. In simple terms, parent(s) did the job, while the child athlete(s) enjoyed their sports in the early years of talent development.

However, the position and role of parents changed (i.e. increased) as the child progresses to the next stage of development (i.e. the middle years). The child's talent development dominates the family in middle years as parent assumed more of a leadership role, looked for a more qualified coach and or a better team and committed more resources and time of the family to talent development; the family (i.e. parents and other siblings) make significant sacrifices to support the continuous development of the child's sporting potentials (Baker *et al.*, 2003). While in the final stage of development in Bloom's model (i.e. the later years), the role of the parents reduced to providing financial and emotional support, and the athlete takes leadership and decision making position in talent development. Bloom's model

is consistent with other staged models of TID (e.g. Cote, 1999; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005; Martindale, Collins & Daubney, 2005; Gould *et al.*, 2006; Martindale, Collins & Abraham, 2007; Coulter, Mallett & Gucciardi, 2010).

For example, Gould and colleagues (2006) assessed coaches' perception of the relationship between parents' behaviour and successful talent development among junior tennis players. The authors reported that when parents have positive behaviours (e.g. providing logistical, financial and emotional support; providing opportunities for participation; and unconditional love), there is a positive effect on talent development. Whereas, when parents display negative attitudes (e.g. overemphasizing winning; having unrealistic expectations; and criticizing the child), there was a negative effect on talent development. However, the study found that more of the parents involved in the survey (i.e. 59%) had displayed positive behaviours towards their child's development, while fewer parents (i.e. 36%) displayed negative behaviours towards the progress of their children. Though this investigation is based on data from tennis coaches in the United State, it will be interesting to see whether the finding will be supported in a Nigerian context. What is very clear though is that family factors are critical to effective talent development.

#### **2.3.4 Access to quality coaching**

One of the implications of relative age effect as discussed above is that advantaged athletes have better access to improved environment for talent development where more resources and opportunities for talent evolvment are available and therefore enhance their chances of successful development (e.g. Cote 1993; Abbott & Collins, 2004). The attainment of excellence in any development domain including sport, involves sustained investments in human resources (e.g. coaches, support staff) and material resources (e.g. facilities and

training equipment), which are important to support the transformation of innate potential to expertise in sport (e.g. Horton, 2008).

Research on the role of the coach in talent development has received significant interest among TID researchers. Beginning from the foundational studies on talent development (e.g. Bloom, 1985; Cote, 1993; Ericsson *et al.*, 1993; Cote, 1999, Durand-Bush, 2002). Through to the recent time (Martindale *et al.*, 2005, Cote *et al.*, 2006; Cote & Fraser-Thomas, 2008; Coulter *et al.*, 2008; Martindale *et al.*, 2007; Black & Holt, 2009; Bouwer, 2010; Andronikos, Elumaro, Westbury & Martindale, 2015), findings have consistently indicated that access to a competent coach, who can design and implement practice sessions appropriate for the stage of development of his athletes is key to successful TID. Thus, Horton (2008) posited that the coach is important to virtually all stages of development (i.e. initiation, specializing, investment and maintenance).

Coaching techniques and coach behaviours are examples of some practical implications of the type and quality of coaching aspiring athletes experience for their development. Previous studies have featured effective use of practice time among the factors of successful development (Ericsson *et al.*, 1993; Abbott & Collins, 2002; Cote, 1993), it therefore follows that coaches are required to ensure that athletes spend their time on the right activities (e.g. either deliberate practice, deliberate play, and involvement in other sports) in order to accumulate the amount of practice experience necessary for expert performance (e.g. Ericsson *et al.*, 1993; Cote *et al.*, 2007).

However, research has shown that discrepancies exist in the way coaches use the available practice time (e.g. Horton, 2008); such discrepancies may have negative effect on talent development. For example, in a study of high-level junior ice hockey training sessions,

Starkes (2000) reported that the young hockey players were only active for about half of the duration of the training time, whereas, a similar study with volleyball players found that volleyballers were active for up to 93 percent of the total training time (e.g. Deakin & Copley, 2003). Therefore, if the ten years or 10,000 hours' rule for expertise development is to be fulfilled, access to good and knowledgeable coaching is of paramount importance.

The coach is equally crucial to the organisation of talent development environment to allow athletes cultivate the necessary mental ingredients of effective TID including motivation, self-efficacy, commitment and self-regulation. For example, Bradley, Young and Medic (2008) identified motivation as an important prerequisite for long-term commitment to talent development, and of course, the acquisition of sufficient skills and competences towards the achievement of world-class performance (e.g. Cote *et al.*, 1993). The level of motivation is however influenced by the style of coaching, the coach-athletes' relationship, and coach-athletes' communication and feedback mechanisms (Cote & Fraser-Thomas, 2008). Therefore, the coach will need to create the right motivational climate to facilitate motivation and self-confidence in their athletes (e.g. Morgan, Sproule & Kingston, 2005).

#### **2.4 Current research in the Nigerian context**

The current literature on talent identification and development is yet to showcase any empirical study of TID in a Nigerian context, therefore, very little is known about the nature and processes of talent development in Nigeria. However, chapter 1 presents some indications of the nature of talent development environments in Nigeria, founded on Nigerian based research activities in sport-related issues (i.e. not TID). Most of the Nigerian based investigation centre on issues such as sport policies and their implementation (e.g. Aibueku, 2002; Shehu, 2000; Aibueku & Ogbouma, 2013; 2014), analysis of school sports (e.g. Aluko

& Adodo, 2011), availability and access to facilities (e.g. Asiyai, 2012), sport as a medium for eradicating poverty (Eze, 2015).

Indications from Nigerian based literature suggest that the talent development environment as well as the process of talent development may not be consistent with the established literature from other cultures (e.g. United Kingdom, Australia, United States and Canada). To start with, the fact that there is yet to be empirical TID studies based on data from the Nigerian environment means that talent development procedures might not be informed by empirical evidence. Additionally, the wider socio-cultural and economic issues of poverty, poor economy, and corruption have been reported to have negative effects on sports participation as well as the national sporting records (e.g. Toriola, Adetoro, Toriola & Igbokwe, 2000; Ojeme, 2000; Morakinyo, 2000). For example, Toriola and colleagues (2000) analysed the youth sport programmes in Nigeria in comparison with those of Botswana and reported that the youth sports policy is mainly targeted at schools, and little provision is made for the out-of-school children; whereas, the numbers of out-of-school children are relatively high in Nigeria (e.g. Abdullahi, 2013). Toriola and colleagues also noted that the Nigerian youth sports development is constrained by both political and economic problems.

Given that talent development is culturally specific (e.g. Collins & Bailey, 2013) and the that TID literature is dominated by research from other countries (e.g. Canada, Australia, United States and United Kingdom), where the social and cultural contexts are dissimilar to those of Nigeria (e.g. Blooms, 1985; Cote, 1993; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Martindale *et al.*, 2007), it is important to investigate the nature of TID in the Nigerian context, to establish the challenges as well as factors that facilitate successful TID in Nigeria. It is clear from the literature that certain environmental and personal characteristics are important (e.g.

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self-regulation, the family support, and access to coaching) to achieve the objectives of TID in sports in Nigeria.

Due to the lack of infrastructure and high levels of poverty in Nigeria for example, it will be interesting to see which of these ‘important’ environmental factors are available/accessible/of sufficient quality in a Nigerian context, Indeed, the relative role of parents, coaches and the characteristics of the athletes themselves may be different to what one might expect from the current findings in the literature.



## **Chapter 3 - Methods**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methodology adopted in the three empirical studies described in the thesis, so that readers are guided through the procedure for carrying out the investigations contained in the study. These are discussed in the following sub-headings.

### **3.2 Research design**

A qualitative research design was adopted in each of the three studies described in the thesis. The rationale for adopting this method was based on the exploratory and fact-finding nature of the studies, and the context within which the studies were conducted. TID in sports in the Nigerian context is not previously popular in the literature, and thus, qualitative research approach would enable the development of initial theories upon which future investigations including quantitative research could be advanced in the subject (Mugenda, 1999).

### **3.3 Participants**

Homogeneous sampling technique was used to recruit participants for the first study presented in the thesis (i.e. chapter 4). Homogeneous sampling is the process of selecting participants who seem to have the phenomenon of interest in a study in common (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This sampling technique was considered appropriate for this stage of the investigation because it enables a researcher to generate the initial data about the phenomenon under study, upon which the initial theory for the investigation is formulated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The inclusion criteria for the first study was that participants must be current members of the Nigerian national team in athletics; and must have developed their sporting talents within Nigeria. This was to ensure that, first, participants are truly successful in their sport(s), and

secondly, that they have experienced the nature, challenges and environmental factors of TID in Nigeria. Eight national athletes, who represented Nigeria in the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, who also have developed their sporting careers in Nigeria, were recruited for the first study.

Subsequently, discriminate sampling was adopted in recruiting participants for the second study of the thesis presented in chapter 5. Discriminate sampling is the method of choosing participants whose experience or knowledge of the phenomenon being studied is considered to have the possibility of enhancing comparative analysis of emerging categories in order to complete a developing theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Due to the significance attached to the role of coaches in TID in sports by Nigerian athletes, it was considered necessary that the second stage of the study examined the perceptions of some selected Nigerian coaches on the context of TID in Nigeria. In the second study therefore, participants included coaches whose athlete(s) took part in the previous study (i.e. chapter 4); or has at least one athlete that fulfilled the criteria for inclusion in the previous study; and or has at least one athlete that resented Nigeria at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. This was considered necessary to ensure that participating coaches have assisted at least one athlete to develop in the Nigerian environment, and as such possess the knowledge and experience of the context of TID in Nigeria. Also, being the coaches of athletes who participated in the first study, it was expected the experiences of the selected coaches would help in saturating the developing theories from the athletes' study. Seven Nigerian coaches that meet the above inclusion criteria were recruited for second study.

To further probe into the socio-cultural context of TID in Nigeria and to develop a better understanding of the challenges as well as facilitators of talent development in sports,

the third and final study of the thesis targeted individuals who are knowledgeable in the social culture of Nigerian communities, and are also involved in the process of education. It is believed that such persons would have experiences relevant to the objectives of this thesis by consolidating on the revelations already made by the athletes and their coaches. It was considered necessary to interview this category of participants because both cultural factors and the school system have been associated with the process of TID by athletes and coaches in the two preceding studies. The same method (i.e. discriminate sampling) described in the second study above was used to select participants for the third and final study of the thesis presented in chapter 6. Participants included six senior citizens; who were community leaders; and have previously worked in the school system (and now retired).

### **3.4 Instrumentation**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all the participants in the three studies of the thesis to explore their understanding and experiences of the nature of TID in the Nigerian context. The main researcher developed the interview guide for each of the studies with questions focusing on the nature, processes, factors and environmental considerations for TID in Nigeria. The interview schedule consisted of open-ended questions purposefully structured to generate open-ended responses from participants (Patton, 1990). The interview guides were given to other researchers, including the main supervisor and an independent researcher, who are experts in the field of study (i.e. based on their previous experiences in qualitative research methods, and also in the field of sport psychology (i.e. the field of the current study) for modification before their submission to the Research Ethics Committee for approval alongside the ethics application form.

### **3.5 Procedures**

An ethical approval was sought from and granted by the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the School of Life, Sports and Social Sciences of Edinburgh Napier University. A copy of the application form for ethical considerations, and the evidence of ethical approval are attached in the appendix. The aims, objectives and procedure of the study were explained to participants in each of the three studies and they (i.e. the participants) were assured of anonymity and confidentiality with regards to their participation in the studies. Participants were then asked if they had any reservation about the motive and procedure of the study and they all responded in the negative (i.e. there were no reservation about participation). Thereafter, each participant was presented with, and dully signed an informed consent form before being included in the sample. Copies of the signed informed consent forms are attached as an appendix.

The main interview questions were given to participants one week prior to the interview so that they could familiarize themselves with the questions (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992). Face-to-face interviews were conducted for the athletes' study (i.e. chapter 4) and the coaches' study (i.e. chapter 5) during the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow by the main researcher. The interviews were held in a quiet room to avoid any distraction to both the interviewer and the interviewee (Wengraf, 2001, p.194). Also, it was ensured that interviews held in a day the interviewees were not involved in either a training session or competition. All interviewees were asked the same questions in the same sequence, however, while and when necessary, the interviewer asked probing questions (Patton, 1990) to create an in-depth understanding of responses, and to capture a true representation of the socio-cultural context of TID in Nigeria. All interviews were tape-recorded, and later transcribed

for further subsequent analysis

Furthermore, telephone interviews were conducted for the third study (i.e. chapter 6) also by the main researcher. Telephone interviews were considered appropriate for the study because of the nature of participants and their location (i.e. retired school heads and teachers from Nigerian communities). This method is considered valuable when there is a geographical distance between the interviewer and the interviewee (Mann & Stewart, 2000). Like the face-to-face interviewees, the researcher ensured that interviewees were in an enclosed place (i.e. a quiet room) away from possible distractions during the interview. Participants were requested to choose the day and time conducive to them for the purpose of the interview. Participants were asked the same questions in the same sequence, and the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribe for further analysis. All interviews (i.e. face-to-face and telephone interviews) lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

Inductive content analyses were conducted with the data from each of the three qualitative studies of the thesis. In each of the studies, the researcher began the process of analysis through familiarisation with the interview data and open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Emerging concepts from the coded experiences were continually compared and refined to form themes; likewise, developing themes were constantly compared and similar themes were clustered to form categories, while categories were continuously compared to develop general categories (Patton, 1990). This process of similarity inferences was continued until the categories were saturated (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The emerging themes and categories were presented in hierarchical to represent the order in which they emerged, and were supported by sample quotes in the result section of each of the three qualitative studies.

### **3.7 Establishing credibility**

Several measures were taken to establish the credibility of the findings in each of the three qualitative studies of the thesis. To begin with, the researcher ensured that interview questions were truly open-ended and were not biased by the researcher's opinion (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Participants were allowed to respond in the direction of choice to the interview questions so that the information provided were what the interviewee wanted to say and not what the researcher wanted to hear. Also, interview scripts and analysed data (i.e. researcher's interpretation of the data) were sent to participants to ascertain they represent the experience participants described in the interviews (Patton, 1990), and all participants in the three studies agreed that the data and their interpretation are true representations of their views.

Furthermore, though unlike the positivist approach to research, qualitative studies cannot be experimentally measured in terms of validity and reliability (Pilkington, 2002), efforts were made to enhance the trustworthiness of the procedure adopted in the current study. For example, interview scripts and analysed data were given to the main research supervisor and an independent researcher who are both experts in the field of sport psychology for further checks to sanction the process of data analysis. In both cases, raw interview scripts were analysed by the expert researchers where the generated themes and categories were compared with those of the main researcher to ensure that the findings were truly grounded in the data. Where differences exist between main researcher's interpretation of the data and the experts' opinion, the team (i.e. the main researcher, research supervisor and the independent researcher) met to discuss and streamline the divergent opinion(s). Any change between the initial interpretation (i.e. main researcher's interpretation) and the experts' opinion was

communicated with participants to ensure that the result of analysis reflects a true representation of the experiences participants described during their interviews.

## **Chapter – The Nature of Talent Development in Nigeria: Athletes' Perceptions**

### **4.1 Introduction**

As indicated in the previous chapters, Nigerian athletes and national teams have achieved remarkable feats at various international competitions in the recent past. At the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow for example, Team Nigeria emerged 8<sup>th</sup> position in the overall medals table having won a total of thirty-six medals, including eleven gold, eleven silver and fourteen bronze medals (The Sun, August 2014). Similar achievements in the past include, winning the 2013 Africa Nation's Cup in South Africa and lifting the 2013 FIFA Under-17 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates for a record fourth-time in the history of the competition. However, there have been concerns over the extent to which Nigeria's sport performances reflect her level of sports development (Toriola, Adetoro, Toriola, & Igbokwe, 2000; Duru, 2001; Kulayo; 1994; Morakinyo, 2000; Busari, 2014; Oputah, 2014).

Interestingly, it has been observed that Nigeria's performances on the international stage contrast the status of Talent Identification and Development (TID) processes in the country (i.e. Morakinyo, 2000; Busari, 2014). For instance, Amusa (2004) argued that although the Nigerian authorities have shown continued interests in sports development by drawing up policies and procedures to guide practice in sports, and setting up sports management structures, the implementation of successive sports development plans has been plagued by a plateau of social, political and economic problems. Consequently, the Talent Development Environments (TDEs) in Nigeria are characterized by deficits in infrastructure, lack of funding, and lack of support for research and development (e.g. Andreff, 2001). Despite the poor state of TDEs however, Nigerian athletes have recorded some good performances at the international stage. Therefore, it would be of interest to examine the



process of talent development in Nigeria to unearth the success factors of TID in the Nigerian context.

Previous research across different cultures has consistently identified a staged approach to development (i.e. Bloom, 1985; Balyi & Hamilton, 2004). Bloom (1985) emphasized long-term development plan, and age related stage-by-stage approach among essential elements of effective TID. Similarly, the social and cultural context within which TID is pursued is deemed to be among key factors of effective development. For example, Collins and Bailey (2013) highlighted the harmful impacts of importing features of TID systems from foreign cultures (i.e. Australia) on talent development in the United Kingdom to illustrate the cultural specificity of TID. Stage models equally promote the commitment of developing athletes to deliberately play and deliberately practice within the various stages of development (e.g. Cote, 1999; Balyi, & Hamilton, 2004). However, further studies revealed that individualised pathways with focus on key transitions are more important to talent development than merely ‘graduating’ developing athletes from one stage to the other (e.g. Abbott & Collins, 2004; Martindale, Collins and & Abraham, 2007).

While considering the dynamic and multidimensional nature of talent, Abbott and Collins (2004) acknowledged the influence of psychological variables over the talent development process. The authors highlight psychological factors such as goal setting, imagery, realistic performance evaluation and commitment among key determinants of the ability to turn potentials into successful performance. Furthermore, research in other performance domains (i.e. music) acknowledged the role of psycho-behavioural factors in recognizing and optimizing potential. MacNamara, Holmes and Collins (2008) documented the development and deployment of psychological characteristics of developing excellence

(PCDEs) as mediating factors of successful negotiation of the transitions between stages of development. Examples of the PCDEs that aid successful transition from one stage of development to another included determination, commitment, self-belief, coping under pressure, competitiveness and ability to work on weaknesses.

On an environmental level, Martindale, Collins and Abraham (2007) highlight the importance of effective TDEs to sport development. The authors identified five key features of an effective TDE to include long-term aims and methods; wide-ranging coherent messages and support; emphasis on appropriate development vs. early success; individualised and ongoing development; and integrated, holistic and systematic development. The role of significant others (i.e. parents, siblings, teachers, peers) has also been emphasized in the talent development process (e.g. Martindale, Holmes & Collins, 2007; MacNamara *et al.*, 2008; Abbott & Collins, 2004). Hence, researchers and practitioners, agree on the need for a network of consistent and coherent supports to aid effective development of future stars (e.g. Martindale *et al.*, 2007).

By implication, it is crucial to consider the effect of cultural differences on the processes and prospects of TID, because socio-cultural influences may have impacts on the perception of the significant others on sports development (e.g. Berry, 1997 Ali, Shen, 2012; Khaleque & Rohner, 2014). While most TID research efforts have concentrated on certain societies/cultures (i.e. North Americas, Australia, Europe), it is necessary to pay attention to the consequences of social expectations and culturally defined opportunities for TID. In the Nigerian context for instance, where many obstacles to effective development have been identified, such as lack of infrastructure (e.g. Busari, *et al.*, 2010), and poor implementation of sport development policies and programmes (e.g. Aluko, 2011), as well as wider social

problems (i.e. poverty, poor management etc.), it would be of interest to know how athletes are able to navigate through such barriers to become elite performers. To this end, the current study is intended to examine the culture specific context of TID in Nigeria, to understand the challenges and factors of effective TID in sports.

## **4.2 Method**

### **4.2.1 Participants**

In order to understand the socio-cultural context of TID in Nigeria, it was necessary to ensure that participants were recruited from among Nigerian athletes who have effectively navigated the challenges of the environment to become successful in their sporting career. Hence, the sample consisted of eight elite athletes from various events within the track and field discipline including, sprint and relay races as well as jumping events. Participants were identified as successful elites through three criteria. All participants represented Nigeria in their various events at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, and the National Sports Commission (NSC) recommended them to be suitable for the study. The NSC is the government agency responsible for the management and administration of sports in Nigeria. And secondly, all participants have developed their career in Nigeria and did not participate in any sporting activity abroad until they became members of the Nigerian National Teams. This was necessary to ensure that participants have experienced the influence of the Nigerian socio-cultural context on TID and that there were no external influences on their development. Finally, participants have all won medals both in local and, or international competitions and are considered the best in their events. Also, all participants were current members of the Nigerian National Teams in their events in Nigeria at the time of the study.

*Table 4.1 Showing the age, gender, education and sports of athletes that participated in the study described in chapter 4*

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Sport/Event</b>
A1	32	Male	Secondary school	Athletics/sprint
A2	28	Male	Secondary school	Athletics/sprint
A3	19	Female	Uni. Undergraduate	Athletics/L.jump
A4	33	Male	Secondary school	Athletics/ relay
A5	26	Female	Uni. Undergraduate	Athletics/sprint
A6	28	Female	Secondary school	Athletics/L.distance
A7	35	Male	Secondary school	Athletics/sprint
A8	23	Female	Secondary school	Athletic/relay

#### **4.2.2 Design**

A qualitative research design was adopted to advance a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural context of TID in Nigeria, and the challenges posed to developing athletes as well as how athletes were able to navigate through those challenges to become successful in their sporting career. The qualitative method was considered appropriate for the study for its potential to generate focused data that would reveal a clear picture of the phenomenon under study (e.g. Neuman, 1997). A semi-structured interview was developed for the study with the aim of creating an in-depth understanding of the challenges of TID in Nigeria. The interview schedule consisted of eleven open-ended questions purposefully structured to generate open-ended responses from participants (e.g. Neuman, 1997; Patton, 1990). Details of the interview

questions are presented in table 4.1.

Pilot interviews were conducted by the main researcher with two members of Team Nigeria (i.e. the Nigerian contingents at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow). The researcher carried out an inductive content analysis of the pilot interview following the guidelines of Patton (1990); the process proceeded from coding experience, to similarity inferences; coded experiences were constantly compared and clusters of similar experiences were used to develop themes; themes were continually compared to form categories and general categories. The comparison process continued until interview data were saturated. Feedback from the pilot study was used to evaluate and moderate the interview guide. Following the recommendation of Watson (1997), feedback was also used to ensure that responses to probing questions were not biased by interviewer's opinions (e.g. the researcher ensured that participants discuss the experience they consider relevant to the process of their development immaterial of the direction of the question asked). The pilot interviews were included in the final analysis as they were considered to be of sufficient quality, and also because the interviewees satisfied the inclusion criteria.

#### **4.2.3 Procedure**

The researcher applied for and received ethical approval for the study from the Research Ethics Committee of the school of Life, Sports and Social Sciences, Edinburgh Napier University before approaching the NSC which provided a list of athletes and their contacts from among members of Team Nigeria at the 2014 Commonwealth Games, suitable for the study. The athletes were contacted and informed of the study, and potential participants were given assurances of anonymity and confidentiality, before they were asked for consent. Out of the ten athletes contacted, eight agreed to take part in the study

*Table 4.2: Main interview questions used for data collection in the study described in chapter 4*

Interview Guide
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tell me a little about your current sport achievements</li> <li>2. How did you become involved in sport and progress from initial involvement to where you are today?</li> <li>3. When did you specialize in your current ‘elite’ sport?</li> <li>4. When did you realize you had the potential to be very good at sport/current ‘elite’ sport?</li> <li>5. What support or experiences were particularly useful for your development to become a national athlete?</li> <li>6. Were there any points in your development that you found particularly difficult?</li> <li>7. How did you manage those difficulties?</li> <li>8. Were they useful or detrimental experiences?</li> <li>9. What factors distinguished you from those who did not demonstrate talent?</li> <li>10. What factors distinguished you and other “talented” athletes who did not quite make it?</li> <li>11. Did you face any different challenges when you were striving to get to the top compared with trying to remain at the top?</li> <li>12. What does it take to develop a successful sporting career in the Nigerian environment?</li> <li>13. In your opinion/experience, what needs to stay the same in talent development environment in Nigeria?</li> <li>14. What needs to be improved or changed to improve the talent development environment in Nigeria?</li> </ol>

while two declined citing ‘personal reasons’. Informed consent forms were given to and signed by all participants. The main interview questions were given to the athletes two weeks

prior to the interview so that they could familiarize themselves with the questions (Martindale, Collins, & Abraham, 2007). At the actual interview, all interviewees were asked the same questions in the same sequence, however, while and when necessary, the interviewer asked probing questions (e.g. Patton, 1987) to create an in-depth understanding of responses and to capture a true representation of the socio-cultural context of TID in Nigeria. All interviews were conducted by the main researcher and lasted approximately 60 minutes, and were tape recorded for later transcription.

#### **4.2.4 Data Analysis**

The interview data were analyzed using inductive content analysis according to the recommendation of Edwards, Kingston, Hardy and Gould (2002). The researcher carried out an inductive content analysis of interview scripts following the guidelines of Patton (1990); the process proceeded from coding experience, to similarity inferences; coded experiences were constantly compared and clusters of similar experiences were used to develop themes; themes were continually compared to form categories and general categories. The comparison process continued until interview data were saturated (i.e. until there were no new trends emerging from the data). Themes and categories were presented hierarchically to represent their order of emergence (Shaw 1999), and were supported by quotes in the result section (Bejaoui *et al.*, 2009).

#### **4.2.5 Credibility**

Several measures were taken to guarantee the credibility of the findings in the current study. As earlier mentioned, the researcher ensured that interview questions were truly open-ended and that responses were not biased by the opinion of the interviewer. Similarly, the raw transcripts and analyzed data (i.e. researchers' interpretation of the raw data) were sent to the

participants to ascertain credibility (Patton, 1990); all participants agreed that they (i.e. analyzed data) accurately represented their views. Likewise, the data were subject to thorough (independent) reliability checks by other researchers, including the main research supervisor and an independent researcher who were experts in the field of this study (Scanlan, Ravizza & Stein, 1989; Morse, *et al.*, 2002) to validate the procedure and findings of the investigation. Interview scripts and analysed data were given to the main research supervisor and the independent researcher (i.e. who is not part of the research team) who are both experts in the field for reliability checks; themes and categories were compared with raw quotes from interview script to ensure that the findings were truly grounded in the data. Their feedback confirmed that results of the data analysis were reliable.

### **4.3 Results**

The findings from the data analysis revealed the nature of athletes' development in Nigeria are illustrated in table 4.3. Three general themes including process-outcome divergent expectations, typical pathways and opportunities for TID, and psychology of successful development were highlighted. A broad description of the general themes and sub-themes is presented in this section with example quotes to support their pattern of emergence.

#### **4.3.1 Process-Outcome Divergent Expectations**

**4.3.1.1 Sport Success at a High-Elite Level is celebrated.** The data revealed that athletes who achieve success at the high elite level of their events are highly celebrated in the society. For example, winning a medal at any international competition (i.e. the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games) comes with national acceptance, high social recognition and national awards.



*Table 4.3: Categories, themes and general themes emerging from the study described in chapter 4. It was revealed that there were process-outcome divergent expectations; a typical pathway and opportunity for development; psychology of successful development.*

Categories	Themes	General themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High social recognition for successful athletes</li> <li>Children are attracted to athletics by the prospect of being celebrated</li> <li>Success in Sports attracts Financial Rewards</li> <li>Pervasive skepticism about the possibility of success</li> </ul>	Sport Success at a High-Elite Level is celebrated	Process-Outcome divergent expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sport seen as a distraction to education</li> <li>Parent say no to sports dev.</li> <li>Society is hostile to sport development</li> <li>No government support for sport development</li> <li>Multiple challenges (i.e. Facilities, poor environment, finance,</li> </ul>	Parents are opposed to sport participation  Poor value for sports development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no formal pathway</li> </ul>	Informal play on the street/participation in school	Typical 'pathway' & opportunities for TID
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secret training without parents' consent</li> <li>P.E &amp; IHSCs</li> <li>Formal training in the university</li> <li>Sudden breakthrough to elite performance</li> <li>No support during injury/rehabilitation</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finding Support</li> <li>Finding a coach</li> </ul>	The Role of Luck	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop strong relationships with athletes</li> <li>Rally parental support</li> <li>Rally supports from peers/senior/fellow athletes</li> </ul>	The role of the coach is key to dev.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Endure hardships</li> <li>Delayed gratification</li> <li>Outperform peers</li> </ul>	Self-belief	Psychology of Successful Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discipline, sacrifice and patience</li> <li>Self-responsible &amp; keen to learn</li> <li>Hard work</li> <li>Mind-set strengthened by challenges</li> </ul>	Discipline and eagerness to learn	

Such athletes are projected as symbols of national pride; private corporate organisations feature these athletes on national TV to promote their brands. Hence, children see such athletes as role models.

*“The best encouragement I have at the moment is that I have just been given a national award by the president of the federal republic of Nigeria as a Member of the Order of Niger (MON). Definitely, this is a lot of motivation for me. Also the president will be hosting us (the awardees) to a dinner by next week; this has been a great boost to my*

*inspiration and I'm really ready to put in all the efforts necessary so that I can take my performance to the next level" (A6)*

*"If you talk about people like Okagbare, the country is now running after her because she is a very successful athlete. Many of our athletes made it without any support. Therefore, I believe that when we get to the top the society will recognize us. But now I do all I can to support myself and believe that I can achieve greater feats and then there will be rewards for all my efforts" (A2)*

*"I developed interest in athletic from when I was small even before I began primary school, at age 5 to 6years I have been watching athletics on television. I didn't care about football because I loved athletics and I knew I could do it. I think the reason athletics captured my interest was because it was the sport that was regularly shown on the TV then, it was the most popular sport, in fact, so many companies used athletes for their adverts, even football was not as popular as athletics. That was how everybody watched athletics unlike now that the love of football has taken over, so I wanted to be a successful athlete" (A4)*

The prospect of national recognition and fame, is a key attraction to sport participation in Nigeria. Participants reported that seeing how high elite athletes were celebrated on TV, as well as the pride that comes with sporting success, they developed the passion for sport participation from a very young age. And when they got to school, children take advantage of the Physical Education (P.E.) sessions to experiment their love and passion for sports.

Physical Education is popular among Nigerian school, both at the primary and secondary school levels. Though the primary aim of P.E. was not TID but mainly to promote healthy living among the pupils, P.E. was important to talent discovery among Nigerian athletes. During P.E. sessions, pupils are taken out of the classroom to the playground where they compete among themselves mainly in athletics. These practical sessions offered opportunities to children to experiment with their desire to become future celebrities in sports.

*“When I was young, I used to watch athletics on the television because my father loved sports channels. I see how people compete on the tracks and how the winners were celebrated and always wished I were the one. So since then I have wanted to be the one winning medals. When I started going to school, I was introduced to P.E. (Physical Education) and the P.E. teacher would take us out to the field to do exercises which always included running, this was an opportunity for me to experiment with what I have seen on the TV and love to do. I think the dream was motivated by how I saw people celebrated athletes who won medals and how people talk about them- this made me form an image of success in my mind” (A3).*

Apart from social recognition, fame and national awards, athletic success at high elite level attracts considerable financial reward. The prospect of earning money through sporting success served as a motivation for potential athletes’ involvement in sport participation. Similarly, success at high elite level meant that athletes would be representing Nigeria at the various international competitions such as the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games, and thus, offer the opportunity of travelling to different countries, make international friends and

build relationship that may help further their development.

*“Before I started running, I have a brother that was the director of sport in his school (the Niger Delta University). He called and told me about the NUGA (Nigeria Universities Games) and said I would be paid if I can run very well. When I asked him about the amount and he said N40, 000; I was amazed that one could be paid that much just for running. So the next morning I went to my university’s sport complex and saw a lot of people training there, I saw the coach and told him I would like to train, and that I can run very well because I have been running from my primary school” (A8)*

*“I only became serious about it after one of my juniors in the secondary school called me one day and told me he was at the airport on his way to France. I was surprised and asked what he was going for, and he said he was going to represent Nigeria in long jump; I was like “just for jumping?” I remembered that I was far better than him in sports and so I said to myself that if he could travel to France for jumping then there is a lot I can achieve if I took my athletic career more seriously. That was when I started training and became committed to developing my sporting talent” (A2).*

**4.3.1.2. Poor Value for Sports Development.** Unemployment and poverty ranked high among the major factors of social and cultural behaviours of the Nigerian society. With an estimate of over 80 per cent of the population living below the poverty line, the struggle to break out of poverty typified most Nigerian families. The economy is dependent on the

formal sector and as a result, only people who are eligible for the highly competitive white-collar-jobs have the real prospect of getting a job. Consequently, education is seen as the only means of crossing over the poverty line. Children are expected to be serious with their studies and avoid whatever could be a distraction to education. Unfortunately, the sport sector has no real prospect for job and wealth creation in Nigeria; in fact, the club structure (which would be an income earner in sports) is non-existent. Thus, athletes only take part in sports for pleasure and other personal reasons, except the very few who could breakthrough to the high elite level. Hence, families viewed sport as a waste of time.

*“In Nigeria, there is a lot of emphasis on education, because education is seen as the only way to break out of poverty. My parents believed that the only way they can secure a better future for me was education; therefore, any other thing (including sports) was seen as unnecessary distraction. Because of this, we (myself and my siblings) were not allowed to do sport” (A4)*

*“I did not have any support while I was growing up apart from the one I gave to myself. Nobody even believed in me, the expectation of my parents was that I focus on my studies; sport was not given the deserved attention” (A1)*

*“My parents believed that athletics would reduce the commitment I have towards my studies and all they wanted was that I faced my studies” (A6)*

*“I realized that I have the potential since I was in primary school, but my father didn’t*

*believe in me even for one day. He was just looking at it as a waste of time because he believed that it was only when you go to school that you can make it in life, my parent believed sport was a waste of time” (A5)*

#### **4.3.1.3 Parents are opposed to sport participation a barrier**

Similarly, the data showed a pervasive scepticism about the possibility that an average child can develop to the high elite level of sport performance (which is the only way sports participation is rewarded in Nigeria). Parents doubt the ability of their children to achieve high-level success in sports; and so, participation in sport is discouraged. The society suppose that allowing children to get involved in TID would amount to a waste of time, especially because the dream of sporting success appears elusive. Participants expressed their frustrations with the fact that sporting success was celebrated by every section of the society, while sport participation was discouraged. Children who got round this obstruction and develop their athletic career only did so by becoming resilient against the social disapproval for TID in sports. For example, young athletes trained secretly without the knowledge of their parents to avoid being punished for taking part in sport.

*“One thing that kept me going was the desire to prove everyone who had doubted me wrong, I wanted to show that taking part in sport is not a waste of time. It was a puzzle to me that people celebrated successful athletes and watched them on the television, and they applauded their performance. Yet any child that shows interest in sports is highly reprimanded. I was determined to achieving my dreams so I was ready to give it whatever it would take including starvation and other forms of self-deprivation”.*

(A1)

*“In 2010, I attended the national trials; I did very well and was selected to represent Nigeria in the 2010 Commonwealth Games in India. I travelled to India without telling my father because he was not aware that I was training behind him. So, while I was at the Commonwealth Games, a family friend saw my name in a national daily and told my dad. My father read the paper and couldn’t believe it. I begged for his forgiveness and pleaded that I had to be secretive about my sporting career because he was never going to support it. To God be the glory, my father had no option than to support me, he began to give money for training materials, feeding, and transportation, and he also supported me emotionally. From this point forward, my dad became a pillar of support; I only needed to ask, and he would do anything for me” (A8)*

The data further indicated that athletes’ families constituted a strong barrier to TID. Parents strongly opposed the idea of their children taking part in sports. Instead of being supported, aspiring athletes were punished for taking part in sport. Though, there are other challenges to TD in sports in the Nigerian context (these are discussed more extensively, later in this chapter), parents’ disapproval of sport participation was viewed as a major stumbling block to sport development in Nigeria. This is because, athletes who disobeyed their parents to get involved in TD would not receive support they needed from the family. Children’s aspirations to become elite athletes face serious financial as well as emotional burdens. For instance, athletes lacked money to support their development, and are also seen as disobedient children. The quotes below demonstrate the effects of parental disapproval of TD:

*“It was so difficult for me, apart from not having financial supports, and training without the necessary kits, there was huge emotional barrier coming from my parents”*  
(A3)

*“People like me, who went behind their parents to take part in sports, were seen as disobedient. While those who gave all their attention to their studies were the good ones. The entire setting was not supportive of sport development. However, I kept on hoping that one day I would be celebrated because everybody would turn around to celebrate successful athletes, including the society, the government and even the parents who were against you taking part in sport will come to say they are proud of your achievements. So I believed that one day this would be my story”* (A5)

#### **4.3.1.4 Negative social perception of sport participation**

There appeared to be a negative social perception of sports participation across every sector of the Nigerian society. Sport development is seen as an unprofitable endeavour for the child, this is more so because spending time on TID would mean having less time for education. According to the participants, the environment was ‘harsh’ to TID in sports, not only was the family a barrier, but the entire society including the school, and the government reportedly offered no support for athletes’ development. Teachers treated pupils who participated in sports as ‘unserious elements’. Athletes were seen as deviants, not only in school, but also in the society. This negative social perception of sports participation was borne out of the view that the sports sector has no real potential for job creation, and the fears



that the average child would not be able to achieve a high-elite status in sports. In the following quotes, participants spoke about the hostility to TID in sports:

*“It wasn’t my father’s fault. The way people talked about sports was not very good. Every parent wants the best for his/her children and therefore would not want to allow them go into sports because the perception was that sport men and women were wayward and easily corrupted. But then, that does not mean that anyone who goes into sport will become bad, it depends on your dreams and how serious you are about them. Again, the way you present yourself to the people is very important. Even if there are rough guys around, they will not come to you except they see that you are their kind”*  
(A8)

*“The problem of education must be addressed; schooling should be friendly to athletic development. The school environment in Nigeria is hostile to sport development; pupils who take part in sports are seen as unserious by the teachers, instead of encouraging the athletes and support their commitment to sports development”* (A5)

*“And again, the Nigerian society was not friendly to sport development; there was no support from any source. There was no financial support, we lacked good facilities and equipment, no good coaches, you know, it was a very difficult situation. But I thank God for seeing me through; I have to strive hard to become who I dream to be”* (A2)

The government, like the family, school and the society, does not encourage TID in

sports. The Nigerian government lacked the will and interest to invest in sports development. This was evident from the acute shortage of sporting facilities across the communities. Similarly, the government provided no form of financial incentive for TID, neither was there any sponsorship or funding programme for sport development. Athletes described the environment as ‘not conducive’ for TID in sports. Even for athletes who already demonstrated talent by representing the country at international competitions, there is no support for further development. In contrast however, as earlier mentioned, successful athletes at the high elite level are celebrated and highly rewarded by the government. The following quotes by the participants demonstrate that developing athletes did not receive any form of support, encouragement or reward for their efforts towards sport development:

*“You need financial supports. You also need facilities, because here in Nigeria, there are no facilities to support sport development. There are good coaches in Nigeria and that is the major thing we have going well for us as athletes. Similarly, we need parental supports, because the reality in Nigeria is that many parents do not really like their children taking part in sports” (A4)*

*“There was no support from the government at any level; during primary and secondary schools the government showed no concerns at all. Even till now, there is no form of support coming from the government- I train on my own and have to rely on whatever help I can achieve by myself” (A1)*

*“I have achieved a lot, but with so many challenges. In Nigeria we lack many things,*

*no facility, no training facility, no encouragement, a lot, a lot of challenges. You can imagine you go to represent your country in an international competition and when you come back you have nothing to show for it - you cannot even recharge your phone, nothing good is coming out of the achievement.” (A3)*

*“We need to learn from other sporting nations where the environment is conducive for the development of athletes; where their governments provide all the facilities needed for sport development; where there is encouragement from the family and friends; where sport is seen as a good profession and athletes are respected and treasured; where there are sponsorship and funding programmes for talent development” (A7)*

With the population of about one hundred and seventy million people, it is reasonable to expect that there would be huge potential for sporting excellence. However, the government would need to set the pace to promote sport development programmes, by creating the necessary environment for sport development and investing into building the infrastructure to support TID. If the perceived sporting potentials of Nigeria are to be realised, the government need not to hide under the cynicism in the society but lead the way in dispelling the negative perception of sports development within the society, and build the enabling structure for TID. Only through deliberate intervention from the government can Nigeria reduce the apparent loss of talents in sports. The following quotes from some of the participants highlight the need for government to invest in sport development, promote TID, and support athletes' development:

*“My advice is that the government should go to the grassroots and begin from there, we should pick up young athletes, because there are talented people from all over the place but there is no encouragement, no support for them, so if we create the good environment Nigeria can produce good athletes” (A2)*

*“We need to go down to the grassroots to identify talents and provide the necessary environment for growth. We need to start from the very basic: primary and secondary school levels. Then we need to provide facilities so that children will be motivated to take part in sports. Nigerians are naturally strong, so if we provide the right environment; there are lots of talents among us” (A5)*

*“The major problem I encountered was the lack of facilities. There are many talents in Nigeria, but because the environment is very hash, people just dropped their sporting ambitions and looked for an alternative in other professions. If the supports were there, and the facilities were available, Nigeria would be among the greatest sporting nations of the world. We have to train on the street instead of the tracks, because there were just no tracks” (A4)*

The nature of Nigerian societies presents athletes with multiple barriers to development; athletes were reportedly left alone to face the onerous task of talent development without any form of assistance. The widespread opposition to sports development prevents children at the grassroots level to get involved in TID; the family, the school, the government and the entire society resisted sport development. This social apathy

is responsible for the lack of investment in sport infrastructure, leaving athletes and their coaches with no other option than to improvise (where possible) for the facilities needed for training. The quotes below reflect the rejection, abandonment, and other barriers athletes are faced with:

*“Under normal condition, an athlete should be supported by the system to develop his career. If he is a student, he should have scholarship to take care of his education. In other countries there are facilities to train; athletes have access to coaches who are professionals, but all that is not available in Nigeria. Everything here is a problem, ranging from accommodation to medical, to school fees, to feeding; it’s just a different ball game” (A3)*

*“I look at it like there are different types of challenges; as a growing athlete, there were no good facilities to train, there were no good tracks and there was no gym, what we did was improvisation. But now, though we don’t have access to very good facilities but it is better than what we used to have as growing athletes; this is one of the issues with sports in Nigeria, when we go to international competitions, we are made to compete with athletes that have it all, but in our own case we barely have the very basic facilities for training” (A2)*

*“Either you are a developing athlete or an elite athlete the challenges are the same. It is the same issues with facilities, sponsors, and finance. These are the major challenges to athletes’ development in Nigeria. Every athlete in Nigeria, both developing and*

*senior athlete faces the same problem and that is why many ambitions are never fulfilled” (A6)*

Athletes believed that the challenges of development in Nigeria deny them a level playing ground with their counterparts from other countries. At international competitions (i.e. Commonwealth Games and the Olympics), Nigerian athletes perceived that their opponents from the developed countries where TD is supported have advantage over them. Athletes have a feeling of being let down particularly by the failure of the government to articulate sport development plans and programmes for the country. In the following quotes, participants express their displeasure with the poor development environment in the country:

*“Here at the Commonwealth Games, we are competing against athletes from the developed nations who have access to good facilities, training programmes, and good coaches and are well supported by their government. But in Nigeria the reverse is the case; we have to improvise for almost everything because the government does not show interest in providing the resources to support athletes’ development” (A4)*

*“We have a situation where we do track and field without tracks, this gives our opponents from other countries where the environment is conducive, the advantage over us. So there is need to create all the necessary supports in the system. So many people drop out of sport because they are not supported” (A2)*

Similarly, athletes were exposed to financial constraints. Since the family was opposed

to TD, and there were no funding or sponsorship programmes for sport development, they lacked the necessary financial supports for their development. Athletes helped themselves (through menial jobs or petty trades) to buy their training kits otherwise they would be handicapped. And for those who did not live with their parents, the problem was not limited to the inability to acquire training kits, but also, getting their basic daily needs (i.e. food, transportation, shelter) was a difficult task. In the quotes below, participants reported lack of funding as being a major barrier to their development:

*“There is need for supports most especially, financial supports. We also need to have a talent identification system where young athletes will be identified and assisted through the various stages of development. As it is now, we rely on athletes who were able to discover themselves and go through very difficult experience to develop their potential” (A7)*

*“My major problem was finance, I couldn’t afford decent feeding, I was training without the very basic materials such as track shoes, I was having problem with transport fare to and from training, and so the major challenge was finance. Though, there are other problems such as lack of facilities and standard training programme, but the major issue was money” (A5)*

*“The most difficult challenge I have faced so far was finance. Sometimes I wake up as early as 5am so that I could walk or run to training because I couldn’t afford the transport money. After training, I would not be able to transport myself home and*

*would have to beg or walk back home. There were so many challenges, no financial supports, no encouragements, even the government will not do anything to support or encourage you. After making the senior team it is the same; you will go to competitions and come back with nothing to show for it” (A1)*

*“Nobody was supporting me; it was hard for me to cope with the demands of training. Many times I would have no food after training, I could not afford ordinary fruits and so I was unable to fulfil the nutritional needs of my sport” (A4)*

#### **4.3.2. Typical pathways & Opportunities**

**4.3.2.1. Informal play on the street/Participation in school.** There was a clear dissimilarity between the process of athletes’ development in Nigeria and established models of TID in other cultures. For instance, there were no formal pathways for athletes’ development; there was no club structure; and no (regular) competitions at the junior level. Apart from the very few individual coaches who (based on their own initiatives) identify athletes and develop training programmes for them, majority of athletes lacked formal training and competition. Only the athletes who were lucky enough to attend the national trials and national competitions get the opportunity to perform in a competitive environment. Otherwise, athletes trained or competed for fun among their peers on the streets. The conspicuous absence of the club structure is a testimony to the total disregard for talent development by a nation that so much celebrates athletic success. The lack of regular competitions was seen as a doorway to dropouts from TID. The following quotes from athletes revealed the lack of organised structure and programme for sport development:



*“We need to have good sports programmes; there is need for regular competitions so that developing athletes will have the opportunity to try their achievement as they grow. Like I said earlier, training without the opportunity to compete is discouraging, therefore, there is need to create a circle of regular competitions to support athletes’ development” (A3)*

*“We also need to develop our facilities and we need supports for athletes, there is need for government to create sponsorship programmes so that right from the grassroots, we can begin to identify and develop young talents. Even beyond the government, private individuals who have the capacity as well as private organisations can develop sponsorship/funding programmes for sport development” (A1)*

*“...Also, there should be programmes and opportunities that athletes can take advantage of to develop their talents; this would serve the purpose of motivation and encouragement for athletes because there would be something to look forward to. But here in Nigeria, our sport system is not very organised, one cannot really predict what will happen next because there is no formal programme, so it affects us in terms of planning our career development” (A6)*

Due to the absence of a consistent structure for TID, and the poor treatment of developing athletes, athletes ‘crashed-in’ and ‘crashed-out’ of sport development. There appeared to be constant and continuous appraisal of the possibility of getting to a high-elite

level of performance by the athletes; and the result of this self-evaluation determined whether or not athletes would continue to pursue the goal of sport development at any given period. Similarly, the way athletes were treated by the authorities during and after competitions were responsible for athletes momentarily (and probably, ultimately) dropping out of sport. In the quote below, one participant explained how he quitted sport because of the way he was treated during and after a particular international junior competition:

*“...That competition was very bad; we spent about two months in camp, and when we came back there was no money, they only gave us \$150 which could not take me anywhere. After I transported myself from Lagos to Benin I was not having anything left. So I go off the sport Again-I quitted. But in 2012, I just decided to come back to the sport because it was like my career. I came back in 2012 and went to ‘Eko’ festival where I won gold medal in 400m, and that marked my return to the sport.” (A8)*

**4.3.2.1.1. Opportunities in Schools.** Though there were no formal pathways for identification, there appeared to be a ‘typical pattern’ of development among Nigerian athletes. The Nigerian education system is designed to provide some opportunities for sport development. School children at the primary school level are expected to have at least a Physical Education session per week where they compete with their peers, though many schools fail to implement this aspect of the education policy, few schools particularly those whose head teacher is favourably disposed to TID encouraged regular participation in sports and games. These informal competitions served as the first opportunity for young athletes to discover their athletic potentials. Similarly, some schools organize Inter-House Sports

Competitions (IHSC) where pupils of different age groups compete among themselves in several athletic events. Participation in sports at the secondary school was open to all students (whether or not they took part in sports in primary school). Athletes who showed exceptional talents at the secondary school level may be lucky to get recognition from coaches who would take them to the national trails. The quotes below illustrate the role of sport participation in school in talent discovery:

*“I began taking part in athletics since my time in primary school and secondary school. I represented my primary school in inter-school competitions and I also represented my secondary school in inter-school competitions. I have been running 4/4m and 4/1m since I was young and develop the love for athletics right from then. My dream is that one day I will represent Nigeria” (A1)*

*“I started in the year 2012 while I was in the secondary school, we went to school sport festival where I won a silver medal, and from there I took part in the national trials where I qualified for the African Junior championship; I was also selected to represent Delta state at the national sports festivals. So, that was how I began, and I have been moving on till now”. (A5)*

**4.3.2.1.2. Participation without parents’ consent.** Outside the school, children concealed their engagement with sport from their parents because playing sports attracts some serious consequences. Young athletes sneaked out of the house to play with their peers on the streets and lied about their whereabouts to parents (who disallow sport participation) in order

to avoid punishments. In the following quotes, participants expressed some of the challenges of having to pursue sports without the supports of their parents:

*“When my father continued to say no, I made up my mind that I was going to proceed without his consent. So I started dodging him to play, I would sneak out of the house on many occasions; when I returned home, I would lie about where I was and what I was doing” (A4)*

*“You know it was not easy, there are many challenges and difficulties. Let me start from the home, my dad wanted me to go to school and be serious with my studies. He considered sport as a distraction to education. But because I love the sport, I was going behind him to play” (A1)*

*“Taking part in sport was something we did secretly and each time we were caught there were serious consequences including beating and sometimes being denied meals. So while I was in the secondary school, I could not train and did not really do much because of my parents” (A7)*

Expectedly, training without parents’ consent came with some consequences. Athletes would rather suffer financial deprivation than approach their parents for help, because to the parent, sport participation is a ‘crime’. The quote below, displays how one participant suffered from lack of financial support due to parent’s disapproval of sport development:

*“I was walking between three to four kilometres to training every day and most of the time it would be after lectures. After training sessions, I would also go back home walking. It was hard for me coping with the challenge of poverty, but there was nowhere I could go for help. My parents must not hear that I was doing sport in the first place, so there is no way I could seek financial assistance from them. Again, the money they gave me for my studies could barely sustain me in school after paying school fees; there was just no provision for my athletic development” (A5)*

**4.3.2.1.3. Access to formal training in the university.** The University system offered better opportunities for talent identification compared to the earlier levels of education (i.e. primary and secondary schools). For example, at the university level, athletes have the freedom to attend training because they no longer live with their parents since most universities are located at the urban centres away from the local communities where the majority of the population live. Hence, athletes see admission to the university as an escape from the hostility of the family towards TID. Also, transition to the university is the first opportunity for formal training and competitions for many athletes. This is because every university has a department, or at least a unit, for sport development dedicated to the promotion of TID among students. Also, there are more opportunities for regular competitions due to the consistent activities of the Nigerian University Games Association (NUGA), which organizes regular competitions for athletes across Nigerian universities. Similar to NUGA is the West Africa University Games, which comprises all the universities within the West Africa Sub-region. Universities therefore have structured sport department or unit to continuously recruit and train athletes for the purpose of these regular competitions.

The following quotes showed that athletes only had access to formal training and competitions after the transition to the university:

*“It was in the university that I started doing what I can call an organised training, before this time, my training was never programmed, it was without any structure but at the university I began to follow a programme of work in my training” (A1)*

*“I became focused on athletics after my admission to the university. I could freely go to training, because I was no longer under my parents. I began to watch senior athletes and looked at how they trained. From there I developed my love for athletics the more and return to my dream” (A4)*

It is important to note, however, that majority of the students from secondary school do not get to attend a university. University education in Nigeria is largely out of the reach of the common man. Firstly, there is shortfall in availability of universities compared to the demands for higher education. Therefore, access is extremely difficult. Secondly, the cost of university education is above what an average family can afford, consequently, lack of transition to the university is the point where majority of potential talents are lost; because only a privileged few successfully make this transition.

**4.3.2.1.4. Sudden breakthrough to elite performance.** Another feature of the ‘typical pattern’ of TID in Nigeria is the sudden breakthrough to elite performance. The data revealed that TDEs in Nigeria allowed only athletes who possess exceptional determination to make

the progress to elite level of performance within a short period, while the average talented individuals who require support and encouragement to develop is neglected. For instance, many of the participants in this study have only started their athletic career two or three years before competing in the 2014 Commonwealth Games, this is in variance with previous research which suggest that it took accumulated ten thousand hours or ten years of deliberate practice (Ericsson et al., 1993) to reach high-elite level of performance. However, only the ‘fittest’ (i.e. athletes with exceptional drive) could achieve this feat, while others who couldn’t cope the high demands of the hostile environment simply quit sport. The following quotes demonstrate the sudden progression to elite performance among Nigeria athletes:

*“I began to focus on athletics in 2013, I made the world championship but unfortunately I was having an injury, which threw me out. I only returned early this year, so I can say I just focused on athletics this year (2014), I can just say this year”*  
(A5)

*“My progress to the national team happened within a short period. I did not have the kind of progression that you would expect; I did not run at the junior level, before I became a national athlete”* (A1)

*“...So I started then but there was no encouragement I would go in and go out, some time we go to train, sometime would not go to training because nobody to push me, I would have no money to go to training, my father would not give me money to go to training because he didn’t send me for that. So that is how I kept on before I started to*

*represent Nigeria in 2010 in a junior competition in Senegal where I won a silver medal” (A7)*

**4.3.2.1.5. No support during injury/rehabilitation.** Successful injury rehabilitation is left to chance. Injured athletes are neglected by the system and left alone during rehabilitation. The chances of recovery from injury in the Nigerian context is very slim, hence, majority of injured athletes end up dropping out of sport. Participants considered recovery from injury as a ‘miracle’ because injured athletes receive little or no attention from the system. In the quotes below, two of the participants attribute their recovery from injury to luck (i.e. a miracle from God):

*“...Before the injury, I have been invited to the camp for the 2013 African junior championship but I had to stay back home to face my rehab. However, miraculously, I attended the 2013 African junior championship because I was beginning to get better. At the event, I could not run as fast as I should, so I made fourth position. I felt bad because if I have been given the right attention I would have made full recovery before the event. This was the most difficult and sad time for me; more so, I knew that the lack of supports compounded my predicament and I was not happy about it at all” (A3)*

*“I once had an injury. It happened during the Commonwealth Games; I had to face a rehabilitation programme where I regularly see the doctor and my physio. But I thank God that I was able to make a full recovery and return to my sport. I’m grateful to God because many athletes have been led out of their sports through injuries because they*



*could not make a full recovery. That is why a wise athlete will be conscious of whatever he does to avoid falling into this dangerous situation” (A6)*

The sport council and athletic federation did not give proper care to athletes while going through an injury/rehabilitation. Many of the participants recounted their experience with injury and rehabilitation. They felt that poor management of injury was a kerb to their development and opined that rehabilitation could have been more properly handled. Athletes were reportedly left alone to deal with injuries themselves without any form of assistance, as a result, many injured athletes never made a full recovery, and those who did considered themselves lucky. In the quotes below, athletes expressed their frustrations with the way injury and rehabilitation were handled:

*“The greatest challenge I have had to overcome was injury. Injuries are the most dangerous enemies to athletes’ career. Injury can happen anywhere, it could happen in training, at competition, even at home. And when it happens, the career of the athlete will be put on hold for the entire period, and that is why many athletes never made a full recovery. While injured, depending on the severity of the injury, you will not be able to train or take part in any competition. During this time, people who previously were behind may overtake you, so you will have to struggle to secure a place for yourself if/when you are able to make a comeback to your sport. But the worst part was that the system does not care about injured athletes; they believe it is the responsibility of athletes to take care of their injuries. So, you are left alone to deal with the injury” (A2)*

*“After I won a gold medal at the national sports festival in 2012, I also won the silver medal at the West Africa Universities Games. Prior to the next season, I had a knee injury and there was no support from anyone apart from my friends and some of my teammates; this was really discouraging. I was like, for a guy that won the national sport festival, which is the biggest sporting event in the country, nobody from the federation or anywhere contacted me to know how I was doing. I had to pay for all my medical bills and this was very difficult for me, the system was not helpful in any way. I could barely work; I was out of training and all the money I had made have to go into treatment. To be honest however, the injury problem was like a blessing in disguise for me because it afforded me the opportunity to focus more on my studies, which was being affected by my training. So I took the opportunity to read my books and focus on my education. I began to think about quitting the sport, doing my masters, getting a job and charting a better future for myself” (A8)*

#### **4.3.2.2. The role of luck in making progress in TD.**

**4.3.2.2.1. Finding supports.** Finding support for TID in Nigeria is largely down to luck. All the potential sources of supports for the child (i.e. the family, the society, the government, the schools etc.) are either hostile to, or not interested in sport development. Consequently, athletes are faced with emotional challenges emanating from lack of attention from those who should have supported them. In the quote below, one participant show displeasure with the fact that athletes needed to abandon training for petty jobs to cope with the financial demands of development, and the lack of encouragement for TID:

*“Athletes need a lot of motivation to develop. When there is no money, there should be a source of help so that you can be focused on your training. But in a situation where you need to abandon your training to go and look for some petty jobs before you can take care of yourself, progress will be very difficult. When you are down emotionally, you will need people around you to encourage you and give you the reassurance of your success” (A2)*

**4.3.2.2.2. Finding a coach.** Similarly, finding a coach who is ready to train and help athletes develop their potentials is also dependent on luck. Athletes needed a coach with the right connections and experience, who can take them to national competitions/trials where their talents can attract recognition. There are no formal talent identification programmes, no funding or sponsorship for sport development, no competition to showcase your talents; therefore, it takes luck to be recognised by coaches. The only opportunity is during the IHSCs in schools, where coaches occasionally go to scout for talents. For the out of school children, the situation is even worse because they have no access to IHSCs, and thus have no chance of being identified by a coach. The following quotes demonstrate the role of luck in talent discovery and the importance of access to competitions in order to be recognised by a coach:

*“It is difficult to develop as an athlete in Nigeria. Except an athlete is lucky to find someone who is ready to support him/her, it will be tough to develop as a professional athlete. There are no facilities, not even stadium, no organisations to support you, no funding, and the government doesn’t care. The only thing we have is the athletic federation, which is also poorly funded. In developed countries athletes are well*

*supported but this is not the case in Nigeria” (A3)*

*“My coach contacted me at the end of the annual inter-house sport competition and said I have the talents for running and that he was ready to help me develop my talent. So I began to attend training with him” (A1)*

*“I started taking part in sport when I was in primary six. And my first major competition was in Kaduna for the secondary school sport competitions where I won a silver medal. That was when some coaches called me and said if you train well you are going to be a good athlete” (A4)*

**4.3.2.3. The role of the coach is key to development.** Getting recognised by a good coach is among the major factors of sport development in Nigeria. The coach is the only source of support for TID. Once a coach identifies an athlete as having the potential for elite level of sport performance, the coach would render all the necessary assistance to see that such athlete get to the peak of his/her athletic career. Because coaches are aware of the neglect from the family, they develop close relationship with their athletes so they can provide the encouragement and motivation that were not available elsewhere. The quotes below show the close relationship between the coaches and their athletes:

*“I started getting very close to my coaches too, I have a father-and-son relationship with the coach, so he took interest in me and would always tell me what I was doing right or wrong. I was also asking questions from other athletes, I really wanted to be*

*knowledgeable about the sport” (A6)*

*“Developing in track and field in Nigeria is very hard, you need to have good supports; financially and morally, otherwise it will be very difficult to make progress. That is why I consider myself lucky to have the kind of coach who would support me at all times and was filling that gap that my parents’ disapproval caused” (A1)*

*“Nigerian coaches are wonderful in terms of supporting their athletes. They see athletes as their personal projects and would sacrifice anything to see you succeed” (A5)*

*“I see my coach as a friend, because he is very interested in whatever I’m going through. If there is any issue bothering me, he is always sharing it with me, and that is why he understands me so well. During training, he can easily tell if I’m in the right frame of mind or not, and would support me through any difficult situation. He knows the right time to draw a hard programme and when to be a little lenient with me. And if it were necessary, my coach would put my training on hold to allow me deal with personal issues and not compound them with hard training sessions” (A2)*

Likewise, the coach played other important roles in the development of athletes through their support and encouragement. Coaches were more than mere professionals who provided training programme and guidance for the athletes, but they equally assumed the responsibility of supporting their athletes both financially and morally. One participant in the

quote below, indicated how far coaches were ready to go in supporting their athletes:

*“So many things have to change in Nigeria if we want to achieve better results. The only good thing I can say we have now is the coaching, because many of our coaches are very good; they give their time and even their money to help their development athletes” (A4)*

Coaches demonstrate strong belief in athletes’ ability to achieve top-level success, and would not give up their efforts toward athletes’ development. Coaches ensured their continued supports for athletes no matter the amount of resistance coming from the family and the society. Athletes draw emotional strength and encouragement from the coach to face the hostility of the society. Most importantly, the coach reassured athletes that the rejection of the society would wither away once success is achieved. Such assurances provided the motivation for athletes to continue striving till they get to their goals. In the following quotes, participants describe the influence of the coach on TID:

*“My coach has been very supportive. He has been very helpful to me, he believes in me and always encourage me to be serious with my training, that I have the potential to make it to the top” (A7)*

*“My coach was a big factor. My coach was always there to encourage me, he always told me that I was going to succeed and everybody including my father will turn around to celebrate me. That was a big motivation for me, to think that one day my father*

*would come and say ‘am wrong and you are right’ so I kept on going” (A2)*

*“The biggest and most important support I have are from my coach. Without my coach I wouldn’t have been anywhere close to my achievements today” (A4)*

*“I can say that God has been on my side. Also, my coach has been very helpful in my progress. I work very hard in trainings; I have been dedicated and determined so that I can attain my goals. I believe there is a purpose for whatever I’m doing so I always put in my best” (A1)*

Even during injury (where participants reported neglect by the system), the coach would not give up on the athlete. In addition to supporting injured athletes, coaches would also mobilise supports and encouragement from fellow athletes for the injured athlete. Such interventions gave hope of recovery to the athletes facing rehabilitation. In the quote below, one participant reported that his coach was the only encouragement he received during injury rehabilitation:

*“But my coach was very encouraging, even when he knew I could not run he kept on checking on me, all my mates too were encouraging me. I started joining them in training though I could not do anything other than to just watch them train, and that was what kept me going. So I began to think that the injury will heal and that I can start to train again and return to the sport” (A3)*

Another way the coach ameliorated the challenges of development was by rallying parents' support for TID. Similarly, coaches collaborated with teachers (i.e. P.E teachers) in persuading parents to allow their children take part in sports. The essence of involving teachers was to assure parents that sport participation would not deter children from excelling in their studies. The data indicated that the coach/teacher intervention rarely succeeded in mobilising parents' support for TID. However, when convinced, parents reportedly gave full support to their child's athletic development. In the cases where the persuasion from coaches fell on 'deaf ears', the coach would encourage athletes to ignore their parents' opposition and train secretly. The following quotes revealed how coaches rallied parents' support for TID:

*“My parents never wanted me to take part in sports because they believed that doing so would hinder my education. But my coach met with my parents and assured them that I have the talent, and that I was going to be a very good athlete if allowed to develop my potential. He also told my parent that doing sport would in no way stop my education and that if anything at all, it would make me more serious and dedicated to whatever I'm doing” (A2)*

*“While I was in the secondary school, I did go to inter-house sports competitions. But my father was against it because he believed it was a waste of time. So, in the year 2009 I met a coach who spoke to my father about the issue. He told my father that I have the talent to be a good runner and that my father should not deny me the opportunity to grow the talent. My father insisted and gave different kinds of excuses for why he would not allow me to do sports. My coach persisted and continued to*



*persuade my father, that he would take good care of me and ensure that I'm focused on my studies as well. Because the reason my father gave was that he wanted me to go to school and be serious with my studies" (A7)*

*"After the coach and the P.E. teacher convinced my parents, they turned round to give me their full supports. They bought me canvas and all the items I needed for training. I was very lucky that they changed their mind to support me. Otherwise, it would have been difficult. I know people who dodge their parents to attend training; they would have no supports with kits, feeding, maintenance and even transportation. So I knew I was lucky to have their support and I really worked hard so that I don't disappoint them" (A3)*

The coach also encourages developing athletes to draw support from one another. Athletes relied on themselves for encouragement and support. Developing athletes identified with one another in facing the various challenges to development. Coaches ensured that athletes develop a sense of community among themselves; both developing athletes and successful elites see themselves as one family and provided assistance to one another. Senior athletes (i.e. members of the national teams) played influential roles in providing moral supports and other forms of assistance for developing athletes. Beyond having physical contact with growing athletes, successful athletes served as evidence that success was possible: The following quotes demonstrate peer group influence and the role of senior athletes in successful TID:

*“I was already having friends around me who were doing the same thing as me, and are also passing through the same experience (i.e. lack of supports) and the feeling that I am not alone, kind of helped me. So, I had high hope that one day it would be better for me” (A1)*

*“Some of the senior athletes advised me, they supported me even financially. They looked at me as the youngest athlete to ever make the senior national team so they really motivated me to carry on. They encouraged me not to be discouraged because of the challenges I was facing and the government’s “I don’t care” attitude to sport development” (A4)*

*“What kept me going was my belief that I have the potential to become a great athlete and I was not going to throw it away. I listen to most of the successful athletes at the time and found out they had gone through similar experience growing up, and that nobody supported them until they broke through to the stage” (A5)*

### **4.3.3 Psychology of Successful Development**

**4.3.3.1. Self-belief, passion and love for sport.** Participants expressed strong passion for athletics, and the desire to achieve high-elite level of performance in their events. Athletes’ love for sports was strong enough that they were ready to endure the neglects, abandonment, and the hostility of the Nigerian society to sport development. The determination of athletes to take on, and overcome all the barriers in the society was fuelled by the sense of fulfilment and satisfaction they enjoy through sport participation. More so,

the decision to take part in sport is solely that of the athletes and so they were determined to follow it through. In the following quotes, participants expressed their passion and desire for sporting success:

*“I have always had the passion for running, which is why it was so painful when my father said he would not allow me. Even when I had injury, I felt like my life was taken out of me because I could not train or go for any competition” (A3)*

*“Again I gave my best because I love the sport and I knew that I can actually be good in it, so I just have to create time to do what I love to do” (A1)*

*“...It was because of my determination. Moreover, I loved what I was doing, I was not forced to do sport but I have the love for it and that was why I could endure all the pains because I enjoyed doing it” (A7)*

Nigerian athletes seemed to have a premium value for their development. For instance, athletes actively looked for opportunities (in the midst of none) to progress in their development. Participants reported in the following quotes that they value sport above every other thing in their lives, and looked for coaches who would help them achieve their dreams:

*“It is all about encouragement and commitment to training. I do not believe there is anybody who is destined to fail; it all depends on how you value what you are doing and what you really want to achieve. As for me, the value I have for sport is not*

*compared to any other thing” (A3)*

*“In my quest for development, I found one coach and informed him that I wanted to train in athletics, but that I don’t know how to go about it, he asked me where I was based, and I said I was in school, so he asked if I have enough money to be coming for training and I said he shouldn’t worry that I can manage. I was really determined to give whatever it takes to support my dream even knowing that my parents must not hear that I was committing my time to training” (A6)*

Self-belief came out as an important factor of progress in TID among Nigerian athletes. All participants reported themselves high in self-belief; in fact, self-belief was essential because no one else believed in the ability of athletes to navigate the very rough and unpredictable course to TID success in the Nigerian context. But with self-belief, athletes were ready to take on all obstructions and difficulties presented by a society that was apathetic about talent identification in sports to get to the peak of their career. Athletes displayed absolute trust in their ability to develop top level of athletic performance. They were aware of their strengths, and ready to work against their weaknesses. The following quotes illustrate the role of self-belief in TID success:

*“What kept me going was my belief that I have the potential to become a great athlete and I was not going to throw it away...” (A2)*

*“I believed that I can make it to the top in my sport if I gave attention to my training.*

*And today I am proud of my achievements, I know am not there yet, there are still rooms for improvement, but with time and commitment, I know I will be who am meant to be” (A8)*

*“Athletes must believe in themselves and have absolute trust in their coach, that is when good progress can be made. When others try to discourage you, once you believe in yourself, you will never give up” (3)*

*“First of all, I have this self-knowledge that I’m fast. And so when I started training, anytime I saw any other athlete running faster than myself, I would just say to myself “with little more training I can beat this guy” so I have that self-knowledge in me that am fast” (A1)*

*“If you must achieve success, you must encourage yourself and believe in your ability to get the result you are working for; you need the ‘I can do spirit’ to make it happen. I thank God who gave me my talent. I believe I’m a gifted person and I still have a long way to go, a lot more to achieve. I believe with more training, better sponsors and assistance, I am still going far” (A4)*

Though success at high-elite level is highly celebrated and impressively rewarded, there is no reward for participation during developmental stages. Successful athletes therefore had to delay the quest to make money till they achieve a breakthrough in sport. The inability to sacrifice immediate rewards for later success meant that such athletes would drop out of

sport to pursue other endeavours that have more potential for immediate returns. Similarly, the reality of the TID environment in Nigeria required that athletes are able to defer pleasure and endure the pain that comes with consistent and continuous training, because success is only achievable through extreme commitment to hard work. The following quote illustrates the importance of delayed gratification and the ability to defer pleasure, if success is to be achieved:

*“...Many of those who dropped out did so because there was no reward, they wanted to make money by all means and they could not see themselves making money from sports. They cannot suffer for a long time before they begin to see rewards. But for me, even when there were no rewards I still believed that one-day I would get there. At least now the financial challenges are reduced, whenever I’m in the camp I can feed and can take care of those little things like transportation, and I believe it will get better” (A7)*

*“...Since 2010, 2011 and 2012 that I began training, I have been conscious that I have what it takes to make it. Sometimes, I will be in pain but will continue to train. My believe is that if I continue to train my pain will go, even when the pain is caused by injury, I will be working with it and endure the pains” (A1)*

Again, the role of P.E. and IHSCs is demonstrated in the development of the unique psychology of athletes’ development in Nigeria. The stout self-belief among athletes developed through participation and impressive performances at P.E. sessions and IHSCs in

school. Though very informal and highly unregulated, these two events gave athletes the very rare opportunity to discover themselves. Consistently outperforming their peers during P.E. and IHSCs opened athletes' consciousness to their talents, and once they discover themselves, they have the rational to rise above all oppositions to pursue TID. The quotes below exemplify the role of P.E. and IHSCs in successful talent development:

*“There are times that people have difficulties in performing some tasks, but I would do such task with little stress. There was nothing like training during my primary school days, the P.E. teacher would just lead us out to the tracks and I would outrun my peers all the time. That could only have been talent” (A3)*

*“I started running at the primary school level. I ran long distance races including the 1500m and 800m, and when I got to the secondary school I started doing more races including 100m and 400m. At the university level, I equally started running for my school immediately after my admission; I did 100m, 200m and 400m at this level of my career” (A5)*

*“I realised I have the potential in athletics back in the secondary school while I was running during the IHSC, then I was also representing my school during the state championship. I enjoyed running and knew since then that I can become a very good runner if I am serious with it” (A1)*

*“While I was growing up at the primary school level, I saw my brother and his friends*

*going to training, I knew I could run a long distance race when I saw them running, I wished I was one of them, and that was why I joined the school team in my primary school. Then I began to run in the school's inter-house sports competitions which was the first competition I attended, then I realised that, ok I have to train for competitions and became a member of the school team" (A7)*

Also, an opportunity to compete at the national sports festivals or the national trials gives athletes a prospect of self-discovery. However, such opportunities are not easily come by; only athletes who are lucky to have experienced and highly connected coaches get to attend these national events. Successful performance at national events strengthens self-belief and athletes' trust in their ability to get to the top of their athletic careers. Self-belief and self-discovery are key survival factors for TID in Nigeria, and thus, every opportunity to enhance these factors are highly treasured. In the quote below, one participant explained how his performance in the national sport festival boosted his confidence and self-realisation (which ultimately promote self-belief):

*"The 2008 national sports festival was when it became clear to me that I am a talented athlete. The crowd was large and my ability to perform that well in front of a large crowd was a great booster of my self-confidence and self-realisation" (A1)*

Furthermore, participants saw talent as having the ability for self-control and doing the right things with or without supervision. This is an indication of how highly participants held themselves responsible for success or otherwise. The quote below illustrates that the concept



of “self” occupied the centre stage of TID:

*“The difference between someone who is talented and those who are not is the ability to improve. Without talent, an athlete will have to train and repeat a particular training several times before they know what to do. While the talented ones may get it after the first or the second trial. Talented athletes would improve with little or no supervision. The difference is that talent gives you the self-control, so you are very organised, you know what to do and when to do them, and you are motivated to work hard because you know you will get the result. Whereas, athletes who are not very talented may have to do extra training to catch up with the space of progress within the team, and cannot be compared with the people that have the natural talent” (A5)*

**4.3.3.2. Discipline and eagerness to learn.** The specific context of TID in Nigeria required discipline, patience and sacrifice to avoid dropping out of development. In particular, a disciplined mind-set was common among elite athletes. Sport development is given priority over and above all other commitment in the mind of the athletes. It seemed that success in TID required athletes to make ‘irreversible commitment’ to sacrifice anything that would impede their development. Participants sacrificed their time, pleasure and sleep for their continued development. The quotes below demonstrate the influence of discipline on TID success in a Nigerian context:

*“I have never thought of quitting sport, my parents’ disapproval notwithstanding. The truth is that being an athlete does not stop you from becoming anything you want to*

*become. So you don't need to quit sport because you want to build another career. You only need to be serious and disciplined, so that you can combine your sporting career with your studies" (A2)*

*"I am highly disciplined; while others play, I would be busy planning and working on my next competition. I wake up around 5am every day because I need to do my workouts and prepare for my training. This is despite the fact that I have to read at nights and also prepare for my lectures" (A6)*

*"The first thing an athlete needs is self-discipline. You don't need to wait till you are told before you do the right thing. You need to take responsibility for your development and know that you have to work hard to get to your goal. You must know what you want and go for it, know what is good and do what is right at the right" (A2)*

One way Nigerian athletes exercised discipline was by identifying activities that would be detrimental to their development and avoid such. Successful athletes were able set the boundaries between what is, and is not right/important for them. This was very important because no external force was available for correction, since those who should provide the moral support were against sport participation. The following quote revealed how participants controlled and disciplined themselves to remain focused on the task of building their sporting career:

*"That type of commitment that you know you cannot go to party like every other*

*person, or keep late nights drinking when you are expected to wake up very early in the morning. So, it's a combination of a whole lot of things. I tried to always discipline myself; I try as much as possible to control myself; I try as much as possible to be moderate in anything I was doing so that my training would not suffer because of my carelessness" (A7)*

Nonetheless, athletes were aware of any serious commitment they have outside sport (i.e. education), which may have a negative effect on TID, however, if they consider such commitment as important and unavoidable, they combine it with sport development until such time they can focus fully on TID. The quote below from one of the participants is an example of how other important and unavoidable commitments are maintained:

*"My training is not consistent enough and that is why I have been unable to make the improvement I need. I have so many commitments outside sport that is not allowing me to put in the extra time and effort necessary for the leap. My studies are getting a little more demanding now that I'm approaching my final year exams, and I have some personal commitments also. So, all I can do now is to maintain my fitness, my training and my performance level so that there is no decline. After this time, if I can put in extra effort I know my performance will improve" (A5)*

Another aspect of discipline was in the management of the meagre resources available to athletes. Athletes relied on themselves for finance because there was no financial support from any source. Thus, instead of allowing the lack of finance to deter them, participants

avoided all forms luxury and made savings from the living allowances they got from their parents so that they can afford their training materials. The same way, many of the participants reported that they were involved in some petty jobs to raise money for their development. The quotes below illustrate how financially disciplined participants were successful:

*“I made savings from my school fees and my pocket money, which were barely enough in the first place, and use this to support myself because my parents must not even know that I was doing sport. If I were to wait for support, I would be nowhere close to my achievement today because no one would support me” (A7)*

*“As a student I was representing my school in colleges of education games and the little allowances I got helped me to some extent. Apart from this, I was going into businesses, I helped people to sell their wares and got little earnings from this, so at least I was able to manage the little money I got. Though, that didn’t solve the problem, but I continued to endure the pains because I knew one day it will be ok. I had to draw a scale of preference for myself, where I only go for the most essential needs and avoided luxury” (A3)*

The culture of self-discipline among Nigeria athletes is so warmly encouraged that dropout was to blame for lack of discipline. The data showed that athletes held themselves responsible for their success, and in the case of failure; it was first blamed on an athlete’s inability to work hard enough, or invest the needed time and efforts into achieving his/her

goals. It was clear that successful athletes did not allow the many barriers of the society to decide their fate; rather, they held themselves responsible for progress or otherwise. Self-discipline is also manifested in the athletes' ability to patiently follow through their development. Patience is essential to cope with the amount of efforts and time required for progress, otherwise athletes would give up and dropout. The quotes below show that athletes who drop out of sport were blamed for lack of discipline and impatience:

*"...Dropouts are not disciplined enough. It takes discipline to endure pain, it takes discipline to be in training every day, it takes discipline to be working hard while others are partying or sleeping, if you are not disciplined enough it will be very easy to give up" (A1)*

*"I am patient with myself; I believe that those who drop out are not being patient enough. I know with time and efforts I will get to my goals, so I don't give up even when am not getting the desired result on time. Again, I am much disciplined and I mean all round discipline. You must be ready to make sacrifices if you want to excel in anything you do; but many people are not ready to make the sacrifice. For instance, as athletes, you are expected to go to training very early in the morning; and must do it consistently (A5)*

The data revealed that participants shared strong commitment and the readiness to learn in common. Not only were they committed to improving their performance, but also, they were willing to increase their general knowledge about sport. Participants expressed the

importance of readiness to learn to sport development in the Nigeria context as shown in the following quotes:

*“When I started practising, I was ready to learn from everybody, when people corrected me I would make sure that I take to correction because I knew that I met them in the team and they were more experienced than me” (A2)*

*“Athlete must be teachable; you must be ready to learn. If you found someone who is better than you in your event, you can meet the person to seek advice and help. But for those who were proud, they would rather fail than humble themselves to learn” (A8)*

*“I know some athletes that are very talented, they seemed to do things effortlessly and always perform better than any one of us. I look up to them for inspiration; one thing I said to myself was that one-day I will be able to run like them. You know, when you have people doing your event better than you, it tells you there is a lot of room for improvement” (A3)*

Athletes believed that progress in TID was based on hard work and dedication to development. This attitude was probably developed due to the consequences perceived to be associated failure; this attitude exemplified the culture of self-drive among Nigerian athletes. Athletes were committed to growth and believed that only through hard work is their dream of sporting success achievable. There seemed to be this mind-set that anyone can achieve success through hard work. This ‘hard work mentality’ is supported by Mo Farah’s in his

tweet on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 2015 “don’t dream of winning, train for it”. Even when athletes are not making progress as expected, they believe that with more efforts and time success is possible. Hard work is so highly embraced that athletes regarded hard work as the defining line between success and failure in sport. The quotes below demonstrate the role of hard work in sport development in Nigeria:

*“The thing is that everyone has a talent; it’s only left for you to work on yourself to bring out the best in you. I can say that the difference between my contemporaries who are not successful or who are less successful and me is hard work” (A1)*

*“I do not believe that there is a super human somewhere. It is all about how much you are prepared for your events. Those who are not making as much progress as their colleagues only need to put in more efforts and dedication, with that, it’s only a matter of time before the rewards of hard work will begin to come in. You must discover your weaknesses and work against them...” (A5)*

*“If anyone is doing better than you, you need to find out why it is so and don’t just conclude that the person is better than you, with hard work you can improve your performance. If you are training for an improvement and you see no result, it doesn’t mean that it is not possible, but that more effort is needed” (A2)*

*“...Yes, my training was a big factor. Even if you have the talent, and everything is working in your favour, you still need to take your career very seriously because there*

*is no short cut to success without hard work” (A4)*

Participants reported that they sought encouragement only in themselves, in order not to be distracted by the fact that the environment was not supportive. It was revealed that talent development in Nigeria required self-regulation and total reliance on the ‘self’. Athletes motivated themselves to work hard in the pursuit of their goals and endured the difficulties associated with development. The quotes below showed that athletes depended on themselves through self-regulation and would not blame failure on lack of supports:

*“All the supports you receive from your coach will only amount to about 10%, the remaining 90 per cent depends on you the athlete and your commitment to what you set out to achieve. We were about ten that started at the same time but all of them have dropped out because of lack of support. But for me, I remained committed to my goal despite all the challenges” (A3)*

*“I have always encouraged myself, I know the time to train, I know the time to play; I know that I have to be hardworking to achieve my goals. So, I have not experienced anything extraordinary apart from the strains I need to go through to be the best I can be” (A7)*

*“I believe that I train harder than people who did not make it; I was ready to stand any hard training schedule given to me by the coach. There is no training you give to me that I will ever complain, I believe that my coach knows what I need and that he is*



*also aware of my strength and limitations, so whatever he asks me to do I was ready. When others believe they are tired and give excuses, some will even run away from training with the excuse that it's too hard for them to cope. But I always endure hard training because nothing good comes easily. Even if you have the talent, you still need to train hard to develop; this is while I continue to work hard and follow the programme and instructions given to me by the coach" (A1)*

**4.3.3.2.1. Successful TID is jiggered by Challenges.** It was also evident that participants took the various social barriers and hostility of the environment as the norm. In fact, according to the participants, many successful athletes in Nigeria reportedly went through the same hostile environment; hence, participants drew strength from the barriers in the society. The data disclosed that athletes trusted in their ability to make it to the top in their sports, and were also sure that the resistance from the family was based on the fear of failure. Therefore, each barrier from the family, the school and the government strengthened the commitment of athletes to make their point, to prove that they can achieve their dream of sporting success. The following quotes demonstrate that the challenges to TID strengthened athletes' commitment to development:

*"My father's disapproval gingered me, it gingered me. It encouraged me to train; I wanted to show my father that he was wrong and that I knew what I wanted. I made up my mind that I was going to prove him wrong, so it was a great booster to my commitment. This is because breakthrough in sports meant two things to me (i.e. proving my father wrong, and achieving my goals). And when I did make it to the*

*international stage, my father was so proud of me; he became my number one fan. He started to do everything to support me, he would ask me when my competition is coming up and offer me any help I needed. As a result, it was painful when my father passed on in 2011. However, I am grateful that I became an elite athlete before he died and that I was able to change his mind concerning my sporting career” (A4)*

*“The challenges made me stronger, and I believe that they helped me become who I am today. Sometimes when I go through hard stuffs I will just say to myself that I have suffered a lot (even more than this in the past) and so, there is no reason to look back now; the challenges helped me to focus on achieving my dream” (A6)*

*“As a national athlete, there is a difference, because I can now meet the basic needs of life. I can afford to eat what I want when I want it, and I can afford the kits I need for training and that is why I’m committing myself to training harder now than ever because I have been through a lot to get here” (A1)*

#### **4.4. Discussion**

The objectives of this chapter were to examine the perceptions of Nigerian athletes on the nature of athletes and sports development in Nigeria in order to develop an understanding of the likely challenges as well as characteristics of effective TD in the Nigerian context. The findings highlight a numbers challenges and barriers to TD in the Nigerian context and also revealed how successful Nigerian athletes manoeuvre through the challenges to achieve success in their sports as shown in table 3.2. This section presents a general discussion of

findings to establish the extent of its consistency or otherwise with the existing TD literature.

The results highlighted three major features of TD in Nigeria including process-outcome divergent reactions to athletic development. Successful performance at high-elite level was highly celebrated, whereby successful athletes received high social recognition, national awards and financial rewards. High reward for success was a key motivating factor of effective development in Nigerian. Successful national athletes were popular features on national television stations and commercial advertisements (i.e. billboards, flyers, posters) such that children, vicariously develop the love and interest in sport participation. The prospect for high rewards has been previously reported as a motivation for sport participation and talent development (Gillet, Vallerand, Amoura & Baldes, 2010).

In contrast however, sport participation at the beginner level and talent development were poorly valued in the Nigerian environment. There was a pervasive skepticism about the likelihood that the average child can successfully develop a career in sports based on the absence of effective TDEs (i.e. poor facilities, lack of funding, unavailability of coaches). Sport participation was discouraged because the society perceived that regular participation in sporting activities would distract the child from education. Education was seen, as the only means of securing the future of the child, thus it is the priority of the average Nigerian family; this negative perception of sport is a major barrier to TID in Nigeria. Previous research has identified the socio-cultural factors such as place of birth as a determinant of sport participation (e.g. Côté, Macdonald, Baker & Abernethy, 2006). Also, most parents do not believe that the child has the potential to develop elite performance where they may earn reasonable income from sport, and so they consider participation in sport as a waste of time. Whereas, in other cultures, like the United Kingdom and Australia parents provide significant

support for talent development (e.g. Bloom, 1985; Till *et al.*, 2011; Cote, 1999; Blooms, 1985; Martindale, Collins & Abraham, 2007).

Secondly, the results indicated a lack of formal pathways for TD. However, the findings highlight typical ‘pathways’ and opportunities for athletic development. There is no club system in place to deliver the structure for systematic stage-approach to talent development (Bloom, 1985; Cote, 1999; Balyi, & Hamilton, 2004), athletes rather engaged in unstructured, informal street play to advance their love for sports and interest in talent development. Though the lack of formal pathways and structured system of development is seen as a challenge to TID, such environment would afford children the opportunity to experiment with different sports and escape the harmful effects of early identification and specialization (e.g. Bloom, 1985; Cote, 1999; Cote *et al.*, 2003; Cote *et al.*, 2006). Despite the fact that parents disallow their children from taking part in sporting activities; successful athletes took advantage of when parents were away from home to play with their peers on the street. Athletes’ determination to overcome parents’ resistance has significant impact on eventual successful TD. Thus, the ability to regulate time, goals and engagement (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006) and commitment to development (e.g. MacNamara, Holmes & Collins, 2008) are key determinants of successful development in the Nigerian context.

Likewise, the school system provides certain opportunities for children to engage in sports. The national policy on education identified regular physical activity among important elements of development for the child, thus P.E. was included in the school curriculum both at the primary and secondary school levels. It is important to note though, that the objective of P.E. was not to promote TD, but to aid the development of healthy lifestyle. However, P.E. sessions in school, combined with playing on the street and other physical requirements for

survival in the Nigerian context (i.e. going to the farm) to present an exemplar of the framework of Cote and colleagues (2003) for expertise development in sports. For instance, the physically active environment in Nigeria would ensure that most of the population, particularly children are fit and physically active; this will serve the purpose of a good foundation for possible TD in the future. Unfortunately, the majority of schools were reported to have abandoned P.E. due to lack of both human resources (i.e. P.E. teachers, games masters, coaches) and material resources (i.e. facilities, funding). The neglect of P.E. is worsened by the collapse of the boarding school system (e.g. Chuta, 1986; Pittin, 1990; Onuka & Arowojolu, 2008), where students had enough time to participate in physical activities and sports in the evenings, and they were mandated to do so.

Since the colonial era (i.e. period before Nigeria's independence from Britain), P.E. has been part of the education process and the development of the child in Nigeria (Laoye & Ackland, 1981, 2006). Though initially it was practiced as an extra-curricular activity in missionary schools, children were mandated to take part in physical activities such as running, jumping, skipping and ball games regularly. After Nigerian independence in 1960, P.E. was formally introduced as a compulsory subject to the curriculum in primary and secondary schools through the 1977 National Policy on Education which recognized P.E. as an instructional subject in schools (Ladani, 1988). The aim of P.E. in the Nigerian education system is to aid the overall development of the child; promote healthy living and physical fitness among school children; and to serve as a foundation for sport development (National Policy on Education, 2004). However, the current findings in agreement previous evidence (e.g. Ajisafe, 1977; Nwagwu, 1976; Puhse & Gerber, 2005), suggest that P.E. has suffered significant set back in the Nigerian education system due to lack of adequate provision for

the teaching of the subject in schools.

Another challenge facing P.E. is related to the training and recruitment of P.E. teachers. Because the government no longer demonstrate genuine interest in the promotion of P.E. component of the education system, there been a decline in the interest in the profession (Ojo, 2015), therefore, there is shortage of P.E. teacher in Nigerians school and this has contributed to the downward trend P.E.

Furthermore, due to the deficiencies of the school environment such as inadequate teachers, lack of facilities and consistent funding, TD did not enjoy enough support from the school. Athletes noted that many of their teachers (like the parents) discouraged them from pursuing talent development in sport, and so, self-determination (e.g. Wang & Biddle, 2007) and self-regulation (e.g. Cote & Hay, 2002; Petlichkoff, 2004) are more predictive of successful development than some other factors (e.g. receiving supports) in Nigeria. This is at odds with other cultures and countries where significant others (e.g. teachers, parents, siblings) provided consistent messages of encouragement and support for talent development (e.g. Bloom, 1985; Martindale, Collins & Abraham, 2007). All through, many communities and schools offered little opportunities for TID, only in few cities where there are better economic climates that athletes have some supports for development (e.g. facilities), therefore, place of birth (Cote, *et al.*, 2003) is one of the determinants of effective development in a Nigerian context.

Subsequently, the current findings revealed the role of luck to be critical to progress in TID. For example, many communities lacked support for sports; most family were resistant to TD; school environments were hostile to sport; coaches were scarcely available; there was no access to funding; therefore, finding the right environment for development (e.g. good

school, coach, supporting parents and facilities) depends largely on luck. Though luck has been reported among the factors of successful development in other cultures (e.g. Albert, 2006; Bailey, 2007) it is more critical in the Nigerian context where progress in TD is, to a large extent, dependent on chance.

When the lucky ones find a coach, the coach plays very important roles in the Nigerian context (e.g. significantly more than the role of the coach reported in other cultures). Research across different socio-cultural contexts identifies coaching among the key factors of talent development (e.g. Bloom, 1985; Cote *et al.*, 2003; Martindale *et al.*, 2007; Vaeyens, Lenoir, Williams & Philippaerts, 2008; MacNamara, Holmes & Collins, 2008; Gillet, Vallerand, Amoura & Baldes, 2010; Coulter, Mallett & Gucciardi, 2010). In the Nigerian context, the role of the coach is even more expanded to include that of the family. For example, in addition to providing technical guidance for training and development, the coach represents a ‘father figure’ and role model to athletes. Athletes rely on their coach for moral support and encouragement that the family failed to render; they rely on the coach for financial support and even for accommodation in some cases.

Thirdly, some psychological factors of successful development in the Nigerian environment were highlighted in the findings, topmost among which are self-belief, discipline and eagerness to learn. The extent to which successful TID depends on these psychological factors would be more understood when the realities of the social and environmental factors of talent development are considered against the established features of effective TDEs (e.g. Martindale *et al.*, 2007). For example, Martindale and colleagues (2007) stressed the need for long-term goals, consistent and coherent messages of support from important stakeholders (e.g. parents, coaches, siblings, teachers) to facilitate effective

development; in most cases, this support network was not available in the Nigerian context. Consequently, developing athletes depended on the development of psychological tools to cope with and overcome the resistance and challenges to TD.

Topmost among the psychological factors of successful TID in Nigeria was self-belief. Since nobody, not even parents, believed in the ability of the child to achieve successful development in sport, progress in TD required that aspiring elites believe in themselves enough, and are convinced that they possess ‘what it takes’ to become high flyers in their sports. Self-belief is particularly important to athletic development because one of the motivations for becoming involved in talent development is the intention to prove parents wrong for resisting sport development. For example, one of the participants (who have represented Nigeria in both the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games) explained that she was already at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing before her father realized that she has been secretly taking part in sport; it takes absolute trust in one’s potential and abilities to make progress in the Nigerian environment.

Athletes believed they would get to the top by enduring the hardship associated with TD in the Nigerian environment (e.g. being on the black book of parents, teachers). For example, parents may refuse to pay the child’s school fees or refuse the child meals if it is found out that he/she was taking taking part in sport; in such instances, athletes would have to rely on the coach for support. Also, there was no reward for taking part in sports until international success is achieved, thus athletes had to continue to work hard without receiving a reward or encouragement which if given would serve the purpose of positive reinforcement; hence, the ability to delay gratification is key to development in the Nigerian context. Performance (e.g. on the street, in the school) emerged as a major facilitator of the



development of self-belief. While playing on the street or during P.E., athletes began to discover their potential by outperforming their peers, the more consistently good performances were recorded the more conscious athletes became that they possessed sporting talents. Having discovered that they possess the potential to achieve elite performance, at this early stage future successful athletes then disciplined themselves (e.g. identify the activities that would distract progress and avoid them), and began to devote time and resources to searching for, and acquiring knowledge to aid their development.

Lastly, discipline and eagerness to learn were highlighted among the main psychological factors of successful development. Discipline in this context was related to self-regulation. For example, successful athletes espoused the kind of behaviors that facilitate effective development (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006) such as hard work, self-denial, patience, and self-control; they were keen to learn and took ownership of their development. These psycho-behavioural factors are similar to the PCDEs reported among successful athletes in other cultures (e.g. Gould, Dieffenbach & Moffett, 2002; MacNamara & Collins, 2013). Though there were many barriers and obstacles to TD in the environment, successful elite took responsibility for failure or setback and did not blame it on the challenging environmental factors. According to the current data, Nigerian elite athletes demonstrated a growth mind-set that took every barrier as a motivation for hard work (Dweck, 2000). For instance, one of participants explained that every failure she recorded was just an indication of ‘what will not work’ and so she searched for an alternative course of action. This finding supports the evidence from other cultures and countries where psychological factors such as mental toughness, imagery, commitment, self-regulation, goal setting reportedly facilitated effective talent development (MacNamara, Button & Collins, 2010); however, it appeared

that these psycho-behavioral elements were particularly more important to successful development in the Nigerian context, than it is for other countries where there is access to better facilities and supports for TD.

Finally, it is important to underscore the limitations of this study such that the reader will be well guided while interpreting the findings. For example, some characteristic limitations of qualitative research should be reflected in the application of the current results. To begin with, the small sample size ( $n=8$ ) must be stressed; also, the fact that all participants belong one sport (i.e. athletics) must be taken into account. It might be that with a larger sample size and or with multiple sports there would be variations in the consistency of perceptions among participants. However, the context within which this study was carried out and the strictness of inclusion criteria (e.g. being a member of a national team, and being among the best in the Nigerian context) should be taken into consideration against the highlighted limitations. Similarly, the current findings are an expression of just one group in TD (i.e. athletes), it will be interesting to explore the opinions of other groups such as the family, administrators, government and the coach.

Research in other cultures have applied the triangulation method to create a holistic understanding of the nature and process of TD by including other groups (e.g. family, coach) in their investigation (e.g. Wolfenden & Holt, 2005; Jowett & Cramer, 2010; Black & Holt, 2009; Coulter, Mallett & Gucciardi, 2010; Martindale *et al.*, 2007; MacNamara *et al.*, 2003). In the current study, the role of the coach was specifically highlighted among the key determinants of successful development; in fact, apart from the psychological characteristics of effective development in Nigeria (e.g. self-belief, discipline, self-regulation) the coach is the only source of external support to aspiring elite Nigerian athletes (Adesanjo, 1997;

Amorose & Horn, 2000). It is therefore essential that the coaches' perceptions on the nature of TID in Nigeria be investigated.

Thus, the next chapter is designed to explore the role of the coach in facilitating successful talent development in sports in the Nigerian context.

## **Chapter 5 – The Nature of Talent Development in Nigeria: Elite Coaches’ Perceptions**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter made some profound revelations about the unique context of talent development in Nigeria. More than their counterparts elsewhere across other cultures, Nigerian athletes reportedly face many socio-cultural barriers to sports development that make TD difficult for athletes. For instance, while previous research (e.g. Martindale, Collins & Abraham, 2007) suggested that an effective talent development environment required a network of consistent and coherent supports from all the relevant stakeholders (i.e. parents, coaches, teachers, siblings and friends) talent development environments in Nigeria was revealed to be lacking support from significant individuals and organisations. Though it is anticipated from the literature that there would be environment related limitations to TID in Nigeria (Adesanjo, 1997; Toriola, 2000; Aibueku & Ogbouma, 2013), it is clear that beyond the limitations of the environment, the previous chapter (i.e. athletes’ study) revealed a wide spread opposition against sports participation. Starting from the family to the school, the government and the entire society, there were very little support for sport development (Ajidual, 2001).

However, there seems to be one consistent source of support for talent development in Nigeria - the coach. In chapter three, the coach was the second factor identified with TID success, the first being the athlete. Apart from providing technical and tactical guidance for training and development, the coach played other roles outside the normal functions of the coach in other cultures. For example, because most families were against TID, parents provided no supports for training and so athletes would resort to the coach for assistance. The coaches reportedly help their athletes financially, morally and even provided accommodation

in some cases, thus the coach is seen as a father to his athletes and not just a coach; these roles have not been previously known with the coach in other cultures.

Early studies of the contribution of coaches to talent development outlined the role of the coach to include knowing, observing, diagnosing, and assessing the process of talent development in order to set targets and draw the strategies to achieve them (e.g. Worthington, 1984; Fairs, 1987). The role of the coach in the Nigerian context seemed to transcend the above definition. Other issues relating to coaching have been studied such as the relationship between coaching behaviour and TID (e.g. Smith *et al.*, 1977), mentorship (e.g. Duckworth & Maxwell, 2015), coaching and coach education (e.g. Panfil *et al.*, 2015), coach-athletes' relationship (e.g. Baron & Morin, 2009), Quality coaching and coach development (e.g. Mallett, 2011). Vast as coaching research is, very little has been done in the Nigerian context. With previous evidences of the cultural specificity of TID and the need to exercise caution in the cross-cultural application of TID research (e.g. Saltapidas & Ponsford, 2007; Collins & Bailey, 2013), as well as the extra roles associated with coaching by Nigerian athletes, it is imperative to investigate the specific nature of coaching in Nigeria in order to further strengthen the understanding of the nature of TID in the Nigerian context. Clear and explicit as the previous chapter was though, it only presented the accounts of athletes on the nature of sport development in Nigeria, which of course may not reflect the complete picture.

Previous studies in talent identification and development have used the triangulation method to investigate issues relating to effective TID (i.e. Wolfenden & Holt, 2005; Gould *et al.*, 2002; Martindale *et al.*, 2007; Black & Holt, 2009), when taken into consideration, the perceptions of the other key stakeholders in sport talent development have made valuable contributions to the understanding of the subject. In order to set off the process of creating

the synergy among the opinions of other stakeholders such as the family, coach, siblings, peers, and friends (e.g. Black & Holt, 2009) the current study is planned to investigate the role of the coach in TID in a Nigerian context. The methods and procedure for the coaches' study is identical with those of the athletes' study presented in chapter three, as it is described in details below.

## **5.2 Method**

### **5.2.1 Participants**

The essence of this study is to explore the perception of coaches on the nature of athletes and sports development in Nigeria, to further strengthen the current knowledge of the context of TID in Nigerian (particularly the results presented in chapter 4). To achieve this aim, it is necessary that participants were recruited from among coaches who have personal experiences of assisting an athlete to progress from developmental stage to an elite stage of sport performance. The high bar set for inclusion (having successfully assisted at least one athlete to achieve elite performance) was to ensure that participants have personal experiences about the challenges faced by athletes at the various stages of development.

For the sake of clarity, the sample included coaches whose athlete attended the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, and or participated in the athletes' study presented in chapter 4; this was intended to create an opportunity for validating athletes' accounts of the nature of TID in Nigeria. Participants were males between the ages of 39 and 52 years ( $n=7$ ), see table 5.1 for detail information about participants. Participants were contacted through their athletes who take part in the athletes' study and they all agreed to take part in the study. The seven coaches who took part in the study were given informed consent form which they signed and returned to the main researcher prior to their interviews.

*Table 5.1: Information about the participants in the study described in chapter 5*

Participants	Age	Gender	No. Athletes in the first study
C1	39	Male	1
C2	43	Male	2
C3	40	Male	1
C4	47	Male	1
C5	52	Male	1
C6	45	Male	1
C7	42	Male	1

### **5.2.2. Design**

A grounded theory approach was adopted to advance a deeper understanding of the perceptions of elite coaches on the challenges of athletes and sports development in Nigeria. The qualitative method was considered appropriate for the study for its potential to generate focused data that would reveal a clear picture of the phenomenon under study (Cote, Salmela, Trudel, Baria & Russell, 1993). A semi-structured interview was developed for the study with the aim of creating a deeper understanding of the challenges of TID in Nigeria. The interview schedule consisted of open-ended questions purposefully structured to generate open-ended responses from participants (Patton, 1990). Details of the interview questions are contained in figure 4.1. Two pilot interviews were conducted with two coaches whose athlete was part of the sample for the athletes' study. The researcher carried out an inductive content analysis of the pilot interview following the guidelines of Patton (1990); the process proceeded from coding experience, to similarity inferences; coded experiences were constantly compared and clusters of similar experiences were used to develop themes; themes were continually compared to form categories and general categories. The comparison processes continued

until interview data were saturated (i.e. no new categories were emerging from the data); feedback from the pilot study was given to other researchers, including the main research supervisor and an independent researcher (i.e. not part of the research team) to further verify the process of analysis before the cogency of the interview guide was established (Brink, 1993). The verification process involved the other researchers carrying out an inductive content analysis of the pilot interview and comparing their findings (i.e. themes and categories) with those of the main supervisor in order to establish consistency in the results. Since both pilot interviews were deemed to be of sufficient quality and relevance, as the participants also fulfilled the study criteria, they were included in the final sample (Backstrom and Hirsch-Cesar, 1981).

*Table 5.2: Interview questions used for data collection in the study described in chapter 5*

<b>Interview Guide</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could you give me a bit of background to your coaching and your current role?</li> <li>• Could you give me an overview of what you do when you coach development athletes?</li> <li>• Are there differences between this and coaching elite athletes/national athletes?</li> <li>• What factors do you think characterize someone who has the potential to become elite/national athlete in the Nigerian context?</li> <li>• What are the stages one has to go through to progress from novice to elite/national athlete in the Nigerian environment?</li> <li>• What do you do at each of the stages?</li> <li>• What sorts of support do you think is necessary for developing athletes in Nigeria?</li> <li>• Do you think this support is available?</li> <li>• How effective do you think current Talent Development processes are in Nigeria?</li> <li>• Do you think there is a clear guideline for Talent Development in Nigeria?</li> <li>• Based on your experience of the Talent Development Environment in Nigeria – what needs to be done to improve in the future?</li> </ul>



### 5.2.3 Procedure

Ethical approval was sought and granted by the school of Health, Life and Social Sciences of Edinburgh Napier University. The aims, objectives and procedure of the study were explained to participants and they were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Participants were then asked if they had any reservation about the motive and procedure of the study and the all responded in the negative (i.e. there were no reservation about participation). Afterwards participants were given the informed consent form which they signed and returned to the researcher before taking part in the study.

The main interview questions were given to participants one week prior to the interview so that they could familiarize themselves with the questions (Martindale *et al.*, 2007; Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992). All interviews were conducted by the researcher; at the actual interview, interviewees were asked the same questions in the same sequence, however, while and when necessary, the interviewer asked probing questions (Patton, 1990) to create an in-depth understanding of responses, and to capture a true representation of the socio-cultural context of TID in Nigeria. All interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and were tape recorded for later transcription.

### 5.2.4 Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using inductive content analysis according to the recommendation of Edwards, Kingston, Hardy and Gould (2002). Data analysis followed the three stages outlined by Cote *et al.* (1993) including coding experience; inductive inference; and similarity processes. The emerging themes and general themes were constantly compared until the data was saturated. Themes and categories were presented hierarchically to represent their order of emergence (Patton 1990), and were supported by quotes in the result section

(Cohn, 1991).

#### **5.2.5. Establishing credibility**

Several measures were taken to guarantee credibility of findings of the current study. As earlier mentioned, the researchers ensured that interview questions were truly open-ended and that responses were not biased by the opinion of the interviewer. Similarly, the raw transcripts and the analyzed data (i.e. researchers' interpretation of the raw data) were sent to the participants to ascertain credibility (Patton, 1990); all participants agreed that they (i.e. analyzed data) accurately represented their views.

Likewise, the data were subjected to a thorough independent reliability checks by other researchers who were experts in the field of the study, including the main research supervisor and another researcher who is not part of the research team (Scanlan, Ravizza & Stein, 1989; Morse, *et al.*, 2002) to validate the procedure and findings of the investigation. Stakeholders' check (e.g. Patton, 1990) was carried by sending a report of the results to an independent expert researcher in TD whose opinions on the results were consistent with those of the researcher. Also, two independent researchers were approached to carry out reliability checks (Scanlan *et al.*, 1989); raw data quotes were coded into raw data themes in all the interviews, the second dimensions were then corresponded to the general themes. The primary and independent researchers discussed results of the reliability checks to finalise the order in which themes emerged.

### **5.3 Results**

The section presents the results from the data collection and analysis, which show the views of the seven participating coaches on the nature and challenges of athletes' development in Nigeria. The findings identify the various barriers (relating sport-

organisational specific barriers, and culture specific barriers), and the two main drivers of TID success (including Coaches' commitment, and athletes' psychology). Details of the emerging themes and their order of emergence are presented in details below, as shown in table 5.3.

### 5.3.1 Sport-Organizational Specific Barriers to TID

**5.3.1.1 Development is poorly valued.** All participants observed organisational specific barriers to TID in sports in the Nigerian context. For instance, though the government and the entire society celebrate sporting success, there was no supports for TD in sports. Elite coaches were of the opinion that the government (in particular) did not give sport development the appropriate attention, thus, TD in sports is poorly valued by every section of the society. Similarly, athletes were seen as people who are not serious about their future. The quotes below indicate that athletes lacked encouragement due to the poor for TID:

*Table 5.3: Categories, themes and general themes emerging from the study described in chapter 5*

Categories	Themes	General themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No supports for sport dev.</li> <li>Huge potentials</li> <li>Stakeholders do not show interest</li> </ul>	Sports dev. poorly valued	Sport-Organisational Specific Barriers to TID
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of fairness, merit</li> <li>Lack of prerequisite knowledge</li> </ul>	Corruption and administrative incompetence	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilities</li> <li>Coaching/coach education</li> </ul>	Lack of investment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policies are not implemented</li> <li>No coherent dev. plan</li> </ul>	Lack of policy implementation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conflicts between TID and family priority</li> <li>Parents cannot finance TID</li> <li>Negative perception of sports</li> <li>Parents discourage TID (athletes hide from parents, reward could motivate parents)</li> </ul>	The family is opposed to sport dev.	Culture Specific barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers discourage TID</li> </ul>	Hostile school	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sports dev. not favoured in the curriculum</li> <li>• No facilities</li> <li>• No rewards</li> </ul>	environment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘I can do spirit’ (passion, determination, self-belief)</li> <li>• Strong mind-set</li> </ul>	Athletes Psychology	Drivers of success in TID
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal commitment (personal initiatives, improvise for facilities)</li> <li>• Sacrifices (no recognition for coaches, lack of regulation)</li> <li>• Role modelling (father figure, rally parents supports, finance activities)</li> </ul>	Coaches’ supports	

*“Athletes go through a lot of challenges in Nigeria because there is no supports and encouragement for development. The society will only celebrate them if and when they succeed in their sports, so the major the question is what happens before they succeed?” (C3)*

*“You know whatever happens to the head happens to the whole body, since Nigeria as a country is not giving the deserved attention to sport development, everywhere in the nation we have athletes and their coaches having to swim against the tide of several barriers to development in the environment” (C7)*

*“...Athletes are looked down on by the society as unserious people instead of encouraging them” (C1)*

A poor development culture constitutes a major impediment on the actualisation of the Nigerian sporting potential. Elite coaches noted that the environment lacked the necessary

support to stimulate interest in TD among youngsters. Furthermore, there were no facilities and structures to support growing athletes in the process of development. The difficult environment tends to create a feeling of being disadvantaged among Nigerian athletes in terms of their competitiveness on the international stage. In the quotes below elite coaches describe their feelings that much potential is wasted due to the poor development environments:

*“Currently we have very few athletes who are doing well in their sports but if the right facilities and equipment, supports and encouragement are given to athletes, especially the young ones, Nigeria has the capacity to produce many good athletes that can compete anywhere in the world” (C7)*

*“Sometimes, the fear of the opponent alone is a huge challenge to athletes, Nigerian athletes know that they have no facilities to train, while their opponents do, and hence they fear their opponents who they perceive as being better prepared” (C3)*

Though the involvement of the organised private sector in the finance and administration of sport would improve the TD process, the private sector is yet to buy the idea of investing sport development. Sport administration and sport development is largely left to the government agencies in charge of youth and sport. Unfortunately, government agencies are reputable for inefficiencies, especially in Nigeria where government business is seen as nobody's business. Therefore, participants emphasised the need for efficient sport development environment where all stakeholders (i.e. the family, the school, the community,

governments, and the organised private sector) would collaborate with the organised private sector to provide consistent and coherent support and encouragement to aid athletes' development. The quotes below echo the participants call for a holistic approach to TID:

*“There is no private sector involvement in the Nigerian sport sector yet, everything is left to the government and so the administrators are not really committed to efficiency because here government business is seen as nobody's business” (C4)*

*“The fact is that the situation we have in sport development in Nigeria today is not the best, we are at a stage where individuals have left the task of sport development entirely on the government. This cannot produce the best result because everybody has a role to play and except each stakeholder is living up to his responsibility, sport development in the country will continue to face needless challenges” (C7)*

*“The way forward is creating an environment for athletic development where there is encouragement and supports from everyone around the athlete. Encouragement and supports from the home (i.e. the parents), from the coach, from the government, from the school, and from the community. Sports development should be given the type of recognition it deserves as it is given to other profession like banking, law, and engineering” (C1)*

**5.3.1.2 Mismanagement & poor administration.** The data indicated that from coaches' perspectives, there appear to be some 'sharp practices' in the management of sports in Nigeria. To begin with, the responses from the elite coaches showed that sport administrative positions were not awarded based on knowledge and competence; instead, people who have connections in government got sport administrative jobs without necessarily having a background in sport management and administration. As a result, athletes and their coaches suffered from poor administration and incompetence in sport management. In the quotes below, participants expressed the need to engage professionals, with background and experience in sport management to oversee the affairs of sport:

*“Coaches and their athletes have not been very lucky with the type of sport administrators we have in the country. It has been rough to say the least” (C4)*

*“Our sport administration is very bad, in fact, most of the sports administrators are politicians who do not have any knowledge of sport development and they never care about the ordeal of the athletes and their coaches because their main priority is to enrich themselves” (C6)*

*“There is the need to have good administrators who would develop good policies and programmes to guide sports development. People holding sport administrative positions must be those that have the enabling background for sport development. Because one of the problems of sports development in Nigeria is that politicians who have little or no knowledge of sport are appointed to oversee sports ministries and*

*departments” (C2)*

One of the direct consequences of poor administration, as reflected in the responses from participants is the absence of fairness and merit in the management of sports in Nigeria. For example, the data revealed that recruitment and selection of athletes into national teams were based only on merit. Some athletes were reportedly recruited into the national teams based on who they have connection with in the system, while those who are not connected to the administrators or anybody in the corridors of power are not given the opportunity to express their abilities. Similarly, among the members of the various national teams, selection into squads for competitions are biased by the administrators, who are often induced in one way or the other to select certain athletes even when there are better athletes for the events. Thus, in the opinion of elite coaches in Nigeria, sports administrators are not committed to merit; this is demonstrated in the quotes below:

*“Nigerian sports administrators are part of the major setbacks in the system, because they are not committed to fairness in the selection process and hence merit is not rewarded. Then you have a situation where you get to the camp and you are subjected to so much stress, at the end of the day you may fall sick and become unable to perform...or in a situation include where the administrators promised you that you will attend a particular competition and at the end of the day you are told, “sorry we cannot raise money to finance you”. For an athlete who already trained hard to compete and the chance of competing is denied him, it takes a lot of determination to be committed the next time you ask him to prepare for competition” (C6)*



*“A major setback we have is the situation where you are supposed to attend competitions and the administrators drop you for other athletes who you are far better than in performance because the person is loyal to them or related to them in one way or the other, if you are lucky to have enough money to fund your travel to the venue of the event then you can go on your own, but if the money is not available you will be out of the competitions” (C6)*

5.3.1.3 Lack of Investment. The data revealed a need for investments across many areas of sports development. For example, there were acute shortages of sporting facilities in communities thereby making training more difficult for coaches and their athletes. Elite coaches believed that access to facility is a necessary motivation for sport participation; they lamented the lack of interest from the government to invest in the development of sporting infrastructure to encourage TID in sports. According to the participants, there are states where athletes have no tracks for training, and instead, trainings was done on the streets. However, access to vacant space where athletes can train is becoming difficult due to increase in the number of new houses being built many communities. The quotes below demonstrate the need for facilities to encourage sport development:

*“Administrators need to invest in facilities because most people build their interest in sports based on the facility they see and would like to enjoy. This is one of the major problems of track and field in Nigeria” (C6)*

*“There are no facilities and equipment for sport development, access to good facilities will motivate children to take part in sporting activities regularly, and therefore enhance the chance that children would pick interest in developing a sporting career. Without money, most of the things we have spoken about will be impossible. Facility, equipment, nutrition, transportation, training kits are all factored by finance; talent development therefore is capital intensive, and as such, the government and other stakeholders must be willing to make the necessary investments” (C2)*

*“There are states that don’t have any synthetic tracks so where will the motivation come from? This problem is more obvious now than ever before, because in those days there were open space around where the children can go to play but now all those pieces of land have been development except the roads, so children no longer have the luxury of playing on the street because the space are not there anymore. This is reason sports are dying gradually in Nigeria” (C6)*

Participants equally decry the lack of research facilities and funding for sport related studies. The feeling from the coaches’ responses on the challenges of sport development in Nigeria is that practice is largely not evidence-based because no local studies are being conducted. This problem is more genuine because unlike the case of facilities, it is possible to improvise for research. This view is shown in the quote below from one of the participants:

*“Another difficulty with the sport development environment in Nigeria is the lack of research facilities. There is no research and development in the environment, sport*

*has gone beyond the era when you can rely on luck, you now need scientific rational for whatever you are doing both in training and in game situation. It is true that we don't have physical facilities like track and field or a standard stadium, but the fact is that we can improvise for them. There are athletes whose talents were developed on the streets and roads and yet they compete well with those who trained on the tracks. But, there is no way we can improvise for research and development, there is need to create research institutes with good laboratories where sports related studies can be carried out” (C5)*

Coaching and coach education is another area deprived of government attention and investment. It appeared that there were no regulations for the activities of coaches. The lack of proper regulation and guidelines for coaching practice reflects the government's unwillingness to invest in sport development. Participants reported that any individual could get into the profession without any formal procedure to establish coaching qualifications. In fact, the authorities reportedly did not know many coaches and there were no checks on their practices. The government demonstrated no concerns related to how athletes were identified and the process of their development. This could be a tactic to avoid the financial responsibility of athletes and sports development. Therefore, coaches are free to adopt whatever means they deem necessary in helping athletes to develop their potential. The absence of guidelines and proper regulations for coaching practice was an evidence of the lack of government's investment and control of the TID process, as indicated in the quotes below:

*“Because the states are not showing commitment to sports development, we now have individuals taking up coaching courses and becoming coaches on their own. These independent coaches also go to recruit their athletes without any input from the states, so coaches have the final say on their practice” (C6)*

*“There is no guideline that all coaches across the country can follow, but based on the knowledge and experience of the coach, he can develop training programmes for his athletes” (C4)*

*“There is no guideline for talent development. We are not even aware of the people in the sector, many coaches including myself are not known to the authorities, so it is as bad as that. There is no credible data to work with, what we rely on is the knowledge of the coaches” (C1)*

5.3.1.4 Lack of Policy Implementation. It is apparent that poor implementation, and in many cases, failure to implement sport development policies was a factor to the pitiable state of sport development in Nigeria. Though the Nigerian government has established several policy documents on sport development, the current data indicate that sport development policies are often poorly implemented, or not implemented at all. The quote below demonstrates that the national policy on sports development clearly identified the need for a structure for talent identification and development, however the policy was never implemented:

*“The last national policy on sport development stipulates that every state should have standard stadia, there should be community sports centres in all the Local Government Areas in Nigeria, the policy also states that there should be inter-school competitions at the primary school level, inter-Local Government competition, Zonal competitions, State competitions, and National competitions. But this has never been implemented. If a structure has been put in place to facilitate the implementation of the policy, that is when we could develop national pathways based on such national structure, but at the moment there is no structural architecture to support national pathways for sport development” (C4)*

The problem of poor implementation of sport development policies is engendered by high level of corruption among government officials whose agencies are responsible for the management and control of sport development programmes. The government yearly have a budget to fund sport development programmes, however the monies are never used for this purpose but instead embezzled by corrupt government officials. Therefore, policies are only developed as a means of getting money into private pockets, while policies are left unattended to, as implied by the following quotes:

*“There is no national policy on sport development in operation, budgets on sport development are never implemented, and we only have things written down without the structure and the will to implement them, the politicians always embezzle the money. In such situation, there is no how a national pathway (even if one is developed), can be enforced” (C2)*

*“...If there is any regulation for coaching practice in Nigeria at all, it would be in the paper and nobody is implementing them. What a coach does, the type of programme he draws up for his athletes is entirely depending on the orientation and discretion of the coach” (C3)*

*“...Even though we have a document in the department of youth development and sports that talks about sport development, it is just there, and nobody is doing anything about implementation” (C6)*

*“...There is no formal pathway for development in Nigeria. Though there may be a programme on the paper but nothing is ever done about implementation. The problem is that most of the time, there is no financial provision for the implementation of national programmes and policies” (C1)*

One direct effect of the lack of implementation of government policies on sport development is that there is no pathway for development. Development programmes and their progression are based entirely on the discretion of the coach. This is particularly not consistent with best practice because there were concerns about the qualification of coaches as indicated the quotes below:

*“I can tell you categorically, that in Nigeria if you want to get anything done you have to decide to do it. If you think there is a programme in place you can follow for*

*development, you will just end up finding nothing” (C5)*

*“Our athletes are only developing on the basis of the coaches’ initiatives, I am in Nigeria, and I can tell you boldly that there are no formal pathways in place for sports development” (C1)*

*“...Guideline will be helpful, because all coaches are not equally knowledgeable, there are coaches who are yet to have their qualification and those who though have qualification are not very conversant with the rules of the game, and there is also another group who are not very experienced in practice. So having such guideline would help these categories of coaches to improve on their practice” (C3)*

The 1989 national policy on sport development (though unimplemented) identified the functions of the State Sports Councils (SSCs) to include the organisation and management of the school sports programmes within their respective states. The SSCs are expected to collaborate with the ministry of education to co-ordinate sports development programmes among school children. The failure of the SSCs in carrying out these functions was partly blamed for the absence of organised sport in Nigeria, as showed by the following quote:

*“The state sports councils are not as active as they should be; in those days, we had school sports programmes, where there were primary school games, secondary school games, organised by the national school sports federation. From there athletes proceed to the national sports/championships, so it is supposed to be a gradual*

*process. But now there is nothing like that. So an individual coach will identify and develop the athlete based on his/their personal development programme and take such athletes to national trials or other national sporting events” (C3)*

The data revealed a poor foundation for TID in Nigeria. Athletes were not identified early enough so that they can undergo the early stages of development, which are important foundations for the later years. Elite coaches felt that their job was compounded by the lack of proper foundation for athletes’ development as revealed in the following quote:

*“It is very important for athletes to undergo the earlier phases of development (underage and teenagers’ stages), because it makes the job of the coach easier as they progress towards elite performance and also the chances of making it to the top. When this early phases are skipped, athletes would have no foundation on which to build subsequent development and this is why the coach (in Nigeria) is faced with much more difficult tasks to help athletes develop without the very basic foundation required” (C1)*

Apart from lacking a strong foundation for development, participants reported the absence of a consistent procedure for TID. Furthermore, since athletes were identified late, athletes were ‘rushed’ to elite performance. Of course, the problem with a hurried development is that it does not allow enough time for an average talent to manifest and as result many potential talents would end up dropping out of sports; only the fittest make it to elite performance. That means those who were not fit enough at the time of testing but have



the potential to develop are left out. Some of the participants indicated the rushed in progression to elite performance in the quotes below:

*“We do not have a formal development track. Most of the age grade levels that are supposed to be are not there because again children don’t start sports early. So when they come, we just have to rush them through” (C3)*

*“As far as I know, there is no good sport programme that can serve the purpose of talent identification. What most of us (the coaches) do is trial and error, because there is nothing on ground to actually bring up the athletes” (C6)*

The fact that the Nigerian government pay no real attention to TID in sports is not an indication that Nigerians don’t like sports. In fact, Nigeria has featured consistently in international competitions like the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games, as well as continental competitions within Africa. How then were athletes raised for such competition? The National Sports Council conducts national trials prior to any major local or international event, where the best performances are recruited to represent the country in the sporting events. The problem with this method of selection is that it encourages performance but not development, as such, there is lack of sustainable growth as indicated in the quotes below:

*“What we do while planning to attend any international competition is to call for national trials where athletes would come from all over the country and compete against each other, the best performances will then be picked to represent the country*

*in that particular event. So national trials are always conducted to select the national athletes year in year out” (C3)*

*“The current system where we have what we call national trials, where any athlete can come to compete and the best among them are recruited into the national teams is very unreliable and irresponsible. We need to show interest in the development of athletes from when they are young and keep track of their development and also support them along the way, that is when we can achieve a sustainable growth in the sport sector” (C5)*

The data showed that Nigeria has the potential to promote talent identification among its vast population, however, the authorities do not take advantage of the opportunities available (within the school system) for athletes’ development. For example, the school sport programmes including IHSCs and P.E. could be further developed to serve the purpose of talent identification, and to engage all school-aged children in sport participation. P.E. is part of the regular primary school curriculum in Nigeria and the aim is to teach children how to be physical fit and live a healthy lifestyle. The responses from elite coaches highlighted in the quotes below, demonstrate the possibility of using the school sport programmes as vehicles for talent identification, in fact, coaches attend such events to scout for talent:

*“...During the inter-house sports competitions, there are relay races between the schools within the area, so you can watch out for talents among the athletes that represent their schools in those relay races” (C3)*

*“The task of talent identification can be done by the games masters in the school through P.E and IHSC but once the talent has been identified and refined, there is need to hand them over to professional coach because the games masters are not coaches, they only call for P.E. sessions and organise sporting activities in schools when necessary” (C3)*

*“Sometimes we go to schools during their sporting events like the annual inter-house sports competition to see new talents, also we scout for talents among children playing on the streets. Once we see the stature, the look and the carriage, then we can pick them up and start to talk to them that they have what it takes for the sport” (C4)*

According to the participants, majority of elite athletes (both past and present) that Nigeria has produced had discovered their sporting talents through the IHSCs and P.E. in schools. This is more so because the club structure is non-functional and the various governing bodies or sports federations are not committed to creating the structure for talent identification and development within their respective sports. Hence, the prominence of the school sport programmes. The current findings further revealed that many school administrators were (themselves) not serious about using the school sport programmes to promote TD among school children, but rather, IHSCs (which are the only regular competitions for young athletes) were more focused on fundraising for the school:

*“The inter-house sports competitions should be improved because majority of athletes*

*in Nigeria started from such events. The IHSC is now being turned to a fund raising avenue for the school and the focus is no longer sport development. It is only the children that are excited by the sports, but the school managements are more interested in the money that comes in through the event” (C1)*

The organisational specific barriers to athletes’ development highlighted made it inevitable that many prospective talents were never realised. Due to the shortfalls in sport development environment in Nigeria as discussed above, and the strains imposed on athletes’ development, the data revealed that many prospective talents lose faith in the system. According to the participants, there were no incentives and encouragement, and thus, many talents are lost. Athletes who are convinced of their potentials, and who have the financial backing seek their education abroad where they believe they would have access to better talent development environments. In such cases, the athletes will rather stay and play for the foreign country where they developed their sporting careers than return to play for Nigeria. The quotes below demonstrate that Nigeria not only lose talents to poor development environment, but also to ‘talent migration’:

*“Athletes should be encouraged to have their education in Nigeria, because we are losing a lot of talents by the athletes going abroad for education reasons. Because the education system in Nigeria is not friendly to sports development, some of them seek scholarship abroad and by the time they go, most of them would not return to play for the country” (C1)*

*“Athletes who go abroad for their studies end up playing for such foreign nations, and you cannot blame them because they have access to quality facilities and good coaching and better opportunities to test their ability through well planned programme of sporting competitions that support athletic development” (C1)*

### **5.3.2 Culture Specific Barriers to TID**

**5.3.2.1 The family is opposed to sports development.** The current findings disclosed some culture-specific barriers to sports and athletes’ development. Though Nigeria is a multi-culture state, with over two hundred and fifty ethnic groups and over four hundred languages spoken, there are some socio-cultural elements that unite the Nigerian communities across the various cultural divides; one of such area of common culture is education. To an average Nigerian family, education is regarded as the best legacy parents can give to their children; education is perceived to be the only way to overcome poverty, which of course is a common enemy to Nigerian families and communities. Furthermore, the Nigeria education system mainly encourages academic development because only through higher education (i.e. university degrees) an individual will be able to secure a good job.

Therefore, every other form of engagement for the child that does not lead to high educational qualifications is regarded as a distraction. Unfortunately, sports development is considered as one of these distractions. The reasons behind the poor value for sport development among Nigerian families are not difficult to understand; there is no organised sport in Nigeria; the club structure is non-existent and sports have little potential for income generation. Sport participation at the grassroots level (i.e. local communities) is mainly for recreation and play; only those who get to participate at the high-elite level are rewarded.

Also, the probability of an average child developing to the high-elite level is elusive, since there is no pathway for TID and there are structures to support athletes' development. Consequently, children who get involved in sporting activities are seen as playing away their valuable time. The fears that sport development may distract the child's commitment to education is founded on the fact that TID in sports is time consuming, hence, parents fear that their children waste the time they ought to spend on their studies for playing sports. The quotes below demonstrate that parents are against TID in sports mainly because it is perceived to interfere with the education of the child:

*"Parents want their children to go to school and be fully committed to their studies, therefore, parents refuse to allow their children get involved in sports/training, because they believe this would be a form of distraction for the child. So, the task of the coach is to convince parents that their children can still go to school and be focused on their studies as well as going to training to develop their athletic talents" (C3)*

*"...No parent is willing to support the child to do sports training, they believe doing so will distract the child from his studies, so parents need to allow their children do sports and also support them both financially and emotionally" (C5)*

*"In a normal condition, parents should provide encouragement to their children but rather; Nigerian parents see sport as a kind of distraction to the education of their children and would do anything to prevent their children from playing any sport" (C4)*

*“...Parents also prevent their children from taking part in sports because they believe it is a barrier to the children’ academic development. But I told them that there are many athletes who are doing very well in their studies” (C7)*

Apart from the perceived interference between family priorities and athletes’ development, the financial realities of many Nigerian families and communities do not work in favour of talent development in sports. With the high rate of unemployment in Nigeria, parents are unable to fund athletes’ development even if they decide to support their children involvement in sports. Participants reported that many parent are unemployed, and those who are employed are mainly low-income earners whose incomes are barely enough to cater for the core needs of the family. Similarly, the majority of the athletes were reported to be from the under-privileged, low-income earning families. Children from more privileged backgrounds are scarcely found in sports because their parents enrol them in high tuition schools where their activities are tightly monitored, and as such, they are fully focused on their studies and have no time for sports participation except when it is necessary for recreational reasons. This social stratification is a further indication that sport development is considered as a reserved for the underdogs. The responses from participants in the quotes below show that children from poor parental backgrounds dominate TID in sport:

*“When we talk about support, the first thing we need to recognise is the social status of the people that are predominant in sports participation in Nigeria. Sports in Nigeria is dominated by children from poor family background, their parents are either unemployed or among the low-income earners. Therefore, parents are unable to*

*provide for the basic needs of athletes including training kits, transportation, feeding and even in some cases there are accommodation problems” (C5)*

*“Most of the parents whose children take part in sports are unable to support financially. So, it is highly expedient that the government, in collaboration with the private sector, and even well-to-do individuals to rescue the sport sector by developing funding/sponsorship programmes for talent development, because government cannot do it alone” (C2)*

*“I have had to bring athletes into my house, shelter them and feed them because definitely, they could not find any alternative. This is more so because it is only the children from poor backgrounds that get involved in sports, those who have privileged/rich background will never be allowed to join any sports training because they are well shielded by their parents, so the coach is left with the option of financing the development of his athletes” (C3)*

Of course, one of the direct consequences of poverty and unemployment among families is that parents do not have the financial capability to support TID. This is not only because sport development does not appear among the priorities of parents, but also, TID in sports is capital intensive. So, parents who can hardly afford to fund the education of their children would consider any investment in TD as unnecessary expenditure. Successful development therefore requires athletes to cultivate strong resilience against these huge financial barriers. It is important to note that like the issue of education, poverty is a common



problem among Nigeria families. In the quotes below, participants speak about the negative effects of poverty among families, on athletes' development in Nigeria:

*“Nigerian athletes need assistance financially, they need money for kits, feeding, and transportation and in some cases, accommodation because most parents cannot afford this because majority of the athletes are from poor families. Those who are students need assistance with their school fees, and that is why giving them scholarships will go a long way to assist their development” (C3)*

*“Sport development is capital intensive, take transportation for example, in Akure here, the cost of transportation to and from training alone is up over 40% of the earning of an average parent (because many of them are low income earners), and by my research it will cost about 200,000.00 naira for athlete to support him/herself in a year, so there is need for somebody to bridge the gap otherwise the coach will have to support the athletes financially” (C3)*

The enormousness of the challenge poverty pose to TID is expressed in the following quotes, as elite coaches revealed that many parents couldn't afford to feed their children properly. Therefore, athletes were exposed to poor nutrition:

*“Another factor you consider with developing athletes is their nutrition. Because they are still growing, you must encourage them to feed properly and ensure that their diets are well balanced; this is where the coach may also need to commit himself financially*

*because the parents may not be able to afford balanced diets for the athletes” (C3)*

*“There are various barriers to sport development in Nigeria, for instance, an average Nigerian athlete cannot afford good nutrition...and other very basic needs, this is a great challenge to talent development in Nigeria” (C2)*

While parents’ concerns about the effects of TID in sports on academic development of their children, and even the financial incapability of families may be rational arguments against sports development, the data revealed some cynical reasons while parents discouraged their children from getting involved in TID. For instance, some parents feel that athletic development would reduce the chances of their female children getting married in the future. For those parents, a girl who trains regularly will develop body muscles that would make her look less feminine and thus less attractive to prospective husbands. Furthermore, inaccurate perceptions include the fear that regular sporting activities would have negative effects for the girl child’s fertility. Parents jealously guide against these concerns because marriage and child bearing are on the front burner of the socio-cultural expectations. In the quotes below, participants expressed the fears among parents that sport participation may hinder their female children’s family life:

*“For female athletes, their parent will say that athletic development will expose the girls to having boyfriend and other behaviours that are inimical to their academic development. They may say that the girls would develop body muscles and look unattractive to possible suitors in the future. And for the boys, the parents would say*

*if they start training they will no longer take academics seriously and would end up being criminals and thugs in the community” (C1)*

*“There are also parents who believe that active sport participation will have negative effects on the future of the daughters; they believe that when a lady develops so many muscles that she will no longer be attractive to men and so have problem with getting married. Other would even say that girls who do sports will have problem with child bearing and all these erroneous beliefs are built on ignorance and superstitions” (C7)*

Parents refuse to allow their children to get involved in athletic development; sport participation is literarily seen as an act of disobedience among children, with severe consequences for acting contrarily to parents’ directives. The quote below is an indication that it is difficult for athletes to secure the supports of the family for TID:

*“Coaching developing athletes in this part of the world is not always very easy, because first, it is difficult to get parents to release their children for sports training. It is very rear to see parents who want their children to do sports, majority of parents will not allow you to take their children for training...” (C6)*

Coaches reported that they have to speak to parents to solicit their supports for their children’s involvement in TID. However, it was revealed that most parents would not yield to coaches’ entreaties for family support. In fact, parents perceived that coaches have chosen the coaching profession because of their inability to secure a profitable employment

elsewhere. These views are illustrated in the quotes below:

*“Nigerian parents are always against their children taking part in sports, on many occasions, we have had to go and plead with parents to release their children for training but they will refuse us and insist that their children must not get involved in any type of sport development” (C1)*

*“No matter what you say, parents refuse to allow their children to take part in sports, they will even insult me by saying I jumped into coaching because I couldn’t get a job as an engineer, so it’s that difficult to get parents support the athletic development of their children” (C1)*

As a result, athletes who eventually develop their sporting potentials did so without family support. This meant that there was no financial provision to cater for the needs of such athletes as indicated in the quote below:

*“Many Nigerian athletes don’t have their parents’ permission to train so their parents would not support them. Therefore, they need to buy kits, they need food, they need transportation and many other basic necessities of life, and if these needs are not met there will be problem with focus and attention in their training” (C1)*

Sport development was a secret children kept by all means from the knowledge of the family (particularly the parents). Athletes dodge their parents to attend training and continue

to pursue their athletic career with no inputs from the family until success achieved. However, if and when success is achieved, athletes are highly celebrated and they then become the pride of the same family that never supported their sporting career. So, the problem seemed not to be that people hate sports, but rather, it is difficult to believe that an average child can successfully develop a sporting career given the functional barriers to sport development in the society. In the quotes below, participants reported that athletes trained secretly to avoid the consequences of disobeying their parents:

*“There are many athletes who hide to do their trainings because their parents must not be aware that they are doing sports, some even hide it from their siblings. But when they win, everybody would start to celebrate them as heroes” (C3)*

*“In the developed countries, you see parents going to watch their children both in trainings and in competitions to give them moral supports, But here it is not so. Nigerian athletes only rely on internal supports (the supports the athletes give to themselves) because the external supports are not there” (C3)*

Conversely, there appeared to be a category of parents, which would allow their children to take part in sports because of the perceived financial return. This category of parents, as revealed in the quotes below, probably cannot afford to send their children to school and thus; the children are not actually fully engaged in the education system. Therefore, such families see sport development, as an opportunity to receive some financial rewards from the government who they sense would be funding sport development:

*“I have seen parents that when you invite their children for training, the first question they ask you is that how much the child will be paid for training, so you find it difficult to go back and approach the same person for financial assistance, otherwise, they will just ask their children to quit” (C4)*

*“Parents have not been encouraging. Even with regards to buying kits, parents believe that they are doing the government a favour by allowing their child to take part in sports, and so the government should be responsible for the materials and kits needed for training. In fact they expect their children should be given allowances for training and that is the mindset of the parents, so it is difficult to get them to support sport development” (C4)*

5.3.2.2 The school environment is hostile to TID. As with the families, every other section of the community was according to the coaches not favourably disposed towards sport development. For example, the school did not encourage TID in sports; teachers were opposed to athletic development because they believe that developing a sporting career will prevent their pupils/students from devoting enough time for academic development. Athletes therefore did not only face discouragement from the family, but were also exposed to a hostile school environment. Some school principals and some teachers alike, treated students who are athletes as they were not serious with their education, they punished students for sport participation just to discourage others from getting involved: the quotes below demonstrate the hostility of the school environment towards athletes’ development:

*“Even the teachers and lecturers who should collaborate with the coach and the parents in supporting the development of the athletes are not encouraging, they consider athletes as unserious students who waste their time on sports” (C1)*

*“When you do sports as a student in Nigeria you are seen as ‘a cast away’. Teachers and lecturers would see you as unserious with your studies because they see you playing sports; while in a real sense, they are supposed to be supportive of your development” (C3)*

*“There is a lot of discouragement from the schools. In a case where a school principal takes sports participation as a crime for the students, he would oppose sports openly and go as far as punishing students for playing sports, this makes it difficult for the children to develop interest in training” (C7)*

Apart from the negative attitudes of teachers towards TID, the education system generally does not recognise sport participation and athletes’ development as making important contributions to the overall development of the child. The school curriculum in Nigeria leaves little room for sport development. For instance, at the primary school level, children only have access to P.E. sessions once a week with a session lasting for about two hours. This poses significant impediment to sport development because it is only in the school that children could experience any semblance of organised sport. Even more discouraging is the fact that P.E. is not included in the secondary school curriculum, and there is no sport

development related subject in replacement. Though P.E. is primarily aimed at promoting healthful living among school children and not to enhance TD in sports, P.E. sessions have remained the only contact school aged children have with organised sports. Therefore, the absence of P.E. in the secondary school is a major setback to TID in sports. In the following quotes, participants recognised the lowly position of TID in the Nigerian school system:

*“Another setback is that sports are not recognized in the school curriculum in Nigeria, at best it is an extra-curricular activity. This reinforces a negative attitude towards sports development among parents and even teachers” (C3)*

*“...School curriculum do not recognise sport development at all, and that is why the athletes are faced with so many challenges trying to have a balance between training session and academic workload; the school does not recognise sporting activities as an important part to the total development of the child” (C6)*

Participants expressed the need for the government to lead the way in promoting sport development both in schools and also in the local communities. The current data showed an acute lack of sporting facilities in schools and in the communities. Elite coaches therefore had the opinion that government should invest in sporting facilities in the government owned school and also create proper regulations to ensure that privately owned educational institutions have the right environment to encourage sport development. In the quotes below, coaches explained the need for deliberate government intervention in creating conducive talent development environments in the Nigerian education system:



*“...The government as well as the athletic federation in the country have a lot of roles to play. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that the environments both at schools and within the communities are conducive for talent development” (C1)*

*“We have a situation where majority of schools, most especially, the private schools which are the most sought after by parents, do not have sports facilities. Therefore, it becomes difficult to discover talent, unless when they do inter-house sports competition, which happens once a year” (C6)*

Another indication that sports participation is poorly valued in schools is that there are no rewards for good performance in sports. The role of rewards and positive reinforcement in encouraging learning cannot be overemphasised. For example, students who perform experientially well in their studies are often given prizes and scholarships to encourage them to put in more effort and also to motivate other students to apply more commitment to their studies. Like students with excellent academic performance, coaches, in the quotes below, advocated some rewards for sport performance in order to encourage more efforts from athletes, and interest in TID:

*“Young athletes, those who do well from the inter house sports competitions should be rewarded so that they have the sense of recognition for taking part in sport, this will motivate them to give commitment to further development” (C1)*

*“Exceptional athletes can be motivated by subsidising their school fees or by giving them full scholarship for their studies; after all, students who perform well academically are often rewarded that way. And that is one of the reasons many parents believe that sport is a waste of time and would prefer their children to be fully committed to their academic development and not sports” (C1)*

### **5.3.3 Drivers of TD Success**

4.3.3.1 Athletes’ Psychology. Though the many challenges to sports and athletes’ development in Nigeria make the dream of TID in sports very difficult to achieve, this data suggest that athletes who are committed to their development, even in the face of all the barriers, moved on to achieve success in their athletic career. There seemed to be a unique psychology common to successful Nigerian athletes. For instance, while previous studies have reported the importance of support and encouragement to TID in sports, Nigerian athletes saw the absence of support as a normal feature of the TID process. In the absence of effective environments for development, athletes relied on psychological strength to follow through their development. According to the elite coaches, the athletes’ mindset is the most important factor of success. Successful development required athletes to take full responsibility and control of their own progress; athletes worked harder to compensate for the poor environment and were determined to overcome the hostility from the society. Athletes did not blame failure on the family, the school, the government and the entire community, which were not supportive of sport development; rather, the athletes put themselves at the centre of their development and developed a strong resilience to the barriers they may face within the society.

*“Nigerian athletes struggle against a lot of odds; there are no facilities, there are no sponsors, there are no supports, these are the challenges of sports development that athletes have to confront in Nigeria. Hence, each athlete has to find the way through and build up himself. That is why I told you earlier “I have seen miracles”, I have seen the most unexpected happen because a particular athlete has developed a personal (internal) motivation to succeed” (C4)*

*“Athletes’ progress depends solely on their efforts, because there is no programme in place. Therefore, the phases an athlete goes through to become an elite athlete in Nigeria is entirely based on the decision of the athlete, we have seen athletes who broke through within one year, and those who worked for years without any outstanding success, so it depends on the athletes and their trainers” (C5)*

*“The greatest supports athletes need for success is from themselves, you must be your own ultimate support and that is the only time when you cannot fail, because you have to believe in what you are doing to be able to do it successfully” (C1)*

*“I encourage my athletes to take control of their development and never to give up in the face of difficulties. I encourage my athletes to create a mental picture of their goals in the mind so that they will be able to pursue them with some degrees of certainty” (C2)*

Another component of the psychology of success is the determination to succeed. Determination was seen as an important factor of development because athletes needed to be determined in order to face the hostile environment. For example, TID in sports in the Nigerian context entails disobedience to parents and its consequences; hence, athletes must be determined to face (regularly) whatever punishment comes with sport participation, which in most instances include, rejection and abandonment by the parents. Similarly, athletes have to get to the high-elite level before there is any reward for sport performance, therefore, athletes must be determined to sustain their efforts until success is achieved. In the following quotes, participants speak about the role of determination in TID in Nigeria:

*“The engine room of success in sport in Nigeria is determination, because in this part of the world we don’t have the facilities, there are no good sport programmes, food and nutrition is poor, the financial backing is not there. With all these barriers and many more that we face in the Nigerian sport development environment, it takes determination for an athlete to navigate through the problems and make it to the international stage” (C6)*

*“One of the major assignments of the coach in Nigeria is to continue to motivate the athletes because it’s only by determination that they can make it to the top. No matter the circumstances and conditions you face in the environment, if you set your mind to achieve a goal, with determination and hard work you will get there” (C6)*

*“The mind of the athlete is important, some people are very determined and whatever*

*they set up to achieve they can achieve, with this type of mindset, nothing is impossible. If an athlete decides to train and become the best he/she can be, he would do it with joy and a sense of fulfilment, they will never complain about challenges or contemplate dropping out” (C1)*

Another element of the psychology of success in the Nigerian context is what the coaches termed ‘*I can do spirit*’. The term ‘*I can do spirit*’ is used to illustrate a strong belief among athletes that they have the potentials to become successful elites, and therefore, commit themselves to the development process. This attitude exemplified the psychology of successful development among Nigeria athletes. With the ‘*I can do spirit*’, athletes were ready to suffer the deprivation and neglect associated with TID and keep their focus on development both at home, in school and in the community; no amount of difficulties is enough to waver their determination until success is achieved. The quotes below expressed the effect of this psychology on sport development in Nigeria:

*“One thing that helps Nigerian athletes is the ‘I can do’ spirit. Once a Nigerian believes and has passion for a course he would give whatever it takes to get to success and that is why we see breakthroughs in sports” (C3)*

*“Though sometimes, it may be difficult for some people and easier for others but at the end of the day, what matters most is the outcome. I believe that with hard work and commitment to one’s goals and aspirations, the end is always going to be great” (C3)*

Elite coaches in Nigeria recruited athletes into their teams based on the assessment of how mentally tough the individual is. According to the participants, possessing the physical characteristics necessary for success in a given sport is not as important as having the *'I can do spirit'*. Athletic success in Nigeria is more likely for people who have the ability to defy all odds in the pursuit of their vision for sport development, so merely having the physical attributes is not the only factor of success. Rather, coaches look for those athletes who can do the usual. Such athletes are emotionally stable, they are undaunted in the face of the very many obstacles to sport development in the environment, and would continue to pursue their goals even when there are no supports for development. Therefore, current ability and performance are not seen as vital for future success as illustrated in the quotes below, but a strong mindset to overcome all the challenges of the environment is key to successful development:

*"There is need for mental toughness, like I said earlier, even if the physical features are not there naturally, with determination they can be developed, so we pick people who have strong mind-set" (C4)*

*"...So like I said earlier, I don't go about looking for children who are likely to be better than their peers, I look for people who have decided to give whatever it takes; I know that the choice of the individual is the most important factor of success or otherwise in sport" (C3)*

*"If an athlete is not psychologically stable, there is no how you can bring out the best*

*in him. Even outside the sport domain, if you are not emotionally stable you may not be able to carry out your normal daily activities” (C5)*

*“I don’t analyse people based on their abilities because I have seen miracles in life. You never can tell who will make it and who would not, so I do not limit people according to their ability. I have seen people who do not show any sign of talent who have gone ahead to become successful athletes, and I have seen people who everyone believed was going to be future champions and yet ended nowhere in sport” (C1)*

After identifying athletes who possess a resilient mindset against the barriers to sport development in the society, coaches devote their time to further strengthening the psychology of young athletes in order to build a rock type commitment to development. One way this is done is by educating the prospective athletes about the future of stardom that lie ahead of them if success is achieved. Efforts are made to help athletes develop the passion for the sport and to create a bond between the athlete and the sport so that developing athletes (almost) believe that they could not live without athletics. Coaches tell stories of current and past elites to motivate the type of attitudes that would lead to successful development in the athletes. For example, in the quote below, one of the participants demonstrated how coaches convinced young athletes that sport development is worth the sacrifices required:

*“You need to win individual athletes and develop the interest and love of the sport in them before they can give their commitment to training. Also, as a coach the athlete must have confidence and trust in you” (C4)*

**5.3.3.2 Coaches' supports.** The coach plays a key role in athletes' development in Nigeria. In fact, the coach is the only source of support for sport development. The data showed that coaches shoulder the responsibility of identifying young talent and drawing a programme of development for them. And because there are no guidelines for sport development, athletes' training programmes of athletes are based on the initiatives of coaches. The fate of athletes is determined to a large extent by the orientation and knowledge of the coach. A very pertinent question is how compliant are the training programmes drawn up by coaches with evidence based TID practices. For example, it was revealed in one of the quotes below that coaches neglect the need to progressively graduate athletes from one phase of development to another, even when they are aware that such systematic process would aid athletes' development. The data revealed that athletes were rushed through to senior performance without paying proper attention to the foundational phases. What is clear however, is that coaches make personal sacrifices to ensure that athletes reach their full potential within their sports:

*“...It depends on the orientation and knowledge of the coach. Because it is the coach who will identify the athlete and draw his programme for the athlete and gradually take the athlete through the various stages of development identified by the coach”*  
(C4)

*“Though we know that athletes are supposed to pass through several stages i.e. local government to stage, to region before they get to the national stage, the structure is*



*not in operation in Nigeria. That is why coaches rely on their individual initiatives to develop their athletes” (C6)*

*“Unfortunately, to be sincere, there are no programmes for sport development in the country. Alternatively, coaches take their personal initiatives to formulate development, training and camping programmes for developing athletes” (C2)*

Elite coaches expressed their frustrations with the fact that they receive no supports from those who should support sports development (i.e. the family, the government, the school) in their efforts to help young athletes develop their talents. According to the participants, they improvised for training materials because there were no provisions for sporting facilities to aid athletic development. Though coaches were willing to help the athletes out of the passions they have for sports, they lacked the financial support and access to effective environments for TD:

*“...But again, there are limits to the extent to which you can help the athletes as a coach. Sport development is capital intensive, and the types of materials and facilities required are such that no individual coach will be able to acquire for his athletes, at best the coach can only improvise, which is what we all do” (C6)*

*“The supports are not there, the government, the parents, the schools; nobody is showing any interest in supporting athletes. In most cases, athletes and their coaches will have to make do with whatever is available” (C5)*

*“Though because of financial ability, we may not be able to provide all the necessary facilities and best environment for training, but we still improvise and try to use what we have” (C4)*

While the efforts of coaches to build a bridge between the pitiable state of sport development environments in Nigeria and athletes’ dream of realising their full potential in sport is laudable, this data showed the need for proper coaching education to ensure that coaches possess the right knowledge to oversee the TID process. From the data, it seemed that the intervention of coaches is driven by their passion and love for sports, and not necessarily because they have been properly prepared for the coaching profession. In some of the quotes below, participants demonstrate that coaching is something they engage in to fulfil their passions because there is no remuneration for coaching, but rather, they sacrifice their time and resources to support athletes’ development:

*“At the moment, the coach relies on his discretion to design training programme for his athletes, hence the athletes’ fate relies solely on the experience and knowledge of the coach. The question is what happens if the coach is not getting it right?” (C5)*

*“Based on my experience, I can say that Nigerian coaches (especially in athletics) are very hard working. They have a lot of passion and love for athletics otherwise, athletics would have been dead in Nigeria, in a situation where nobody pays the coach not even little supports, and the coach will have to work elsewhere to raise money to support*

*himself and support the athletes, it takes hard work and commitment from the coach to uphold athletics in Nigeria since there is no encouragement at all” (C3)*

*“You know in Nigeria we don’t have a clear line of division of labour. In Ondo state for example, I work with developing athletes as well as scouting for new talents. I also work with the elite athletes and even the high performance athletes, so that is the reality of the environment” (C4)*

Coaches felt that they were not given the recognition they deserved by the authorities in charge of the management and administration of sports. For example, coaches on their own, invest their time and resources into identifying and developing new talents while the agencies of government that are in charge of sport management showed no interest in TID. However, whenever there were international competitions, the National Sports Commission organises a national trial where athletes would come from all over the country to compete and the successful ones are recruited into the national team for international events. When this happens, the coach that identified and developed the selected athletes would be sidelined in the process. While in the national team, athletes are managed by the national coaches who were not involved in the development of the athletes and therefore have no working relationship with them.

The national coaches also ensure that athletes do not communicate with their original coaches, and those who disobey them may face disciplinary actions which may include expulsion from the team. As a result, the development coach who had worked with the athletes from the beginning would not be part of the eventual success story. The reason behind

poor treatment of development coaches may not be unconnected with the culture of corruption, which is deeply rooted in sports administration in Nigeria. For instance, if and when athletes record successful performance at international competitions, they are highly rewarded by the government and such rewards are extended to their coach. That is why the national coaches make sure that athletes are disconnected from their original coach so they can have the rewards instead. The following quotes demonstrate that coaches are not well recognised by the sport management authorities:

*“As a coach, you identify athlete probably from when he/she was still very young and work hard on the athlete to develop his potential, but once the athlete performs well at the national trial, he is taken away and the coach is given no recognition for his efforts over the years, the coach is not even given the privilege to follow his athlete to whatever competition it is to be executed. A new coach who has no background knowledge of the athlete will then be the one to take them to the competition, so it is denigrating to the coach who bring up the athletes from the beginning” (C2)*

*“The managers of the national teams even make the situation worse by making sure no link exist between the athletes (while they are in the national teams) and their original coach. The athletes would be threatened and because they would not want to lose the opportunity of being part of the national team in the future they have to comply with whatever they are told to do” (C5)*

*“Also, when the athletes go to international competitions and perform well and win*

*medals, the government would arrange compensation for the team where the athletes and their coaches are rewarded for doing the nation proud. But painfully, instead of recognising the coach who trained up the athletes, the recognition and rewards will be given the coach who took them to the competition who never contributed anything to the development of the athlete” (C1)*

Apart from the lack of rewards for coaches, participants explained that coaches are unknown to the system. From the quotes below, it was clear that coaches were not regulated, and as such, could do whatever they deem necessary with their development athletes. The lack of appropriate care and control for the activities of coaches may be harmful to athletes and their sporting careers. But not withstanding all the challenges faced by the coach, they still sacrifice their time and efforts to ensure that young talents are assisted to fulfil their potentials in sports:

*“Nobody cares about you as a coach not even for what you do, they don’t even know your name. I don’t like talking about this issue because it is not something you will be happy to talk about” (C1)*

*“The system expects you to go and do whatever you like to train up the athletes and when they perform well, the government takes the glory and nothing goes to the man who did the job” (C1)*

The role of the coach in the Nigerian context goes beyond organising and supervising

training activities for athletes. Coaches reportedly develop closer relationship with athletes so that the progress in development is seen as the collective responsibility of both the coach and the athletes. The coach is also a role model to athletes, as earlier mentioned, parents are against their children taking part in TID and thus do not offer any support for athletic development. In fact, athletes conceal their involvement in sport from the knowledge of their parents and instead look up to the coach as a father figure and a model. The coach is thus a father to his athletes and provides the emotional as well as financial support that athletes would not get from home. This close relationship between athletes and their coaches fosters a deeper understanding and trust between the two, which ultimately enhance the possibility of successful development. Also, because majority of the coaches were formally athletes who themselves have experienced the hostility of the social culture to sport development, their stories were points of encouragement to athletes and so, the coach:

*“Also, beyond being a coach, I see myself as a father to the children. I am concerned about their emotional well-being, I make sure am aware of whatever problem they have even those that are not sport related, and do anything I can to help them solve it to make sure that they are comfortable, because if athletes are not comfortable they will not improve as much as you want, no matter the training you give them” (C6)*

*“You have to get the children closer to you because it is only under close relationship between athletes and the coach that the inner talent can be revealed” (C7)*

*“I have athletes that I can say t are where they are because of God’s support, because*

*at the time of need and problem everyone will desert them, they will have to depend on themselves or their coach for whatever help and support they need” (C7)*

The strong psychology of athletes discussed above is connected with the level of motivation and encouragement provided by the coach, and those encouragements received from former and or current elite athletes. One of the major functions of the coach is to assist athletes to build strong resilience against the hostility to TID in sports from the society. Coaches show athletes that it is possible to overcome the challenges they face in their development. Some of the techniques employed are to explain and reinforce the coaches personal stories, and the testimonies of former and current top elites in sports who have experienced similar barriers but still developed to become successful elites through their resilience. The coach and successful elite athletes are practical examples that rejection and hostility would turn to acceptance and celebration once athletes become champions. This psychological priming is established in the quotes below:

*“One of the major tasks of the coach is to find the right words that will encourage athletes to face these numerous challenges and barriers and overcome them, so that they remain committed to the fulfilment of the aims of their involvement in sports. In some instances, we have to cite previous/successful athletes who were faced with same or similar situations but yet they moved on to become legends in their sports, such stories give hope to developing athletes that they too can make it to the top since someone had done so in the past against all odds” (C1)*

*“My personal story as an athlete also has been a point of encouragement to my developing athletes; my father did everything possible to stop me from any form of sport participation, he burnt all my training kits and restrict my movement, cut my allowances, in fact, when my father discovered I was dodging him to attend training, he went to my coaches and warned them never to allow me train with them, he threatened to get them arrested if I ever attended their training again. But then I still went ahead behind him to become elite athletes. So these stories help our young and developing athletes to develop self-motivation and resilience to overcome all the barriers” (C3)*

*“We encourage the athletes to help one another...they also become a good example for other athletes to know that success is achievable” (C1)*

Coaches also make financial contributions to the development of their athletes. This may include helping athletes with feeding, transportation and in some cases shelter; otherwise athletes may become unable to continue with development. The need for coaches to make financial sacrifices is due to the fact that, majority of athletes take part in sports against the wish of their parents, or without the knowledge of the parents and therefore can not approach their parents for any financial assistance. One important reason coaches support athletes with their personal money and as well rally successful athletes to make financial contributions towards athletes' development is to reinforce the culture of solidarity and supports among the sporting community. However, the major financial challenges to TID are beyond what coaches and their athletes can afford. For example, there are issues with funding and facilities;



this would require the direct investment from the government in building a reliable architecture for athletes' and sports development. In the absence of supports from the government, however, coaches improvise for training facilities and also give the little they can, to assist athletes with the basic needs in their development as demonstrated in the quotes below:

*“In many cases as well, coaches would have no option than to provide some financial supports to their athletes, because if they don't, the athlete may just dropout because of lack of provision. There was a time I had about 16 athletes living with me in my three-bedroom apartment, because there was no other alternative for shelter and feeding” (C1)*

*“Athletes and coaches are left to work with nothing in terms of facilities and supports for sport development. One advantage my athletes have is that I was part of the system as an athlete; I faced all these challenges as a developing athlete and even as a member of the senior national team before I became a coach. So I am aware of the problems and have resolved that I will do anything possible, including spending my own money, to alleviate the effects of the challenges on my athletes” (C6)*

*“As a coach, I have taken it upon myself to prevent my athletes from facing preventable challenges; I am always out there to make sure I have the right information for my athletes, and also to ensure that they are financed to attend competitions and even when necessary, I would offer to fund my athletes' travel and other expenses when*

*there is no alternative source of funding” (C7)*

*“We give all that we have into the development of our athletes. Similarly, we encourage the athletes to help one another. Those who make a breakthrough in their event and as a result could afford some levels of financial assistance would come back to help the others, they also become a good example for other athletes that success is achievable” (C1)*

#### **5.4 Discussion**

The objectives of this study were to examine the perceptions of coaches on the nature of sports development in Nigeria, and also to gain insight into how coaches assisted top elite athletes to achieve success in sport. The data revealed a number of key themes. Specifically, sport-organizational specific barriers and culture specific barriers were the two categories of barriers to TID in the Nigerian context. The results also identified success factors of athletes’ development including athletes’ psychology and the role of the coach. Many of the sport-organizational specific barriers to TID identified in this study are supportive of previous literature as they ranged from lack of formal pathways to sports development (e.g. Ojeme, 1985); lack of sporting facilities (e.g. Omobowale, 2009); corruption (e.g. Osoba, 1999; Marquette, 2012; Adefila, 2012; Elendu, 2012); poor implementation of government policies (e.g. Ewah & Ekeng, 2009; Makinde, 2005); administrative failures (e.g. Ikejiofor, 1999); to lack of funds for sport development (e.g. Ifeka, 2000). The culture specific barriers are related to the larger societal problems of poverty (e.g. Shola, 2010; Awotide, 2012; Kolawole *et al.*, 2015), and unemployment (e.g. Uyanga, 1979; Uwakwe, 2005; Innocent, 2014; Joshua & Helen, 2013; Iwu, 2015).

The data showed that many families were opposed to TID; there were conflicts between TID in sports and family priorities (e.g. Senbanjo & Oshikoya, 2010; Kimm, *et al.*, 2002). Parents resisted their children's involvement in sport because education was seen as the only means of defeating poverty (e.g. Aigbokhan, 2000; Obadan, 2001), while sports development was seen as a distraction to academic development of the child. These socio-cultural factors combined to create a society-wide hostility against TID in sports (e.g. Saavedra, 2003). Contrary to the recommendation of Martindale, Collins and Abraham (2007), the home (i.e. parents and siblings), school, government and the entire society constituted functional barriers to athletes' and sports development (Elendu, 2012). The family for example, is opposed to sports development because they felt that sport has little potential for poverty alleviation (e.g. Eze, 2015) and as such discouraged TID in sports. Whereas, research from other cultures (e.g. Cote, 1999; Durand-Bush, 2000) revealed that parents showed significant interest in their children's development and also make sufficient supports (e.g. financial, emotional, and encouragement) available for their children's athletic development.

Similarly, the school environment was not conducive for TID. It is good to stress that Nigerian national policy on sport development identified the school among the mechanisms for athletic development. Educational as well as sports development were seen as important elements of the general development of the child (Federal ministry of youth and sport, 1989). However, the current results, in conjunction with the previous chapters, showed that the school lacked the clout to encourage TID. Problems identified with the school environment includes the absences of sports facilities, poor rewards system, and poor implementation of the school curriculum. For example, the time allocated for P.E. was being reportedly used for

other classes or activities (e.g. Toriola, 2000); the main excuse given for this negative behaviour towards sport is that the government does not empower the school (with facilities and funds). Also, behaviour of some teachers was not encouraging for developing athletes. For instance, teachers believed that students should be focused on their studies and not invest their time on sporting activities; thus, athletes are branded as the bad eggs in their class. As a result, some athletes who could not stand the moral burden placed on them would drop out, while many of those who succeeded said they took the discouragements in school as a challenge they needed to overcome, and they became more resolute to prove everyone who doubted them, wrong.

Another clear message from this investigation is the wide spread corruption and incompetence in sport administration in Nigeria. Participants reported that administrators were appointed without due considerations to the prerequisite knowledge and experience in sports administration and thus sports administration in Nigeria is characterised by incompetence on the part of the administrators (e.g. Onifade, 1985; Bogopa, 2001; Jeroh, 2012). In simple terms, administrators don't know what to do. Similarly, administrators were alleged to mismanage funds meant for the development and maintenance of sporting facilities and therefore have left most of the sports facilities in Nigeria in a state of total neglect and disrepair (e.g. Toriola, 2000; Omobowale, 2009; Asiyai, 2012). Administration has been argued to play a key role in sports development (e.g. Watt, 1998; Sam Jackson, 2004; Kidd, 2008), without good administration, the goal of achieving success in TID may be no more than a mirage because athletes, coaches and other stakeholders in sports development will only work on the policy framework provided by sports administrators. It is therefore not surprising that performances of Nigerian athletes and teams on the international stage have

been unstable and unenviable due to politics of sports administration in the country (e.g. Wright, 1978). Previous studies have suggested that sports development in Nigeria requires sound policy decisions to engage qualified and seasoned sports administrators who can plan and implement effective agenda for sport development (e.g. Mgbor, 2006; Aluko & Adodo, 2011;), the current findings lend voice to this suggestion.

Severe as these barriers were, successful Nigerian athletes defied all the challenges posed by the hostile social culture to achieve top elite success in their athletic career. One major driver of success in TID was athletes' psychology (e.g. Olawale, 2007; Nia & Bessharat, 2010). Successful elites shared unique psychology of resilience (e.g. Smith *et al.*, 1995; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013) against all the levels of barriers to sport development. In fact, success or otherwise is mainly determined by the mindset of athletes. And as such, elite coaches reported that athletes' psychology was a major factor for successful talent identification and development. Key among the psychological features of successful development in a Nigeria context (as it is revealed by the data) is 'I can do spirit' which is characterised by passion, determination, and self-belief.

Athletes deployed these mental elements to regulate their approach and responses to the difficult environment in which they develop; therefore, self-regulation appeared to be important for successful talent development in Nigeria. This finding provides further evidence for the role of self-regulation in talent development (e.g. Critien & Ollis, 2006; Nesbit, 2012, Blair, 2010). While this finding confirms athletes' report of how they achieved success through psychological resilience to barriers, the finding also gives an indication of how coaches mentored resilient behaviours in their athletes. For instance, when a parent refuses the child to get involved in TID and the coach has unsuccessfully tried to convince

them, the coach would encourage athletes to defy family restriction on sport participation and also support the athlete to overcome the consequences of such ‘defiant’ behaviour (e.g. providing food, money, and shelter). Thus, to athletes, the coach is not just a technical guide, but also a father substitute in their career development.

Also, the results revealed that the supports coaches gave to their developing athletes make significant contributions towards successful development. This finding provides further evidence for earlier studies that suggest a relationship exist between quality of coaching and successful development (e.g. Bloom, 1985; Saavedra, 2003; Short & Short, 2005; Bouwer, 2010; Schlatter & McDowall, 2014). Apart from designing and implementing training programmes, Nigerian coaches played other non-sport specific roles, such as making personal sacrifices to support athletes financially and providing the encouragement and motivation that should have been provided by the family. Similarly, the coach served as a role model by showing personal commitment to athletes’ progression. The data equally supports the role of the coach in the development and deployment of mental skills to aid successful development (e.g. MacNamara, 2013;). For example, participants reported that the coach assisted them to defy family resistance by assuring them that once they are successful the family will turn back to support them, so athletes continue to avoid their parents to attend trainings.

Since athletes did not get support from the family and other important stakeholders like the teachers and other personnel in schools, the coach became an important refuge for supports and assistance. Coaches also tried to mobilise other supports e.g. family (albeit normally unsuccessful). As critical as the role of the coach is, the data revealed several issues with quality of, and reward for coaching in Nigeria. For instance, it was revealed that Nigerian coaches suffer deprived conditions of service and are poorly rewarded (Abdulgafar, 2013;

Eddie, 2012), many coaches worked without rewards and recognition, so they keep other employment and only engaged in coaching for their passion for sports development. Like the athletes, the coach also suffers some psychological stigma from members of the community; one of the participants explained that a parent had once humiliated him because the parent was of the opinion that he (the coach) was into coaching because who could not secure a decent job after graduation and warned that the coach should not allow the child to train with him again. This is different from the evidence from other cultures.

Furthermore, the data revealed that the problem of poor implementation of government policies constitutes a barrier to sports development in Nigeria. Though previous studies (e.g. Crosby, 1996; Mambula, 2002; Soludo, Ogbu & Chang, 2004; Makinde, 2005; Olukunle, 2008) have reported in the wider national economic sense that Nigeria's growth and development is hampered by lack of policy implementation, the current finding brings to bear the e impact of policy implementation failure on sports development. Sport development appeared to be among the least priority for the Nigerian government; though the government have created a document on sport policy way back in 1989 (Ministry of youths and sports, 1989), no concrete steps had been taken to ensure that the policy is implemented. This finding supports earlier reports that the Nigerian government has not been committed to policy implementation (e.g. Makinde, 2005) and presents a contrast to the practice in other cultures (e.g. Australian, United Kingdom). For example, the Australian government has constantly reviewed and adjusted their sport development plan to suit its objectives (e.g. Australian Olympic committee, 2009; Australian Sports Commission, 2008; Commonwealth Department of health and Aging, 2010), whereas little concrete steps had been taken by its Nigerian counterpart to turn its sporting plans to actions.

Though there is yet no clear evidence that sport development policy has a direct influence on international sporting success (e.g. Bosscher *et al.*, 2006), but it has been demonstrated that having a clear policy direction has positive impacts on national sports development (e.g. Green, 2004; 2007). Some of the consequences of lack of policy implementation noted in the current finding include that the Nigerian sports development environment lacked coherent and consisted long-term development plan, which has been identified among the factors of effective talent development environment (e.g. Martindale, Collins & Abraham, 2007). While many nations that have clear policy direction like United Kingdom, Australia and Canada, have witnessed high levels of investment into sports development (e.g. Grix & Carmichael, 2012), the current finding indicated a lack of investment in sports development in Nigeria, thus the poor state of facilities and sporting infrastructures across the country (e.g. Toriola, 2000; Akarah, 2012).

This investigation has made a number of contributions to the TID discuss. To begin with, the nature of talent development in a Nigerian context has not been previously researched, thus the introduction of coaching in the Nigerian context to the TID discuss is the first achievement of the study. Also, the current results added more weight to the argument on the influence of socio-cultural factors on TID in sports (e.g. Maguire & Pearton, 2000; Henriksen *et al.*, 2010; Shen, 2012; Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009). While previous studies have nurtured the idea that the cultural contexts of sports development are important to the design or adoption of TID models for a given society (e.g. Collins & Bailey, 2013), the current data suggest that socio-cultural factors can in fact determine the effectiveness or otherwise of TID models.

The revelations about the strong influences of social culture on TID in Nigeria also



enriched the debate about the dynamic nature of TID in sports (Abbott & Collins, 2004; Vaeyens *et al.*, 2008; Phillips *et al.*, 2010; Collins & MacNamara, 2011), such that the factors of successful development in a culture might become barriers in another. For example, Martindale, Collins and Abraham (2007) promoted the role of supports from the family (i.e. parents, siblings), the community (i.e. peers) the school (i.e. teachers, friends, class & school mates) and the government in providing consistent and coherent support for TID, but in the Nigerian case, all the supports gears were reported to constitute functional barriers to TID. Nonetheless, through their resilient psychology (e.g. Martin-Krumm *et al.*, 2003; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012), top elite athletes overcome all the barriers to become successful in their sports, thus the model of athletes' development in Nigeria supports previous suggestion (e.g. Collins and MacNamara, 2012) that developing athletes may have to face some challenges to facilitate success at the elite level of sport performance. This may also mean that some features of TID in certain cultures have more relevance /importance compared to other cultures; perhaps the role of the coach and athletes' psychology come to the fore in the Nigerian context.

Another important message from the current result is its support for the need not to pay lip service to the role of psychological factors in making selection decision. For instance, though there is evidence for the importance of psychological factors to TID (e.g. Gould *et al.*, 2002; Jones, 2002; Gould & Maynard, 2009), it has been observed that many talent identification programmes still make selection decisions based on physiological factors and performance factors with little emphasis on the role of athletes' psychology (e.g. Abbott & Collins, 2004; Vaeyens *et al.*, 2008; Abbott *et al.*, 2002). Probably more than previously realized, this study suggests that psychological factors are key to talent development in sports.

In fact, in the Nigerian context, athletes' psychology constitutes a major consideration for inclusion in the TID process.

While this data strongly links athletic success in Nigeria with athletes' psychology, there is need for further studies to determine how this psychology is developed. For example, it will be interesting to know what comes first: the passion for sports or the psychology of resilience to social barriers. Participants in the previous chapter (i.e. elite athletes) identified their passion and love for athletics as a major contributor to their successful development, while the current finding points to the role of psychological factors, and in particular, psychological resilience to social barriers. What is clear however is that these two factors (i.e. athletes' passion for sport and athletes' psychology of resilience) are important for TID success in the Nigerian context. This is more so because elite coaches identified athletes' passion for sport as a component of the psychological resilience to the hostility of the society to TID in sports.

Finally, it is important to highlight some limitations of the current findings so that readers would have sufficient guidance in the application of the results. Firstly, the characteristic limitations of qualitative research methods must be considered before attempting to generalise the results. For example, the sample size was relatively small ( $n=7$ ) and thus, the possibility of variations in opinions and themes with in a larger sample should not be ruled out. Secondly, all participants in this study coached one sport (i.e. athletics); it is also being possible that coaches in other sports might add other experiences to the study that would enrich the findings. However, the current study was a follow up to the previous one in chapter three and thus interviewing the coaches of participants in the athletes' study would help to monitor the consistency or otherwise of the reported nature of TID in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the coaches and athletes' perceptions alone would not create a complete picture of the nature of sports development in Nigeria because other stakeholders (e.g. family, sports administrators and the government) have all been identified among the influencing factors of TID.

More specifically, the findings of the current study and those of the previous one (i.e. chapter 3) highlighted the influences of sport administrators and the government as well as the community on TID. For example, the government was reported to be slack about policy implementation; the family was resistant to sport development; and more broadly, Nigerian communities were reported to be hostile towards talent development in sports. Consequently, the next chapter of this thesis shall be exploring the community perceptions to the nature of athletes and sports development in Nigeria.

## **Chapter 6 – The Nature of Talent Development in Nigeria: Community Stakeholders’**

### **Perceptions**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter builds on findings from the investigations of the perceptions of elite athletes and those of elite coaches on the nature of talent development in Nigeria as presented in chapter three and four respectively. The purpose of the chapter was to investigate the context of talent development from the perception of stakeholders within Nigerian communities. Both the elite athlete and coach groups blamed some of the challenges to athletes and sports development on the attitudes of the family and other significant persons in the community towards sports development. Beginning from the home, to the school and the community, it was revealed that the Nigerian society is hostile to talent development in sports.

As such, the current study aims to probe into cultural practices and beliefs within the community to unearth underlining factors of the reported negative attitudes towards TD in sports. It is also important to validate the claims by athletes and coaches that they lacked supports for sports development by exploring the cultural context of TID in Nigeria more broadly. In other words, it is necessary to recognise that people personally affected by the challenging circumstances (e.g. athletes and coaches) may present a biased or highly individualised view of such processes. As such, the perceptions of suitably experienced individuals with (potentially) a more objective, ‘big picture’ overview of how children get involved in sports will likely add value to our understanding.

Indeed, such triangulation of data will be useful in establishing a more balanced and robust understanding of the talent identification and development processes, and the state of

sports and athletes' development within Nigeria. Given that different stakeholders have been shown to have different perceptions and priorities in talent development in other countries (e.g., Martindale, Collins & Abraham, 2007; Pankhurst, Collins & McNamara, 2012) the need to understand a range of major stakeholders' perspectives in talent development seems to be critical. With unlimited resources this may include for example, athletes, coaches, administrators, national governing bodies and parents. In fact, a number of researchers have used triangulation methods to understand sport development more holistically (e.g., Black & Holt, 2009; Martindale *et al.*, 2007; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005; Martindale *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, the fact that coherent support, which provides continuous and consistent guidance to athletes has been shown to be critical to successful development (e.g., Martindale, Collins & Abraham, 2007) it makes sense to glean an understanding of TD from a triangulated perspective.

As well as the potential usefulness of gaining an understanding from a number of perspectives, getting further insight into the specific cultural constraints that may exist in TID within a Nigerian context also appears necessary. For example, recent research (e.g., Collins & Bailey, 2013) has highlighted the need to take account of cultural differences when using and applying TD models. Specifically, Collins and Bailey (2013) warned against the dangers inherent in uncritically replicating 'effective' TD models from societies considered to be successful in talent development to others that aspire to achieve success in their quest for athletes and sports development. One of the key demerits of this practice is that the cultural context within which such models were developed is often not considered before their adoption. Other researchers have highlighted the potential culturally specific context of TID (e.g. Reilly *et al.*, 2000; Green & Oakley, 2001; Khanna, 2010; Collins & Bailey, 2013;

Gagné, 2004; Ollis *et al.*, 2006).

In summary, a society's perception of sports development and other culturally specific processes can affect the prospect of TD in sports among its people (e.g. Baker, Horton, Robertson-Wilson & wall, 2003). It is therefore necessary that attention be given to environmental factors in the efforts to promote participation and development in sports (e.g. Baker & Horton, 2004; Martindale, Collins & Daubney, 2005; Burgess & Naughton, 2010). Thus, this chapter is focused on the 'community perspective' to investigate the culture and beliefs that shaped social behaviour as it relates to talent development in sports. It is hoped that triangulating studies of this nature will enrich the understanding of the reader of the concept under study, since the triangulating method has been used successfully by previous studies (e.g. Gould, Dieffenbach & Moffett, 2002; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005; Black & Holt, 2009; Mills, Butt, Maynard & Harwood, 2012).

## **6.2 Methods**

### **6.2.1. Participants.**

The goal of this study was to establish the cultural context of TD in Nigeria by investigating the perceptions of community stakeholders to the challenges of talent development in Nigeria. It is therefore imperative that participants are carefully selected to reflect the types of knowledge and experience that would lead to in-depth understanding of the topic. The study thus needed to recruit participants among persons whose position in the community would avail the opportunity of experiencing the process of talent development in sports; and playing a role in helping children to develop their sporting talents; as well as having interactions with significant persons in TD such as coaches, teachers, parents and the larger community in relation to the topic under investigation. Consequently, the following

inclusion criteria were set for participants' recruitment: The first condition set for participants' recruitment was the level of education and or type of training acquired. Education was considered important to the achievement of the aim of this study because it would take an enlightened mind (especially in Nigerian context) to decipher the motive of the study and the contribution participation would make to its findings as well as sports development in Nigeria.

*Table 6.1: Background information of participants in the study described in chapter 6*

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Job at retirement</b>	<b>Years in service</b>	<b>Current role</b>
<b>P1</b>	75	Male	PhD	Lecturer	40	Community Leader
<b>P2</b>	62	Male	1 <sup>st</sup> Degree	Tutor General	35	Community Leader
<b>P3</b>	60	Male	1 <sup>st</sup> Degree	Head Teacher	35	Community Leader
<b>P4</b>	61	Male	1 <sup>st</sup> Degree	Bursar & Games master	35	Community Leader
<b>P5</b>	63	Female	NCE	Asst. Head teacher	35	Community Leader
<b>P6</b>	84	Male	NCE	Asst. Head teacher	35	Community Leader

Similarly, education is synonymous with exposure in Nigeria; Nigeria is a multicultural society with different ethnic groups across the various region of the country. Being educated in Nigeria meant that a person would have had to leave his/her own local community to live in another society (because educational institutions are located away from the local communities), and therefore interact with the different cultures in the country so that

they are able to bring their knowledge and experience of the differences and similarities among communities to bear on the motive of the study. Therefore, all participants in the study have at least a university degree except one who attended professional training institutes that are equivalent to the standard of university education (i.e. teacher training institutes). Similarly, the researcher ensured that participants' course of study were those that are related or would enhance the understanding of the current investigation (i.e. Physical Education, Health Education, Social studies, Religious education etc.). The sample therefore included educated individuals who have attended several educational institutions both in Nigeria and abroad and have varied certifications including National Certificate in Education, Bachelor degree holders, Master's degree holders, and a Ph.D. holder.

The second criterion considered for inclusion was the occupation and experience of prospective participants. In order to enhance the richness of the interactions between participants and the researcher, and of course the outcome of the study; it was necessary to ensure that participants' occupation is such that allow them to have direct interaction with children and also enable them play direct roles in the development of the child. This way, the study could guarantee that participants are aware of the patterns of relationships among developing or aspiring athletes; parents; coaches, and other significant persons in the community in relation to TID in sports. In terms of experience, this study intentionally targeted people who had retired from active service because then it would be certain that participants have enough personal experience to guarantee a wealth of practical knowledge in the research topic.

Hence, all participants in the study except two were retired school teachers who ranked from being a class teacher to the position of assistant school head and school head before



retiring from the teaching service. One of the participants was a school bursar who worked in several schools across many communities for thirty-five before retirement, this participant also doubled as a certified coach and served as sports and games master in many schools alongside his primary role as the bursar. Similarly, one of the participants was a retired Professor of Physical Education who in addition to teaching physical education and sports in the university also served in several national committees on sports organisation and administration.

And finally, the third criterion for inclusion was the current status or role of the prospective participants in the study. In the previous two studies of this thesis, athletes and coaches have identified hostility and lack of supports from the community as a major challenge to TD in sports in the Nigerian context, it is therefore necessary that participants in this final study are well rooted in the cultural dynamics of Nigerian communities so that they might be able to understand and elucidate on the underlining factors of negative social attitudes (if any) towards sports development in Nigeria. Hence it was ensured that participants were senior citizens, who after retirement from active service are now involved in the social and cultural leadership in the community. In all, six (6) participants who met the stringent criteria set for inclusion in the study (see table 5.1) were recruited to participate in the study.

### **6.2.2 Design**

A qualitative research design was adopted to advance a deep understanding of the perceptions of community stakeholders on TID in Nigeria, and their experiences of the challenges posed to developing athletes. The qualitative method was considered appropriate for the study for its potential to generate focused data that would reveal a clear picture of the

phenomenon under study (e.g. Cote, Salmela, Trudel, Baria & Russell, 1993). A semi-structured interview was developed for the study with the aim of creating a deep understanding of the challenges of TID in Nigeria. The interview schedule consisted of ten open-ended questions purposefully structured to generate open-ended responses from participants (Patton, 1990). Details of the interview questions are contained in figure 5.1. Pilot interviews were conducted with two members of the sample P1 and P2 (see table 5.1), the researcher carried out an inductive content analysis of the pilot interview following the guidelines of Patton (1990); the process proceeded from coding experience, to similarity inferences; coded experiences were constantly compared and clusters of similar experiences were used to develop themes; themes were continually compared to form categories and general categories. The comparison processes continued until interview data were saturated (i.e. no new category emerged from the data); feedback from the pilot study was submitted to other researchers for further analysis before the cogency of the interview guide was established (Brink, 1993). Since both pilot interviews were deemed to be of sufficient quality and relevance, as the participants also fulfilled the study criteria, they were included in the final sample (Backstrom and Hursch-Ceasar, 1981).

### **6.2.3 Procedure**

Ethical approval was sought and granted by the School of Life Health and Social Sciences of Edinburgh Napier University. The aims, objectives and procedure of the study were explained to participants and they were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Participants were then asked if they had any reservation about the motive and procedure of the study and they all responded in the negative (i.e. there were no reservation about participation). The main interview questions were given to participants one week prior to the

interview so that they could familiarize themselves with the questions (e.g. Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992). At the actual interview, all interviewees were asked the same questions in the same sequence, however, while and when necessary, the interviewer asked probing questions (Patton, 1990) to create an in-depth understanding of responses, and to capture a true representation of the socio-cultural context of TID in Nigeria. All interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and were tape recorded for transcription.

#### **6.2.4 Data Analysis**

The interview data were analyzed using inductive content analysis according to the recommendation of Edwards, Kingston, Hardy and Gould (2002). Data analysis followed the three stages outlined by Cote *et al.* (1993) including coding experience; inductive inference; and similarity processes. Themes and categories were presented hierarchically to represent their order of emergence (Patton 1990), and were supported by quotes in the result section (Cohn, 1991). The themes and categories are presented in tables 5.2, table 5.3 and table 5.4.

#### **6.2.5 Establishing credibility**

Several measures were taken to guarantee credibility of findings of the current study. As earlier mentioned, the researcher ensured that interview questions were truly open-ended and that responses were not biased by the opinion of the interviewer. Similarly, the raw transcripts and analyzed data (i.e. researchers' interpretation of the raw data) were sent to the participants to ascertain credibility (Patton, 1990); all participants agreed that they (i.e. analyzed data) accurately represented their views. Likewise, the data were subjected to a thorough (independent) reliability checks by the researcher's supervisor who is an expert in the field of this study (e.g. Scanlan, Ravizza & Stein, 1989; Morse, et al., 2002) to validate the procedure and findings of the investigation.

*Table 6.2: Interview questions used for data collection in the study described in chapter 6*

<b>Interview Guide</b>	
<b>1. Background</b>	Could you give me a bit of background to your working career?
<b>2. Nigerian Culture</b>	Could you give me a general overview of the nature of the culture within Nigeria as a country and local communities?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values</li> <li>• Financial stability/poverty/working</li> <li>• Corruption</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Sport development</li> </ul>
<b>3. Sport Success &amp; Development</b>	Could you tell me about any experience you have of seeing young people develop to become successful sportsmen/women?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How successful are Nigeria in an international sports context? (Also sporting potential?)</li> <li>• To what extent is sport success valued in Nigeria?</li> <li>• To what extent is sport development valued in Nigeria?</li> <li>• What sorts of opportunities are there for sport development?</li> <li>• How well/fairly is sport development administrated in Nigeria?</li> <li>• What facilities exist to help sport development/participation?</li> <li>• What funding/finance/policy is provided/implemented for sport development/coach education?</li> <li>• What barriers or challenges exist for successful sport development and/or elite athletes? (Effects of the challenges on development/psychology)</li> <li>• How/why do children become involved in sport?</li> <li>• How do those with potential get identified or selected?</li> <li>• How do those with potential progress in sport? Development opportunities? Sneaking out the house?</li> <li>• What characterizes someone who has got potential to be an elite sports person? (Psychology, performance, physicality, luck, finding a coach)</li> <li>• What coaching/support (role models/other athletes) is or needs to be available?</li> <li>• What is the role of the coach? (Self responsible/committed/improvise; finance; father figure; role model; mobilize support e.g. family P.E. teacher)</li> <li>• How well rewarded/recognized are coaches for successful development of athletes</li> </ul>
<b>4. Family &amp; Community Support for Sport Development</b>	Would an average parent allow their child to get involved in sport? Why/why not?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What would make a parent allow their child to be involved in sport?</li> <li>• What emphasis or support is placed in schools for sport development? (Teachers, sport competition, curriculum, financial/social rewards, facilities)</li> <li>• To what extent does community value, show interest or support sport involvement?</li> </ul>
<b>5. TD Effectiveness - Current /Ideal World</b>	Is TD/ sport development effective in Nigeria?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In an ideal world, what would need to happen to facilitate more sporting success in Nigeria?</li> </ul>

## **6.3. Results**

### **6.3.1 Features of Nigerian Communities and Culture**

The first general theme emerging from the data presents the features of Nigerian communities and culture as illustrated in table 6.3. An expanded description of each theme is

presented below and example quotes provided to support the points made.

### **6.3.1.1 Economic Hardship.**

#### **6.3.1.1.1 Poverty.**

*6.3.1.1.1.1. Lack of a thriving economy.* The data revealed a number of characteristics of the Nigerian society and culture that pose challenges to sports and athletes' development including the absence of a thriving economy. Majority of the Nigerian population live in the rural communities, and survive on small-scale farming. People barely earn enough from their farms to cater for the daily needs of the family and hence the level of poverty among the local people is very high. The Nigerian economy depends largely on petroleum resources; the oil sector is the only foreign exchange earner for the country. It is a common knowledge that proceeds of oil exploration is circulated between political office holders and their allies in the organised private sector, both groups get richer while the commoners grow poorer.

As a developing nation, the Nigerian economy is still developing and thus could not be compared to the economies of the developed countries of the world (i.e. Europe and America). Many sectors of the economy that should create opportunities for wealth creation and income generation so that the average family will be able to overcome to problem of poverty are non-functional. For example, there are no industries to create jobs for the low and semi-skilled workers. Also, the manufacturing sector is non-existent; therefore, there is a very slim middle class in the society, very few persons at the upper class, while the majority of the people belong to the lower end of the social ladder. The quotes below indicate the state of the Nigerian economy compared to what is obtainable in the developed world:

*“We are not going to compare Nigeria with European countries, the economy is not as developed as you have in the developed world, but we are coming up gradually...in*

*the average, the income per head is not all that good and so you discover that people earn very little and have no reserve for taking part in many social/sporting activities...” PI*

*Table 6.3: The first general theme emerging from the study described in chapter 6; the data revealed features of Nigerian communities and culture to include economic hardship; corruption; and lack of facilities, programmes and implementation of policies.*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of a thriving economy</li> <li>• Majority at the bottom of the social ladder</li> <li>• Most families live in poverty</li> <li>• Unemployment</li> <li>• Most athletes from poor homes</li> </ul>	Poverty			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vast natural resources</li> <li>• Bad leadership</li> <li>• Sporting potentials are mismanaged</li> </ul>	Poor Management of resources	Economic hardship		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public office holders are corrupt</li> <li>• Politicians serve self-interests</li> </ul>	Corruption in government			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Match fixing</li> <li>• Cheat (age, racketeering)</li> <li>• Poor performance</li> </ul>	Corruption in sports			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debased value system</li> <li>• Politicians are exploited</li> <li>• People sale their votes</li> </ul>	Reinforcement For Corruption	Corruption		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No facilities</li> <li>• No clear policy</li> <li>• Poor policy implementation</li> <li>• No coaches/P.E. teachers</li> <li>• Flawed appointments processes.</li> </ul>	Community: Lack of facilities, programmes, policy implementation			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National policy on education poorly implemented</li> <li>• Failure of the boarding system</li> <li>• Inadequate human resources</li> <li>• Teachers discourage sports development</li> </ul>	School: Environment not supportive of sports development			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding a supportive school depends on luck</li> <li>• Few school support sports development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. School improvise for facilities</li> <li>II. School may fund raise to supports dev.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		Lack of Facilities, Programmes, and Implementation of Policies		

*“Most of our people in the local communities depend on small scale farming; many of the people plant crops like cassava and yam, other have palm oil plantations or rubber plantations, some are involved in fishing and so on. That is how the local people earn*

*a living. Due to the fact that majority of the people only cultivate small farms just to take care of themselves and their families, the level of poverty is high among the local community people” P6*

*6.3.1.1.1.2. Majority of the population are at the bottom of the social ladder.* Majority of the families in local communities were reported by the participants to be living below the poverty line. In terms of social stratification, the data revealed that between 65 to 75 per cent of the population are at the bottom of the social ladder, with very few people at the top of the ladder and also a very slim middle class. The data also showed that the level of illiteracy is very high, since many families cannot afford to fund the education of their children. The inequality gap between the rich and the poor is very wide due to the almost complete absence of the middle class. The quotes below indicate that the economy of the few people at the top of the social ladder is good while those who are at the bottom of the ladder suffer financial deprivation:

*“The economy of the very few at the top of the ladder can be compared with what you get in Europe and the Americas, for that category, the economy is a bit higher. But most of the people in Nigeria, 70 per cent of the people, you can say to have a below average economy...But surely, the Nigerian society can be categorised into three classes; the affluent at the upper part, but we have the majority at the lower part of the ladder, with a very slim middle class. So almost 65 to 70 per cent of the people are at the lower part of the social ladder” P1*

*“The educated elites in Nigeria are not up to forty per cent of the population up till now. So the illiterate class is in the majority. Because when you want to evaluate this, you can use your local community, you can even use your own family. How many people in your family or your community can you say are among the elite class? So the uneducated illiterates are in the majority” P2*

6.3.1.1.1.3. *Most families live in poverty.* Families survive on the little money they earn from petty trades and farming, participants reported that many families couldn't afford to feed properly; they live in dilapidated buildings because they cannot afford a decent apartment, and also struggles to pay children school fees. The data revealed a wide spread of poverty across Nigerian communities. Many people and families result to menial jobs for survival; this was observed as a contributing factor to the poor state of economy and high level of poverty among the people:

*“The level of poverty is quite high, particularly among the local communities. Because when you see how people suffer, and the way they engage in menial jobs; they go to farms, and many petty businesses. So the economy is very poor and there are many people among the communities, and that is a major problem in Nigeria” P2*

*“The rate of poverty in Nigeria is uncalled for; you see so many people in the society who cannot afford to pay the school fees of their children, they cannot even afford to feed properly, they live in dilapidated buildings and nobody cares about them” P5*

6.3.1.1.1.4. *High level of unemployment.* Similarly, the economy featured a high level



of unemployment; hence the very slim middle class mentioned above, participants reported both youth and graduate unemployment in the communities. Unemployment was said to have contributed to the high level of illiteracy among the people. Children and young people lack inspiration to pursue education the way they should because they see educated people around them who roam about in the communities without a job. Apart from discouraging education, unemployed youths were observed to engage in anti-social behaviours:

*“...There is no employment for the people, there is graduate unemployment and youth unemployment. You see, young Nigerians need to be gainfully employed, but because of lack of employment some of them decided to engage in anti-social activities, like kidnapping, robbery, and other crimes” P3*

*“...More so, this period that unemployment is prevalent in Nigeria, they will say that there are many people who have graduated from the University and yet don't have a job....” P1*

Another indication emerging from the data is that employers of labour exploit the job seekers because the latter has no option than to accept whatever the former throws at them. For example, job seekers are asked to pay a bribe before they can secure employment, female job applicants were being exploited sexually by employers. Participants reported that unemployment has assumed the state of a cankerworm in the Nigerian economy as showed in the quotes below:

*“Do you know that even when unemployed graduates apply for work the employer will demand bribe from them before they even give them the application form, and for the ladies, they face a lot of sexual harassment because they are looking for job and if they refuse to have sex with the people in charge of the employment process they will not get the job...” P5*

*“Employment is another area where we have problem. Unemployment has attained the status a social cankerworm in Nigeria now, because there are no employment opportunities for the people...” P2*

6.3.1.1.1.5. *The employed are not paid regularly.* Similarly, people who were in the civil service (which is the major employer of labour in Nigeria) were not being regularly paid. Salaries in some states of the federation were owned in arrears for up to eight months without any indication of when those salaries would be paid. Therefore, even those who were employed have their share in poverty because they work for several months without receiving their income. Of course this has a direct negative effect on the economy; the whole economy depends largely on the public sector and so if public/civil servants are not paid the effect will be felt across every aspect of social life. In the quote below, a participant explained how salaries are not paid as and when due and its effects on the economy:

*“...Let me tell you, many of the civil servants in Nigeria currently are not being paid. Today is the 24<sup>th</sup> July, and many civil servants in Nigeria are yet to receive their May salaries, even we have some states that are having backlog of salary arrears up to ten*

*months. How do you expect things to go on well in such state? How will those states be able to invest in sports? So the economic factor has a multiplier effect on every other aspect of life in the society” P2*

*6.3.1.1.1.6. The government does not take problem of unemployment seriously.*

Participants were of the opinion that the government was not appropriately addressing the problem of unemployment. Apart from failing to make policies that would promote economic growth and job creation in the private sector, the government is also reluctant to employ more staff even when such vacancies exist in the public service. For instance, one of the participants explained in the quote below that he was once in the position of a tutor general where he had the opportunity to see the vacancies in the state teaching service and advised the government on the importance of recruiting new staff to fill those vacancies, but that the government was not willing to take such advice. According to him, the teaching service lost staff regularly through many windows including retirement, transfer of service death and those who were relieved of the duties for disciplinary reasons. But then nothing was done by the government to fill those vacancies even when there is an awareness of the high level of unemployment among the people. The implication of the government’s unwillingness to recruit new staff into the teaching service is that schools are understaffed:

*“By the time I was a tutor general, we made a lot of recommendations to Mr Governor about employment. People were retiring from service, some staffs died, but there were no replacement even up till now. When you go to schools now, you will discover that most of the schools are experiencing acute shortage of teachers, this has a negative*

*effect on our education system” P2*

6.3.1.1.1.7. *Most athletes have poor background.* The high level of poverty among families and poor national economy were found to have negative effects on athletes and sports development. For example, the data revealed that most of the athletes in Nigeria came from poor families; one of the participants explained that up to seventy per cent of Nigerians families are poor and so most people you see in sports were from poor homes. The few families that are wealthy or at least financial stable were observed not to engage in sporting activities. Those (people from rich family background) who take part in sports were reported to have preference for the highly sophisticated sports like golf, cricket; they would not engage in the contact sports probably because such sports are considered the poor man’s sport:

*“If you look at the present crop of players you will discover that up to 80 per cent of them are from the families with poor economic status...take cricket for example, most of the people-playing cricket in Nigeria today are from the high economic class. Majority of the athletes in other sports, and particularly the contact sports are mainly people from the 70 per cent at the lower end of the social ladder...But, we do get a few athletes who come from the affluent families; one thing that is common to these few athletes from the privileged background is that they are found in highly sophisticated games like cricket, tennis, golf, and table tennis. This is because it is only the people in this category that have a lot of money in reserve to take care of the requirements for these sports” P1*

### **6.3.1.1.2. Poor Management of resources.**

*5.3.1.1.2.1 Enough resources for economic prosperity.* One of the main reasons poverty was blamed on mismanagement of the economy and selfishness of the political leaders is that Nigeria has vast deposits of natural and mineral resources. For instance, participants noted that there are arable lands across communities enabling farming activities even without any form of land treatment; virtually every crop could be grown successfully in many communities across the country. The data revealed that agriculture was the main stain of the Nigerian economy before the discovery of crude oil. Because all the participants were senior citizen, they recounted their experience with the economy before and after oil exploration and concluded that resources were not being properly managed after oil exploration began. Similarly, it was reported that there were several other resources apart from agricultural potentials and crude oil. Other natural resources include iron and steel, coal, bitumen and long coastline that allow for fishing on a commercial scale. The following quotes illustrate participants' belief that Nigeria has enough resources to fight and overcome poverty if such resources are well managed:

*“From the beginning, Nigeria was so rich in agriculture; in fact, the economy of Nigeria after independence was powered by agriculture. Apart from agriculture, there are many deposits of solid minerals across the country, but we have leaders that cannot reason beyond their nose...I know much more about the present situation in Nigeria compared to those days while we were growing up. There is no doubt about the fact that Nigeria is blessed with many natural resources. I have never travelled wide but with what I heard, I am very sure that Nigeria is one of the few nations of the world*

*that are richly blessed with natural resources. We have many resources that we should not suffer; we have a lot of arable land and we need very little or no fertilizers to grow our crops” P4*

*“...I said Nigeria is rich because we are blessed with many mineral resources; we have oil, we have good land for agriculture, we have iron and steel, we have coal, and bitumen, and a large coast line, so we have enough resources such that we can reduce the level of poverty among the people” P5*

6.3.1.1.2.2. *Bad leadership.* Participants rationalised the state of the economy and the level of poverty among the people around bad leadership and poor management of resources. Political leaders were said to be self-centred and unconcerned about the plight of the masses, most of which are very poor. The data revealed that the nation once had a thriving economy before the discovery of petroleum resources in the 1970s; after the discovery of crude oil and exploration works began, people abandoned their farms and agriculture (which was the main stay of the economy) and the whole nation began to rely on the sale of petroleum products.

Furthermore, instead of taking advantage of the proceeds from exploration and sale of petroleum resources to diversify and grow the economy, the political leadership diverted oil monies to their private accounts. Consequently, the nation and its people grew poorer while the political class become richer. In fact, it is believed that Nigeria has more natural resources than many developed countries just that such resources were not being properly managed in order to develop the economy. In the quotes below, participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the way the economy is being managed and blamed the high rate of

poverty among families and communities on the leaders (i.e. public office holders):

*“We have a situation where the leaders think less about the people but concentrate on personal benefits. That has dragged our once striving economy into the dustbin of history. You may be aware that around the 70s we discovered oil in Nigeria, and the exploration of oil was started such that Nigeria rank among the largest producers of petroleum products in the world. Our social behaviours, especially our leaders started changing with the discovery of oils and the people in government began to syphon public funds into their private accounts” P4*

*“...Our leaders are the cause of the poor economy that we have, our leaders do not recognise the suffering of the masses. The masses are facing a lot of challenges in Nigeria, the masses are poor and they are suffering while the political class is not concerned about the plight of the people” P5*

*“...There are many countries in Europe that don't have up to a half of the natural resources Nigeria is blessed with but yet through good leadership they are able to organise themselves with the little resources they have and make life meaningful for their people. But in our own case, instead serving the people, politicians see themselves as lords over the people and that is why they say absolute power corrupts absolutely because the masses have no means of checking the excesses of the political class” P4*

6.3.1.1.2.3. *Sporting potentials are mismanaged.* Also, participants expressed a feeling that sporting potentials in the youthful population of Nigeria is not well exploited. An estimate of about sixty per cent of the Nigerian over one hundred and eighty million people were said to be youths, it is therefore expected that many sporting potentials would be hidden in the vast number of young men and women in the country. It was clear that the authorities are not taking advantage of the large population of Nigeria to raise formidable sporting team that would earn the country enviable records in sports at the international level; participants blame this factor on the government's lack of commitment to talent identification and development in sports:

*"The country is just looking as if we are big for nothing. How do you explain with our large population, we will be playing a small country like Congo and we are having problem defeating them, the fact is that our big population should be an advantage because we have more to select from, but our sports administrators will not take advantage of the population factor because they want to favour their own people..."*

*P4*

*"And believe that if the talents are properly harnessed, Nigeria will be the best country in terms of sporting activities in the world. Whatever happens in Nigeria however, revolves around good governance...We have talented sport men and women, young boys and girls, even from the primary school level to the secondary school and tertiary institutions, there are talented people in Nigeria. But the only problem is how to harness these talents, how to bring them in for training"* P3



*“...People like Hakeem Olajuwon who is a Nigerian, he was picked up from the university and now he is making a name in America, so we have a lot of potentials in sports but then it depends on finding them early enough and expose them to the right training, a well-developed and determined training” P1*

### **6.3.1.2 Corruption.**

**6.3.1.2.1. Corruption in Government.** The data indicated corruption as a major negative influence on the Nigerian economy. Everyone one of the participants seemed to have identified with the fact that corruption is identical with every aspect of social life in the country. The reason many Nigerians blame poverty and underdevelopment on bad leadership is largely because of the level of corruption perpetrated in public life. Public officials were reported to embezzle government funds under their care, which they should have used to create the enabling environment for growth in the economy. Also, government contracts were said to be awarded through questionable procedure; for instance, government officials take ‘kick backs’ before they award contracts; any contractor that is ready to play to their demands would not win a contract from government agencies. In the words of the participants as shown in the quotes below, it is impossible to get anything done in the country without paying a bribe:

*“Corruption has become a worry for everybody in this country, it is unfortunate, even our head of state who is in a state visit to the U.S at the moment said that one of the problems his government will face is the fight against corruption. So, there is no point in deceiving ourselves by saying that there is no corruption...People who are in charge*

*of public money will embezzle or misappropriate money made for public services. People who take jobs or contracts from the government are asked to give what they call ten per cent 'kick backs' to the government official giving out the job or awarding the contract” P1*

*“...Corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of every sector of the Nigerian economy. In every office both in the private and the public sector, there are high levels of corruption among the people. Government officials literally demand for money before they discharge their duties and responsibilities for which they are paid” P4*

*“...Especially in government offices, you cannot get anything done without having to part with some money, you cannot get anything done in Nigeria on basis of merit except you pay a bribe. This is the case with every sector of the economy, people will not do their job until you give them bribe to do it” P5*

6.3.1.2.1.1. *Many political leaders are selfish.* Instead of working for the common good of the society, it was revealed that political office holders were only interested in enriching their personal pockets without giving concerns to the plight of the masses. So, the political class grow richer while the rest of the people grow poorer. The data also showed that the government provided no form of assistance to poor families; the poor are left alone to cater for their needs and those of their children, in the rare cases when the government creates a scheme to help the poor, such funds end up in the pockets of the politicians and their associates. For instance, when the government promises to help farmers with fertilizers for

their crops the money or the fertilizers would not get to the farmers who need them but rather would be syphoned by those who are responsible for executing the scheme. Therefore, sports and athletes' development would be among the least thing an average family in Nigeria will be willing to invest in because there are more serious issues like food, shelter, education which they struggle to cater for. The quotes below illustrate the opinions of participants that the political leadership is responsible for the wide spread poverty among families and communities and the poor state of the economy:

*“...Our politicians are only fighting for their own purse and they do not care about the suffering of the masses, which is why every family is left alone to provide for themselves without any form of assistance from the government” P6*

*“...The leaders only care about their immediate family alone. Many of the people are poor farmers, they have no help with the implements they need to have the best of their farms, and the government will not even help them with fertilizers...When the government says they are giving loans to the farmers to help them cultivate their lands, buy good seed and fertilizers the money will end up in the pockets of those who work in the office and the real farmers are left to suffer” P5*

*“Our leaders don't think about the future of the country but are more concerned about what they will eat and steal today. Politicians now own the best houses and the best cars in towns, they have destroyed the economy by their corrupt tendencies” P4*

**6.3.1.2.2. Corruption in sports.** Similarly, the culture of corruption and mismanagement of public fund was reported to be present in the sports sector. Many of the individuals who are into administration and management of sports departments/agencies were reportedly corrupt. Beginning from the Nigerian representatives in world bodies (i.e. FIFA) to those who are in charge of state and national agencies/departments of sports, participants reported that the sports sector in Nigeria has also known for scandals. Young athletes go through unnecessary challenges in the development process, for example, selection decisions are made based on who the athlete is or whom he/she knows and not on the ability or potential of the athlete. That is why participants believed that there is abuse of trust in the system. The following quotes demonstrate the lack of trust between the people and the sports administrators in Nigeria:

*“...There is also corruption within sports setting. Some time ago, a Nigerian was penalised at the board of FIFA for corrupt practices. Now back at home, one of the ways corruption is manifested in our sports is that we are not faithful” P1*

*“Corruption has hampered the development of sports in Nigeria in no little measures, majority of our youngsters face many challenges that are not necessary. For example, during selection there is no respect for merit, people are selected into teams not because they are the best among their equals but because of the connections they have with the people in charge of sports administration” P4*

*“...The major problem we have is these corrupt people who are in charge of our sports,*

*they deprive people of the opportunity to grow in sports because they want only their people to benefit from sports, so even if a child is very good they will still not pick him”*

*P6*

*6.3.1.2.2.1. Referees and coaches engage in match fixing.* Some of the referees and coaches were also reported to be corrupt. Participants saw the behaviour of games officials as a hindrance to sports development in Nigeria. For example, it was revealed that referees collect bribes from teams to officiate in their favour and so no matter how hard the opposing team works they would lose the game because the referee is already biased; this is a point of discouragement to developing athletes. In fact, one of the participants who is a certified referee explained that he has refused to officiate in Nigerian competitions because of the behaviour of referees and the perception of the public about them, he added that Nigerian referees rarely officiate in international competitions because they are known to be corrupt and that they could sell a game for money. Similarly, recruitment into an elitist team or any of the national teams is based on how much a player is able to pay those in charge of the recruitment process; since the highest bidder and not the one with the highest potential will have the day. In the quotes below, participants explained some of the corrupt practices of referees and coaches in Nigeria:

*“The referee even discourages sports development from the grassroots because when the children train so hard and at the end of the day they always lose the game because they don’t have the money to bribe referees, they are discouraged. Therefore, no school head will see all this I have spoken about and he or she will still encourage*

*sports development in school” P2*

*“The referees are so corrupt that they will take money and sell the game; it will be obvious that the referee is biased and he is supporting one of the teams because he has taking money. That is why have refused to officiate at any competition because I’m a graded referee too, but I cannot do what they do. That is more reason why you don’t see Nigerian referees officiating in any international competition they are known to be corrupt...I know of a young footballer who was invited to the national team camp, but because the coaches were demanding for bribe before they recruit players into the team and the boy could not afford the amount they were asking for, that is why he did not play for the national football team before he later got a club in France. What I’m saying is that his football career only began after I was able to convince his parents to allow him play football otherwise that talent would have been wasted” P4*

6.3.1.2.2.2. *School athletes and teams device several means to cheat.* The culture of cheating and corruption was not limited to the referees and coaches alone, as teams were also reported to engage in cheating. For instance, the data indicated that school teams have been reported to hire athletes/players who are not students of the school (and so not members of the school team) to play for them during competitions in order to secure a victory for their school. According to the quotes below, another way athletes and teams cheat is by falsifying their age so that older athletes would be able to compete in a junior category, it appeared that athletes, teams and their officials are willing to buy their ways to stardom:

*“When we need secondary school students for competitions many of our sport administrators would rather go to the sport councils and hire boys and girls who are not in the secondary schools, give them money to compete for them, the universities also do this. So, when you say a school or university has won a particular competition you can clap for them, but come back to that school or the university a month later, you will not find up to ten per cent of the athletes who competed for the school or university in the competition...When we say under-20 we mean people under the age of 20 years, not that you will go and bring somebody who is over 25 years old and say he/she is under-20 because you want to win the competition, these are all parts of the problems we are facing in Nigeria” P1*

6.3.1.2.2.3. *Poor performance on the international stage.* The performances of Nigerian athletes and teams on the international stage was observed to be very poor due to the poor environment for athletes and sports development as discussed above. Participants argued that the management of sports in Nigeria has been over politicised with appointment of administrators and coaches without ensuring that the individual are competent for the job. Players were also selected based on political patronage tribal sentiments, thus it was believed that Nigeria don't take its best to international competitions and also do not prepare well to record success in the global state:

*“As at today, Nigeria is nothing in the international stage. The reason for this is because sport is being politicised in Nigeria. Those that can play football, for example, are not engaged but rather they use political patronage in the selection of players.*

*Even if you are playing football better than Segun Odegbami (a Nigerian football hero) you will not be selected without a political godfather...Because of politics, sporting activities in Nigeria have gone down. Even just to employ coach, politics comes in, you know what happened to the former coach of the super eagle who was sacked several times and reinstated before his eventual replacement because of politics” P3*

*“You see, some people are complaining that our athletes and teams are not selected on merit, that we usually don’t take our best to competitions. There are some underneath factors and influences on the selection process. We need to base everything purely on merit, if an athlete is good, even when he/she doesn’t have a godfather they should be selected on merit...people complain about the short period of training and preparation for competition that I mentioned earlier is just to reduce the amount of money spent to prepare athletes for the competition. The policy should be that more funds should be voted to sports in Nigeria, the poor state of the economy is affecting all these issues” P2*

#### **6.3.1.2.1. Social reinforcement for corrupt practices.**

*6.3.1.2.1.1 Poor value orientation.* The culture of corruption, which is pervasive in many sectors of the economy, was reportedly reinforced by the social behaviour of many Nigerians. The data showed that people’s value orientation play a substantial role in the spread of corruption among Nigerian communities. For instance, some of the participants stated that people worship money without questioning its source. To earn respect in the society you must be rich; the society was reported not to have value for hard work and



integrity but instead revere the rich even when the source of wealth is questionable or unknown. The quotes below are indications that there is problem with the value orientation in Nigeria:

*“People don’t have the right value clarification, what do I mean by that? What people should appreciate and place value on they don’t. For example, when some throws money around you will see people starting to applaud him and would not think about how the person got the money, whether it is through genuine means or not, they don’t want to know...Corruption begins from attaching importance to what people should not attach importance to. As a result, people run after things that really don’t matter and neglect their responsibilities just to get money. Once you have money everybody in the society will begin to respect you and will not want to know how you get the money, their logo is that the ends justify the means” P2*

6.3.1.2.1.2. *People demand money from politicians.* Similarly, the social reinforcement for corrupt practices is manifested in the relationship between the people and the political class. Participants revealed that people literally trade their votes for money during elections. According to the data, politicians spend a lot of money to get into power because the masses believe election is an opportunity for them to make money and so they would only release their vote to the highest bidder. Consequently, having spent so much money to get elected political office holder would do anything possible to recoup the investment made during the electioneering period; and that is how the circle of corruption goes round:

*“When it is election period in Nigeria, people will begin to demand money from the politician in order to vote for them; they would say that election period is their opportunity to get money and would not care about what the politician would do if elected, having spent a lot money to get votes. So all these are corrupt tendencies that we are now waging war against in Nigeria” P2*

However, one of the participants observed that during April 2015 general elections, the educated elites have started to educate the people on the needs to elect their representative based on their ability to deliver the dividends of democracy to the communities and not because the politicians have got a lot of money to spend, the problem nonetheless is that very few people belong to the elite class and so it will take a while and a lot of commitment before the message can go round:

*“...But during the last election, it took a different shape; those were elected to the House of Assembly and the House of Representatives we made sure that they are the well-educated ones. Unlike in the past when people who were voted into these offices were those who could throw money about and that they are necessarily good for the job. So those of us who are educated are now fighting these corrupt behaviours because our eyes are opened through education and we now know the right thing to do. But how many people are in the same level as us in the local communities?” P2*

#### **6.3.1.3. Lack of facilities, programmes, and implementation of policies.**

**6.3.1.3.1 Lack of facilities, programmes, policy implementation.** The second general

theme emanating from the data is the lack of government commitment to sports development. Participants expressed their displeasure with the state of sporting facilities across Nigerian communities and schools. It was argued that Nigeria has many potential talents in sports but the environment was not suitable for meaningful talent development activities due to the acute shortage of facilities. From the quotes below, it was evident that the few facilities that exist are concentrated in the big cities like Lagos (the former federal capital city) and Abuja (the current federal capital city) whereas the majority of Nigerians live in rural communities and villages, which are situated on the hinterlands of the country. In those villages, people rarely feel the presence and attention of government in terms of social amenities and other vital services that should be provided by the government. This neglect by the government was expressed by participants in the quotes below as having a negative impact on talent identification and development in sports:

*“We have talented players at the local level but the only problem I see is that there are no facilities and supports for them to develop. The only few sporting facilities we have in Nigeria are probably located in the Lagos and Abuja but how many people can access these places” P4*

*“Is it the government that does not equip the school with sport facilities you will expect to create facilities in the community? There is no encouragement in the community it is only the school that tries to help the children to develop their sporting talents...To be sincere, I would say there is no much encouragement for sport development in the communities. Take for example; there is no community that has facilities for sports*

*development, so if there are no facilities how do you want children to develop in sports? I even told you that the school has to improvise for sporting facilities because the government is so unconcerned about encouraging sports development among the people; in fact, the government don't even talk about it" P5*

Though Nigerians would like to see their athletes doing well in international competitions such as the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games, the data revealed the realities of the environment in Nigeria is in contrast with what is obtainable in the countries that have consistently dominated the medals table at such international competitions. In the following quote, one of the participants argued that the situation in the communities are not right compared to communities in Europe and America where there is availability and access to sporting facilities in community centres where children, young people and even adults can go to participate in any physical activity or sport of their choice:

*"Of course, this is different from what you will find in the developed countries, where communities would have community centres equipped with various sporting facilities to encourage the people of the community to take part in physical activities for personal development and health reasons, and also for sports development. Children can go to these community centres and they would find coaches who would school them up in sports. But is not yet the case in most Nigerian communities. May be in Lagos and Abuja, you may find community centres similar to what you have in Britain and America" P1*

6.3.1.3.1.1. *Government policies are not well communicated.* Similarly, participants felt that the government have a role to play boosting parents' confidence in sports. It was revealed that parents lack encouragement from the government in terms of allowing their children to participate in talent development programmes. Interestingly, the data suggest that government used to have a clear policy and procedure for recruiting young talents in sports; one of the participants who was a former athlete explained that while he was recruited into a talent development programme that the invitation was done in a manner that encouraged parents to support young people going into sports development programmes but that the government has now jettisoned the process such that parents now perceive sports participation as a waste of time. The lack of interest by the parents was expressed in the quote below as a reaction to the withdrawal of government interest in sports development:

*“If the government is ready to come down to the local level to put in place programmes that will encourage people to take part in sports. During my own time, when I was first invited to a camp around 1977, we were encouraged; we were given good foods, milk, and so we enjoyed it. The sports administrators then would write letters and give to take to our parents, so it was a dignified thing. If the government is showing interest in supporting and taking care of the young the athletes, the parents can be motivated. At the end of day, if these children are given scholarship, the parents will know that the children are not just wasting their time playing sports but that there is reward for participation” P4*

6.3.1.3.1.2. *Poor implementation of sports policies.* Similarly, lack of implementation

of government policies on sports development was seen in the current data as a militating factor against talent development in sports in Nigeria. This view is consistent with the results of the previous two studies of this thesis; participants across the three studies argued that Nigerian government and the agencies in charge of the administration and management of sports development have consistently developed good policies for sports and athletes' development, however, implementation of such policies has always been poor, or in many occasions there would be no implementation at all. Therefore, it is believed that there is disconnect between the government agencies in charge of sports and the people in local communities where government policies ought to be implemented:

*“Policies in Nigeria are not well implemented. I don't know of the urban centres, but at the local areas where most of the people are located there is no implementation of government policies on sports development. The people at the grassroots do not see the impact of any government policy on sports development” P3*

*“The government, especially, the governors of each state, must be decided to ensure that the sport development policy of the state is fully implemented. Similarly, however weak the economy is, we must find a way of funding development in sports” P1*

6.3.1.3.1.3. *Shortage of P.E teachers/coaches.* Another indication of the poor implementation of the policies of government on education and its implication for sports and athletes' development is in the area of personnel in schools. The data indicated that there were not enough teachers in schools to implement the various subject in the school

curriculum. In particular, schools were reported to suffer from acute shortage of physical education teachers; physical education is the component of the general education curriculum that takes care of sports development in relation to the general development of the child. Because there are no physical education teachers, it is either people who are not knowledgeable in physical education are drafted in to teach the subject or the subject is completely neglected in the school:

*“The teaching service in general does not have enough teachers in schools. Take my school for example, we are supposed to have forty-one teachers but we have just twenty-seven teachers in the school, and only one of them is a physical and health education teacher. So you can imagine how one teacher will be able to effectively teach physical and health education to all the pupils from primary one to primary six. And that is an indication of how sharply we are in need of physical education teachers” P5*

*“Even in our schools, there are no trained physical and health education teachers, what the schools do is just to appoint one of the teachers who probably has no prior experience in sports to be the games master. So there are no coaches around here and there has never been any encouragement for coaches to take on the responsibility of training our young men and women in sports...” P4*

6.3.1.3.1.4. *Poor implementation linked to corruption.* The problem of poor implementation of government policies or the complete absence of implementation in some cases is linked to culture of corruption as earlier discussed in this section. Public funds made

for the implementation of policies were reportedly stolen or diverted to other use by those saddled with the responsibility of implementing government policies in sports. Participants recounted that the sports sector in Nigeria is popular for various scandals relating to embezzlement or misappropriation of public funds. In the few stadia and sports facilities available in the country, it was observed that the maintenance culture was bad, owing to the fact that the money meant for the maintenance of such facilities would be diverted to private use, thus leading to a decay in infrastructure across the country:

*“I can say that we have always developed beautiful sports policies in Nigeria but the implementation is where we have problems. You know when the head is corrupt the whole parts of the body will be affected. We have so many scandals in our sports agencies in the past involving many of our sports directors and that is why they are not serious about implementing the government policies on sports development so that they will have the money to embezzle. It is not that we don’t have good policies but the people who are in charge of implementing the policies are the ones spoiling the system...If you get to our stadia you will discover that a lot of things are wrong, the little facilities in place are not well maintained, and our maintenance culture is very bad. The people who are in charge of supervising the use of the facilities and maintaining them are so corrupt that they divert the money meant for maintaining the facilities into private use. So I cannot deceive you, we don’t have the facilities that will encourage sports development in Nigeria” P4*

6.3.1.3.1.5. *Administrators’ appointment lacks merit.* The data revealed that the sports



sector in Nigeria lacks merit in many areas of its operations. For example, people were appointed into administrative and management positions not because they possess the right credentials for the job but because they have connections in the government. Federal ministers of sports and state commissioners of sports were said to have no background or experience in sports administration and thus lack the knowledge required to engender growth in the sector. Therefore, participants opined that there is need to have a change of approach in this regards so that knowledgeable and professional sports administrators can be employed to manage agencies of government whose jobs relate sports development:

*“...The idea of appointing people without sporting experience and background should be discouraged. People with the right credential in sport development should be given the responsibility of the administration of sports in Nigeria. Ministers and commissioners for sports should be appointed from among the sporting community”*

*P3*

*“...Most of the people who are in charge of sports organisation in the country are not people have experience and knowledge in sports at all. So if you ask me, I will say conservatively, that about 50 per cent of people in charge of sports in the country today don't have any prerequisite knowledge in sports” P1*

#### ***6.3.1.3.2 School environments not supportive of sports development.***

*6.3.1.3.2.1. National education policy not executed.* The school system is a key factor

of sport development in Nigeria. The school is very important because it is the only semblance of organisation in sports especially at the local community level. For instance, there is no structure for organised sports in the communities; there are no clubs, few coaches, and few obsolete facilities. But in the school, at least students are meant to be exposed to physical education, which involves taking part in physical activities regularly, under the supervision of physical education teachers or the school's games masters, however, the reality on the ground (i.e. lack of facilities and personnel) meant that it is not so in many schools.

Also, the national policy on education identified physical and sporting activities as critical elements of the general development of the child and thus incorporates sports development into the school curriculum. It is however regrettable that the implementation of government policy on education is also poor to the effect that sports development element are scarified for the other components of the school curriculum; Like in the communities, it is indicated in the quotes below that there are no adequate facilities in schools to support sports and athletes development:

*“The national policy of education defines the scope and pace of sports development within the school system. However, there is problem with implementation of this policy...the national policy on education states clearly that there should be physical and sporting activities at every level of education. But to what extent are we implementing this policy is a big question. So, as far as policy is concerned, there are good policies, no doubt about that, but there is no proper implementation” P1*

*“The problem with the school is that the government does not implement the education*

*policy. If there is implementation, the school will have no choice than to cooperate with the policy, but in a situation where there is nothing in place what do you expect the schools to do? There is no way the school heads will not comply with sports development policy if the government is serious about implementation” P4*

*“Sporting facilities are not available at all in Nigerian public schools, the only ones that are available are being provided by the heads of the schools. For example, while I was the principal at Ojuala...” P3*

6.3.1.3.2.2. *Failure of the boarding school system.* Another factor that was seen as contributing to unenviable status of talent development in sports in Nigeria is the collapse of the boarding school system. Boarding schools were predominantly federal or state governments schools spread across the communities in Nigeria. The boarding school system provided an opportunity for sports participation and talent development in sports among school children. Because students lived in school hostels in the boarding system, they were made to mandatorily take part in sporting activities mostly in the evenings, and that served as a medium of discovering talents and helping them to develop. However, the boarding system has since gone into extinction probably because the government seemed to have relented in funding the schools. Some participants in the quotes below illustrate this view:

*“There is a problem in Nigeria nowadays that is inhibiting sports development; there are few boarding schools in Nigeria now, both public and private schools rarely operate the boarding system. There are only a few private schools that are running*

*what I will call skeletal boarding system. Unlike in those days, I attended a boarding school for my secondary education, I attending boarding in the university, and there is more sporting culture in the boarding system...Because it was compulsory for all students to take part in sports while I was in the secondary school, but now, students only stay in school till 2pm and they return home to do whatever they like. So that is part of the problem we have in Nigeria currently which affect sports development opportunities in schools” P2*

6.3.1.3.2.3. *Teachers do not encourage sports development.* Similarly, teachers in schools were reported to have discouraging attitudes towards students who take part in sports regularly. Such students are seen, as not being serious with their studies because most teachers believed that the time used for sporting activities should have been used for academic purposes. In fact, some of the participants argued that the period assigned to physical education in many schools is used for other activities because teachers believe that engaging in physical activities and sports has no meaningful contribution to the development of the child. Also, to demonstrate the negative attitudes towards sports participation and talent development in sports in some schools, physical education teachers whose primary duties should be to teach physical education and encourage the student to take part in physical activities and sports are assigned to teach other subjects. One of the reasons given for the reassignment of physical education teachers to other subjects is that there are no facilities in schools to teach physical education. It therefore clear that the school environment is not conducive to sports and athletes’ development:

*“Many teachers will not ordinarily encourage pupils to go and take part in sports and we have to be very sincere with this. What is happening this day is that, the periods for physical activities in the school timetable is even used for something else. Not only that one, the specialist themselves are not helping matters...What you find is that physical education teachers end up teaching other subjects in schools because there are no facilities to teach physical education and sports. So, at the primary and secondary schools there are no much interest and efforts to promote sports development among the teachers” P1*

Also, one of the participants who was also a school head explained that one of the reasons physical education is ill-favoured in school is the behaviour of some of the students who regularly take part in sports; he argued that once they begin to play one sport or the other, the students no longer give enough attention to their studies, and so teachers who discourage sports participation do so to ensure that the students are fully focused on their studies. However, the participant observed that regular participation in physical activities would enhance academic performance, if it is properly managed:

*“Some students, when they begin to take part in sports they will no longer attach importance to their studies. By the time I was a principal, I was telling them that sports should help them to do well in their academics, because as you play football it will develop your brain. Due to regular physical activities, athletes will be able to think faster, they will have endurance and better concentration” P2*

6.3.1.3.2.4. *Finding a school that promotes sports development depends on luck.*

Though this data showed several elements of the school environment that pose challenges to sports participation and talent development in sports, there are also certain opportunities for sports development identified in some schools. For example, there are some schools where staff have a positive attitude towards physical development through sports participation. Such schools are aware of the importance of exposing the child to regular physical activities in the three domains of development vis-à-vis the cognitive domain, affective domain and the psychomotor domain. Participants rightly argued that for effective development to be achieved, there is need to have a balance between the three major development domains. Some school heads are aware that those students that play sports tend to have better academic performance compared to those who do not take part in regular physical activities and sports. Attending a school where sports development is viewed positively would enhance the prospect of talent development in sport; finding such schools however, depends on luck. In the quotes below, some participants spoke about the schools that see sports development in good light:

*“When you talk about education; development is not limited to only one domain (i.e. Cognitive). There is need to consider the other domains such as affective and psychomotor domains. And if one considers the role of the psychomotor domain, then development will not be effective without regular physical activities. However, most schools only focus on the cognitive domain, and sometimes the affective domain while the psychomotor domain is mostly neglected. But in the schools I was the principal, I ensured that the students are exposed to regular physical activities” P2*

6.3.1.3.2.5. *Few schools Improvise for facilities and raise fund to support sports development.* Apart from displaying the general awareness of the importance of physical development through regular physical activities and sports, some schools would even go further to address the limitation posed by lack of facilities by improvising for them to ensure that students are given the opportunity to exercise and play sports regularly in school. Some of the participants revealed that they (as school heads) improvised for sporting facilities because the government were not making provision for them. For instance, students were asked to go and fetch bamboo poles, which they used to erect goal posts for football. Also, school principals reportedly raised funds from several sources including their personal income and parents-teachers' association to buy some sporting equipment in the school:

*"... I raised funds to buy sporting facilities like volley ball court, tennis court, javelin and so on, I have never seen the government providing all these facilities. So if the principal fails to improvise, the school will not have sporting facilities at all. So to come to your question, there are no facilities except the little being provided by the heads of schools and no provision from the government" P3*

*"... All we do is to improvise otherwise we cannot do any sports in our schools. For example, we have to send learners into the forest to go and cut bamboo poles so that we can use them to erect goal post for football, and we improvised for football. Also, through the aid of the parents-teachers-association, we had to raise money to buy table tennis equipment and that was how we were able to get the pupils to learn table tennis, so there is no provision for sporting facilities in our schools, the school who are very*

*passionate about sports will have to device the means to create the opportunity for pupils to play sports” P5*

### 6.3.2 Family Influence On Talent Development

The second general theme emerging from the data presents influences of the family on talent development in the Nigerian context as shown in figure 5.3. An expanded description of each team is presented below and example quotes provided to support the points made.

*Table 6.4: The second general theme emerging from the study described in chapter 6. The data highlight family influence on talent development such as cultural influences on the role of family; the role of the family; misconceptions about TD in sports; and athletes’ approach to family influence/barrier*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• North/south Religion differences</li><li>• North/South education differences</li></ul>	North/south cultural diversity	Cultural influences on role of family	Family Influence On Talent Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communal lifestyle</li><li>• Respect for elders</li></ul>	Cultural similarity		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parents discourage sports</li><li>• Parental control strong</li><li>• Place barriers to participation</li></ul>	Parents deemphasize sports/promote education	The role of the family	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Education tops priority list</li><li>• Family sacrifice for education</li><li>• Children to prepare for professional jobs</li><li>• Sport dev. Is stopped at marriage</li></ul>	Sports dev. Seen as threat to education, family life		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sports dev. distracts education</li><li>• Athletes are time wasters/unserious</li><li>• Sports dev. can overcome poverty</li></ul>	Myths about sports development	Misconceptions about TD in sports	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prospect for financial breakthrough</li><li>• Social mobility is enhanced by successful dev.</li><li>• Participation aids better academic performance</li></ul>	Truths about sports development		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop resistance</li><li>• Exploit parents’ absence</li><li>• Depend on peer influence &amp; supports</li></ul>	-	Athletes’ approach to family influence/barrier	

#### 6.3.2.1. Cultural influences on the role of the family. Nigeria is a multicultural



society with over four hundred different cultures among the over one hundred and eighty million people that make up the population. However, there are three dominant cultures vis-à-vis the Hausas in the north, Yoruba in the south and the Ibos in the east. Though there are some cultural beliefs and cultural practices shared across the country, certain beliefs and practices are peculiar to some of the many cultural groups in Nigeria; some of the cultural differences between the northern and southern regions of Nigeria are discussed below.

**6.3.2.1.1 North/south cultural differences.** The current data revealed religion beliefs and practices as a major difference between the Northern and Southern Nigeria. The Hausas in the North are predominantly Muslims while the Yoruba in the South are predominantly Christians. Consequently, there are differences in the way the North and South react to issues regarding social activities; these differences are reflected in sports development. One example of the effect of religion differences between the North and the South on sports development is the issue of women's right to social participation. The data indicated that the Muslim North is of the opinion that women should not be seen taking part in social activities because the Islamic religion requires women to be seen only at the home front, while the Christian South promotes the right of women to get involved in social activities. The quotes below revealed how the North/South divide on the issue of women right is reflected in sports and athletes' development in Nigeria:

*"...Another way the north is different from the south is religion, look at the female soccer team and you will not find any Muslim among them because of the way the Islamic religion treat women. Female Muslim children who have sporting talents in Nigeria will not be able to develop their talents due to the religion doctrine" P3*

*“...Especially in the northern Nigerian where females are not allowed to come out and take part in the social life, as a result they cannot take part in sporting activities. Even the way they dress according to their Islamic religion; they cannot take part in sports” P2*

6.3.2.1.1.1. *Education is valued differently between the north and the south.* Another area of cultural dissimilarity between northern and southern Nigeria is education. The people of the north pay little attention to education, Northern Muslims reportedly promoted Islamic education over western education; this of course is not unconnected to their religious beliefs. The data showed that girl child education in particular is discouraged in the culture of the Hausa/Fulanis who believed that women should not take active role in social life, but rather remain at the home front to support their husband and raise the children. The lack of interest in western education by the Muslim north was also linked to the root cause of the Boko Haram insurgency in the north-east of Nigeria; the insurgents were said to be fighting for the abolition of western education in the region, which according them is a taboo in Islam. Participants also observed the northern Nigeria to be lagging behind in general social development due to their cultural and religious beliefs as shown in the quotes below:

*“There are some tribes especially in the north that do not encourage their children to go school due to their own religion, but in the south we see education as very important for the child...But by and large, education is very much valued in Nigeria especially in the southern parts of the country” P6*

*“...We again have some cultural involvement in what I have just said. In some parts of the country, we may say that it appears they don't take the education of the child very seriously but that is their own peculiarity” P1*

*“The people of the northern region of Nigeria do not attach much importance to education and in fact, some of them discourage formal education, and that is why there is a big gap between the south and the north in terms of education, and social development...so in the north, the Hausa/Fulani do not have much value for education. In fact, one of the main philosophies of the boko haram insurgents is that western education is a sin according to their religion, and that speaks volume of the value they have for education” P4*

In the south however, an average family sees education of the child as a must. Southern Nigerians, which are predominantly Christians believe that the best legacy they can leave for their children is education, because education is viewed as a potent weapon to fight poverty which of course have been repeatedly observed as the greatest challenge faced by the average Nigerian family in the two previous chapters of this thesis. The quote below illustrate the importance attached to education among the southern Nigerian families:

*“To the southerners, education is the only way to plan for the future of the child, and that is why it is commonly said that if you want to plan for one-year plant cassava, if you want to plan for ten or fifteen years plant plantain, but if you want to plan for the*

*future you educate the child. So it is highly revered among Nigerians to have educated people from the family, such families are highly respected in the society...” P4*

#### **6.3.2.1.2 North/South cultural similarities.**

*6.3.2.1.2.1. There is a sense of communal living.* Though there are discrete cultural and religious practices between the northern and the southern regions of Nigeria, the data showed some similarities between the two regions, and in fact, there are values and practices shared across all the ethnic and cultural groups in Nigeria. For example, Nigerians were observed to share a sense of communal living immaterial of the region they come from or their religion belief. The traditional institution plays important roles in the community by ensuring peace and social harmony among the people. Disputes between persons or families are brought to the traditional leaders for settlement such that the law courts are usually not the first point of call (but the last) in addressing disputes:

*“We have traditional chiefs in charge of quarters, as well as the community heads, and we also have kings who are the overall leaders of the towns. This traditional institution is responsible for maintaining peace in the community; they settle disputes between families and ensure that disagreements are quickly settled before to lead to a breakdown of peace in the community” P5*

*“The local chiefs settle marital disputes and ensure that the family is in good shape. If the local chiefs are unable to settle misunderstanding between couple they refer the case to the king whose authority is binding on all the people within his kingdom. This way, the social life of our people is well organised and rarely will the community*

*people result to the court of law for dispute resolution” P4*

Apart from disputes resolution, there are many aspects of life where Nigerians share their commonalities; farmers for example work together to cultivate their farmland in order to reduce the cost of cultivating their crops. The child is seen as a child of the community so every adult takes responsibility of training the child to behave appropriately in the society:

*“We have communal living at the heart of our culture. For example, farmers work together to cultivate their farm or plant their seeds together so that the work will be faster. The child also is seen as a child of the community where elders the community accept the responsibility of training the child even when the parents are not around”*

*P2*

6.3.2.1.2.2. *Respect for elders.* Similarly, the data indicated that the culture of respect for elders is common to Nigerians irrespective of their regions and religions. It was considered an anti-social behaviour for a child to disrespect elders; one of the ways respect is shown to an elderly person is the mode of greeting, young people bow down while greeting an elder as a mark of respect to him. Also an elderly person is seen as always right in his/her opinions and so a young person would always obey instruction given by anyone in family/community who is considered to be an elder; the presents a sharp contrast with the enforcement of the child's right in the developed world. The culture of respect for elders is important to the objective of this study because of its implication on the child regarding talent development. For example, if an elder sees sport participation as a wrong thing then the child

might not be allowed to discover and develop his/her sporting potentials, but if the elders are in support of sports development then children would be encouraged to participate in sports. Elders in this sense include the parents, older siblings, older people in the community, and teachers in school. The quotes below illustrate the culture of respect for elders among Nigerians:

*“We have respect for elders. It is an abomination in my area of Nigeria to be disrespectful to elders...” P3*

*“In our background, we highly esteem the culture of respect for elders and this is evident in the mode of communication between the elders and the younger generation, the words of elders are to be obeyed in the community” P1*

*“Exactly, anywhere you see Nigerians throughout the whole world you will see this culture in them; they respect elders a lot. For example, you will not find a Nigeria greeting an elderly person without bowing his/her head to the elder” P4*

### **6.3.2.2 The role of the family.**

#### **6.3.2.2.1 Parents deemphasize sports, promote education.**

*6.3.2.2.1.1. Parents discourage sports.* One of the direct effects of the high level of poverty among Nigerian communities on athletes and sports development is that families would not support their children to take part in sports. The data showed that an average parent would not allow the child to participate in sporting activities because most of the

families are unable to fund sports development. In fact, there are other issues the families consider critical to the survival of the child and so command the attention of the family and that of the child, thus sports development is considered to outside the major priorities of the family as demonstrated in the quotes below:

*“...But the average parents, which unfortunately are in the majority, will not want to allow their children take part in sports. I have many of them around me here, who will come to me to beg for assistance to pay their children school fees because they don’t have the means of paying, such parents don’t encourage their children to play sports because of their level of orientation” P2*

*“We have some parents who don’t want their children to take part in sports they don’t like it. When I was the principal at Igbotu High school there was a mother who came and said we should not allow her son to play football in school. And when I asked her for her reason she sighted then case of Michael Okparaji, a member of the Nigerian senior national football team who died during a football match. So some parents have a kind of apathy towards their children taking part in sports” P4*

Parents’ negative attitude towards sports development is a major hurdle for children and young people who want to develop a sporting career in Nigeria. According to quote below, even those who go on to become successful sports men and women would have at one time or the other gone through the family barrier:

*“...No father will want the child to go and play sports. There was a boy I raised here while I was a coach and I had my own club; the boy moved on to play for one of the second division clubs in France, the same way, his father was a problem it took my intervention for the boy to develop his sporting talent. If the encouragement is there from the family, if the father is ready to support the children like they do in Europe and America, we have a lot of talents in Nigeria” P4*

*6.3.2.2.1.2. Parental controls pose challenge to sports development.* Participants were of the opinion that the lack of supports from the family inhibits the actualisation of the sporting potentials of Nigerian communities. Parents reportedly have influence over the daily activities of their children, though it was observed that many parents do not have a decisive control of the activities of the child, an average parent will be able control the choice of the child. And since sports development do not fall within the priority of the family parents discourage their children from getting involved in talent development in sports. From the responses of participants to interview questions as illustrated in the following quotes, it was clear that many people who would have grown up to become successful sport men and women have their minds dissuaded by their parents:

*“Parents do have influence over their children, but we cannot say categorically that a parent would have a decisive of control of what the child will do, or will not do. But surely parents can influence their children when it comes to taking part in sports” P2*

*“But from what we have observed, many children are highly talented but without the*



*support of the family no success can be achieved...” P3*

*“I was playing football together with the people who later become members of the national football team, but my father didn’t allow me. I think I would have been one of the national football team members, or may be a national coach but my father destroyed that vision by stopping me from taking part in sports” P4*

#### ***6.3.2.2.2 Sports development is seen as a threat to education & family life.***

*6.3.2.2.2.1. Education is taken very seriously.* The poor state of the Nigerian economy and the prevalence of poverty among many families and communities were sighted among the major reasons parents refuse their children to get involved in talent development in sports. To the average Nigerian family, the only way the child can be insulated from poverty is by making sure that he/she is educated to the highest possible level, so parents take the education of their children very seriously. The child is expected to go to school and be fully concentrated on his/her studies; sports development is perceived as a threat to the academic development of the child because of the amount of time the child has to study would be affected by the child’s engagement with talent development activities:

*“The average family in Nigeria takes education of the child very seriously, because they have come to realise that education is a gateway to many things in the future...Every family will want every child in the family to be educated as much as the family’s economy can afford, the family will go a long way to ensure that the child receives the best education that can be given...Parents rarely appreciate the*

*contributions of physical activities in the general development of the child, they would say look I'm sending you to school and not to go and be involved in any sporting activities..." P1*

*6.3.2.2.2. Families make sacrifices for education.* The data indicated that most of the Nigerian families attach so much importance to education, to the extent that they are willing to make sacrifices in order to ensure that the child is educated to the highest possible level. The responsibility of educating the child is largely within the purview of parents because the government have no policies in place to aid the education of its citizens. That means parents will have to invest the little they have into paying school fees and buying books and other materials for education. To fulfil the education needs of the child, all other demands are sacrificed; that is one of the reasons parents and family would not buy of the idea of their children getting involved in talent development:

*"Parents attach so much importance to the education of their children and would sacrifice anything to ensure that the child is educated to the highest possible level" P4*

*"Parents have to give their children proper education, both formal and informal education. Informal education starts from home, the parents have to teach the child how to live in the society; they teach the child how to take care of their personal care, how to relate with people in the society, how to relate with the elders in the community, and how to take care of the environment. Later parents have to take their children to school where they will receive formal education. Formal education refers to the kind*

*of learning that takes place within the classroom in school under the control of the teachers. The teachers teach children how to read and write, which is the primary duty of the teachers” P5*

*6.3.2.2.3. Parents want their children to become professionals.* The economy of Nigeria is mainly dependent on the public sector because other sectors of the economy are basically non-existent. For instance, the manufacturing sector is non-functional, small and medium scale enterprises do not exist and so the government is the only major employer of labour. Due to the death of the industrial sector, there are no low and medium skilled jobs such that getting a job literally required a university degree. The professional jobs are highly competitive and so the more educated an applicant is, the better his/her chances of securing a decent employment. Consequently, parents want their children to get education to the highest possible level and be good academically in their chosen profession, which is the only way to brighten the prospect of getting a job. The quotes below illustrate that parents would want their children to study and become lawyers, doctors and other professional disciplines, and as such, they discourage sports participating:

*“To be sincere, parents would want their children to become lawyers or doctors, and no parent will ordinarily expect the child to come and say I want to be a star athlete except if the child is showing a lot of talents. So in the Nigerian culture, sport development is incidental to the development of the child. There is no conscious attempt to encourage the child to go for any career in sports” P1*

*“...Let me use myself as an example, I was one of the first group of athletes to be recruited to the sporting cooperation at the state level, but my father wanted me to be a medical doctor and so while I was trying to develop my sporting career my father came out strongly against me; he said look, I don’t want you to play football and he did everything he could to stop me” P4*

6.3.2.2.2.4. *Sports development is stopped at marriage.* Apart from education, another reason the cultural background of Nigerian communities does not promote talent identification and development in sports is the belief that a young person would have to get married at a certain age, and begin a personal family life. Marriage is one of the indices used to measure success in the society so parents would be proud to give their female children away in marriage at the appropriate time and also to get a wife for their male children. Marriage in this concept presents a challenge to sports development because once married young people (who were previously athletes or involved in one sport or the other) would stop their participation in sports; women would then devote their time to having and raising children while the men are now committed to providing for their immediate family. In the following quotes, participants explained how highly valued marriage is to the culture in many Nigerian communities and how at marriage, people would stop their involvement in sporting activities:

*“...My other children were very sporty while they were in school but when they grew up and get married that was the end of it, and you cannot say that because a child is good at one sport he/she will not get married when they get to the age” P6*

*“Once a person attains the age of thirty years or there about, he or she has to get married, because marriage is highly valued among Nigeria families. After they have done this, they would then start their own homes and are now seen as responsible adults in the community” P3*

*“...Until a child attains the marriageable age stated above, he or she is under the control of the parents. The parents are in charge of the development of the child and they decide what the child can do and cannot do. It is only after they get married and formed their own family that they receive freedom from the control of the parents” P2*

### **6.3.2.3. Misconceptions about TID.**

#### **6.3.2.3.1 Myths about sports development.**

*6.3.2.3.1.1. Sports development distract schooling.* Furthermore, the data revealed certain myths among families that put sports and athletes’ development in a bad light in the communities. For instance, people were observed to believe that getting involved in sports development would affect academic development of the child negatively. Being former school heads, participants recounted their experiences of having to encourage parents to allow their children participate in sports, explaining that sports participation would not have any negative effect on academic development of the child. In fact, in the opinion of the former school heads that took part in the study, taking part in sports would enhance academic performance and the general development of the child. According to them, pupils and students who take part in sports possess certain qualities that that give them advantages over

their peers who do not participate in sports. But to the parents, they would rather have the child focus on education and avoid any distraction that may be caused by sports development:

*“I was the one who encouraged the parents to allow him because the parents said they want to him to go to school and go to the university but I told them that sports will not disturb him from going to school; in fact, I told them that playing football will even help him in so many ways when he gets to the university and that was how they allowed him to play football. And today the parents are very proud that their child plays football in France” P4*

*“Taking part in sporting activities does not have any negative impact on the child; in fact, it is even better for a child to take part in sporting activities in relation to the child’s education. Sporting activities develop the child mentally. At least you would know that sports develop children socially, mentally, academically, culturally and even politically. I said politically because when you play sports you have to give and take in life, and that is politics. So during our PTA meetings I tell parent to encourage their children take part in sporting activities. However, there are some children that do not take their studies seriously once they start taking part in sports, but such students only need the right guidance so they know how to share their time between studying and playing sports” P3*

6.3.2.3.1.2. *Athletes are seen as time wasters and unserious.* Similarly, it was revealed that majority of the people in the communities would view sport participation as a time

wasting venture. Athletes were seen as young men and women who do not take their future seriously because they spend time on sports development rather than focusing on their studies. These negative perceptions of sport participation equate athletes with other young people who are involved in anti-social behaviours in the communities. Parents' insistence that their children should not be involved in sports development was seen as partly emanating from the fear that there is no prospect for the child in sports and as such, the child would waste the time that could have been devoted to education to prepare for a more meaning future. These sentiments are illustrated in the quotes below:

*"...People will look at young athletes from different perspectives. For example, some people will see them as unserious young men and women who are wasting time on sports...Yes those who see sports development as a waste of time are in the majority, within them they see athletes are unserious young men and women who waste their time playing sports around in the community. But the elite know that sport participation is good" P2*

*"Parents are afraid that the child would just waste his/her time playing around. And don't forget that education cannot be taken lightly under any disguise, even in the developed world, education is still taken as important for every child, because athletes will need education to survive either they succeed in sport or not" P1*

6.3.2.3.1.3. *Parents believe sports will not help the child to overcome poverty.* In the same vein, because the major challenge facing an average family is that of poverty; therefore,

families direct all resources towards fighting and overcoming poverty. Such investment includes sending the child to school, because parents would be out of the education and employment age. The child's education is seen as a tool for possible future economic freedom for the family, consequently, any (perceived) threat to academic development of the child is not only seen as putting the future of the in jeopardy, but also tied to the economic survival of the entire family. However, many parents are unaware of the economic potentials in sports, especially when there is successful talent development at the elite level. In the quote below, one of the participants was of the opinion that if parents are aware that successful talent development in sports could lift the child as well as the entire family out of poverty that they would support talent development in sports just the way they support education:

*“What most of these parents don't know is that their children can bring them out of poverty through sports. Look at John Mikel Obi for example, he has built a house for the father and have established a lot of businesses for him such that the parents cannot suffer from poverty again. You can imagine somebody earning sixty thousand pounds sterling every week; can such a person be poor again? So that is what the parents don't know, that sport is now a well-paying career” P4*

#### **6.3.2.3.2 Truths about sports development.**

**6.3.2.3.2.1. Prospect of financial breakthrough.** A major missing link in the talent development environment in Nigerian communities appeared to be the lack of awareness of the opportunities in sports and the contribution sports development could make towards both personal and social development. The data showed that the few parents who allow their



children take part in sports did so because of the perceived economic benefits of successful talent development in sports. Participant observed that once there is a clear prospect of breaking out of poverty through sports, many families would become supporters of sports. The data also gave an indication that it would take time before the opposition to sports development in many Nigerian communities began to give way to the reality that sports is now a renounced profession across the world and also among the major income earners in many developed economies. One factor that will help promote sport development in Nigeria is that there are now testimonies of Nigerians who play football in Europe (for example) and have been able to break the cycle of poverty in their families; this is an encouragement for other parents to support their children who show the potential for successful talent development in sports:

*“The major motivation for parents to endorse sport participation for their children is when they perceive that there is reward for taking part in sports. For example, when children perform well at inter-house sports competitions in schools the school gives them some items as rewards and because of that the parents will encourage them to do in the next competition” P2*

*“Many parents are now realising that sporting participation is good for their children. Look at people like Segun Odegbami, Kanu Nwankwo are billionaires and they made their money through sports. So parents are realising that their children can make money through sporting activities” P3*

6.3.2.3.2.2. *Prospect for social mobility.* Likewise, sporting success appeared to be a veritable vehicle for social mobility in Nigeria. Athletes who succeed in their sporting career are celebrated as national heroes; they receive national awards and interact with the highest echelon of the society. The connections successful sports men and women make through sports put them at an advantage in the larger society such that they have more opportunities to achieve financial freedom. In the quotes below, participants gave examples of how sports have served as the vehicle for social mobility and promote the interests in talent development in sports in the society:

*“But with the improvement of sports, and the fact that people are now realising that sports is one of the avenue to get to the upper part of the social ladder, more people are now aware of the opportunities in sports...” P1*

*“We can now see that children can develop a career in sports and become successful in life, look at the Super Eagles, the national football team, they all earn a lot of money and they are very popular and celebrated in the society so people have now seen that sporting success will make their children to seat with the kings in the society...” P5*

#### **6.3.2.4 Athletes’ Approach to Family Influence/Barrier.**

**6.3.2.4.1. Develop resistance.** Though the cultural beliefs and practices in Nigerian communities as discussed above make sports development unnecessarily more difficult than it ought to be, however, the data revealed that athletes who are committed to the development of their talents would not drop out because of the challenges. For example, the family (as

earlier discussed) is opposed to the child taking part in sports and would do anything to discourage talent development in sports. Yet, this data suggest that children would devise ways to get over parents' opposition to their involvement in sports development. According to participants, the barriers only make athletic development more difficult than it would ordinarily have been but barriers do not form a deterring end for athletes who really want to grow their sporting potential:

*“The truth is that though these barriers are there, but those who have passion for sports will find ways of overcoming the barriers. Let me give you a real example, if a boy is aware that he is very good in tennis, and he knows that if he plays tennis to an appreciable level, the sport can become a good means of survival, he will do anything legitimate to develop his potentials in the sport” P1*

*“...But many children will not stop because the parents say they should, in fact, I told parents that their refusal to allow children fulfil their interest sports development may lead to the child getting involved in some negative tendencies. Again, don't forget that I said that children spend a lot of time away from home, even more than they spend with their parents in most cases. They can go ahead and play any sport they like once they leave the home because the parent cannot see them and will not know what the child is doing” P2*

**6.3.2.4.2. Parents' absence and peer influence.** Children take advantage of the fact that many parents are not always around in the house, to engage in sporting activities. An

average parent would go to work or farm in the morning only to return in the late evenings, therefore parents are not always around to monitor the activities of the child; that gives the child an opportunity to pursue his/her passion in sports. While the parents are away, children meet with their peers in the neighbourhood and engage in many activities they like including sports, this is how many Nigerian athletes began and grow their sporting career. Similarly, when children go to school they usually have the physical education periods in school where they take parts in many sports of their interest under the control of the P.E. teacher. When they close from school, those who are really interested in sports development would continue to engage their peers in sporting activities on the street until their parents return from work; these interactions outside the home (on the street and in school) was seen by one of the participants in the quote below as key to talent development in sports in Nigeria:

*“The issue is that it is not possible for parents to be with the children all the time, sometimes the child will be with the peer group, where they engage in several activities that they so wish to engage in. So, parents can influence children to some extents but the parents cannot determine the totality of what the child does...Children go to school by 8am, and sometime they remain in school up to 4pm, because when they close from the normal school hours they still wait behind for extra lessons before they later go home in the evening. So children spend more time away from home with their peers than they spend with the parents...when children interact with people outside the family, they learn from them. When the child goes to school, he relates with many people from different background and all these will play together to inform the child behaviour. I will say that the peer group has more influence over the child and play a*

### 6.3.3 Ad Hoc Sports Development Model

The third general theme in the result is the ad hoc sports development model, shown in table 5.4 below. The data revealed general physicality; lack of structure for sports development; and issues relating to access to coaching and coaching quality.

*Table 6.4: The third general theme emerging from the study described in chapter 6 showing an Ad hoc sport development model including general physicality/informal opportunities; lack of structure for sport development; and access to coaching/coaching quality.*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical development crucial to survival</li><li>• Annual festivals</li><li>• Inter-house sports competition</li></ul>	General physicality/informal opportunities	Ad Hoc Sport Development Model
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No TID programmes</li><li>• No competitions</li><li>• No funding</li><li>• Inconsistent government interventions</li></ul>	Lack of structure for sports development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The role of the coach is critical to dev.</li><li>• No access to coaching</li><li>• Coaches poor on CPD</li><li>• Rewards: inconsistent/irregular</li></ul>	Access to coaching /coaching quality	

#### 6.3.3.1 General Physicality / informal opportunities.

**6.3.3.1.1. General awareness of need for physical development.** The data revealed several ways in which cultural practices among the Nigerian people and communities interface with sports and athletes’ development. For example, it appeared that there is a general awareness on the importance of physical development in the overall development of the child. Physical development was however not considered in the light of sports and athletes’ development but was more for its necessity for survival; because most Nigerian communities rely mainly on agriculture/farming, children are required to go the farms with their parents on daily basis, and such journeys require physical fitness because they walk to

and from the farm. It is therefore a necessity that people are physically active in order to cope with the demands of daily life.

Also, apart from walking to and from farms on daily basis, and sometimes carrying heavy loads, children also get engage in many physical activities in the communities for play purposes. The quotes indicate that physical activities were part of daily life in Nigerian communities:

*“So as far as Nigeria is concerned, we are much aware of the fact that both boys and girls have to develop themselves physically...particularly in the villages, young boys and girls go to farm in the morning to help their parents and return in the evening;*

*these farms are always many kilometres away from home and they walk to and from the farm” P1*

*“...For the girls, it may not be competitive as such, the boys take part in more competitive activities, while the girls are more interested in what I will rather call social activities like music, and dancing...But things are changing gradually now in the sense that many of the traditional ways of life are giving way to some forms of modern enculturation, so we now discover that boys and girls have different ways of playing together at the backyard. The girls are joining the boys now in sports, may be not as competitive as the boys, but some competitiveness are coming into the girls’ activities” P3*

So, the data suggested that most Nigerian people are very conscious of the need to encourage children to take part in physical activities, primarily for survival but also for recreational reasons. In the quote below, one of the participants opined that the Nigerian culture encourages children to take part in physical activities:

*“In the evenings, children usually congregate in the villages to play several forms of games, which include physical activities, these are all parts of the cultural endowment of the Nigerian people. So what I’m saying in essence is that culturally we have means by which our young boys and girls develop their interest in open door physical activities” P1*

**6.3.3.1.2. Annual festivals.** Another feature of the cultural background of the Nigerian people and communities is regular (annual) festivals. For instance, each season of the year is celebrated with one festival or the other. Because majority of the people in the local communities are farmers, the planting season is celebrated with a festival and the harvest season as well is welcomed with another festival. Apart from the farming related festivals, there are many other festivals held by communities. These festivals are rich in physical activities including rallying, dancing and in most occasions, there are traditional games such as boxing, wrestle and other local games that people engage for entertainment. The culture of festivals seemed to be critical to the development of sports in Nigeria because the festive periods avail the people an opportunity to come together to showcase what they are good at doing and also compete with one another; such competitions may be formal or informal

depending on the preference of the community leaders and how much (time & money) they are willing to invest in the games. In the quotes below, some of the participants revealed how popular the festivals are among the Nigerian people and community:

*“Culturally, people in Nigeria are used to one type of festival and the other. During these festivals, physical activities are part and parcel of the things that they do...For example, in most towns they have what we call the yam festival, part of the activities are physical and movement activities, like dancing, running, and other types of traditional games that accompany these cultural festivals” P1*

*“In the social aspect of our culture, we have a lot of festivals, these festivals include many traditional games such as wrestling, boxing and some other games. We also have the traditional institutions that are in charge of the leadership of the communities” P4*

*“One of the outstanding elements of our culture is the annual festivals that communities hold and see as very important to their history. Take Irele for example, we have a festival called “Ore festival” which is held once in a year. The essence of the ore festival is to pray on the crops that we have planted so that they will grow and yield good harvest, therefore, the festival is held immediately after the planting season....after the Ore festival, we also have the new yam festival; the new yam festival is a festival we hold to the gods, for the yam harvest season, yam is one of the most popular crops in our own part of the world” P6*



#### ***6.3.3.1.3. Festivals are used to promote unity among families and communities.***

Apart from celebrating a season, festivals are also used as a medium to promote peace, unity and cohesion among individuals, families and communities. For example, in the following quote, one participant explained that the “Eje” festival (one of the annual festivals held in his community) is intended to be an avenue for people and families to come together once every year to discuss issues that are of common interest to the family and also to spend some time (a week) together socialising; this ways, families strengthen the bond among their members, and communities also promote their common interests:

*“Similarly, we have the Eje festival; “...The essence of the Eje festival is to encourage our daughters who are married to people outside the community to come home once in a year to reunite and have a good time with the family. So during the Eje festival, every female member of the family comes home to spend five days with their parents and the extended family members, no matter how far or near these daughters are, it is a must that they come home once in a year for this purpose...” P6*

While it may be advantageous to sports and athletes’ development that people engaged in physical activities both for survival, recreation and festival purposes, it also necessary to emphasize that such engagement are not taken as a replacement for elitist talent development in sports. The form of physical activities observed in the cultural background of Nigerian communities is informal and unregulated. As such, it necessary that people are aware that physical activity for survival or cultural festivals would not serve the purpose of formal talent identification and development in sports, though it might provide a good foundation for future

development.

**6.3.3.1.4. Annual inter-house sports competitions.** Another opportunity for sports development is the annual inter-house sports competitions in school. The inter-house sports competition is a regular feature in the Nigerian school system; students are divided into competing groups called ‘houses’ and the houses would compete among themselves in several sports (mostly in track and field events). The inter-house sports completion is a major platform for talent identification in sports in the Nigerian context, thus both elite coaches and athletes in the previous two studies of this thesis recognised the role of the inter-house sport competition in athletes and sports development in Nigeria. School heads and teachers (especially those that value sports development) use the period of the inter-house sport competition to mobilise the supports of parents for sport participation and encourage parents to buy kits for their children so they compete effectively in their chosen sports:

*“The inter-house sports competitions are one example of how head teachers organise sporting activities to promote sports development among the students. The teachers and the principals will mobilise parents to buy kits for their children to take part in sports, and some of the parents are keenly interested in the inter-house sports and they take active roles in the school sport” P3*

*“Heads of schools also organise inter-school competitions to give students the opportunities to compete among themselves, so kudos can be given to the teachers and head teachers for their efforts to supports sport development. Teachers equally encourage parents to contribute money towards sporting activities in school” P2*

In the time leading up to the inter-house sports competition, each ‘house’ would have intra-house competitions to select their representatives in the main event. All students have the opportunity to try their abilities in different sports while the best among equals are selected to compete for the house. Similarly, other schools within the community are invited to take part in the inter-house sports competition. It is important to note that the conduct of the inter-house sports competition is based largely on the discretion of the school heads, as it is not mandatory for schools to hold this annual event, and the participation of parents in the inter-house sports competitions is also motivated by the role of the head teachers. In the quotes below, participants showed that they encouraged sports development while they school heads through participation in the inter-house sports competitions:

*“I encouraged them to attend several competitions when they are invited and my school would always be present, and they would come with gold and silver medals in most of the cases....So I made sure that I encouraged the pupils, and then I have one thing at the back of my mind that even when you cannot use education as a vehicle for success, sports may become the instrument to break out of poverty” P2*

#### **6.3.3.2. Lack of structure for sports development.**

**6.3.3.2.1. No Talent identification programmes.** In the earlier discussion in this section, it was mentioned that the cultural background of the Nigerian people and communities, as well as government attitudes towards talent development in sports portend serious challenges to athletes and sports development. Some of the issues raised like the lack

of facilities in communities and schools, parents' refusal to allow their children take part in sports, poor implementation of sports development policies of government; all cumulated to a situation where there is no organised sport in the communities, as such, there were no talent identification efforts in many local communities:

*“Until we begin to identify our talented young men and women right from the local level we will continue to be behind in sports in Nigeria because majority of the people live in the villages and rural areas so we need to get to them and identify the talents among them. As I speak to you, we don't have any programme in place to identify and develop new talents” P4*

**6.3.3.2.2. Playing on the street.** It was revealed that successful talent development in sports is incidental as opposed to a planned occurrence. Children usually play together on the streets and they engage each other in different sporting activities. Participants considered playing on the streets as the foundation of sports development in Nigeria. From the street, it would then depend on luck to find a coach who will see the potential in the young children and offer to help them develop their talents:

*“I will refer to playing sports on the street as the formative period of sports development. When they begin from the street, by the time they get to school the interest and the passion in sport will be growing. Most of time I would even join them to play in the compound, even at my age because of the training I have got in the past” P2*

*“The children just play sports informally in the streets without any form of organisation at all. Children only use what they watch on television as a guide for their sporting activities...Our children nowadays, most especially the very young ones are so eager to take part in sports that they gather on the streets every day to play one sport or the other; as I am talking to you now they are in front of my house playing football” P4*

#### **6.3.3.2.3. Performance and behaviour on the street/school is indicative of talents.**

Also, when the children start to go school, they begin to engage (possibly) in sporting activities such as in the physical education and the inter-house sports competition. This way those who have sporting talents will start to notice that they perform better than their peers always and then become conscious of their sporting abilities. The data showed that street performance and performance in school are the major indication of sporting talents in Nigeria and not a carefully planned/organised development programme where talent are formally identified and put through a process of development:

*“One of the ways we identify young boys and girls who have sporting talents is through their performance at. They can compare themselves with their peers and see that they are better in a particular sport” P1*

*“The first characteristic is their performances during sporting activities in schools. Also, we see their level of tolerance because when the teachers take them out for sporting events they usually do not misbehave and of course, social behaviour is*

*important to sport development. A good sport man should be well discipline. Mentally too, children who have sporting talents are different from their peers who don't play sports. They are different in the sense that they are easily amendable to circumstances, they have self-control, and they easily relate with people" P2*

**6.3.3.2.4. There are no regular competitions.** The data revealed that there were no regular competitions to encourage children to develop their sporting talent. The absence of the club system meant that children had no opportunity to engage in organised sports in the communities. Even in the school many schools do not hold the inter-house sports competitions regularly, it is only the few that value sports development that ensure the sporting event is held annually. Therefore, children who take part in sporting activities do so for personal fulfilment and play, but no conscious effects are made to develop to elitist level of sports performance. The lack of competition was seen in the quote below as part of reason schools and families perceive sport participation as a waste of time:

*"There is need for regular competitions right from the local level to the top, so that there is something to train or to play for that is when the school can take sport development serious, without that, we will only be wasting the children's precious time" P4*

**6.3.3.2.5. No funding for sporting activities.** Participants explained one of the reasons there were no talent identification programmes as lack of funds for athletes and sports development. Finance was seen as the number one barrier to talent identification and

development in sports in the Nigerian context. The problem of funding spanned from the large economic problems in the country, many of the states were reported to be owing staff salaries for several months without any hope of paying the arrears; therefore, participants were clear about the effects of the poor state of the national economy (discussed extensively earlier) on sports development and sighted it as a reason why there are no investments into talents development in sports to motivate formal talents identification procedures:

*“The number one barrier is finance. I said earlier that the economy is not that buoyant, in fact, most of the states now seeking bailout from the federal government before they can pay staffs salaries. Would you then expect states that cannot pay salaries to have interest in financing sport development? So the first problem is finance” P1*

*“There is the problem of inadequate funding. Then the period of training is too short, we don’t prepare our athletes early enough for competitions, there are time that athletes and their coach are given short notice to prepare for competition. So we need to address all these issues before we can begin to see improvement” P2*

**6.3.3.2.6. Government interventions are inconsistent.** Where government (either state or federal) have any intervention programme for sports and athletes’ development, such programmes were said to be inconsistent. Any intervention programme, according to the participants, is always focused in the big cities whereas a larger percentage of the population live in the local communities and would not be able to benefit from a city-based intervention in sports development. Again, intervention programmes from the government are threatened

by sustainability, such programmes were reported to run for a while and later fade away due to inconsistency in government pursuits:

*“There are some activities outside the school system, particularly in the big cities. The sports councils send coaches to specific centres in the big cities, where after the school hour athletes come and receive imputes from these coaches. But again like I said, it is only the big cities. For example, in the whole of Ondo state, it is only at the sports council where the coaches have their schedules to meet pupils who they have be identified while they go round the schools during the day. They encourage these young athletes to come to the sports council in the evenings after school hours for further training. But, this only happens in the big cities...Well like I said, Ondo state has just started this in the last two three years, and I think the thing is spreading to other parts of the country. But how consistent, that again will depend on what happens in the future, and the people at the helms of affairs” P1*

#### **6.3.3.3 Access to coaching and coaching quality.**

**6.3.3.3.1. The role of the coach is critical.** The data indicated that there is need to improving on issues regarding access to coaching for developing athletes. Participants argued that coaching is critical because talent development require technical knowledge and experience that will lead the athletes through the various stages of development. Without a coach the child might just waste his/her time doing the wrong things. In the Nigerian context, the role of the coach was seen as critical because the coach is the link between athletes and the hostile cultural environment in which they develop. For instance, participants believed



that the coach needs to take responsibility of sourcing information for athletes to enable them know the opportunities that are available and how they can access them. The quotes below illustrate the peculiar roles of the coach in the Nigerian talent development environments:

*“The coach has a unique opportunity to lead the child correctly. In terms of training, the coach must train the child, and in fact, that is the primary assignment of the coach to give the technical knowhow to the athletes. And I believe that many coaches in Nigeria are trying their best depending in their own level of understanding and knowledge...Another role the coach plays is that of a P.R.O, you know the coach is supposed to know more than the athletes. The coach is now more interested in helping athletes to source information regarding, for example, competitions, and how to raise money to finance training and competition. So, many of the coaches, particularly, the games masters in schools are now working as the link between the schools and the athletes. They encourage their schools to sponsor athletes to the various competitions. In the sport councils, the coaches are also trying their best...First they give the technical knowhow, and secondly they direct the athletes in such a way that they take their education very seriously beside their sport development. The coach also tries as much as possible to encourage and put across the mind of the athletes to the managers of the organising bodies. For example, at the states sports council, the coaches have a way of making sure that the administrators are aware of the concerns of athletes and that athletes are were informed of the council’s activities” P1*

**6.3.3.3.2. Coach training and retraining need improvement.** Certain reservations

were voiced about the training of coaches in Nigeria. Though there is a good platform for coach education through the national institute for sports, the data revealed that coaches rarely take advantage of the institute to update their knowledge. Therefore, Nigerian coaches were observed to be lagging behind with regards to updating their knowledge and familiarising with the current trends in talents identification and development, as indicated in quote below:

*“I must not forget to add that one of the things that the coaches in Nigeria are not doing well is that they should be going for training frequently to update their knowledge. It is not that you have your training two, three years ago and that is the end of it, or you can just continue to practice as long as you want without attending further trainings, but our coaches in Nigeria are not very good in updating their knowledge...The National Institute for Sports (NIS) is in charge of coaching education in Nigeria. Many people attend the programmes of the NIS to obtain the certificate in coaching. But when they finish, most of the people who obtain these certificates work in the sport council and not in the schools” P1*

**6.3.3.3.3. Local communities and schools lack coaches.** Coupled with the problem of regular training and retraining of coaches, the data indicated that there were no coaches at the local communities’ level to help children with sporting potentials who intend to develop a career in sports. Even in the schools (which is the only semblance of organised sports in the communities), it was observed that there are no coaches; the school heads who are interested in sports development would only appoint one of the teachers as a ‘games master’ to oversee the conduct of sporting activities in the school. However, at the tertiary level (i.e. universities)

there seemed to be better organisation in the management of sports. For example, the higher institutions were noted to have the human resources to support sport development, the problem notwithstanding remains that the primary level, where there are no coaches is the foundation for talent development while the universities can only build on the on the background created at the local community level:

*“...We only have games masters and mistresses overseeing sports development in schools, so we don't have trained coaches in the primary and the secondary school...At the tertiary level, some of the lecturers were formerly P.E. teachers, so they take on the responsibility of helping athletes who are students to develop their talents. But, many of the schools and colleges are now appointing full-time coaches, whose sole duties are to help and coach student-athletes, such coaches are the ones certified by the NIS. For instance, at Adekunle Ajasin University, we employed about three coaches last year. And all of them have one type of coaching certificate or the other from the NIS” P1*

*“The games masters usually identified talented students in school and intensify their training. That is how talents are identified and developed in Nigeria...As at now; there are no opportunities for people that have talents in sports. There are no coaches, there are no facilities, and even at the state level they hire coaches from the eastern parts of the country” P3*

*“There are no coaches around at the local level. In the whole of Irele local council*

*area we don't have any coach in any sport that I know of. In the early eighties, I was organising football teams and other sporting competitions with the help of a philanthropist who was from this local council area and that was how we were able to discover many talents then, but since the man died, the programme has come to a complete halt. At that time, coaches were encouraged to organise their teams and take part in the competitions but since the competitions are not forthcoming everything has come to an end with regards to sporting activities in the local council area" P4*

The data also revealed that progress in sports development was largely dependent on luck as in finding a good coach. For example, one of the participants who had previously been a coach recounted in the quote below, his experience of a particular footballer who he discovered from when he was still young and helped to develop his talents. The footballer was lucky to have been so discover because many potential talents end up not being discovered or developed because of the prevailing circumstance of the Nigerian environment:

*"I discovered him in 1983, when I was a teacher in Comprehensive High School, Ode-Irele. I discovered that he could play good football and so I started to encourage him; I would arrange practice session for them together with other students that played football, then I later formed my own football club called the 'Adesuku Base' and I was the coach of the club and he started to play for the club... I told you, I have met with several coaches and I'm well known as a coach among coaches in Nigeria, so I later introduce him to another coach in the city who took him to the city to play football.*

*That was how he got to Lagos and joined Julius Berger” P4*

**6.3.3.3.4. Coaches are appointed without due process.** The problem of appointing people without the requisite knowledge and experience was not limited to administrators alone. The data revealed that coaches also were appointed based on other sentiments rather than previous knowledge and experience in sports coaching. Participants see this factor as responsible for the lack of long-term development plans, which is a challenge to talents identification and development in sports in Nigeria:

*“We don’t have long-term development, for example, you must have heard that the football federation just appointed a new coach for the super eagles (the national football team) in the person of Sunday Oliseh. I know he was a good player while he was a member of the team, but the question I continue to ask myself is that in the last five years or so, where has Sunday Oliseh been? What coaching experience does he have to warrant him handling the senior national team? What teams has he coached? How many competitions has he attended as a coach? You don’t just bring somebody from the blues to come and coach the senior national football team and expect him to perform a miracle” P1*

*“Once we can get people who are technically knowledgeable about sports we can be sure that we will get the programme going. But if we derail like it has happened in the past and we appoint just anybody to oversee the administration of sports, then we can be sure that the future of the programme will be blink” P3*

**6.3.3.3.5. Coaches' rewards depend on employer.** One major factor of where trained coaches chose to work is the perception about available rewards and remuneration. Apart from the fact that there are no facilities at the local communities that coaches can work with, there are also no rewards for the coaches should they chose to work with children and developing athletes at the local levels. As earlier discussed, there are no clubs to hire coaches so if at all; the coach would have to work on humanitarian ground without income. Similarly, the schools at the local level (i.e. primary and secondary schools) do not have the financial capability to engage the service of a professional coach, in fact, the schools struggle with acute shortage of teachers, and so hiring a coach would not be in the list of priorities. The tertiary institutions at the other end can afford to engage the service of coaches and that is why most coaches are found working in the universities or in the states agencies of sports where at least they can earn a livelihood:

*“Well, to some extent I will say coaches are fairly rewarded. I know a little bit about the coaches in the University more than those at the sports councils in terms of their remuneration, and I think their take home is not too bad. In the sports council, I think they are fairly rewarded too, I don't know the details, but I suspect they would be fairly rewarded. But for the coaches in private organisations, am not aware of how much they earn or how well they are rewarded” P1*

*“But apart from the regular salaries, some of the coaches who are lucky to be in charge of teams whenever there are competitions, and there is need for training, then*

*have extra allowances. Also, they are lucky to travel abroad with the national teams they are very well rewarded for such opportunities. But very few coaches have these rare opportunities. But in all, I will not compare the level of rewards coaches receive in Nigeria to how rewarding coaching should be; I believe we still have some grounds to cover in this regard” P3*

Generally, participants argued that coaching in Nigeria is not as rewarding as it should be; in the quote below, a participant sighted the case of the national team coaches who do not command enough respect from their players because the players are having better financial standing compared to the coach and so they naturally do not succumb to the control of their coaches, this was linked to the poor performance of the national teams:

*“One thing I have noticed especially among the senior national football team is that all these super stars from Europe don’t obey our own coach the way they fear and obey the white coaches. That was the reason why the team achieved a lot during the time Joe Bonfrey was the coach of the team. So the only thing I see is that the coach is earning less than they should earn and the players are far richer than the coach who should be a boss, so there is no much respect for the coach” P4*

#### **6.4. Discussion**

The current data further expand the revelations made by the previous studies on the athletes’ and coaches’ perceptions to athletes and sports development in Nigeria. The findings

unearth some of the underlining factors of the specific context, model and environments for Talent Identification and Development in the country. In total, three general themes emerged from the study including (1) Features Of Nigerian Communities And Culture which include, poverty; poor management of resources; corruption; reinforcement for corrupt practices; lack of facilities, programmes, and implementation of policies; and unfriendly school environment. (2) Family Influences on Talent Development including, discrete cultural practices and religion beliefs; North/South cultural similarities; families deemphasize sports and promote education; sports development seen as a threat to education; Myths about sports development; truths about sports development; Athletes approach to family influence/barrier; and progress in TD depends on luck. (3) Ad Hoc Sports Development Models, which feature factors such as, general physicality; lack of organised sports development programmes; and inadequate coaching/coaching quality; This section discusses these findings in light of the existing literature on TID, and their implications for sports development, first in the Nigerian context, and also for the wider audience (i.e. beyond the shores of Nigeria).

The first important feat achieved by this investigation is the exposition of the features of Nigerian communities and the culture of the people, and their effects on athletes and sports development in Nigeria; to start with, the data highlighted a high rate of poverty among Nigerian families and communities. It was revealed that the average Nigerian parent lacks the financial capacity to finance talent development in sports, not only that, the struggle to break out of poverty was identified among the major preoccupation of the Nigerian people such that any endeavour that is considered not to have immediate financial return is blacklisted, while all efforts are focused on activities perceived to have a foreseeable positive financial impact on the family; for this reason, sports and athletic development are out of the



priorities of the family, while attention is focused on education as the means to ensure a brighter financial future for the child.

This finding provides evidence supporting earlier studies, which have reported a high rate of poverty in Nigeria (i.e. Aigbokhan, 2000; Timothy, Oluwatayo & Obayelu 2010; Kolawole, Omobitan, & Yaqub, 2015; Toyin, Timothy, & Oladayo, 2015; Awotide, 2012). For example, Aigbokhan (2000) reported that an increasing number of Nigerians were living under absolute poverty; the rate of poverty is higher in rural areas than the urban cities, these findings are consistent with the current data. The main reasons for the prevalence of poverty among Nigerians include the non-diversification of the national economy, domestic policy mistakes, and overreliance on petroleum resources (Aigbokhan, 2000). Similarly, Timothy, Oluwatayo, and Obayelu (2010) identified the root cause of wide spread poverty among Nigerians to include polarization and inequality between the different zones of the country.

Also, the current data featured poor management of resources as a factor of poverty in Nigeria; governments, were noted to have an “I don’t care” attitudes towards the plight of the people, majority of whom are very poor. Rather than being an advantage to economic development, natural resources have been observed to be a curse to developing countries (i.e. Sala-I-Martin & Subramanian, 2012; Auty, 2007). Sala-I-Martin and Subramanian (2012) argued that the level of poverty in Nigeria is due to the culture of waste, and mismanagement of oil and other mineral resources, which have continually derogated economic development. Similarly, Ascher (1999) identified policy failure, faulty management, as well as dependence on natural resources among factors responsible for poverty in developing countries; the current data provide further evidence to these findings. One manifestation of the mismanagement of resources is the lack of consistent policy direction to drive economic

growth, as a result, there continued to be a growing line of inequality among the people (Araar & Timothy, 2006).

Though capital intensive, sports development holds high prospect for economy development, and requires investment both from the national, community and family levels. For example, the cost of hosting the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil was estimated at over \$14.5 billion (Oputah, 2014) while the organisers of the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow reported that the games generated over 5,000 jobs and apprenticeships, £200m worth of contracts to Glasgow firms, £198m investments in sports facilities, and £700m on Games-related transport infrastructure (Bull, 2014); these figures leave no one in doubt of the relevance of sport as a profession in tackling the problems of poverty and unemployment in today's world. Hence, nations across the world are increasingly investing in sports development as reflected in the hosting of international competitions because of the growth effects such events are perceived to create in their respective economies (Porter, 1999). Therefore, for the dream of improvement in the sports sector to be a reality, Nigeria has to view sports development as an investment that is worth making for the growth of the economy. On the family level, success in talent development requires adequate financial provisions for materials (i.e. dress and kits), good and balanced nutrition, comfortable transportation, and reliable healthcare. One of the consequences of poverty to talent development in Nigeria is that most families cannot afford to provide the enabling environments for their children to successfully engage in athletic or sports development.

The second economic feature of the Nigerian society, which has been found to have negative effects for talent identification and development in sports, is corruption. The data showed evidence for the argument that corruption is pervasive in all aspects of life in Nigeria

(Smith, 2007; Ugwu 2002; Okonjo-Iweala, 2012) beginning from the government and the political class, to the organised private sector, the sport sector, to the general populace. Nigerians reportedly glory in the culture of taking and giving grafts, with no mechanism to check the menace, thus corruption is seen as a wider social problem rather than individual tendencies (Obayelu, 2007; Aluko, 2012; Fadeyi & Adisa, 2012). This finding is in agreement with earlier studies (i.e. Osoba, 1999; Sarafa, 2009). Osoba (1999) made some profound arguments about corruption in the Nigerian societies, which were strengthened by the current finding. For example, the author argued that corruption has become a way of life in Nigeria that the nation's governments "neither wish to, nor can control" the menace. He defined corruption as an anti-social behaviour which that confer 'improper' benefits on individuals against legal and moral norms, and also undermines governments capacity to secure the welfare of the citizens. These positions (particularly the definition of poverty) by Osoba supports those of the current data which indicated that the few people who belong to the political class accumulate wealth through several means at the expense of the national economy and the welfare of the people.

The data also revealed the prevalence of corrupt practices specific to the sports sector including, diversion of funds and cutting back on athletes' allowances (Ogunleye, 2012); match fixing (Aarons, 2014), age cheating (McAuley, 2013; Burdick, 2014; Fagbenle, 2015); appointment racketeering and selection frauds (Elendu, 2012; Omoegun, Longe, Ahimie & Agbogidi, 2009). Omoegun, Longe, Ahimie and Agbogidi (2009) argued that sport development has been greatly hampered by the debased value system in modern Nigeria which have negatively impacted sports administration, facilities and equipment, as well as recruitment and appointment of administrators into sports ministries. These findings were

echoed in the current data; participants believed that there is need for a change in orientation and approach to organisation and administration of sports in Nigeria before TID can begin to yield meaningful results. One reason current is endemic in sports in the Nigerian context is the wider social tolerance for corrupt practices (Elendu, 2012). People reportedly worship corrupt public officials without questioning their source of wealth. It was clear from this data that social behaviour provide reinforcement for corruption; for example, during election periods, people take money from politicians before voting for them and when they get to office, politicians would exploit all opportunities to recoup the money they spent to secure votes. Consequently, many areas of public life (including athletes and sports development) that require government investment are neglected.

Prominent among the consequences of poverty, poor management of resources and corruption are the lack of facilities (Wright, 1978; Awoma Christopher, Okakah & Arainwu, 2015); poor programmes (Ojeme, 1985); and poor implementation of policies (Aluko & Add, 2011). The current results revealed an acute shortage of sporting facilities across Nigerian communities and schools. Children and young people who are desirous of developing a career in sports have no access to facilities needed to work towards the achievement of such desires. Similarly, there are no sports programmes that would aid TID among the vast youthful population of the country; where there are policies to improve physical activities and sports development, such policies are either poorly implemented or not implemented at all. For example, the Nigerian federal government issued a policy document for sports development in Nigeria. The policy identified strategies to tackle the challenges to sports development, and to use sports development as a medium to promote physical as well as national development (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1989). While Shehu (2000) argued that the national sports

development policy represents “unprecedented initiative to maximize the effectiveness of national sports agencies”, poor implementation of its provisions is blamed for the sorry state of sports development in Nigeria (Ojeme, 1985; Aibueku & Ogbouma, 2014).

Participants reasoned that the culture of mediocrity among sports administrators most whom are hired without any prerequisite knowledge and experience in sports is largely responsible for poor implementation of sport policy; this finding supports those of Aibueku and Ogbouma (2013). The school system is the major structure identified in the sport policy to implement its mandates, therefore, sports development is intertwined into the school curriculum; however, the current data suggest that schools in Nigeria lack effective environments for sports development, particularly with the collapse of the boarding school system. Limitations of the school environment include lack of funds, facilities, coaches and teachers to implement sports and physical development elements of the school curriculum, and also the desire to do s.

Furthermore, some of the challenges to TD identified in this study are culture specific. For example, previous studies the people of the northern Nigeria were reported to be conservative about western education and human right (i.e. gender inequality and women’s rights); these cultural practices prevent the child (especially, females) from participating in sports. This finding provides evidence for existing literature on gender disparity, cultural biases and religion sentiments in the Nigerian education system (i.e. Csapo, 1981; Sushila Niles, 1989; Obasi, 1997; Pittin, 1990; Ifijeh & Osayande, 2011 Abdullahi, 2013). Similarly, certain cultural elements of Nigerian community could be used as good driving force TID in sports, though they currently impede sports development. For instance, Nigerians were noted in the current study to have a culture of respect for elders; parents, older siblings, teachers in

school, and elders in the community all command high respect from children and young people such that the words and opinions of elders are observed and followed. Because of the prevailing economic circumstances of Nigerian families and community (as discussed above) and certain myths about sports development, these ‘elders’ are against the idea of the child getting involved TID in sports.

However, the position of the elders (i.e. parents) can be advantageous to TID if they are convinced of the importance of, and opportunities in athletes and sports development, since the role of the family in talent development have been previously reported (i.e. Falk *et al.*, 2004; Kay, 2000; Baker, Cote & Abernethy, 2003; Gould, 2006; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005; Taylor, Collins, 2015; Vaeyens *et al.*, 2008). Parents were reported to be opposed to their children taking part in sports because they believe that participating in sports is a waste of time and a threat to education. Some of the misconceptions on sports participation were particular to girls (e.g. Anyanwu, 1980); such as the belief that sport participation has negative physiological effects on women menstrual cycle and the chances of child bearing, as well as the perception that sports participation constitutes a distraction to education. Of course, other underlining factor of parents’ negative attitudes towards sports includes the high level of poverty (Collier, Soludo, & Pattillo, 2008) and the struggle to achieve financial freedom (Adebayo, 1999), parents’ belief that sports development has no potential for wealth creation, however, TID in sports has been suggested to be a weapon for the eradication of poverty in Nigeria (Eze, 2015). However, it is important to note that family opposition to sports development (alone) does not necessarily deter the child from taking part in sports because the current data showed that children could maneuver around this barrier. Participants observed that children and young people took advantage of the time parents are

at work to get involved in sporting activities and also play with their friends both on the street and in school.

How then do Nigerian athletes develop their sporting potentials? The data revealed an ad hoc development model for successful Nigerian athletes. In contrast with the literature on TID (i.e. Bloom, 1985; Norris, 2010; Martindale, Collins & Daubney, 2005; Martindale, Collins & Abraham, 2007) sports development in Nigeria has some unique challenges that expose athletes to different experiences from their counterparts in the developed world (i.e. Australia, Europe and the USA). For instance, Martindale, Collins & Abraham (2007) identified characteristics of effective TDEs including long-term aims and methods; wide ranging coherent messages and supports; emphasis on appropriate development, not early success; individualised and ongoing development; and integrated, holistic systematic development. All these features of formal talent development environments are excluded in the Nigerian sports development environments, because there are no cutout programmes for TID. However, in the case the athlete was lucky to find a coach, the coach may make efforts to mobilize supports from parents, teachers and other significant persons to support the progress of the athlete, as well as encourage long-term development focus.

Though the Nigerian environment lacked formal TID processes, there is general physicality among the populace; children go to the farm with their parents from very young age, play with their peers on the street, participate in physical education and the inter-house sports competitions in school, thus Nigerian children are mostly physically active. This is an advantage to the talent development, because unlike the developed nations where children don't require such natural regular physical activities for survival since the society (family, government etc.) have enough provision for the child, the general physicality among Nigerian

children can form the foundation for subsequent talent development in sports. However, making progress in talent developed is difficult because there is no support from the family, there are no facilities and programmes, coaches are generally not available to guide athletes through the process of development. Athletes who eventually make it to the top of their career did so due to luck; to make progress athletes need luck to find financial supports; find a school where sports participation is tolerated; find a coach and a club/team to train with.

Furthermore, the current data identified some issues relating to access to coaching and quality of coaching available to developing athletes in Nigeria. Participants revealed that finding a coach was difficult and that many athletes just play for fun on the streets without any professional guidance for development. Therefore, sport developed is an incidental occurrence and does not follow a planned course or procedure. This finding provides further evidence for previous suggestions that poor quality of coaching is associated with the challenges to sports development in Nigeria (Onifade, 1985; Adesango, 1997; Ojeme, 2000; Christopher, 2014). The role of the coach is critical to successful talent development in sports (i.e. Bloom 1985; Eze, 2015), developing athletes need experienced coaches to guild them through the several stages of development by identifying the appropriate activities in training and their right intensity, otherwise, athletes may expend their energy and time on the wrong set of activities that may not have positives effects development. In their study of the factors of effective TDEs, Martindale, Collins and Abraham (2007) argued that coaches as well as the parents (i.e. significant others) play crucial roles in TID and thus coaching constitutes a key feature of an effective TDE.

The current study revealed that majority of developing athletes in Nigeria lacked access to coaching, and those who have access to coaching do so by luck. There were no



coaches at the community level where majority of children and young people with potential sporting talents could be identified and assisted to grow their talents, whereas, being identified with potential is critical because it serves as a source of motivation and determination to get through challenges. Rather coaches prefer to work in the big cities for organisations where they have the potential of earning decent wages. In terms of quality, many coaches in Nigeria have been noted to be lagging behind the trends in coaching because they hardly seek opportunities to enhance continuous professional development (CPD). For example, Adesajo (1997) and Christopher noted that necessary actions need to be taken to ensure that the provisions of the national policy on sports development (1989) that stipulate that coaches must be well knowledgeable and experienced before they are allowed to practice, are enforced. This position is supported by participants in the current study who observed that many Nigerian coaches did not have the right credentials and requisite experience in coaching but rather lobby for the job through their connections in corridors of power.

## **Chapter 7– Conclusions, General Discussions and Recommendations**

### **7.1. Conclusions**

#### **7.1.1 Overview**

The focus of this PhD programme was to take a broad examination of the nature of talent identification and development within a Nigerian context. From this investigation, it was hoped that it would be possible to identify strengths and weaknesses of the system, such that recommendations on best practice can be advanced. In line with this four objectives were pursued including:

1. To understand TID theories, evidence and models, within a Nigerian context, in order to establish what constitutes effective practice within talent development environments and how this may apply to Nigeria.
2. To explore the nature of athletes and sports development in a Nigerian context.
3. To appraise the socio-cultural factors of TID in Nigeria.
4. To make recommendations for future research and best practice in effective TID in Nigeria.

#### **7.1.2 Objective 1**

In chapter 2, an overview was provided with regards to the current literature on evidence, models, procedures and contexts of TID. The finding of this work emphasise the need to focus on the creation of effective development environments that can nurture the sporting potential in young people into actual expertise in sports, rather than focusing on digging a goldmine (i.e. talent identification). Past research activities have outlined the nature of development as individualised, idiosyncratic process, as opposed to something that

maps very generically onto staged pathways. Within this context, research also highlights the importance of personal (i.e. psychological) factors of effective talent development including self-regulation, commitment and hard work ethics, as well as the huge influence environmental factors have in facilitating successful development. Examples include family support, competent coaching, as well as less controllable factors such as birthplace, available opportunities and relative age effects.

The existing literature also identifies the culturally specific nature of talent and the process of its development. For example, the values assigned to sport or infrastructure in one country and/or culture may significantly impact on availability or quality of opportunities. In the USA, huge value and resource is assigned to college sport, whereas, in the UK University sport is seen very differently. As such, in one country sport within the higher education system may be a huge asset to the development of talent, but in another it may be a barrier.

Furthermore, in addition to recognising the context specific nature of sport development, there is currently little evidence of TID research activities in a Nigerian context; most of the existing evidence is focused on other cultures (e.g. Europe, Australia and America). Leading to the clear research gap and need to examine TID directly within a Nigerian context. More specifically, it makes sense to attempt to gain insight from those individuals who have personal experiences of the nature and process of TID in a Nigerian context in order to establish its consistency or otherwise with the existing evidence on theory and best practice; hence, there is a rationale to utilise qualitative methodology.

### **7.1.3 Objective 2**

To address objective 2, the thesis explored the perceptions of key stakeholders in the process of talent development (e.g. athletes and coaches) to investigate their personal

experiences of the nature and procedure of TID in the Nigerian context. Semi-structured interviews were carried out among a purposeful sample of successful Nigerian athletes to identify the nature, challenges and success factors of talent development in Nigeria. Furthermore, systematic analysis techniques were used to ensure trustworthy and vigorous evaluation of the data.

The results revealed three key features of TID in Nigeria including 1) Process-Outcome divergent expectations; success at elite level of sport performance was highly celebrated, however, sport development is poorly valued by the Nigerian society. 2) Typical pathways and opportunities for TID; talent development typified by informal play on the street and participation in school, luck played a huge role in making progress, and the coach played more roles in development outside to conventional responsibilities of then coach. 3) Psychology of successful development; successful development in the Nigerian context required a high level of self-belief, discipline and eagerness to learn.

Similarly, a purposeful sample of elite coaches in Nigeria was interviewed; data analysis process was identical with that of the athletes' study. The result showed three general themes including 1) Sport-Organisational specific barriers to TID including, poor value for sport development, corruption and administrative incompetence, lack of investment in talent development, and lack of implementation of national policies on sport development; 2) Culture specific barriers including, opposition to TD from the family, and hostile school environment; and 3) Drivers of success in TID, which included athletes' psychology of resilience and the support from the coach. Both studies (i.e. athletes' and coaches' studies) suggest that the Nigerian culture was harsh towards sport development.

#### **7.1.4 Objective 3**

Leading on the findings in chapter 4 and 5, objective 3 was accomplished through the qualitative study presented in chapter 6. The researcher identified community leaders, who by the nature of their position in the society have good knowledge of the culture and have been involved in how children and young people engage in sport, such that they would be able to encapsulate the socio-cultural characteristics of Nigerian society and their implications for TID were identified, in order to explore their perceptions of the nature of TID in Nigeria. The purposeful sample included six community leaders who were retired school head teachers and teachers; interview and analysis procedures were similar to those of the athletes' and coaches' studies.

The results highlighted three general themes such as 1) Features of Nigerian Communities and Culture such as economic hardship, corruption, lack of facilities and poor implementation of government policies; 2) Family Influence on Talent Development; this general theme identified the role of the family, cultural influences on the role of the family, misconceptions about TID in sports, and athletes approach to family influence/barriers; and 3) Ad hoc sport development model, that underscored general physicality/informal opportunities for sport development, lack of structure for sport development, and access to coaching/coaching quality, among the underlining factors of successful development in the Nigerian context.

#### **7.1.5 Objective 4**

Finally, objective 4 is addressed through the findings of chapters 4, 5 and 6, as well as the current chapter which presents an overview of the research activities of this thesis and articulate the results of the three empirical studies (i.e. athletes, coaches and the community

stakeholders' studies) presented in chapter 4, 5 and 6. A general discussion of the key features of TID in the Nigerian context is presented hereafter, where the strengths and weaknesses of the nature of TID in Nigeria are highlighted. The implication of the findings of research contained in the thesis is discussed and recommendation for future research and best practice are underscored as presented the section 7.2.

#### **7.1.6 Summary**

In summary, there was a clear gap in the talent development literature in terms of the nature and processes of TID in a Nigerian context and what constitute effective practice. Considering the call for evidence-based practice in TID (e.g. Martindale et al., 2005), it was important to initiate empirical research in TID to Nigeria such that coaches and other practitioners can be guided in decision-making. Though athletes and coaches were aware that challenges exist in the Nigerian environment that affect talent development, this thesis represent the first scientific analysis of such challenges and how they impact performance and development; in fact, interestingly, some features of Nigerian culture, which on the surface may appear to be detrimental to development (e.g. lack of parental support), were reported to have been facilitative for some of those who made it to elite level (cf. Collins & MacNamara, 2012). It therefore hoped that the thesis will served as an initial reference point for coaches and other TID practitioners as well as stimulate further TID research in the Nigerian context.

### **7.2 General discussions**

#### **7.2.1 Overview**

Several points came to the fore from this thesis, which are important for general discussion. To start with, the nature, challenges and procedures of talent development in

sport were identified. This is important because of its implications for the understanding of underpinning factors of current practice and how athletes, coaches and other practitioners can be guided towards best practice in talent development in the Nigerian context. A discussion of the nature, challenges and factors of effective development is presented in section 7.2.2.

Secondly, due to the lack of scientific analysis of the nature, environment and the procedures for talent development previously in the literature it was apparent that athletes and their coaches, as well as parents have misconstrued certain elements as having dilapidating effects on talent development in Nigeria, though in actual fact, such factors present opportunities for effective development. For example, stakeholders in TD in Nigeria (e.g. athletes and coaches) believed that the unstructured participation in sports children have from young have negative effects on development, whereas such characteristic have been advocated for effective development. Therefore, sections 7.2.3 and 7.2.4 put forward a discussion of the strengths, and the weaknesses of the nature of talent development in Nigeria.

### **7.2.2 The nature, challenges and procedures of TID in Nigeria**

One of the contemporary issues in the TID literature is the culturally specific nature of talent and the need to exercise caution in cross-cultural application of models perceived as effective in certain cultures without considering its contextual implications (e.g. Collins & Bailey, 2013). Given that very little is known before now, about the interface between socio-cultural elements of the Nigerian society and talent development in sports, it was important that this thesis took an exploratory approach, to unearth the social and cultural contexts of talent development. The results of the three qualitative studies of the thesis highlight the features of the Nigerian society some of which have critical implications for talent development (e.g. cultural practices, poverty and corruption); the challenges to athletes and

sports development (e.g. family resistance, misconceptions about sports, financial barrier); and the factors facilitating effective development (e.g. informal grounding in physical development).

Certain cultural practices were highlighted among Nigerians that may influence TID in sports. For example, the Nigerian culture is rich in traditional festivals, which are held at different period within the year; the festivals have physical elements such as traditional games, rallies and dance. Secondly, the Nigerian economy is very weak compared to the developed countries; therefore there is high rate of poverty among many Nigerian families. Consequently, families set priorities around their finance and as such do have enough capacity to finance TID sports; this place a huge burden on the athletes. And finally, there is high rate of corruption among the political office holders meaning that state funds meant for common social good are divert to private purse; the implication is that there are no facilities for TID, government policies are not well funded, and so, they are poorly implemented.

Following from the key features of the Nigerian society enumerated above, certain challenges to athletes and sport development were also identified by this thesis. For example, the family was noted to be resistant to TID in sports. Parents believed that education is the only feasible means of defeating poverty and securing a better financial future for their children, while sport development was viewed as a waste of time, thus, most parents disallowed their children from taking part in sports. More so, the financial status of many families lacked the capacity to finance talent development, because allowing the child to play sports would constitute an additional drain to the family income and probably limit the family's ability to finance the child's education.



Furthermore, some misconceptions about talent development in sports were identified among Nigerian families. For instance, many parents believed that athletes are wayward people and that athletics would make a child less serious with regards to their studies. Also, some parents believed that playing sports regularly would have negative effects on the reproductive life of their female children. For these and many other reasons, the family constituted a functional barrier to talent development in sport. The role of the family in a Nigerian context presents a sharp contrast with other cultures where parents offered significant supports for TID (e.g. Bloom, 1985; Cote, 1993; 1999; Martindale *et al.*, 2005; Gould, 2006). Family resistance to TID was a contributing factor to the fact that athletes were seen as wayward and disobedient to elders, because athletes had to ignore parents' instructions in order to be involved in TID, whereas, respect for elders is part of the hallmarks of the culture of the Nigerian society.

Also, there was no formal pathway for talent development in Nigeria; rather, the data revealed an ad hoc development model, in which the development process is very individualised and informal. Athletes themselves constitute the major factor of success or otherwise. The talent development environment in Nigeria was lacking in terms of the support network advocated for talent development in other cultures (e.g. Martindale, Collins & Abraham, 2007). Psychological resilience towards environmental challenges emerged top among the factors of successful talent development among Nigerian athletes. Successful Nigerian athletes were identified as possessing the 'I can do spirit' which epitomized self-regulation, self-belief, determination and passion for talent development, and thus, they were able to overcome all the challenges to TID in the environment.

The most important, and in fact the only source of support for talent development in Nigeria was the coach. Besides providing technical and tactical guidance on training, the coach

played other roles including being a ‘father-figure’ to athletes (who would be have been neglected by his or parents for taking part in TID), as well as providing social and financial supports to motivate athletes’ commitment to their development. The coach equally served as a role model in the Nigerian context; most coaches were former athletes who had passed through experiences similar to the challenges developing athletes were facing in the environment. Therefore, it is clear that the coach constitutes a critical factor of successful development, far more than the responsibility of the coach in other cultures.

### **7.2.3 The strengths of talent development environment in Nigeria**

Though the nature of TID in Nigeria has some features, which are considered as barriers to development by athletes and their coaches, yet, certain elements of the socio-cultural environment could be facilitative of effective development if they are properly handled. Firstly, the harsh financial climate in Nigeria meant that people (young and old) have to work hard to survive; people walk long distances to and from their farms; children walked long distances to and from school and also join their parent in the farm after school. This engendered general physicality, and perhaps also a mental toughness among Nigerians, which could form the basis for future involvement in talent development.

Also, Nigerian communities are used to regular festivals; some community hold up to four festivals annually, which are aligned to certain seasons of the year (e.g. planting season, harvest season, Christmas celebrations). These festival involved several types of physical activities such as traditional games (e.g. wrestling, boxing), rallies and dance; these activities contribute to general physicality among the people such that sedentary lifestyle and its attendant consequences are almost non-existent in the Nigerian context. This present a strength to the Nigerian environment because children are naturally fit and active to participate in

sports, unlike other cultures where children live comfortably (e.g. watch TV, eat fast food, driven to and from school) and as such might be unfit to take part in sports.

Secondly, talent development in Nigeria is very unregulated and unstructured. Children get involved in any sport of their choice primarily for fun and enjoyment, in an atmosphere that lacked adult supervision; this type of environment has been previously suggested for effective talent development (Cote *et al.*, 2007). Children engaged themselves in the backyard and on streets in several sports, performance on the street is the first indication that a child have the potential in a particular sport and not the other, thus, the child may commence training in the sport. To the Nigerian child, he is not playing sport because a parent wants him to, but as a matter of personal preference and choice. Thus, even when oppositions and restrictions occur from the family, the child can rise to the challenge and stand for his belief that he can achieve world-class performance in sport.

Thirdly, the many barriers to talent development could be exploited to facilitate the development of the psychological characteristics of developing excellence that are not only critical to effective development, but are also important for the maintenance of elite performance. While research has suggested that the many supports mechanisms that exist in other countries (e.g. United Kingdom, Australia, America and Canada) may be misdirected and that athletes should be allowed to face challenges of the environment so that they can become mentally tough and psychologically resilient, these challenges are naturally part of the Nigerian environment. Therefore, Nigerian athletes potentially exhibit more psychological strength than their counterparts elsewhere in the world.

Finally, the culture of respect for elders among Nigerian communities is another factor that could be used to strengthen TD in Nigeria. In the Nigerian context, children obey and

respect the elders (e.g. parents, teachers, older siblings, and older people in the community) such that the instructions from elders are rarely disobeyed. Though at the moment, it appeared that the elders are opposed to TD, but that is because of some of the misconceptions earlier highlighted in this chapter. If parents are properly educated about the opportunities in sports and how sport sports development can enhance the general development of the child, they may embrace TD, and become a positive influence on the child and the process of TID.

#### **7.2.4 Weaknesses of talent development environment in Nigeria**

The weaknesses of talent development environment in Nigeria take their root from the wider social problems of poverty, corruption and poor leadership, which will require a change in the mindset of the political class to address. For example, the problem of poverty was associated with poor management of resources and corruption among political office holders. Consequently, there was high level of unemployment such that many families cannot afford the cost of financing sport development. The thesis revealed that the culture of corruption has permeated every aspect of social life including sports. One of the implications of corruption and bad governance for sport is the problem of incompetence in administration. Sport administrative appointment were based on political patronage and not the background and experience of the administrators.

Similarly, sport development policies were poorly implemented. Nigeria has had two national sport development policies, the first in 1989 and the second in 2009; but in each case, the policies were not implemented. Again, the problem of poor implementation is linked to government not being serious about investing in sport development, and corruption among sport administrators. While the government is blamed for not funding sport, the administrators were blamed for embezzling the available funds for sport development

programmes. In many communities, there were no facilities for sport participation and even in the few communities where some facilities exist, they were left at a deplorable state.

Furthermore, one negative effect of the lack of structure for talent development is that the system lacked merit. During selection for national and international competitions, athletes that have connections in government and or have money to bribe the officials have comparative advantage over those who actually have the capacity to deliver. Therefore, it was clear that in many instances, Nigeria does not have effective representation at international competition. The culture of selecting athletes based on sentiments and not their performance is reinforced by the high rewards given to athletes for attending and performing well at international competitions.

### **7.3 Recommendations for Future Development**

Though the four objectives of this thesis have been scientifically researched, it is necessary to build on the findings to take TID research forward in Nigeria. This is very important for several reasons, among which are: firstly, this thesis took a general (exploratory) approach as there was limited evidence from the Nigerian context that research could be built upon, therefore, this thesis may just be the tip of the iceberg in terms of the nature, processes, and factors of TID in a Nigerian context. Secondly, there are some limitations of the current research work that make the need for further investigations more obvious. For example, from the culture point of view, Nigeria is a multicultural society with up to four hundred and fifty different ethnic nationalities, though there are similarities among the different cultures, there are also areas of clear dissimilarities. Therefore, it will be necessary that the current findings be expounded to more Nigerian communities. Thus, it is recommended that findings of the studies discussed in this thesis be exposed to larger samples within the Nigerian population through quantitative studies in order to test the theories that emerged from the thesis.

Also, further qualitative studies will be necessary to explore the perceptions of other stakeholder groups (e.g. parents, sport administrators) whose opinions were not covered in this thesis. For example, participants across the three studies contained in the thesis recounted their experiences about the unfavourable dispositions to TD in sport among many Nigerian parents, therefore, studying the perceptions of parents in order to understand the underlying factors of their resistance to TD in sports would better enhance our understanding of the TD process in the Nigerian context. Similarly, some of the findings of the studies described in the thesis (e.g. corruption, poor administration, policy implementation issues) make the opinion of sport administrators vital to the understanding of the nature of TD in Nigeria, and thus constitutes a viable direction for further studies.

More importantly, it is necessary to create awareness among sport stakeholders in Nigeria about the findings of the studies contained in the thesis. This is important because some of the perceived challenges to TD in Nigeria could actually promote effective practice. For example, the absence of a structure for talent identification at the grassroots level described by participants as a challenge could provide the opportunity for deliberate play, as well as avoid the danger deselection associated with talent identification programmes, thereby giving every child the opportunity to continue training at his/her pace of development. Therefore, it is imperative to promote awareness about TD research (both the findings of the current thesis and the larger TD literature) among coaches, athletes, parents, administrators and policy makers, in order to promote effective TD practice in Nigeria. Consequently, it is important to take the current findings to the population through seminars, conferences, and publication in peer reviewed journals.

Finally, the researcher should leverage on some of the revelations about the culture of the Nigerian people to promote TD in sport. For instance, the culture of respect for elders

(where the opinions of elders in the society are believed, respected and obeyed) could be used as a medium of promoting TD in Nigeria; in which case, efforts should be made to sell TD in sport to the elders by educating them on the advantages of regular physical activities to the development of children, and that taking part in sporting activities will enhance the health, physical, social, and more importantly academic development of the child. Once the elders are convinced of the merits of regular physical activities, they can be used as agents of change to promote participation in sports among Nigerian children.

By and large, it is hoped that the thesis will make an historic introduction into the nature of TID in the Nigerian talent development literature, and also serve the purpose of guiding TID practice in Nigeria and directions for further research.

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## Appendices

### Informed consent form for Interview

**Title of research:**

Understanding the Nature of Talent Identification and Development in the Nigerian Context

I have read and fully understood both the information sheet and the consent form for the one-to-one interview. I have had ample opportunity to ask any questions I may have about my participation within interview section of the study.

I understand that participation within the study is optional.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any point without giving cause.

I agree to offer my participation within a one-to-one interview for this study.

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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## **Participants' Information Sheet**

I am a doctoral research student in the school of Life, Sport and Social sciences at Edinburgh Napier University. I am currently undertaking a research project as part of my studies with the title 'understanding the role of personal characteristics and supports in the effective development of Nigerian sport men and women'. You have been invited as a member of the Nigerian national team(s) to take part in the study.

Before taking part in the study, it necessary you understand the purpose of the study and what your participation entails. Please take time to read the following information carefully and kindly get back to me if you have any questions or need more information on the study.

### **Purpose of the study?**

This study is designed to explore the experiences of Nigerian athletes and their coaches on the personal characteristics and supports necessary for the effective development of Nigerian sport men and women.

### **Why you have been invited to take part?**

You have been invited to take part in this study because of your participation in your sport as a member/coach of a Nigerian national sports team and/or your selection in the squad to represent Nigeria in the 2014 Commonwealth games. Members of the national team(s) are athletes that have been able to distinguish themselves in their sports by developing their sporting career to an elitist status; as such your experience of the Nigerian sporting environment may hold information useful in assisting upcoming athletes develop their performance. Furthermore, coaches who have experience of developing or seeing the development pathway of elite Nigerian athletes at first hand may also have experience and insight into effective talent development processes within Nigeria.

### **What your participation will involve?**

You will be asked to participate in a one-to-one interview which should last no longer than 1 hour. During the interview you will be asked questions relating to your experiences leading to you becoming an elite athlete or your experiences as an elite coach. All interviews will be

recorded and later transcribed into word documents. The transcribed interviews will then be analysed and examined to identify any recurring themes and views which may help understand the experience, personal characteristics and support requirements of effective development of Nigerian sport men and women.

### **Confidentiality?**

During presentation of findings of the study, your words may be quoted however this will be anonymous to ensure that you cannot be identified from your input.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured by:

- All names being replaced by numbers (i.e. participant 1 said)
- All information being stored as a hard copy will be in a secure, locked place for up to one year after the study, due to data protection.
- Only I and my supervisor will have access, to minimize the handling of the data.
- Both audio and transcribed computer files will be encrypted

Further information for participants

- You as a participants have the right to stop the interview at any time.
- You may withdraw from this study without need for explanation.
- You do not need to answer questions that you don't want to answer.
- Your name will be removed from the information gathered.
- It is fully your choice to participate in the study, on an opt in/opt out bases.
- If you decide to withdraw from the study at any moment, all data relating to you will be withdrawn and destroyed.

If you have any further questions regarding the study or are need of additional support please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor through the details below:

### **Contact details of researcher:**

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## **Main interview questions in chapter 4**

### **Interview Guide**

- 15. Tell me a little about your current sport achievements**
- 16. How did you become involved in sport and progress from initial involvement to where you are today?**
- 17. When did you specialize in your current ‘elite’ sport?**
- 18. When did you realize you had the potential to be very good at sport/current ‘elite’ sport?**
- 19. What support or experiences were particularly useful for your development to become a national athlete?**
- 20. Were there any points in your development that you found particularly difficult?**
- 21. How did you manage those difficulties?**
- 22. Were they useful or detrimental experiences?**
- 23. What factors distinguished you from those who did not demonstrate talent?**
- 24. What factors distinguished you and other “talented” athletes who did not quite make it?**
- 25. Did you face any different challenges when you were striving to get to the top compared with trying to remain at the top?**
- 26. What does it take to develop a successful sporting career in the Nigerian environment?**
- 27. In your opinion/experience, what needs to stay the same in talent development environment in Nigeria?**
- 28. What needs to be improved or changed to improve the talent development environment in Nigeria?**

## **Interview questions used for data collection in chapter 5**

### **Interview Guide**

- Could you give me a bit of background to your coaching and your current role?
- Could you give me an overview of what you do when you coach development athletes?
- Are there differences between this and coaching elite athletes/national athletes?
- What factors do you think characterize someone who has the potential to become elite/national athlete in the Nigerian context?
- What are the stages one has to go through to progress from novice to elite/national athlete in the Nigerian environment?
- What do you do at each of the stages?
- What sorts of support do you think is necessary for developing athletes in Nigeria?
- Do you think this support is available?
- How effective do you think current Talent Development processes are in Nigeria?
- Do you think there is a clear guideline for Talent Development in Nigeria?
- Based on your experience of the Talent Development Environment in Nigeria – what needs to be done to improve in the future?

## Guide for interview questions for chapter 6

### Interview Guide

#### 1. Background

Could you give me a bit of background to your working career?

#### 2. Nigerian Culture

Could you give me a general overview of the nature of the culture within Nigeria as a country and local communities?

- Values
- Financial stability/poverty/working
- Corruption
- Education
- Sport development

#### 3. Sport Success & Development

Could you tell me about any experience you have of seeing young people develop to become successful sportsmen/women?

- How successful are Nigeria in an international sports context? (Also sporting potential?)
- To what extent is sport success valued in Nigeria?
- To what extent is sport development valued in Nigeria?
- What sorts of opportunities are there for sport development?
- How well/fairly is sport development administrated in Nigeria?
- What facilities exist to help sport development/participation?
- What funding/finance/policy is provided/implemented for sport development/coach education?
- What barriers or challenges exist for successful sport development and/or elite athletes? (Effects of the challenges on development/psychology)
- How/why do children become involved in sport?
- How do those with potential get identified or selected?
- How do those with potential progress in sport? Development opportunities? Sneaking out the house?
- What characterizes someone who has got potential to be an elite sports person? (Psychology, performance, physicality, luck, finding a coach)
- What coaching/support (role models/other athletes) is or needs to be available?
- What is the role of the coach? (Self responsible/committed/improvise; finance; father figure; role model; mobilize support e.g. family P.E. teacher)
- How well rewarded/recognized are coaches for successful development of athletes

#### 4. Family & Community Support for Sport Development

Would an average parent allow their child to get involved in sport? Why/why not?

- What would make a parent allow their child to be involved in sport?
- What emphasis or support is placed in schools for sport development? (Teachers, sport competition, curriculum, financial/social rewards, facilities)
- To what extent does community value, show interest or support sport involvement?

#### 5. TD Effectiveness - Current /Ideal World

Is TD/ sport development effective in Nigeria?

- In an ideal world, what would need to happen to facilitate more sporting success in Nigeria?

