

**EXPLORING HOW JUNIOR NETBALL IS MANAGED TO ENSURE
CONTINUITY TO SENIOR NETBALL**

by

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DECLARATION

I, Margaretha Lefébre Rademan, hereby declare that the dissertation titled **EXPLORING HOW JUNIOR NETBALL IS MANAGED TO ENSURE CONTINUITY TO SENIOR NETBALL** is my own work in design and execution, and that all materials from published sources contained herein have been duly acknowledged.

Signature: 

Date: September 2024

ETHICS STATEMENT



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

04 October 2021

Dear Miss Margaretha Rademan

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

Exploring how junior netball is managed to ensure continuity to senior netball

Ethics Clearance number: **UFS-HSD2021/0669/21**

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

The lack of gatekeeper's approval remains a concern.

Yours sincerely

Dr Adri Du Plessis

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

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GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

Registration Number: REC-112922-058

23-Jul-2024

Ethics Clearance Expiry Notice

Dear Mej Margaretha Rademan,

It has come to my attention that your ethical clearance for research project title **Exploring how junior netball is managed to ensure continuity to senior netball.** with ethical clearance number **UFS-HSD2021/0669/21/22/3** has expired, and no application for continuation has been received. If you have concluded the project, please submit a final report. If you have not yet concluded your data collection, you are currently collecting data without valid ethical clearance, which raises serious concerns. Your ethical clearance will be withdrawn if your continuation application is not submitted and approved within the next 30 days. Please urgently attend to this.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Adri Du Plessis
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ABSTRACT

Netball in South Africa is a competitive sport with many participants all over the country. It is evident that the sport is growing and that there are sponsors that are eager to get on board. The SPAR Proteas that are the national team of South Africa are currently ranked fifth in the world. Top netball playing countries like Australia, New Zealand and England have their own professional leagues and these players can play the sport professionally. In South Africa, as is the case in most other countries, netball is an amateur sport. Players need to study or work to earn a salary, and they play netball for the love of the game.

Netball at secondary school level functions under the auspices of SA Schools Netball (SASN) that annually presents the DSTV Schools Netball Challenge (DSNC) that attracts over 3 500 schools across the country with over 70 000 girls in the Under 19 division taking to the courts in the preliminary stages. The hosting of the Netball World Cup in South Africa was a huge boost for netball. The mentioned statistics underline the fact that there are many schools with talented netball players who do not continue to the senior level. The research explored possibilities of how the dropout of players can be prevented or ameliorated. The central research question was how the transition from junior to senior level netball can be improved. This study examined the management of the transition from junior to senior level netball.

This qualitative research study provides insights into the various experiences of provincial and national netball players and their narratives in which they describe other aspects of being a netball player, such as their actions as athletes and their personal beliefs and interests. Employing a case study methodology, primary data was generated using semi-structured, in-depth interviews with five players from a purposefully selected provincial netball team and two South African coaches. In addition, I interviewed seven players from international teams that participated in the World Championships in South Africa. What foregrounds this study's importance is that it unpacks the reality of how netball players experience and perceive the management of the transition from junior to senior netball in South Africa. The key finding is that the transition from junior to senior netball is not managed nationally and many potentially great athletes are lost in the process. A consistent finding was that financial support, sponsorships and media coverage played a role. There needs to be enough support for every player that has the dream to continue to the senior level and wants to represent their country at the top level.

Key words: Junior and senior level, management, professional netball, transition.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACL	Anterior Cruciate Ligament
ANC	Australian Netball Championships
ATDE	Athlete Talent Development Environment
BEL	Berger Elite League
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DSAC (SA)	Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (South Africa)
DSR (SA)	Department of Sport and Recreation (South Africa)
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
INF	International Netball Federation
INSPORTS	Institute of Sports
IOC	International Olympic Committee
JNA	Jamaican Netball Association
MCL	Medial Collateral Ligament
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
NNZ	Netball New Zealand
NNZA	Netball New Zealand Athlete
NOCSA	National Olympic Committee of South Africa
NF	National Federations
NSA	Netball South Africa
NSC	National Sports Council
NWC	Netball World Cup
SASN	South African Schools Netball Association
SCSA	Supreme Council for Sport in Africa
SSA	Secondary Sports Association
SSN	Suncorp Super Netball
TNC	Telkom Netball Champs
TNL	Telkom Netball League
UK	United Kingdom
USSASA	United School Sports Association of South Africa

CHAPTER 1

CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Netball in South Africa is not considered a professional sport as is soccer, rugby and cricket. This may, in part, be a contributing factor for female netball players not to advance to senior level, but it may not provide one with the complete picture. After completing secondary school, players need to study further or work to earn a salary as they do not have the benefit of playing netball professionally. Countries such as England, Australia and New Zealand boast professional netballers (De Villiers, 2018). In these countries, players earn a salary and can make a living from netball. Despite not being professional players, the SPAR Proteas showed the world what they were capable of at the 2019 Netball World Cup (NWC) when they finished fourth. This has been the best performance from the SPAR Proteas since 1977 (Sport24, 2017).

Contrary to countries where netball is a professional sport, there are not enough opportunities in South Africa after junior level for netball players to advance to senior level; as a result, they can feel demotivated to continue. The management of players is important to ensure that they consider the right options for advancing their sport career at post-school level. Amateur netball players rely heavily on teachers, coaches and parents as role models in that they form part of managing/guiding players to take the next step in their sporting career. Usually, players that are growing and continuing to the senior level are the players who are in a high-performance sport structure. This means that they train every day and are coached by a qualified coach, with conditioning in the gymnasium.

From an educational perspective one needs to look at the problem differently. The Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (SA Government, 2001:37) asserts the following:

The benefit of sport in education is undeniable and it leads to healthier and happier individuals. Sport is an exciting but also challenging and healthy alternative to the anti-social behaviour that is doubtfully appealing to the inactive. But sport in the educational sector has benefits far beyond individual well-being. The language of sport, and its value of community building, re generally on rules of engagement, the dedication to strengthen the need for commitment to a common social code, indeed, to the Constitution itself.

It is a relevant goal that education should develop the full potential of a country's people. This is not restricted to academic talent but to all human talent, including to be successful in sport. If potential is lost between school netball and senior level netball, we need seriously to consider how education could fill the gap between school and post-school (South Africa, 1995). This study set out to explore this gap in the sport and education endeavour.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Chief Executive of Netball South Africa, Blanche de la Guerre, said that the growth of netball over the last five to 10 years has made it undeniably clear that netball has a place in this country. Thousands of players play netball every year and it is unquestionably the country's biggest women's sport (Feltham, 2019). Most girls at school level play netball and they can compete at provincial level. Netball is a diverse sport that teaches players much about themselves, leadership and social interaction skills. Although some players continue to post-school institutions, most players complete school and then discontinue their participation in netball. This is a loss of human potential to netball and our country.

At school level it is easier to perform and do well in netball because there are set times for sport practices and tournaments during the year. Advancing to post-school institutions requires that students need to manage their time effectively to compete at senior level. The problem is when talented players finish school they do not progress to the next level of netball and their talent is lost. I believe that this loss may, at least in part, be addressed by education that created a hiatus between school and post-school netball.

The study approached this problem from an education management perspective and asked the question whether netball is effectively managed at school level to create continuity from school-based netball to senior netball. One of the challenges that underpin the question is that school education falls under the authority of the Department of Basic Education and post-school education under the control of the Department of Higher Education and Training. This separation of education phases often creates a gap between the two departments. To add to this complexity, sport in South Africa falls under the Department of Sport, Art and Culture. Research into transition challenges between the three authorities is often neglected or ignored, more so in terms of transition issues that affect sport (Surujlal & Van Zyl, 2014).

1.3 SPORT ORGANISATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

According to the Council of European Sports, “Sport means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competitions at all levels.” This definition is included in the White Paper on Sport in South Africa. The purpose of the White Paper is to pronounce Government’s policy regarding sport and recreation. The White Paper sets out Government’s vision, strategic objectives, policy directives, outcomes and outputs for promoting and providing sport and recreation (RSA, 2011).

In South Africa, sport, including netball, resorts under the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC). The Department’s mission is to transform the delivery of sport, arts and culture by ensuring reasonable access, development and excellence in all levels of participation to create a better life for all South Africans (DSAC, 2023). The Portfolio Committee on Sport, Arts and Culture considered the 2022/23 budget of the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC) as part of its oversight function for the 2022/2023 financial year. The Committee noted that the Department had committed to focusing on the following projects, among others (DSAC, 2023):

- Opportunities that will drive the transformation agenda and new business models for the sector.
- Supporting the professional sport system by finding new and innovative solutions to mitigate the negative effect of COVID-19 in the field of sport, ensuring that talent is encouraged to emerge from all communities in an equitable manner, and is nurtured and supported.
- Seeking new ways of forming strategic collaboration by mobilising the resources, knowledge, creativity and concern of all role-players to increase social cohesion on a partnership basis.

Challenges that the ministry is facing are the imbalances between advantaged, mostly urban communities, disadvantaged and largely rural communities. There is also the lack of a strategic vision and policy for the development of sport and recreation. South Africa must take its rightful place in the global sporting community. The Deputy Director-General: Sport in the DSAC must cater for the entire population to provide for the promotion and development of sport and the co-ordination of the relationships between the Sports Commission, national and other agencies to provide for measures aimed at correcting imbalances in sport and to promote equity and democracy in sport (DSAC, 2023).

Management challenges seem to exist between sporting codes and the DSAC, and these need to be approached from a South African values and beliefs perspective. The history and heritage are a big part in the national sport and recreation policy that must be responsible to the global influences (Johnson et al., 2019). Global direction and policies are influenced by the international and continental associations like the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa (SCSA) (DSAC, 2023).

At the provincial level, the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) and the Provincial Department of Sport and Recreation are tasked with the responsibility of policy development within the context of national sport and recreation, with the principal agents being provincial federations and national bodies. They are responsible for creating facilities by local authorities for national and provincial events. The roles of the local authorities are to implement the recreation policy, development at a local level and funding its principal agencies like clubs and individuals. They have the responsibility to upgrade infrastructure and facilities, as well as the maintenance and management of infrastructure in sport and recreation in municipalities, metros and districts (RSA, 2022).

A major factor in sport growth is management at school level. The organisation of school sport is the United School Sports Association of South Africa (USSASA). Its function includes the implementation of government policy on sport and recreation at school level. Its core business involves talent identification, maximising participation, and coordination of intra- and inter-school competitions, coaching and developmental programmes for teachers, giving input to the physical education curricula and sharing facilities with the community (RSA, 2022). The provision of facilities in South Africa presents a challenge, not simply about a shortage but rather the location. The DSAC and DSR are in favour of a community-centred approach, and they want communities to assist with maintenance and management. The previous government lacked in developing human resources in sport and recreation and this led to a *crisis in voluntarism* in developing countries. A lack and a concern are the development of high-performance programmes that are geared towards the preparation of elite athletes for major competitions. It cannot be expected that netball players should perform at major competitions if they do not have the resources to equip them for the role. The current situation in South Africa is the lack of a system for the preparation of elite athletes. There are many leaders in management, but, due to the fragmented system, they do not manage the process effectively.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The problem that was explored is the transition from junior to senior level netball in South Africa. This is an essential period for netball players to make the right decisions if they want to continue participation in netball at the senior level. The transition from school level to a post-school level is not always an easy one (Wylleman et al.,2004). Because of the gap in the management of athletes from junior to senior level, South Africa loses a great deal of talent for the country. The focus of the research was to ascertain why South Africa is losing talented netball players that do not continue to senior level. The primary research question is: How can the management of the transition from junior to senior level netball be improved to prevent or curb the loss of netball potential? The following secondary research questions guided the research:

- What management processes and procedures are in place to handle netball players' transition from junior to senior netball?
- What support do schools and post-school institutions provide to ensure that the players are fully equipped for the next level of netball?
- If one compares South Africa to overseas countries, what lessons can be learnt to smoothen the transitioning from junior to senior netball in South Africa?

1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to analyse the management of junior and senior netball in South Africa and to identify possible shortcomings in the management of the transition from junior to senior netball. The research did not want to cast blame but set out to identify the barriers to effective management that could be addressed. It is assumed that by addressing weaknesses in the transition one would be able to identify the barriers in the transition to senior level sport and address them.

1.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Henriksen et al. (2020) discussed dual career development environments (DCDEs) that exist to support student-athletes in their endeavour to combine sport with education or work; these are best understood from a holistic ecological approach. Such environments are likely to vary in their structure, processes, philosophy and degree of efficiency. They postulate that these environments are best understood from a Dual Career Development perspective that is graphically illustrated in Figure 1.1.

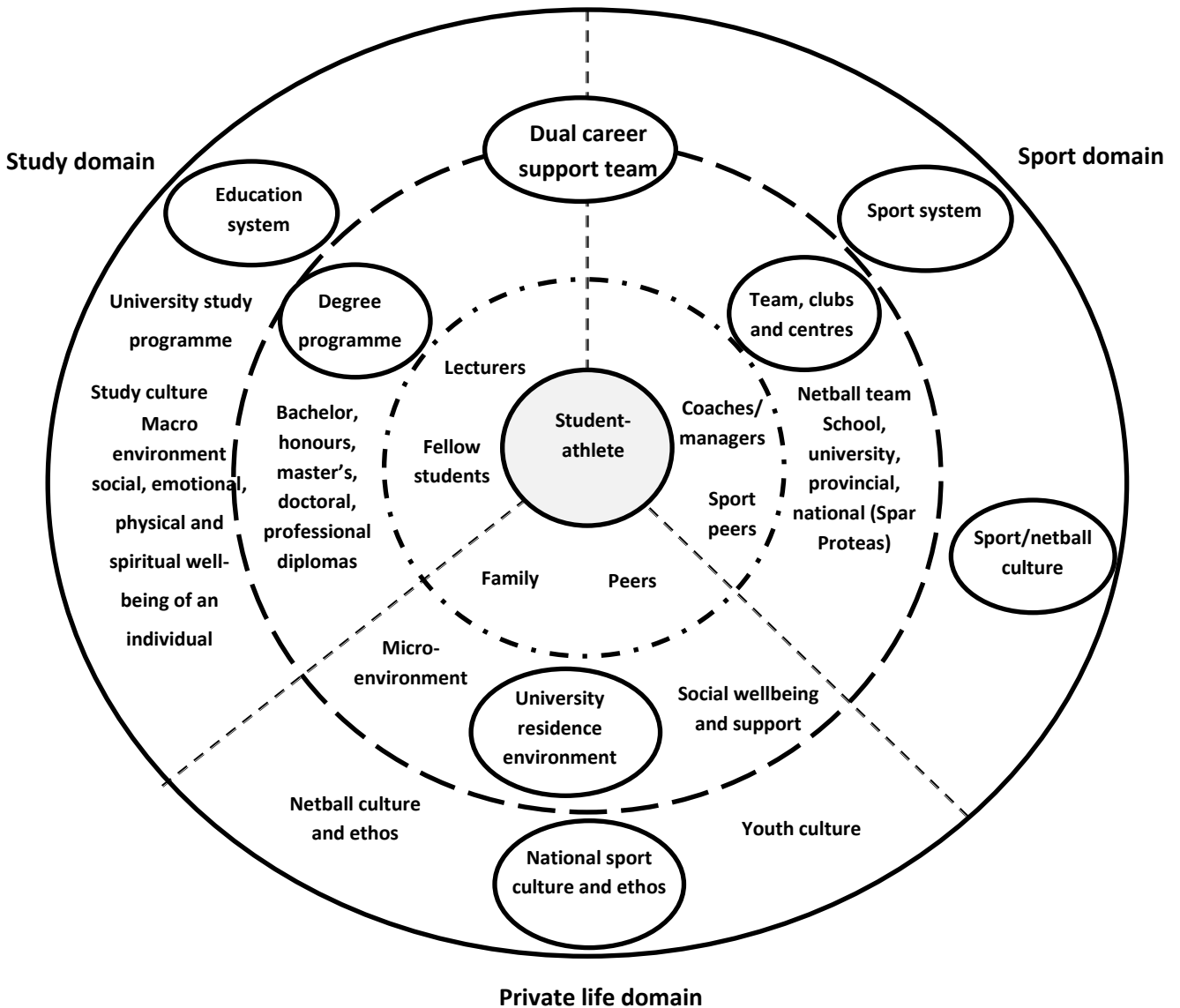


Figure 1: Dual Career Development perspective (Adapted from Henriksen et al., 2020)

To frame this study and have a better understanding of the management of the transition from junior to senior netball, I drew on the holistic ecological approach. A holistic approach considers the whole person and includes the social, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being of an individual and not only one part of a person. *Ecological* defines the environment that the person is being exposed to and what the person is used to and knows (Johnson et al., 2019) (Consult Figure 1). This study did not focus on talent development only but considered the environment in which the athlete develops (Garavan, Carbery & Rock, 2012).

According to Moore and Werch (2005), participating in sport has been found to provide opportunities ranging from physical, personal and social development to psychological well-being. Different factors play a role in the social well-being of a player. The support and motivation from parents, coaches and teammates are crucial to succeed in the sport world (Deci & Ryan, 2001; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Reeves, 2002) (Consult Figure 1).

Poor relationships such as non-supportive coaching behaviour and negative feedback influence a player's social well-being and it has been shown that negative emotions can cause stress in a player's ecological environment (Campo et al., 2012). According to Donohue et al. (2007) poor teammate/peer relationships influence the perception of support and cause feelings of isolation that can undermine player performance.

Social well-being and support (Consult Figure 1) are broadly defined as the resources provided by *good relationships* and players' social sphere (Cohen & Syme, 1985), such as emotional support or objective resources. Health is connected to social well-being and if players are not happy in relationships it causes anxiety and can have detrimental health outcomes, like cardiovascular disease, cancer and overall mortality as well as physiological and behavioural mechanisms (Beauchamp, Crawford & Jackson, 2018; Hodge et al., 2013; Holt-Lunstad, Robles & Sbarra, 2017; Uchino, Cacioppo & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996). Positive relationship characteristics are beneficial for players in their ecological environment; players who are happy in their environment will have better results (Thoits, 2011). Hedonic well-being refers to happiness, pleasure and positive affect; when players feel secured and self-determined they are motivated to give their best (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

A sporting career is demanding and very intense, not only physically but emotionally as well. During a player's transition phase, competitive season, and sporting career there may be potential risks leading to mental health problems and risk-taking behaviours (Hughes & Leavey, 2012). One of the most common factors is anxiety. It is defined as a negative emotional state and consists of several feelings of nervousness, worry and fear related to the activation of the body that lead to physical and mental anxiety (Krane & Williams, 1987). According to Stonerock et al. (2015), the level of anxiety not only depends on the situation that is causing stress to the athlete but also the individual's perception of the challenge. For any elite player, there are aspects of sport during competition that match certain elements that can be identified as challenging and that cause players to be vulnerable and feel isolated (Balyan et al., 2016).

Physical and competition stress, including pressures from public through social media and limited support networks, may add to a player's anxiety. According to Brewer and Petrie (2014), training commitments, travel scheduling and time constraints, pressure to maintain fitness and motivation due to physical fatigue, lack of money due to restricted financial opportunities, public criticism and injuries are factors that players experience in their careers.

When players are confronted with stress and anxiety it can most likely lead to depression, poor concentration, deprived sleep, appetite disturbances and strained relationships (Kirsch, 2016). The way in which players cope with these stressors is a powerful factor in their sporting success and mental health. According to Gulliver, Griffiths and Christensen (2012), players do not tend to seek support for mental health problems. A lack of understanding of emotional health problems and the perception of seeking help look like a sign of weakness.

To prevent mental health issues, early treatment of psychopathology can help players. This is the responsibility of clubs or sport governing bodies that continue not see the value of mental health. If players do not get the care that they need, it will lead to disrupting their career and players will not feel safe to raise their mental health concerns. Although physical activity has a positive effect on health, a review has found that intense physical activity may increase symptoms of anxiety and depression because players over-train, and this leads to burnout (Peluso & Andrade, 2005). According to a recent study in Australia (Gouttebarga et al., 2015), almost half of elite athletes acknowledge that they have symptoms of at least one mental health problem. It will be valuable if there is an undertaking to develop the importance of mental health and access to psychological well-being. This should propagate trust in athletes and may facilitate performance gains. According to Nicholls and Polman (2007), such an undertaking is required for sport practitioners like coaches, medical staff and sport psychologists.

According to Leonard (2010), people still need a certain amount of physical activity to maintain good health and well-being. Physical health can be described as the systems of the body carrying out physiological functions properly, resulting in *good* physical health and a lack of illness or disease (Kruk, 2009; Onogimesike & Angba, 2022). It is the main priority for any elite player because their body is the engine that keeps the car going. Without conditioning and good nutrition players will struggle to compete at their best.

Primarily, positive health effects are achieved through physical activity, such as psychosocial developments and personal developments (Eime et al., 2013). Individuals who participate in sport have a higher physical activity later in life; through sport, knowledge of nutrition, exercise and health can be gained (Khan et al., 2012). There are also negative effects relating to physical activity, namely the risk of failure leading to poor mental health (Howie et al., 2016), risk of injury, eating disorders (Joy et al., 2016) and burnout (Brenner, 2007). These negative effects are more common in elite-level sport, where players need to find the balance between performance and health.

Spiritual well-being refers to the human need for meaning, life purpose and connection to something greater than oneself. This aspect of well-being may be achieved through practice of faith, cultural values, nature or professional vocation (Roychowdhury, 2019). This aspect of a player's ecological environment may be the most important, giving context and meaning to all other parts of oneself and life experiences (Roychowdhury, 2019). Life purpose is a term that is defined as finding life meaningful and is measured with the *Purpose in Life Subscale* in the Psychological Scale of Well-being (Breivik, 2021). Players who have a better sense of life purpose experience a positive physiological function and physical health; for example, they will have better glucose control (Kim et al., 2013), lower cholesterol (Ryff, Singer & Love, 2004) and fewer disabilities (Cohen, Bavishi & Rozanski, 2016; Kim et al., 2013).

Characteristics such as determination and grit are the ability to maintain a desired behaviour or outcome in relation to health (Deci & Ryan, 2001). By extension, this implies that despite the challenges that players face, they will persevere to pursue their long-term goals (Duckworth & Gross, 2014) even when willpower is low, or behaviour is difficult in the early stage of development and growth. In a competitive environment the ability to practise optimism will allow players to be more confident that they can successfully engage in healthy behaviours; for example, recover more quickly from flu or an injury than players who are more pessimistic (Kraemer, Denegar & Flanagan, 2009).

Optimism can sometimes be combined with hope. According to Boutilier (2020), hope can be defined as the determination that is goal-oriented, characterised by planning and perceived controllability. Studies have shown that hope may enable better coping with stress and that hope has faster rates of healing, for example, after spinal surgery (Lu, Jing-Horng & Hsu, 2013). Players will have highs and lows, good and bad experiences in their transition phase and sporting career, implying that it is important to practise characteristics like grit, determination, being optimistic and having hope.

Netball players in South Africa who wish to pursue sport at an elite level must be flexible to change. Change can be defined as “an act or process”. Players go through *transitional periods*, which means that a corresponding change in one’s behaviour and relationships (Válková, 2017) is required. According to Wylleman et al., 2017 there are four transitional phases and experiences players face through life:

- Player career that is the initiation into sport, injury and retirement.
- Psychological development, moving from adolescence into adulthood.
- Social development, adapting to a new team and coach.
- Educative and professional development, which is moving from school to college or university.

The future will always be unknown, and this could lead to fear. In netball, for example, an instance of fear can be moving to a different team in a new environment (Cao et al., 2011). Players experience many challenges in their transition, be they planned, such as a change of team, or unplanned, like an injury. How players respond to transition periods throughout their career is mostly determined by their personality. Coaches should be aware that every player will respond differently in adapting to change.

Conceptually, it is not only about the development of netball sport talent in South Africa, but about the player in a holistic manner establishing a career. The post-modern theory links with a *holistic person* and it relates to the problem statement and research questions, namely how the player is embedded in the ecological societal context. Post-modern theory encourages management to increase worker productivity by focusing on the needs of the employees and creating systems to have a career path. Players need to be managed in a postmodernist way so that they can advance to the senior level of sport (Consult Chapter 2).

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research design approach was used in this study; this entailed exploring and understanding the meaning assigned to a phenomenon by individuals or a group to a social or human problem that they are confronted with or engaged in (Creswell, 2009). This process included developing questions and collecting data from selected participants to be analysed by the researcher. A qualitative research design approach was suitable for my study because it investigated netball players, role players and the challenges they faced in their environment.

The research methods used aligned with the interpretivist approach that involved me, as the researcher in combining human interest in a human activity. Interpretivism has to do with people that assign meaning to different phenomena of significant importance. This approach focuses on the differences between people and how to reflect on different aspects of their challenges (Myers, 2008).

A comprehensive outline of the research design, data collection strategies, data analysis and the interpretation of the findings is provided in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 provides detail on how the participants were selected and how interviews with overseas players were arranged during the Netball World Cup that was hosted in South Africa. It also provides information obtained during the interviews with management of Netball South Africa.

1.8 ETHICS CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics clearance ensures that research is conducted in a responsible and ethically accountable way to minimise harm to humans and ultimately ensure that the research will lead to beneficial outcomes (Hanekom, 2018). Research requires ethics guidelines and protocols in the research to safeguard the identities of the research participants (Smyth & Williamson, 2004) Ethical research makes collaborative and respectful dialogue between the participants possible. Research ethics is important because it promotes the aims of research, such as expanding knowledge. It means that researchers can be held accountable for their actions. Ethics supports social and moral values, such as the principle of doing no harm to others (Resnick, 2015).

Considering the ethics requirements, the researcher obtained permission from the University of the Free State to conduct research (Consult Annexure A). In executing the research, I ensured that all the requirements of ethical research as indicated above were observed.

1.9 CHAPTER LAYOUT

The following chapters are presented in the research: Chapter 2 offers the literature review that is based on the challenges that players face during transition as well as the theoretical framework. The focus is on the transition from junior to senior netball in England, Australia, New Zealand and Jamaica. The management of the transition in South Africa and of junior netball is also explored. This should provide a better understanding of why there are gaps in the transition phase. In Chapter 3 the research methodology is outlined. Chapter 4 contains the data presentation and the last chapter, Chapter 5, presents the findings of this research.

CHAPTER 2

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE TRANSITION FROM JUNIOR TO SENIOR NETBALL

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Van den Heever, Grobbelaar and Potgieter (2007) note that despite being the most popular women's sport in South Africa (approximately 649 820 participants), almost no research has been conducted on the sport of netball and research into the management of netball is almost non-existent. A recent study by Van den Heever et al. (2007), for example, into sport psychological skills found that frequent exercise is closely related to performance in netball. Contrary to common belief, Botha (2019) points out the risks involved in netball. She argues that netball is a fast-paced game that consists of high physical demands such as quick acceleration, deceleration, and a sudden change of direction as well as repetitive jumping. Junior netball players frequently engage in adult training programmes to meet these demands of the sport and are thus exposed to higher training loads and intensities. None of these studies focused on the management of netball or the transition from junior to senior netball and what evidence is available is cursory references to netball in general and the management thereof. My study therefore aspires to contribute to research studies by looking at how the transition from junior to senior level could be better managed.

This chapter provides an overview of literature on the transition from junior level to senior level netball and the challenges faced by players, as well as the causes for the discontinuation from junior to senior level career development in sport. The chapter aims to provide a tentative answer to the following three questions from a global and theoretical perspective:

- How do netball organisations deal with netball players' transition from junior to senior netball?
- What support do schools and post-school institutions provide to ensure that the players are fully equipped for the next level of netball?
- Comparing South Africa to overseas countries, what lessons can be learnt to support and develop the transition from junior to senior netball in South Africa?

This chapter provides an overview of the main aspects in the sport management environment and the challenges associated with professional sport management principles. It also provides a cursory overview of transition, focusing on the top netball countries and comparing how they manage their sport and what South Africa should do to close the gap when junior netball players transition to the senior level.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 Coaching versus management

Differentiating between coaching and management is important. Internationally, there is growing recognition of the importance of coaching, yet there remains a lack of a clear conceptual basis for sport coaching (Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2006). This situation has left coaching without a clear set of concepts and principles that reflect coaching practice and consequently the current set of definitions discusses coaching as a process that is often reduced in complexity and scale, and the essential social and cultural elements of the process are often underplayed. Herbert (2022) quoting O’Flaherty (2003) argues that the difference between managing and coaching is that a manager directs; a manager has authority, targets to meet, and must achieve a specific outcome. A coach, however, is often described in terms of the ability to develop both people and teams. What further complicates the confusion, is concepts such as *leadership* and *mentorship* that are often used interchangeably with *management* and *coaching*. In business, as in sport, leaders and coaches often fulfil interchangeable functions; nonetheless it is important to distinguish between these roles. Lawrence (2017) offer the following definitions to distinguish between key concepts:

- **Managing** is aimed at providing clear, concise focus on outcomes, deliverables and due dates to the team.
- **Leading** is targeted at inspiration and encouraging the team towards a vision that embodies new possibilities.
- **Mentoring** provides expert advice and guidance, taking members of the team under one’s wing and providing a role model that the team can aspire to become.
- **Coaching** entails providing a development focus for new competencies, qualities and ways of being as team members.

There is a good chance that the explicit or implicit job description for anyone occupying a role requiring the supervision of people performing tasks contains the words *lead*, *manage*, *mentor* or *coach*. These are becoming an accepted part of a competent leader’s armoury.

However, organisations have failed to acknowledge that each of these distinct *ways of being* requires specific training and support. Herbert (2022) points out that if one is assigned the responsibility of driving a team towards defined outcomes and targets – such as winning a netball tournament – each of these four roles has an explicit purpose.

2.2.2 Conceptualising management

Modern management theories emerged from the industrial revolution through the First and Second World War. According to Witzel and Warner (2015), modern management theory implementation happened slowly because of the belief that organisations were too diverse, and the practice would only work over a short time. Ratten (2023) points out that modern management theories focus on maximising productivity and often treat employees as a cog in a machine. Scientific methods are in use to regulate processes, select appropriate workers and reduce employee movements. Factors such as division of labour, defined by rules and regulations, and the more formalised relationship with a defined chain of command are established between employees and management. In today's workplace modern management theories are widely embraced and have applicability (Nixon, 2003; Ratten, 2023).

According to Gantt (2024), the postmodernist movement humanises employees and encourages management to increase worker productivity by considering the needs of the employees, developing encouraging systems, training and having a career path. Furthermore, the division of labour has taken on a team-based focus, management has become more concerned with motivation and communication, and the hierarchy and rule system has become less comprehensive (Haeussler & Sauermann, 2016). Modernist management practices are still used in manufacturing and in many industrial settings today. These management practices are normally used with inexperienced workers and entry-level positions. The more complicated jobs and the more skilled workers become, the more ordinary postmodern management theories become. Through modernist theories, basic job functions benefit by initial scoping. Employees are the key element in most businesses and thrive under modern theories. Although modern managers do understand employee motivations and can improve productivity, employees need to feel that they are needed, want to be appreciated and rewarded for their efforts and work on tasks that are engaging.

In contrast, postmodern theories of management allow managers to understand these feelings and design tasks that will deliver for the business and the employees at the same time (Nixon, 2003; Haeussler & Sauermann, 2016; Gantt, 2024). These aspirations of workers are not always fulfilled by modernistic managers. When one considers sport and its management, it is obvious that classical management theories and control structures do not sit easily with postmodern coaching practices and the management of sporting codes (Cushion et al., 2006; Cunningham, 2017; Bachkirova, 2017). Top athletes are professional people and cannot be regarded in the same vein as workers in a factory.

It needs to be acknowledged that at school level, netball, as is the case with other sporting codes, enjoys amateur status. At post-school level, sporting codes enter professional status or move in the direction of professionalisation; for this reason, a postmodern theory was used, and the models developed for postmodern organisations (Cushion et al., 2006) were used in crafting a conceptual understanding of the management of netball (Cunningham, 2017; Bachkirova, 2017).



Figure 2: Schematic representation of the management functions of the sport manager.

The theory underpinning my study is best illustrated in the diagram in Figure 2. There are five basic knowledge and skill sets required from a sport manager and coach: As with many industries, the marketplace for talented people in sport is highly competitive and demanding and requires specific skills sets for the managers of athletes. Numerous skills may be listed, but there are five skill sets that all sport coaches and managers require:

- **Working in sport management** involves dealing with different professionals across specialisations, which vary, depending on the specific sector. These could be legal experts, marketers and sales professionals, trainers, financial experts, medical professionals or the press, but most importantly, the athletes. As a manager, one is the facilitator, implying one must exercise one's people skills to ensure that everyone stays on schedule and delivers tasks to a high standard to keep all stakeholders happy in the process. Managing people well is extremely important to achieve goals and objectives in the workplace. People management skills can be acquired through experience and observation or through coaching. These skills are positively affected by the attitudes and personalities that the managers develop and apply. Coaches/netball managers must possess specific people skills, such as adaptability, effective communication, negotiation skills and conflict resolution abilities. These soft skills are what differentiates the management of sports organisations from other organisations. Management, specifically team management skills, is what differentiates a good netball manager as they help attract and retain talent, manage the emotional intelligence of the team and inspire players to commit to overall goals and work as a team to achieve them (Guidotti, Demarie, Ciaccioni & Capranica, 2023).
- **Time management** is the process of planning and exercising conscious control of time spent on specific activities, especially to increase effectiveness, efficiency and productivity. It involves a juggling act of various demands relating to work, social life, family, hobbies, personal interests and commitments with the finiteness of time. Using time effectively gives one *choice* on spending/managing activities at one's own time and expediency (Hoye et al., 2015). In sport organisations, be they governing bodies or netball teams, much can happen on any given day. During the competition season, sport managers need to put in extra hours to attend to all the matters that require attention. This calls for impeccable organisation and time management skills. Sport managers must ensure that the athletes that they manage are in the right place at the right time to make sure that athletes and their supporters and funders are satisfied (Hoye et al., 2015). All

good coaches/managers must possess specific management and coaching skills that will enable them to juggle the various demands relating to work, social life, family, hobbies, personal interests and commitments with the finiteness of time. Time management has important implications for the development of elite athletes. Sport managers must juggle priorities and changed strategy when they notice conflicts in the time frames imposed (Ersoy et al., 2017). In the world of amateur netball, managers and coaches hold other full-time jobs and netball is done on a part-time basis, and therefore demands the ability to manage time effectively.

- **Communication:** managers spend a great deal of time communicating to plan, control, coordinate, direct and make decisions. Communication is, therefore, an integral function of management as the proper operations of an organisation cannot be successful without communication (Hoye et al., 2015). Communication is arguably the most important component of a successful sport environment. Without it, sport managers cannot establish effective relationships with business partners and other stakeholders. Internally, poor communication causes confusion among teams and damages productivity (Bagshaw, 2024; Pedersen et al., 2007). Sport managers or organisers require great verbal and written communication skills, especially when managing the public reputation of a brand or team (Bagshaw, 2024). This may involve correcting any issues relating to contract negotiations or endorsement opportunities as well as establishing the necessary relationships to facilitate these. Planning is a major part of every coach's job. Managing technologies in support of the sport code is one of the most important roles in the sports industry. The basic task of each coach is to recognise a young, talented and promising athlete who possesses skills and physical predisposition for netball. The basic elements of creating a training programme includes training goals, competition calendar, competition goals and test results (Radosevic et al., 2020). All these decisions depend on the data at the disposal of the coach. Data related to each netball player in a team is needed for physiological reasons, movement screening, fitness assessment, body mass index [BMI] and physical conditioning (Croft, Spencer, Taurua & Wilton, 2021).
- **Entrepreneurial skills:** *Entrepreneurship* is defined as the ability to establish, manage and grow a business venture, taking into consideration its risks, with an intention of making a profit. This definition is applicable to a professional sporting team. The people who establish businesses or netball clubs with these intentions and considerations are called *entrepreneurs*. An entrepreneur can either be the manager or the proprietor of a business

initiative or netball team. In addition, she attempts to make profit by taking initiative and risks. The sporting industry rewards those who are brave enough to take risks – be it on the pitch or in business. For this reason, being a practising athlete or being in management requires an entrepreneurial mindset and a willingness to ask questions, challenge the status quo, be curious and view change to unlock new opportunities for growth (Hoye et al., 2015). Having the ability to take measured risks and manage the risk assessment process is essential in competitive marketplaces such as sport. Netball coaches should be entrepreneurs that are willing to take risks, break new ground and innovate. Entrepreneurship therefore needs to be embedded into the basic fabric of society and of netball. Netball in South Africa has moved from being amateur-focused to being professional-focused, resulting in an increase in the number of professional netball players that play netball professionally overseas. Surujlal (2016) indicated that sport coaches with high levels of motivation, aptitude and positive attitudes towards work have higher levels of entrepreneurial potential. Sport coaches who possess a positive attitude towards work are more knowledgeable about entrepreneurship and are more motivated to excel to achieve long-term success than those who do not possess these qualities.

- **Sport analytics:** Each sport has its own statistical benchmarks that identify the athletes that excel and those that do not. In the past, these statistics were collected and analysed manually; however, the simultaneous development of wearable technologies and big data analytics has accelerated the real-time collection and transmission of many performance-critical metrics. With the rapid growth of information technology and sport, analysing sport information has become an increasingly challenging issue. Sport big data comes from the internet and shows a rapid growth trend. It contains rich information, such as data on athletes, coaches and netball players. Nowadays various sports data can be easily accessed, and amazing data analysis technologies have been developed that enable one to explore the value of the data. From this data, coaches can better understand where improvements need to be made (Watanabe, 2021). As far as communication is concerned, one should differentiate between player/coach communication that is training/match/performance oriented, and coach/external communication that is information oriented. Player/coach communication is focused on discussing the technical and tactical elements of the game, analysing in-play actions and positional play, possession outcomes and strategy. External communication of the coach/manager focuses on sharing information, promoting the team and sharing marketing information.

- **Mentoring and coaching of netball players:** All the functions listed in a) to e) should support the mentoring and coaching of the netball team. Mentorship is a two-way relationship in which both mentor and mentee grow and develop. The mentor benefits from the relationship as much, if not more than the mentee. Stead-Dorval, Isaksen & Noller (2023) take the position that a mentor is a guide by the side and, therefore, a mentor travels the journey of personal learning and growth along with their mentees. Mentors know what skills, techniques and abilities are needed (i.e., patience, learning tools, expertise) and where to get additional information, training or skill development opportunities). By contrast, the coach explains the physics of each shot and links between technical hitting and strategies for winning points. The coach wants the netball player to learn to use her strengths and compensate for her weaknesses – an essential skill in netball. During each training session, the coach will push the player to her limits. The player may argue about things and receive explanations for why the coach holds her perspectives. Although coaches often point to the growth of the individual as priority, pressures from the team, parents, the school or their own internal drive for success often shift their focus from growth to winning (Stead-Dorval, Isaksen & Noller, 2023). In practice, some coaches focus on the growth of the individual while others may prioritise learning of skills and strategies, while others may engage in two-way communication, and enable the athlete to challenge the coach’s viewpoint.

It is important to note that developments within the field of professional sport have seen new rules and functions for sport managers. In addition, innovative technologies and social and cultural movements are causing enormous shifts in the sport world. One of the features of these changes in the field of sport is the move from amateur to professional sport (Bilohur, Skrypchenko & Nepsha, 2022).

2.3 THE MANAGEMENT OF THE TRANSITION IN NETBALL IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.3.1 Management of junior netball

The South African Schools Netball Association (SASN) gives young netball players the opportunity to start with netball at school level and participate in regional, provincial and national level competitions. SASN focuses on an integrated netball programme that caters for all to augment the growth of netball in regions where it is not played fully. SASN aims to complement, encourage and develop mass participation that entails learners participating at school level, intra- and inter-school activities, in netball festivals and promotes the joy of playing netball (SASN, 2023). Schools in South Africa are responsible to register with SASN.

Public schools are managed by the National Department of Basic Education and Training and the provincial education departments, which means that education authorities and sport organisations fulfil a complementary and supportive role to enable sport at school level. The Department of Basic Education must create national policies that will make it possible for schools to participate in sport and to have netball as part of the curriculum. Many learners at junior level get the opportunity to participate in this sport code; this ensures that netball in South Africa can grow, and players can develop (Vosloo & Du Toit, 2023).

SASN focuses on an inclusive netball programme so that all players from any background will benefit (SASN, 2023). The focus is on stimulating growth in netball, and on promoting education and training from an early age with netball being part during these formative years. Every player and coach need development. There is a certain structure that SASN has set out. Schools have teams participating in school circuit competitions and then there are trials for districts – regional, provincial and national. The aim is to encourage participation by learners at school level and to ensure that there are enough training sessions for players, and it is the schools' responsibility to organise inter-school activities. At the Top School netball tournament in 2019 there were nineteen teams for the Under 18 league (Calvert, 2019).

According to Vosloo and Du Toit (2023), it is necessary that schools organise enough inter-school competitions with other schools so that players can get game and court time to improve their talent and skills. It is the schools' responsibility to have netball coaches with the right qualifications to teach the players quality standard netball. There is nothing more fun and exciting than to work hard at training and then compete against other teams from other schools (Calvert, 2019).

All netball players at school level should be registered with Netball South Africa, and there are various structures in place to manage school level netball. For the purposes of my research, I focused on how the school level netball structures link-up with Netball South Africa at senior level and to determine whether it is possible that these junior and senior level structures could manage the transition more effectively.

2.3.2 Coaching of junior netball

At school level, the role of the coach and the manager is often collapsed into one single individual. For this reason, it is not easy to separate the roles of coach and manager in this study (Consult Paragraph 2.2.1). Preference was therefore given to the concept of a coach, knowing that the coach often acts as the manager who manages the team. Coaching is aimed at getting the best performance out of the players at the right time and to keep the players interested and motivated (INF, 2012).

A netball coach is someone who has sound technical knowledge of the game as well as in-depth knowledge of the basic strategies, game tactics, routines and practices (England Netball, 2018). Coaches communicate effectively with team members and are flexible to change when it is required. At the same time, it is expected that coaches have the required organisation skills and the administrative ability to implement their coaching programmes effectively and reliably (INF, 2012) and therefore they also need to be able to act as managers of their team.

Coaching should be such that it will increase players' enjoyment of netball, while also improving players' skill level and their self-esteem in sharing their knowledge of the rules and netball strategies (England Netball, 2018). Such an approach helps the players to be the best they can be. Effective coaches are also good communicators (INF, 2012). Communicating effectively is the coaches' responsibility, and they must manage this effectively. The ability of the coach to improve netball players' performance depends to a large degree on the ability to use non-verbal communication, such as body language (grinning, sighing and shrugging) effectively, and to listen attentively and use interaction skills to communicate (Mehrabian & Bowden, 2019). This process takes place during informal conversations and group interaction sessions, whilst speaking in public or in written correspondence.

Coaches can improve or make communication better by keeping the message succinct and to the point and by being specific with the message and using simple language. Closely linked to effective communication is effective listening. Coaches must develop and refine their ability to listen well. Active listening skills require a genuine interest in what is being said. Coaches who are effective listeners practise skills such as attentive listening and making and maintaining eye contact. Effective communicators allow the player time to talk without butting in and use non-verbal gestures to show that they are following what is being said, such as nodding (Davis, Jowett & Tafvelin, 2019). Active listening is a technique that helps the coach gather more information.

There is not a recipe for being an effective coach. All coaches are individual and therefore will do things differently. INF (2012) identified six broad coaching strategies that are reflected in Table 1.

Table 1: Approaches to coaching

COACHING STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION
Ms Iron-hand	The strong unwavering type who insists on maximum effort from everyone all the time. They always give their best and expect the same in return. They are sympathetic towards the player's problems but if anyone tries to cut corners, she will be sorry. These coaches can assess a player's potential and ability quickly and accurately.
Ms Nice to All	The very thoughtful coach whose greatest fault is that they are too nice to everyone. They were classic performers themselves, proficient in all skills but slow to change to the modern techniques and the changing patterns of netball.
Ms Bad-Loser	The coach that hates to lose and their fiery temperaments upset their judgement at times. They can gather ideas from all sources, analyse the good from the bad and apply them effectively. They create tremendous drive, which is transmitted to the players, but they can also relax and mix with them.
Ms Hi Flyer	The creative and persuasive coach who prefers the gentle approach. They deal with players on an individual basis and are masters at getting the best out of them. Before a competition they give the players detailed instructions on how to execute their movements correctly as well as useful advice about their opposition.
Ms Annoyer	They get under the players' skin. They are feared and hated but above all are respected. Although they do not like being hated they believe it is the only way to be a successful coach.
Ms Sergeant Major	The coach initially upsets the club with their tough attitudes to discipline when they first take over but prove to be extremely astute and very fair.

As far as school level netball is concerned, there are six distinct roles that may be identified for effective coaching and for the management of netball players.

- Planning:** Many sport researchers have claimed that without the betterment of strategic planning activities, sport will not survive the turbulent and competitive environment of the sport industry (Avgerinou et al., 2017). The will to win is the will to prepare to win. Some call it "a remorseless march towards the inevitable" (INF, 2012). Netball administrators should plan a yearly programme from season to season. Before the pre-season commences it is worthwhile spending the time to plan the year ahead. The regular review of the season is one of the most important parts of a coaching programme. It entails reflecting on what one has achieved, one's satisfaction with achievements and determining and reviewing one's targets (England Netball, 2018). A few weeks after the end of the season, the coach should call on all the support personnel (assistant coach, manager, etc.) to reflect on and analyse the season.

- **Management and leadership:** Schnurr et al. (2020) argue that leadership and critical leadership is the outcome of an ongoing process of social construction and negotiation rather than the attribute or characteristic of an individual. They view leadership as a discursive process through which meaning is constructed and negotiated, and through which sense making is enacted and influence is exercised (Alvesson & Spicer, 2014; Larsson & Lundholm, 2013). Such a conceptualisation of leadership enables one to view leadership as a collaborative process in which people who are not the officially designated leader take on a leadership role (for example, when a player takes over as captain when the captain is injured, or when the assistant coach needs to perform the duties of the head coach). In netball, leadership roles are often shared among team members, but in many of the clubs and provincial teams the traditional leadership hierarchies are still maintained. It is accepted that coaches must lead by example. One will quickly lose the respect of one's players if one does not know what one is doing (Mthombeni, Coopoo & Noorbhai, 2024).
- **Coaching and feedback:** Coaches must be attuned to the needs of the players while keeping in mind the correct technique for executing certain actions. Making good decisions is one of the most difficult skills to master for a netball player. Much of decision-making is linked to what the players see. If they do not see it, they cannot decide what to do. Coaches should devise activities that simulate the correct netball skills, making sure they also have a change of speed in the activities. They should challenge their players by creating activities that test and enhance their decision-making abilities. Coaching requires immediacy, which simply means that corrective intervention must follow shortly after the execution of the skill (Netball NZ, 2022; England Netball, 2018). Feedback to players on the corrective steps to be taken needs to be brief and to the point and not open for debate or arguing. It is important that coaches not only use verbal feedback, but more importantly, demonstration. Coaches must guard against giving too much feedback that can be confusing to the players.
- **Match analysis and strategies:** Coaches involve players in their game plan that gives them ownership and sharpens their own insight into the game (England Netball, 2018). During the match, coaches analyse the game and determine individual positional strategies and plan the action for each area of the court. They consider effective full court strategies as well as coping strategies per player and they look at each player for strengths/weaknesses, any repetitious movement, the use of space and timing (Netball NZ, 2022; England Netball, 2018). Coaches must also be able to analyse specific

groupings such as shooters/centre court/defence and look at the team as a group. They need to appraise specific groupings within the team by asking questions such as, are they always doing the same thing? Have they got variety in their game? Do they always set up the same way? Do they play to the side or down the middle of the court? Do players have a favourite side on which they like to stand? Where are their eyes focused? Are they out looking for intercepts or do they stay back on their opponent? (INF, 2012).

- **Statistics:** The coach in collaboration with the manager should determine the type of statistics to be collected and maintained. Statistics can play an important role within any sport and are there to back up what the coach sees and the decisions to be taken (Jacobs, De Bosscher, Venter & Scheerder, 2018). Management and the coach must establish what statistics to use from those that have been kept, and how much emphasis should be placed on them. Some examples of possible statistics include the number of unforced errors, for example, a bad pass, drop catch, stepping, offside, breaking, etc. Statistics can also include plotting on paper where the feeds to the goal shooter come from and by whom; plotting the position of the centre pass caught and by whom; plotting the pathway of the ball from a back-line throw-in, etc. (INF, 2012). Another important form of statistics to be maintained is turnover, where it is recorded when a team gains the ball or when a team loses it.
- **Role of the parent:** The home is where a child learns good sportsmanship. By the time a child joins a team, a sense of sportsmanship or lack thereof is already well established. Parents should not force an unwilling child to participate in sport but should encourage and support the learners who are interested and keen to participate in sport (Netball NZ, 2022; England Netball, 2018). Children should play sport because they enjoy it. At school level, children should always be encouraged to play by the rules and not publicly question the officials' judgement and never their honesty. The parents who are often the spectators of a game should set the example for their children. They should have a positive attitude to the sport so that learners want to stay involved. Parents should never ridicule or yell at their children for making a mistake or losing a competition. They should support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from children's sporting activities.

2.3.3 Management of senior netball

Netball is a sport that has grown significantly in popularity and stature globally over the past decade (Whitehead et al., 2021) and now features in forty-five countries on their world-ranking list. The International Netball Federation (INF) provides opportunities for talented athletes that represent their respective national teams to participate in major international events such as World Cups, Commonwealth Games and World University Championships (INF, 2020).

Many of the countries recognised by the INF have implemented professional leagues (McClean et al., 2019). South Africa has achieved significant success in netball in Africa (ranked 1st) and is currently ranked 5th in the world (INF, 2020), yet netball has remained an amateur sport under the auspices of the South Africa National Netball Association (SANNA). Netball South Africa aspires to be the nationally and internationally recognised, respected and professional women's sport organisation in South Africa with the aim to develop to its fullest the potential of netball players at all levels, and to become world champions, reflecting the values of integrity, commitment and professionalism, thus inspiring all South Africans (SANNA, 2008).

To achieve performance outcomes, national sport organisations must position their elite sport programmes to be able to access resources in a globalised and interconnected sport environment (Sotiriadou & De Bosscher, 2018). The International Netball Federation (INF) provides opportunities for talented athletes that represent their respective national teams to participate in major international events such as World Cups, Commonwealth Games and World University Championships (INF, 2023). Many of the countries recognised by the INF have implemented professional leagues (McClean et al., 2019). Despite these international trends, Netball South Africa has remained an amateur sport and has competed in numerous major international netball events since 1992 as amateur athletes, and while other countries have adopted more professionalised programmes in the management and athlete development spheres, Netball South Africa has remained an amateur sporting code. In the recent past, the pressure on netball to go professional has increased, as is evident in Netball South Africa's (NSA) implementation of highly competitive elite provincial tournaments such as the Telkom Netball Challenge that is a semi-professional league played between 13 top teams from all nine provinces in South Africa. Most players in these teams are from universities where LTAD programmes are offered. Another feature is the placement of elite players in leagues in England, Australia and New Zealand (Netball SA, 2023) to gain expert knowledge of netball and to be exposed to professional competitions at elite level.

Netball teams in South Africa participate in Varsity Sports, a high performance and semi-professional competition between university netball teams (Varsity Sports, 2018), while South African Schools Netball (SASN) and NSA offer competitions and leagues for various age-levels (SASN, 2023). To develop athletes optimally from foundation to elite level and produce sustainable performance outcomes there is increased global recognition of a systematic and scientific approach to the development of athletes (Trofimenko et al., 2019).

The result is an increasingly uniform approach to development pathways for athletes, with local variations accounting for differences in implementation due to contextual variances (Houlihan & Zheng, 2013; Nolte & Hollander, 2020). An initiative that has significantly influenced the delivery of sport programmes is the systematic programme of athlete development over a long period of time called the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) strategy (Ellerton, 2019; Nolte & Hollander, 2020; Balyi, Way & Higgs, 2013).

To create conditions that are supportive of LTAD programmes, investment in elements such as sport sciences support, long-term coaches' development (LTCD) programmes and physical resources such as training facilities is critical (Blake, 2020; Nolte et al., 2017). The NSA LTAD model indicates that an integrated and collaborative approach from age group to elite level is required to identify and develop talented athletes effectively and appropriately, and ensure life-long participation (Netball SA, 2021). Australia sets a good example in as far as the mature sport programmes invest significantly in physical resources (training facilities), training programmes including talent identification and development, coach provision and development, international competition, post-career support and scientific research and innovation (De Bosscher et al., 2015).

Netball South Africa (NSA) is the national controlling body of netball in South Africa, and it has set as priority the goal to develop netball from grassroot to elite level, and NSA is committed to providing fair competition, access to facilities and equity in participation at all levels. Netball South Africa is committed to the provision of the highest standards of coaching, administration and officiating at junior, senior and elite levels (SANNA, 2008).

Netball development programmes in South Africa cannot function properly without appropriately designed and effectively applied talent development pathways, continuous sport sciences support, strength and conditioning programmes, and highly knowledgeable coaches (Lea & Branko, 2020). According to De Bosscher et al. (2015), access to high quality training facilities plays a significant role in the success of an elite sport system. NSA is investing significant resources, including funding, towards an effective LTAD programme countrywide to achieve excellent team performance at the 2023 Netball World Cup hosted by South Africa (Gibbs, 2019; Nolte, Burnett & Hollander, 2017; Nolte & Hollander, 2020). This incorporates athlete development within all nine provinces in South Africa that are individually managed, but in line with NSA's constitutional requirements, culminating in representative teams at national and international level.

As is reflected in Figure 3 and applied to the South African context, Netball South Africa is managed at national, provincial and local level by the following structures NSA Council, NSA Executive, Netball Provincial Structure, Netball Regions, Netball Wards and Clubs. These are all amateur based. As amateur sport, Netball SA has four directors responsible to plan, coordinate and implement/monitor development programmes at national and regional level.

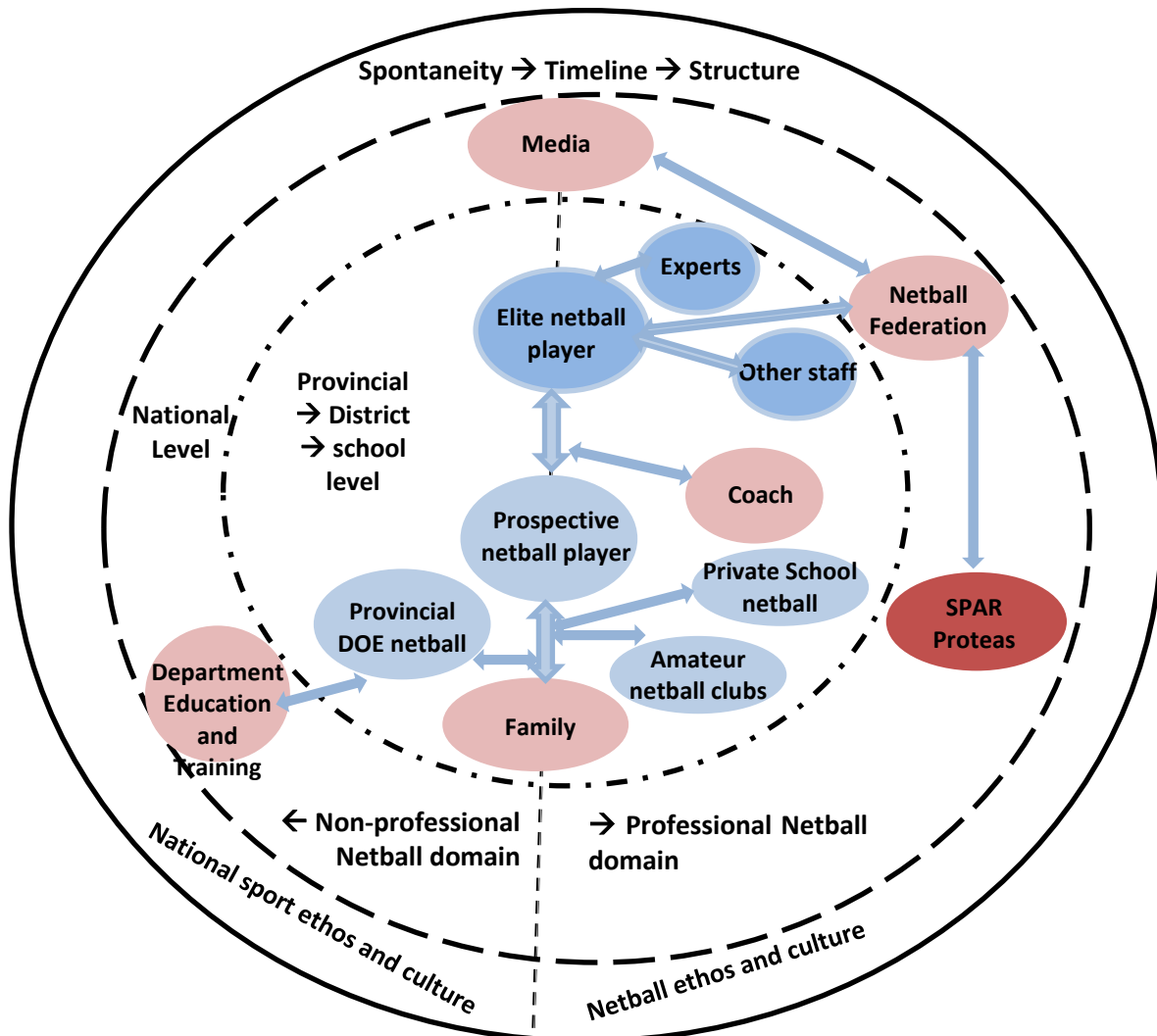


Figure 3: The athletic talent development environment (ATDE) empirical model of the Danish national 49er sailing team (Henriksen, 2010)

At the regional level, Provincial/Regional Conveners are responsible for planning, coordination and implementation/monitoring of development programmes in the region, recording and submitting reports on development to directors. Each director keeps a record of all activities/programmes/projects in the portfolio concerned and initiates and monitors development

programmes aimed at players and officials. The executive in each province is responsible for initiating and organising development netball administrator workshops, while player development at regional and provincial tournaments and SA Championships is used as platforms for players. Development programmes run in partnership with leading netball countries (involving taking technical officials overseas to learn from top officials in the game as well as officiate in tournaments there while being mentored and evaluated). Compilation of databases of members, players and technical officials and records thereof is done by each director to feed into NSA database (SANNA, 2008).

2.3.4 Transition gaps

Players who transition from junior to senior level have some barriers to overcome. These barriers include internal and external factors that influence players' ability to cope; examples are interpersonal conflicts and a lack of specific abilities and difficulties in combining sport and studies/work. When players can develop effectively and use all the necessary resources provided to make their transition easier, they overcome the barriers in the coping process, and this leads to a successful transition (Brewer & Petrie, 2014; Whitehead et al., 2019). Only a few sport environments are successful in conducting the transition for their young talented athletes to senior elite level. Stambulova and Alfermann (2009) found that talent development has an impact on athletic career development and underscore the importance of the context in which development takes place.

Other factors that play a role in influencing athletes' career development and transition are the micro-environment that consists of coaches, parents and peers (Whitehead et al., 2019; Côté et al., 2007; Wylleman et al., 2017). Martindale, Collins and Daubney (2005) as well as Martindale, Collins and Abraham (2007) developed the term *ATDE* that refers to athlete talent development environment (Consult Figure 2. p.35) The authors explain the term as involving "... all aspects of the coaching situation" (Martindale et al., 2007:354). The ATDE model applies to the study because when the research was conducted, I discovered what the netball players' micro-environment consisted of; this indicated their motives and reasons for continuing with netball or not. The above information indicates the importance of one's holistic ecological environment and how it influences the athletic career of a player.

Alfermann and Stambulova (2007) use the term *athletic career* that is defined as the sport path chosen voluntarily to achieve an individual peak in athletic/sport performance. *Career* relates to all types and levels of sport. An athletic career can be regional, national or international and it can be amateur or professional, depending on the athlete's status. When players compete at an international or professional level it is labelled an elite sport career. According to Stambulova, Ryba and Henriksen (2020), there are different stages in an athletic career and these stages reflect a pattern. Sport demands performing excellence from players and the requirements of each sport may differ. It can also differ from the age from when the players start to specialise in their sport (Stambulova et al. 2020). Proceeding through career stages and transitions can often be associated with stress and uncertainty for players. Transitions come with specific demands that players need to cope with to continue with their sport (Thomas et al., 2017).

The most critical aspect of an overall athletic career is the transition from junior to senior level sport. Athletes describe it as the most difficult transition and many of them have admitted to the fact that they struggle to cope with it. Many athletes cannot cope, and they stagnate and move to a more relaxing level of sport or drop out. Only a small number of athletes continue to the elite senior level. According to Tønnessen et al. (2012), a study conducted in Belgium found that track and field athletes from fourteen to eighteen years old were national champions in their events just before their transition from junior to senior level; five years later the results were very disappointing. They concluded that 17% of the elite junior athletes made senior national teams, 31% stagnated, 28% performed occasionally with ups and downs and 24% dropped out. This is just one example of how athletes struggle with the transition from junior to senior level.

The transition from junior to senior level may be aligned with transitions in other aspects of life; for example, from school to university, making it even more difficult and requiring additional resources to cope (Gamede & Ajani, 2020). Other demands in the transition are balancing sport goals with other life goals and reorganising lifestyle, searching for one's individual path in sport, coping with pressure of selections, winning status around peers, and coping with relationship problems (Van den Berg & Jonck, 2021).

2.4 INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE TRANSITION FROM JUNIOR TO SENIOR NETBALL

2.4.1 England

Netball in the United Kingdom begins at the age of eight and continues till the age of eighteen years. Players that are talented and that want to get more invested in the sport or just want to play to enjoy the game can register with their local and nearest club. There are different clubs in areas and ages from Under 15 to Under 21 and senior. The Netball Super League is the highest performing league. It is a top-level elite netball competition featuring ten teams from England, Wales and Scotland. This is a league where players need to participate to be selected for the national Future Roses development team and, from there, for the National England team, the Vitality Roses (England Netball, 2020).

Talented players that have been identified by coaches could be part of the team system to join a Super League team club and there are groups from Under 17, Under 19, Under 21 and the senior team. The England netball system is designed to give players opportunities to continue and grow in their sport. They have many options to participate in clubs. In an interview with Jade Clark, who is the highest capped player of the Vitality Roses of England, she said: "I then got involved in a club outside of school and just went from there." This shows that players who get opportunities to participate in a club environment can reach goals at the senior level (England Netball, 2020).

In 2004, the Vitality Roses were placed fourth after their loss to Jamaica. England Netball personnel considered this an underachievement. This led to the decision by then-Chief Executive of England Netball to review the structure of the Vitality Super league. It included making the tournament longer instead of a two- to three-month round robin. The league would last five months with home and away games. The key focus for the league was to develop a franchise-based model with franchises as the foundation through which player performance could be enhanced and managed (England Netball, 2020).

According to an article on sport (Noble, 2019) England conducted an Active Lives Survey that explored benefits of sport and physical activity, such as mental well-being. Netball in England has shown growth in popularity with 50 200 more people taking part from May 2018. This amazing increase in women sport has to do with the England Netball Team, Vitality Roses, and making history in April 2018 winning gold at the Commonwealth Games for the first time. Director of Development at England Netball, Fran Connolly, said:

Statistics show that elite success really does drive participation and 2018 is a year that stands out in our memories because of the Vitality Roses clinching the title in the Gold Coast. We have seen a huge surge in interest since that tournament with international media exposure, new investment and partnerships, and an increase in participants across our variety of programmes. This data shows that the Vitality Roses inspired a nation after the Commonwealth Games, and the growth doesn't seem to be slowing. Since the recent Vitality Netball World Cup in July, more than 160,000 Brits started playing netball or more netball as a result according to a survey conducted by government, which is fantastic.

England Netball wants more women to participate in sport because netball has so many benefits for people's mental and physical well-being (England Netball, 2020).

2.4.2 Australia

Netball is the biggest team sport in Australia. About 1.2 million men, women and children all over the country participate and it is the number one sport for women. Netball Australia aims to improve the growth and to connect with local communities to empower women to excel in the sport. The Australian netball team is rated the most successful team in international netball; they have won nine out of 12 Netball World Championships (Australian Netball, 2020).

Players who participate at school level can also join and register at clubs in their district. The Under 16, Under 17 and Under 19 teams that are representing their home state participate in the National Netball Championships that take place over a week. This is a championship that plays a fundamental part of Netball Australia's High-Performance Pathway and lays the foundations for many young rising star players to experience a high-performance competition. It provides inspiration to compete for memorable international careers. This is where the best players, umpires and coaches come together to absorb a high-performance environment (Netball Australia, 2020). The Australian Netball Championships (ANC) tournament is just below the Suncorp Super Netball (SSN). This pathway event aims to bring together all of Australia's developing netball talent. It is the tournament where talent identification with a view to progressing to the SSN and International levels takes place (Australian Netball, 2020).

The best league in the netball world is the Suncorp Super Netball (SSN) league, which is the elite league in Australia. It consists of eight teams. This league is professional and has an intense level of training. The SSN season consists of fourteen weeks and a three-week finals series ending in August (Suncorp Super Netball, 2020).

Players are full-time professional athletes with an average salary extending to AUS\$ 67 500 (Netball Australia, 2018). The Netball Live App makes it possible for anyone to watch the games on their devices; this encourages more people to watch and in this way the sport enjoys more exposure and sponsorships (Suncorp Super Netball, 2020).

Netball Australia has always had depth and a pathway demonstrating capability and potential to progress to the Australian Diamonds within the current four-year performance cycle. In October 2019, Netball Australia announced a development 2020/21 squad. Diamonds coach Stacey Marinkovich was excited by the list of players, saying:

Our priority with this squad is to identify and develop athletes within our pathway to ensure we have an elite programme that is deep with talent right across the court. We will keep this programme closely aligned with that of the Origin Diamonds and U21 Netball World Youth Cup team to help us prepare for our benchmark events in the Commonwealth Games and Netball World Cup (Australian Diamonds, 2023).

Netball Australia has a *Centre of Excellence*. This is the training ground for the Australian Diamonds. It is an intensive boot camp for future national stars supported by elite coaches and AIS performance staff. The goal of the centre is to prepare Australia's next generation of netballers for the intense nature of international competition (Netball Australia, 2020).

Netball has a meaningful impact, not only physically but also mentally. Mental health plays a major role in a professional training environment (Sandars, Jenkins & Church, 2021). Sharni Layton made her international debut in 2011. She had forty-six appearances for Australia and won gold at the Commonwealth Games in 2014 in Glasgow, and Netball World Cup Championship in 2011 and 2015. She is described as one of the best defenders in the world and after a six-month break, she announced her retirement in July 2018. Anxiety and depression prevented her from leaving her house despite her shining on court. Layton said, *If I couldn't perform because I had done my ankle it wouldn't be fair on the team, and mental health was no different*. Being an elite athlete is tough, not only physically but mentally as well. It is of prime importance to be balanced. Australia supports players as a whole and when players need to take time off, they have the necessary support to guide them (DHM, 2015).

2.4.3 New Zealand

The Silver Ferns are the 2019 Netball World Cup champions. New Zealand has had a remarkable turnaround from 2018, when they came fourth at the Commonwealth Games. After this unsatisfactory performance, in-depth feedback was provided to make key recommendations to the Netball New Zealand (NNZ) panel. The Netball New Zealand Athlete (NZA) programme was re-established, and a world-class high-performance campaign plan was formed (Netball New Zealand, 2020).

NNZ's role of developing and managing national programmes for participation, coaches, umpires and officials is for netball to continue to be the sport of first choice for New Zealanders. Currently netball is the most popular sport for women in the country. Netball in New Zealand is known for its sporting excellence from grassroots netball through to the Silver Ferns, the national team. This organisation works hard to support Netball's five zones and eighty-three netball centres that deliver over 140 000 registered members and 300 000 plus people who participate in the game annually (Netball New Zealand, 2020). There is a strong love of the game and the viewership in New Zealand netball events and competitions has increased. Worldwide the growth of netball reflects New Zealand's dedication to help develop the strength of the sport outside their borders and the determination to see how netball succeeds around the globe. The Beko Netball League is for all club players to play. The domestic competitions are the Netball U18 Champs, NNZ open champs and National Secondary Schools events.

The ANZ Premiership is the elite netball competition in New Zealand. There are six teams based throughout the country and they play over fourteen weeks, totalling forty-seven games. Therefore, New Zealand is so successful because of what the league provides players with.

Ameliaranne Ekenasio is part of the NWC 2019 gold medal team; she is a key member of the squad who won back-to-back championships. Elite athletes sacrifice a great deal (Sandars, Jenkins & Church, 2021). By way of illustration, Ekenasio, the captain of the Silver Ferns, felt that she needed to step away from the court to rest and recharge. This is an essential part of any career. She is a mother and misses key moments of her child's life because of training and international travelling. The four-year cycle of World Cups and Commonwealth Games started to impact her mental health (Josep, 2021). On social media she said: *Just because I am a successful athlete does not mean I am immune to mental health challenges.*

2.4.4 Jamaica

Jamaica is a country in which netball has grown significantly over the past few years. They are a team that is known for their strong and tall players. In the national squad, ten of the Jamaican players are playing abroad, four players in England and six players in Australia. The Institute of Sports (INSPORTS) is the league for primary schools in Jamaica; when players go to high school they compete in the Secondary Sports Association (SSA) league. There are several options for netball players to continue with netball after junior level. Any player can join the club league that is known as the Jamaican Netball Association (JNA). Players only need to register in a club to play. Weekly training is required for the club league. Players who go to college and university play in the Inter-collegiate League.

Netball players in Jamaica train daily because it is a high-performance level of play and there is more structure. Universities and colleges have special facilities to improve players. The Berger Elite League (BEL) is Jamaica's senior tournament (Jamaica Netball, 2019). According to Paula Daley-Morris Netball, Jamaica president, the competitiveness in the BEL is reaching its desired goal for the sport's growth locally and internationally (Loop Sports, 2019). She said, *it is amazing to see how the ladies lift their standard even though we have eight professional players who would have been playing in this league who are playing elsewhere and yet still the crop that has remained is just as good and is really playing well.* For Netball Jamaica it is important to be competitive on the world stage. Their biggest challenge is to fund leagues like the BEL. Daley-Morris continued by saying: *Look at this league, look at the excitement that it brought to all of us and tell me, can you help us to make this into a professional league. We would be very happy to have you join us in this effort* (Loop Sports, 2019).

Jamaica aspires to be the best in the world; they say that is easy to stay in the game in the preliminary round, but when they get to the finals, and they have nail-biting encounters, they want to be constantly challenged to win (Loop Sports, 2019).

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter aimed to analyse and discuss the aspects in the netball management environment and the challenges associated with professional sport management in netball. At the start of the chapter, I found it necessary to differentiate between coaching and management. Internationally there is growing recognition of the importance of coaching; yet there remains a lack of a clear conceptual basis for sport coaching. This situation has left coaching without a clear set of concepts and principles that reflect coaching practice and consequently the current set of definitions discusses coaching as a process that is often reduced in complexity and scale. In this chapter I identified the six pillars on which coaching, and management should be built.

I provided a cursory overview of transition, focusing on the top netball countries and comparing how they manage their sport and what South Africa should do to close the transition gap to the senior level. In my analysis of netball in South Africa, I showed that netball is a sport that has grown significantly in popularity and stature globally over the past decade and now features in forty-five countries on their world-ranking list. It was indicated that South Africa has achieved significant success in netball in Africa and in the world.

To achieve performance outcomes, national sport organisations must position their elite sport programmes to be able to access resources in a globalised and interconnected sport environment. For this reason, it is important that netball is regarded as a professional sport and that learners at school level should be developed to articulate into senior level professional netball. Many of the countries recognised by the INF have implemented professional leagues. This is evident in Netball South Africa's (NSA) implementation of highly competitive elite provincial tournaments such as the Telkom Netball Challenge that is a semi-professional league played among 13 top teams from all nine provinces in South Africa. Most players in these teams are from universities. Another feature is the placement of elite players in competitive leagues, as is the case in England, Australia and New Zealand to gain expert knowledge of netball and to be exposed to professional competitions on elite level. A brief overview is provided of netball in several selected countries to illustrate how professionalism in netball is managed in these countries.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an outline of the research methodology of this study. It includes the qualitative research design, case study, sampling method, data collection and analysis. In this chapter it is indicated how trustworthiness and credibility were ensured. Lastly the ethical clearance considerations implemented in this study are foregrounded.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The design of the study is reflected in Figure 4 below.

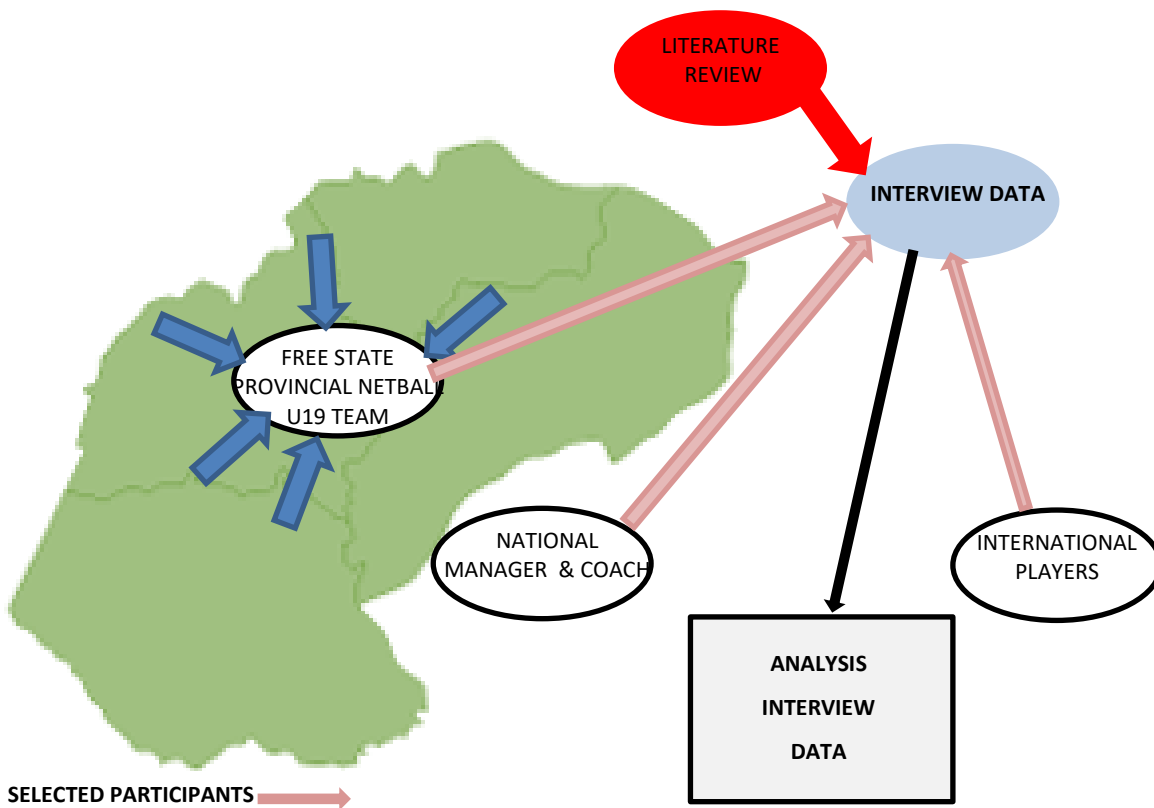


Figure 4: Data collection and analysis

A qualitative research design was used; this entailed exploring and understanding the meaning assigned by a person or group to a specific phenomenon or to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009). For the study I explored the experiences of Under 19 provincial netball players regarding their transition from junior to senior level netball.

The data gathering process included developing an interview schedule that contained questions pertaining to netball players' experience of the transition from junior to senior level netball. I collected data from selected Under 19 provincial netball participants. A qualitative research design was suitable for my study because it dealt with netball players' lived experiences and their interaction with their challenges. It also related to the interpretivist approach that involved me as the researcher, combining human interest into the study. Interpretivism has to do with people that assign meaning to certain things. This approach focuses on the differences between people and how to reflect on different aspects of their challenges (Myers, 2008). As netball players interact with the world, they are constantly assigning meaning to their experience. The meanings that they assign to experience greatly influence their decisions regarding netball (Foley et al., 2021). In addition to the selected participants for my study, I interviewed a netball official and a coach at senior level and five international netball players that were part of the Netball World Cup in Cape Town, 2023.

3.3 CASE STUDY

Stake (1995) claims that cases are objects of study that focus on bounded systems. A case study must clearly define its boundaries by way of principles of selection and provide rationales for those boundaries (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). By defining the boundaries of the study, the researcher links the theoretical framework of the study to the phenomenon being studied. Moreover, because case study research focuses on individuals engaging in a specific activity, case study research is highly contextualised, and focuses on subjects and the *multiple realities* constructed by subjects (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Based on these principles, I selected the five players from an Under 19 netball team that participated in the South Africa national championships (2019) and decided to interview all five of the players as part of the data collection process.

Another important factor to be considered is the specificity of the selected case that "... allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (Yin, 2009). Accordingly, case studies pay extremely close attention to the detailed ways in which people interact with one another in a variety of ways (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). Gallagher (2019) emphasises that researchers should describe the principles for the selection of participants and why those principles are important. The members of the netball team that were selected for the interviews came from various secondary schools in the Free State and they had been selected for the provincial team, thus providing me with a very representative grouping of Under 19 provincial netball players.

Case studies do not facilitate generalisability; instead, they emphasise "... uniqueness and commonality" (Stake, 1995). It is important to understand each netball player's unique situation and the challenges and opportunities available to the player. For this reason, data was collected from interviews, participant observations and physical descriptions. The techniques and strategies that were used for data collection were guided by the boundaries of the case and the guiding methodology. Such an approach ensured that the phenomenon being studied was not explored through one lens, but rather through a variety of lenses.

The focus was on the challenges faced by netball players in their transitioning from junior to senior level and how to manage players better. This was a topic that had not been researched before, and the outcomes should enable management in schools and post-school institutions to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon.

3.4 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Using convenience sampling is often determined by the researcher's choice, considering access to the research context, participants and methodological framework (Koerber & McMichael, 2008). Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) describe convenience sampling (Accidental Sampling) as a type of non-probability or non-random sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study. Convenience samples are sometimes regarded as *accidental samples* because elements may be selected in the sample simply because they just happen to be situated, spatially or administratively, near to where the researcher is conducting the data collection.

The advantage of convenience sampling is that the researcher can collect information from participants that are easily accessible to the researcher. It is generally assumed that the members of a convenient sample are homogeneous, and that there will be little difference in the research results obtained from a random sample (Gary, 1990). Nonetheless, Gary (1990) points out that the obvious disadvantage of convenience sampling is that it is likely to be biased. For example, it could be argued that all the participants in my research were from the Free State and did not include members from other provinces. For this reason, it cannot be claimed that the research results are representative of the South African or even the Free State population.

To clarify, there were five selected participants that were part of the Under 19 provincial Free State team in 2019. They were junior netball players. Secondly, this study interviewed two coaches; Ms De Kock who had coached the Proteas and who was still a senior coach at a senior level at the time of the research and Ms. Masoahle-Samm who had played for the Proteas and was also a coach at senior level. Thirdly, this study interviewed five international senior level players who had participated in the Netball World Cup 2023, Cape Town.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) identified nine stages of an interview; these are initiating the study, designing it, interviewing, transcribing, analysing the data, verifying the validity, reliability and generalisability of the findings, and finally reporting the findings. The latter was used to inform my own research approach. Before data collection can commence, it is important to decide on the research questions to be answered by the participants. The questions used in my study were open-ended and focused on the research topic (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and on gaining insight into the netball players' lived experience. The research questions outlined in Chapter 1 served as a useful starting point for determining the interview questions (Consult Annexure A for the interview questions).

The data collection technique that was used was semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews refer to a context in which the interviewer has a cycle of questions that are in the form of an interview schedule, but the structure of questions can be varied (Ruslin, Mashuri & Sarib, 2022; Mack et al., 2011). The interview schedule for my research contained eight questions that generally related to the same situation.

The semi-structured interview method allows latitude to explore answers given and to solicit more detail on the answer given. The guideline for interviews is for the researcher to implement the same context of questions. This means that each participant receives the same interview questions. My enquiry line was the same for players and coaches, but I encouraged the participants to speak from their own experience and to discuss their opinions (Ahlin, 2019; Mack et al., 2011, Miles & Huberman, 1994). The five junior netball players were contacted through WhatsApp and an outline of what the research was about was sent to them, indicating that the researcher needed specific information from them. The participants were assured that all information that they shared would be confidential and that they would remain anonymous (Steffen, 2016). The five junior netball players were interviewed using Zoom. Participants were provided with an indemnity form in which they granted permission to be interviewed and that assured them of the confidentiality of the interview (Consult Annexure B).

The two coaches were contacted telephonically, and they sent their answers through WhatsApp; the five international senior level players also replied through messages. It should be noted that the research was conducted in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and certain travel restrictions were still in place, necessitating the need to use alternative means of collecting data.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis assists researchers in making sense of their data (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Although there are numerous sources of qualitative data, such as observations, questionnaires, document reviews and audio-visual materials, most studies, such as the present study, rely on interview data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Making sense of the data is the main purpose of qualitative data analysis.

For this study thematic analysis was used. Thematic analysis is "... a method for identifying themes and patterns of meaning across a dataset in relation to a research question ..." (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The process starts with specific data that is then transformed into categories and themes. The conclusions are drawn based on observations of the transformed data. Using the questions posed to the participants, I was able to identify the specific themes and the views on the issues raised, and how these influenced their decisions regarding netball. The data was consequently organised in terms of these identified themes.

Creswell (2007) discusses qualitative data analysis in terms of several consecutive steps, such as preparing and organising the data, coding, and presenting the data in the form of text, tables or figures. These elements assist researchers to maintain an audit trail to demonstrate the trustworthiness and credibility of a study (Belotto, 2018). In analysing the data, I used the following steps:

- **Preparing and organising the data:**

The first step in the data analysis process was to ensure that all the recordings made were transcribed and checked for accuracy. I reviewed the field notes made and organised them in terms of the different aspects that were observed and noted (Belotto, 2018). During the semi-structured interviews, I reflected on what the participants had said and made key notes by removing irrelevant data. Data was coded and categorised according to its meaning. This enabled me to draw conclusions from what was said by the participants and evaluate the answers.

- **Coding:**

The research questions were used as a guide for conducting the data analysis. For example, each question became a major coding category and was broken down into sub-categories. This is a process that assists the researcher in moving data to a higher level of abstraction (Ng & Hase, 2008; Williamson & Johansen, 2017). There are several coding strategies available to researchers but for the purpose of my study I used summarising and presenting data with minimal coding and used the research questions to develop broad themes.

- **Memos:**

Harding (2013) indicates that memos can serve as an audit trail of the research process. They provide details of what the researcher was doing during the process. Memos facilitate a process where researchers step back from the data and reflect on the data and conceptually create and image of what the data means in terms of the research question (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2019). Writing memos assisted me as the researcher in moving directly into an analysis of the data and systematically to examine, explore and elaborate on bits of data and early codes (Charmaz, 2008). Memos help a researcher to be accountable and transparent during the research process. Analytical memos are the researcher's commentary on what the data may mean, as they are notes added to coded segments.

- **Data analysis process:**

The content analysis approach was used in the qualitative research study. Content analysis focuses on the presence, meanings and relationship with words and concepts. The use of content analysis reveals differences in communication and patterns materialising in contact with the participants (Creswell, 2012; Elo et al., 2014).

3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY

The researcher is responsible for protecting participants, developing trustworthiness and maintaining integrity to guard against any misconduct that may cause problems for the research (Israel & Hay, 2004). Quality and ethical questions are important to the study to ensure that authenticity and credibility will prosper (Israel & Hay, 2004). I took time to contemplate and reflect on the integrity of the study; I had to reflect on the sample to ensure that it represented the intended population, making sure that I was aware of possible biases and if so, manage them. I took time to ensure that the research was transparent while making decisions, as this was of importance when I reported to the people involved and enlightened them about any limitations.

Lewis, Saunders, and Thornhill (2012) state that academic research is grounded in good scientific practice that includes the following:

- **Voluntary participation and informed consent:** Marshall, Adebamowo and Rotimi (2006) emphasised the fact that the goal of informed consent is to give the participant the information necessary to decide whether to take part in the interview/research. I informed the netball players and officials in detail, and they were invited to participate. They participated voluntarily and did so without being forced. I told them that if they felt uncomfortable and wanted to leave the programme they could do so and that it would not have any negative consequences.
- **Benevolence:** The interviews were based on the principle that no players or coach would be harmed in any way. If the participants felt stress, pain, worry, a decline in self-esteem or a privacy violation whether intentionally or not (Hafen, 2023), they could discontinue the interview, and their information would not be used in the research. None of the selected participants withdrew from the study.
- **Anonymity:** Although most of the players and coaches were known to me, I still assured them of the importance of anonymity in the data presentation and assured them that none of the identifying information would be revealed in the report (Kang & Hwang, 2023). In writing the dissertation, and where I experienced the need to use a name, I made use of pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participant. The only exception to this rule was the names and details of the two coaches and managers as their identities could not be protected with pseudonyms as they were the only two incumbents in these positions. Permission was consequently obtained to use their names in the research.
- **Confidentiality:** In all research studies it is essential to protect the personal information of the participant and treat it confidentially. From the onset I assured the participants that all personal information of the player would be treated with the highest degree of confidentiality (Saunders et al., 2012).
- **Prevention of the potential for harm:** I assured all the participants that the information collected would be used for research purposes only and none of the information would be used in a way that could cause any harm or damage to the participant (Arora et al., 2023).
- **Honesty in the dissemination of the research results:** I assured the participants that all results would be communicated in an honest and fair manner and that the report would not contain any personal information regarding any of the participants.

- **Transparency and accountability:** Throughout the research I meticulously insured transparency and accountability. The actions, decisions and research methods employed as discussed in this study reflect accountability and I demonstrated transparency by focusing on clarity and openness in the reporting of my research (Heimstädt & Dobusch, 2020).

Nieuwenhuis (2019) discusses the criteria for the establishment of trustworthiness by using the norms credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability.

- **Credibility** is established by prolonged engagement. I spent three weeks or more in the company of my participants during the World Cup that was hosted in South Africa. During this time, I built rapport with participants to understand their perspectives deeply. We practiced together and spent our free time together. Building trust and rapport with participants over time allowed me to gain nuanced insights into their experiences, behaviours and beliefs (Nieuwenhuis, 2019). It helped in capturing rich data that might not be immediately evident during brief interactions (Ahmed, 2024).
- **Credibility** is described as thick descriptions that provide detailed contextual information to enable readers to assess the transferability of findings (Nieuwenhuis, 2019). This was achieved by thoroughly describing the research context, participants and methods that would allow readers to evaluate the similarities between their context and the study, enabling them to judge the applicability and relevance of findings to their own settings or situations. Credibility is also achieved by clearly articulating the sampling process and criteria to justify the potential transferability of the findings.
- **Transferability** may be described as methodological documentation in which the research procedures and decisions made during the study are thoroughly documented (Nieuwenhuis, 2019). Each step of the research process helps ensure transparency and allows others to replicate the study or assess the dependability of the findings by following the same procedures and understanding the rationale behind decisions made. In addition, I ensured a clear audit trail in which I kept records of research decisions, changes, and data analysis processes to ensure traceability as is documented in this report. This audit trail aids in establishing the dependability of the research and provides insight into potential biases (Nieuwenhuis, 2019).
- **Dependability** was achieved by engaging with my supervisor and with colleagues or experts to review interpretations and findings, minimising researcher bias. Finally, **confirmability** was achieved by discussing the notes made with participants to review

and confirm the accuracy of the findings to enhance confirmability. Involving participants in the verification process ensures that their viewpoints and experiences are accurately represented, strengthening the confirmability of the findings by providing an opportunity for participants to validate or offer corrections to the interpretations. Lastly, I kept a reflective journal in which I recorded personal thoughts, biases, and reflections throughout the study. Keeping a journal helps researchers track their evolving thoughts, biases and reflections during the research process. This reflective practice enhances transparency and provides insights into the researcher's subjectivity, contributing to the confirmability of the findings (Nieuwenhuis, 2019).

3.8 ETHICS APPROVAL

Considering the ethics requirements of the University of the Free State, I obtained ethics clearance to conduct this research. Before interviewing any of the participants, I handed them an informed consent letter to read and complete. The informed consent letter contained information pertaining to the aim and purpose of the study, the type of information that was required, the duration of the interview and the participants' right to withdraw from the interview at any stage (Consult Annexure B).

CHAPTER 4

VIEWS AND PERSPECTIVES OF NETBALL PLAYERS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of the research was to discover why South Africa is losing talented netball players that do not continue from junior level to senior level netball. From a review of the literature, as discussed in the previous chapters, it is evident that netball players face certain challenges in transitioning from junior to senior level netball. The research, among others, aimed at establishing whether improved management of the transition can circumvent these challenges faced by netball players. The primary research question is: How can the management of the transition from junior to senior level netball be improved to prevent or curb the loss of netball potential?

In addition, this study set out to answer the following secondary research questions:

- What management processes and procedures are in place to handle netball players' transition from junior to senior netball?
- What support do schools and post-school institutions provide to ensure that the players are fully equipped for the next level of netball?
- If one compares South Africa to overseas countries, what lessons can be learnt to support and develop the transition from junior to senior level netball in South Africa?

This chapter is an outline of seven themes and sub-themes that relate to the research questions of this study and proved to be the most important in the transition of a junior netball player. In studying these questions, it is hoped to find possible reasons and causes for the loss of valuable netball potential during the transition phase. The aim of this study was to investigate the reasons why junior netball players do not continue to the senior level. By connecting with junior netball players in the industry, data was obtained through their perspectives. The research focused on the apparent lacuna between netball at school level and at senior level and seeing that this created a transition challenge from junior to senior level.

4.2 BASELINE INFORMATION

All five South African participants interviewed were highly talented netball players. They had all dreamt of playing in green and gold. Each one of them had their own unique story of how they began with netball, what motivated them to continue and the challenges they had to overcome.

Two of the five participants became senior SPAR Proteas players. The other two played for their university and the fifth player had chosen to discontinue playing. The following is a short summary of each participant, of how they started playing and what motivated them.

Emma* (Player 1) started playing netball when she was in Grade 1. Her mom was the reason she started playing netball and she tried other sport like hockey and athletics. She enjoyed partaking in a team sport and appreciated the opportunity to tour and visit other places. It was important for her to give her best in competitions because she knew scouts would be watching her and that would mean that she could get into a university. She had support from her coaches and her parents to succeed. She was motivated to work hard and to play for her school and her province because it would mean she would be seen more often by possible scouts. Everyone motivated her to continue with netball because of her talent.
*Emma is currently in the SPAR Proteas senior netball team.

Lerato* (Player 2) was also a member of the SPAR Proteas senior netball team. She started playing at the age of seven and her netball coach encouraged her to play and told her that if she worked hard, she could have a future in netball. Lerato enjoyed the competition and playing against other schools and measured herself against the other top school players in South Africa. She was one who valued growth, and for her to grow in everything was a very important consideration. She wanted to do her level best in tournaments because she knew that there were scouts and that would mean that she would be able to get a bursary at a university. She was motivated by aspiring to be the best that she could be. In our interview she said,, *My coach sat me down and told me that if I wanted to be a good player, I must attend every session and do it full-out and not just to for the sake of doing it – a rule and motivation behind why I am doing it, so I have a purpose why I am doing it, and why I have continued till now.*

Jana* (Player 3) also started playing netball in Grade 1 and it was her mom that introduced her to the game. Her mom loved the sport and Jana enjoyed being part of a team unity and travelling with her team to tournaments. It was very important for Jana to perform at her best at school level. Netball had always been important in her life, and she wanted to see how far she could advance in her career. Jana was a hardworking and motivated player; at the time of the research, she was playing for her university and provincial team. In our

* In the interest of confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms were used to protect the players' identity.

interview she said, *my motto always is, everything I achieve is through God, He gave me the talent. It was always a big thing for me to showcase it on the netball court. So, it was a way for living my ... to live out what I believe, and it was fun. I loved it so much. I think I encouraged myself to do better. To go to practice every day, to do extra.*

Elri* (Player 4) was a player who fell in love with the game in Grade 1 when her mother told her she should try it out. She said that she did not like to practise, but the tournaments and games were fun. She said that it was important for her always to give her best; the likelihood that someone, potential scouts, saw one was slight. Elri said that she always watched the SPAR Proteas on television when they played and at that time Maryka Holtzhausen, former Proteas captain, was her role model. She wanted to play like Maryka, and this motivated her. Her coach also encouraged and motivated her. Elri later played for her university and province.

Chanel* (Player 5) was a player who tried out hockey, tennis and swimming. Netball looked like fun, and she started playing at the age of seven. She enjoyed netball because of the friends she made, the bonding and the experiences she would always remember. She also enjoyed the games, tournaments and the places she had seen through netball. Chanel said that in primary school the pressure was not too much, but in high school there was more pressure. She chose to focus more on netball and to put more effort into it, and to put more pressure on herself to be the best and this resulted in being part of the first netball team. She was motivated by her own goals that she had set for herself, and she received words of encouragement from her friends and coaches. Chanel decided to discontinue playing netball for her first team at school and decided to join the provincial team.

From the interviews it was evident that the netball players had the drive to perform well. It appeared that most of them were intrinsically motivated by their own drive, ambition and desire to be the best at what they were doing. In addition, external motivation in terms of performing well to get entry into university or to get bursaries for further studies played an important role. Students who performed well at school would always be considered for possible university bursaries.

Scanning the websites of leading universities shows that universities are actively marketing their sport bursaries (for example University of Cape Town, University of Pretoria, University of the Free State as well as overseas universities, such as UCAS¹, Educanada in Canada, University of London and the University of Oxford). Sport scholarships are offered to help students progress in their chosen sport while they pursue a degree. Sport scholarships, grants and bursaries are often awarded to undergraduate students based on their athletic ability and potential but also serve to promote sport at university level and enhance the image of the university, thereby attracting students with potential.

Funding of this kind, together with the extra benefits that come with it, can relieve some of the pressure on the financial resources of families and make balancing everything more manageable. In return, universities can attract and nurture young talent that can represent them in competitions and polish their profile. TuksSport, for example, ensures that a high-performance support programme is established for all athletes and participants, providing services such as medical, scientific, fitness, sport-testing, tactical and technical expertise, and sport psychology and injury support (TuksSport, 2023). This became evident in the data gathered through the interviews and was evidenced by the fact that most of the participants were from universities and had benefitted from their performance in netball at school level. Much of what was said by participants and what was reported on university websites resonated with my own experience.

4.3 CAUSES OF THE TALENT DRAIN IN NETBALL

From the literature consulted it is evident that the availability of sport resources and opportunities is largely limited to the historically privileged former Model-C and independent schools where the main sport played by learners is rugby, netball, hockey, cricket, athletics and tennis (Burnett, 2010). Most of these schools have resources that include sport fields, courts, pools, equipment, coaching staff, internal or external transport systems, internal fundraising systems and numerous other additions and inputs based on their needs and capacity. The availability of such resources permits many learners across a broad age-range to participate in training sessions in a highly organised and structured extra-curricular programme (Christison, 2013). The five junior participants involved in the research project were all from such privileged school environments and therefore they had the opportunity to participate in numerous sporting events and received well-funded training.

¹ The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) is a charity and private company based in England; it provides educational support services. UCAS's main role is to operate the application process for British universities and colleges.

Despite the opportunities available to school-level athletes, junior netball players who wish to continue with senior netball face numerous challenges that can prevent them from continuing with their careers. Netball in South Africa is not a professional sport, making it difficult for junior netball players to make the decision to continue with netball or to stop and focus on something else that will bring them security and an income. Based on these observations, it was necessary to explore with the participants the reasons why they may have: a) dropped out of netball, or b) continued with netball after completing their high school careers.

One of the participants indicated that she was eager to continue with her netball career but due to numerous considerations she could not. Those who did find it possible to continue with their careers elaborated that they faced numerous challenges to overcome. The following are excerpts from my interviews with the players that illustrate this point well.

Participant 4 said:²

... in the future you will need to make a living and have an income and I know at the higher-level netball there is some money but at this stage, everything is so expensive and if I can get a job and work and get an income from that, I would rather do that now and get a good foundation and create something for the future.

Participant 5 said: *I want it to be more professional that would be very nice.*

Each participant's view was different and yet similar in a sense, depending on what they experienced when transitioning to the senior level. Three participants said that the challenges they faced in transitioning from junior to senior level were that the *intensity* level was much higher. Intensity happens when training or practice is done with will, commitment, enthusiasm and purpose. To have high intensity levels in any team is a most important characteristic of any successful team (Thomas et al., 2017). Players who go to training with an intense focus are goal driven. How players train is an indication of how they will play in tournaments. The problem is when young talented players are not used to a high intensity level of training, they have an attitude of just going through the motions (Taylor, 2019). At junior level it will suffice if they are talented but, when they transition to the senior level the intensity level will be higher. Practice intensity should be a habit.

² Participants' responses are supplied verbatim and have not been edited.

According to Sport psychologist Jim Taylor (2019), intensity has three important aspects. Firstly, an ideal level of intensity is needed for players to perform at their best; secondly it is a positive feeling, and thirdly, the optimal level of practice intensity is different for all players. It is interesting to see how the intensity levels changed when the players transitioned to the senior phase. Their strength and fitness had to be better to make the team because everyone in a senior team wanted to be there and wanted to perform. Everyone wants to be selected in the team that goes to tournaments. I wanted to explore the participants' feelings regarding the change in intensity level from junior to senior level netball.

Participant 2 elaborated on her own experiences and the challenges that she faced when she moved to senior level netball and said:

I would say to adapt to higher intensity netball. Because at school you're just playing around ... and then you get to the senior level, and it is more serious because everyone that is playing here wants to be here. So, I feel it's the intensity that makes a big difference. Training is harder but it's fun.

Participant 3 also mentioned the challenges associated with the intensity levels and said:

The intensity of training and playing is very different from high school and senior netball because (hmm...) I don't know how it differs... but you feel the difference like there's like two steps that you just jump to high intensity level, so I think with high school kids they must be introduced to university training levels a bit sooner than waiting for them to be first years and start training then.

The increase in the intensity level will always be a challenge for young athletes. Participant 5 said:

For me it was very hard ... the intensity is much higher than school netball. It's hard for school netball, you don't condition that much you don't, it's just there in the background. University netball conditioning is very tough and hard to go from that level to university level. And then you like, most of the first years, I know when I was in the first year, I got a lot of injuries because I wasn't used to it. That for me was the hardest part.

Participants found the interaction with senior players another challenge. Participant 1 said that the experience of the older players in the senior team made it more challenging and that one must perform every day for the coach to acknowledge one:

I think it sometimes tough to be the same as them because now you must learn and must show the coaches that you can step up to be on the same level as them. University netball conditioning is very tough and hard to go from that level to university level. And then you like, most of the first years, I know when I was in my first year, I got a lot of injuries because I wasn't used to it. That for me was the hardest part.

Participant 4 did not continue playing senior netball; she also said that time management was difficult for her:

I think what happened, was that I was just a bit overwhelmed by the varsity.

Time management is an important skill for any young athlete. It relates to juggling the different commitments that are required. Using time effectively and planning are key factors that will help any athlete managing their time schedule. It is also important to be realistic when planning schedules. Players should balance their time for study, social life and training. Life should be balanced. If players are not managed correctly, they might suffer during training or in their studies, and this can make them feel overwhelmed and cause anxiety. Effectively managing time will allow players to play netball more and therefore they will be likely to continue (Hedstrom & Gould, 2004).

From the interviews conducted it is evident that the following must be considered in developing young athletes for senior level netball:

- The level of intensity of any sporting code differs substantially between that of school level netball and university level netball as the athlete's risk of sustaining an injury increase. Sustaining an injury was a theme that featured in most of the interviews. Most universities do make provision for physiotherapy and other supporting paramedical assistance to help the athletes in their development, but this is greatly lacking at school level.
- Female athletes are not convinced that they can make a living through participating in professional sport. Traditionally, professional sporting codes were reserved mainly for their male counterparts and only recently have female sporting codes turned professional. Some female athletes have, as a result, discontinued their netball career to focus on a career that will generate an income.
- When athletes transition from school to university level, they are aware that the competition becomes more intense. Senior players have more experience because they have been in the system and understand what they need to do and how it works whereas new players must adapt quickly and show the coaches that they can perform at this level as well.

- Time management is also a challenge for junior players. When transitioning to the senior level more planning needs to be done. Athletes need to take ownership of planning and balancing their day. Balancing entails going to classes, engaging with faculty and lectures, doing group work, and participating in student activities (Wycliffe & Simiyu, 2010).
- Having to prioritise and choose one commitment over another can be stressful because it often means either compromising success or failing expectations of lecturers, coaches, friends or family.

4.4 HOW CHALLENGES SHOULD BE MANAGED

Taking on the challenge to be a full-time athlete and a student means that there will be many obligations that need to be considered in the sporting and academic domains. All five participants said that they wanted to study and play netball. There are more trials and tribulations for students who want to play netball full-time, which involves training and conditioning, tournaments and travelling (Watt & Moore, 2001). A major goal for student athletes is to graduate and to be successful in their sporting career (Watt & Moore, 2001).

When referring to the challenges there are certain support structures that need to be in place for athletes. Athletes in Grade 12 are on the bridge between childhood and adulthood, and they are still largely dependent on their parents, not only financially but more importantly, emotionally. Therefore, parents play a crucial part in athletes' success or failure. Athletes leaving school and furthering their education at university often need to relocate to a different town or city, and their coaches largely fulfil the role of a surrogate parent.

4.4.1 Role of the coaches

Coaches are under pressure to produce results to remain in their positions and in their future careers (Wycliff & Simiyu, 2010). What makes a coach extraordinary is the fact that they have the desire and capacity to unlock athletes' hidden potential to maximise their chances to achieve success. Coaches who believe in their athletes get the best out of them and motivate them to achieve success. The relationship between the coach and the player should be a genuine working relationship where they trust and respect each other and work together towards one goal. Any coach can be good but what separates the best from the rest is that the coach has the extra effectiveness in this relentless competitive sport environment (Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016).

Relationships can be challenging because people are complex; the coach-athlete relationship relates to situations where coaches and athletes' feelings, thoughts and behaviours are mutually and causally interconnected (Jowett, Timson-Katchis & Adams, 2007). During the interviews I explored the relationship between the coach and the athlete. Firstly, I wanted to explore the role of the coach in encouraging the athlete to continue with netball.

Participant 1 said:

... my coach, she told me I should continue. And another coach, they both encouraged me.

Participant 4 said:

The coaches they also encouraged me to keep on playing netball. I had a good bond with the coaches so whenever they said something, I trusted that, and I took that as important.

Participant 5 said:

She wanted me to play and continue and she also encouraged me and wanted me to do my best... and (hmm) reach my goals.

The second important role of the coach is refining the skills of the athlete. In this regard, Participant 2 said:

The coached help me to improve and mastering my skills.

Another important role of the coach is to mentor the athlete. Participant 3 said:

She is actually my coach and mentor.

All five participants mentioned how important a role their coaches played in their junior level phase and how they motivated them to continue to the senior phase. Participant 3 mentioned that her coach was like a mentor to her that advised her about other aspects of life as well and that she was not just a netball coach. Participant 2 mentioned that her coach improved her game by honing her skills; this shows that her coach had the expertise to help her to prepare her for senior level netball. Players need a coach that encourages them and helps them to reach their dreams; players also need to be open to learning and to be coachable.

4.4.2 Role of parents

Parents who support and encourage athletes without putting too much pressure on them are a special boon. Such athletes have the best environment for developing and enjoying the sport. By way of an example, toddlers are at their most susceptible stage and parental support plays a

critical role in developing children's belief in their own abilities. During preschool years they begin to explore the world and to experience physical movement. Many of these experiences will have a lasting impact on the child's later development as an athlete. Parents remain the number one role model for their child. Their behaviour and attitude towards life influence the mindset of their children. By being a good role model, they can create a positive sport environment and reduce poor side-line behaviour (Domingues & Gonçalves, 2013).

During the interviews, I explored the role that parents had in the formation of the athlete and sharpening their skills. Participant 1 said that her parents played a major role in motivating and developing her. In asking her who her role models were, she said:

My parents, because both of them were also in sport and athletic and they also know how important it was for me to win.

The same sentiment was expressed by Participant 3 who emphasised the important role of parents and friends and said:

(My supporters were) ... my friends, family. They have always been supportive of what we did as a team, supported us throughout the whole way.

Research has shown that one major key to success is parental involvement (Elliott & Drummond, 2011). Athletes whose parents are involved at school level show better attendance and behaviour; they have better grades and demonstrate better social skills. Parents can make or break a child's relationship with sport; they play a major role in modelling the fun in mastering new skills, working in a group and being a good sportsman when it comes to winning and losing (Domingues & Gonçalves, 2013). From the interviews conducted, it became evident that parents did in fact play a major role in shaping the athletes' development as top netball players.

4.5 HOW THE MANAGEMENT OF THE TRANSITION BETWEEN JUNIOR AND SENIOR LEVEL NETBALL CAN BE IMPROVED

First team netball players in schools are overemphasised; first teams have become an asset for marketing and manifest a school's identity and ideology. Schools use their first sport teams as a drawcard for new learners when they choose a school. Being part of the first team in any school is the pinnacle of a school's commitment to sport. Playing for the first team is a symbol of the highest achievement.

Henriques (2015) points out that netball has become one of the most popular sports in South Africa, with more than two million female participants and a growing support base. Annually, the Telkom Netball Championships (TNC) provide a great opportunity for players aged 16 to 19 years to prepare, compete and be exposed to university and provincial team scouts. Telkom's chief marketing officer, Gugu Mthembu (Telkom, 2023) stated the following:

This tournament has become the perfect launch pad for young girls across South Africa to showcase their skills and talent. It plays an important role in closing the gap in the development of netball as well as making it more accessible for emerging talent that can be nurtured into national heroes and international superstars of the future.

From the onset, the aim has been to give team managers, coaches, umpires, and administrators an opportunity to get involved in the game and develop in their roles.

In my interview with participants, I explored the role that management, both at school and national level, plays in the development of players' talent. Participant 1 elaborated on the limited number of opportunities that exist for players to sharpen and refine their skills in the game:

More opportunities to play like we have TNL (Telkom Netball League) now but that's only, and varsity netball, that's the only two biggest tournaments we have, and all the money goes in that. It is only two tournaments, and it is finished. There is USSA as well but it's not like everyone can be there. TNL and varsity netball has a broader place for players to play actually and it's just a short time so I think more opportunities to play will be great.

From the interviews it became evident that it is not only funding at national level but also the limitations that exist in the development of a broader spectrum of athletes in netball. Participant 2 said:

I would say at school level, not just to focus on the A teams but also the lower teams. So that all the players can develop because it puts more pressure on the generations after us who doesn't train hard and then there would be no players who was developed so that the netball will get affected.

An important factor identified by the participants was the hiatus between school level netball and senior level netball. In this regard Participant 3 said:

There is a gap between high school, university, and senior netball, above the university. So having close those gaps there will make a job easier for netball South Africa for provincial teams, everyone so it will be a good thing to see, more academy. More people engaging in netball as a worldwide sport. More exposure for everyone.

Netball players want the system to improve through better communication with Netball South Africa, schools and secondary institutions, and then with the coaches. The profile of netball in South Africa has been greatly advanced through the SuperSport broadcast of Varsity Netball in promoting future stars. The large number of current and past Varsity Netball players that have been selected for the national squad representing South Africa at the 2015 Netball World Cup bears testimony to the necessity for grassroots development. Bosman, CEO of Netball mentioned the following:

Varsity Sports strives to bridge the gap between high school and university sport, and netball is just another one of the sporting codes that need some attention. It has one of the biggest drop-off rates in participation after high school, and we hope that, by showing them that there are career opportunities in netball, we can encourage even more women and young girls to take up the sport (News24, 2022).

In a study undertaken by Hartley (2017) it was found that students had an inherent belief that it is possible to succeed as a student-athlete, but success is also largely dependent on the support from family and the ability to function autonomously in the academic and sporting spheres. From the interviews that I conducted, it became evident that the participants in this study all had difficulty with finding and maintaining balance. All the participants were aware of and affected by matters related to finance, whether they be the expectations regarding bursaries and the financial strain placed on parents and family members should these expectations fail to be met.

Very little information was forthcoming on how the management of the transition from junior the senior netball can be improved. It is evident that there are active processes in place to recruit well performing school netball players into university programmes, but little is done to manage the transition from junior to college or university level netball.

4.6 POSSIBLE IDEAS ON HOW MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES CAN BE HANDLED WHEN NETBALL PLAYERS TRANSITION FROM JUNIOR TO SENIOR NETBALL

Nel, Troskie-De Bruin and Bitzer (2009) studied the successful transition from school to university as it is believed to be crucial to academic success – especially in the first academic year. They point out that various studies have, however, shown that students are increasingly underprepared for higher education studies.

Not only is the school-university gap increased by the school system that produces inadequately prepared learners for higher education, but universities are also ill-equipped to accommodate these learners, particularly learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Nel et al. (2009) argue that universities have a responsibility to facilitate school-university transition and should actively get involved in schools at an early stage. This preparation of students for higher education should focus not only on academic prowess but also on sporting codes. In this study I explored the extent to which schools have succeeded in preparing netball players for higher education studies. Some of the participants said that players need more opportunities to play and to grow. It is also important for the players that are not in the A-teams so that there can be depth in the netball structure. From the information obtained it is evident that the participants thought that schools do not really succeed in preparing netball players sufficiently for their higher education studies, particularly for netball at higher education level. Apart from feeling that there should be more opportunities to participate competitively in netball, they also felt that the management of netball should be improved.

This point was elaborated on by Participant 3 who said:

I would love to see more players given the chance to play. For instance, for every province there can be sports academy where disadvantage children get to stay there, get to be taught how to be strong, mentally and the get physical assistance, emotional assistance to that we get strong players growing into the professional setting.

Another important challenge that was flagged during the interviews was the lack of effective communication. This point was elaborated on by Participant 5 who said:

The one changed that I would like to see is the communication between the players and the management and NSA. I want the information to be clear and not everyone guessing what going on, who is in this team now. I think that's all that comes to mind now.

4.7 PLAYERS' VIEWS ON THE SUPPORT THAT SCHOOLS AND POST-SCHOOL INSTITUTIONS PROVIDE

Support from schools and post-school institutions plays a critical role in players' performance and transition. When players transition to a university/college it is crucial that it should be a positive and successful move to ensure that they are able to focus on higher education studies and their sport commitments. However, challenges will always arise when transitioning to higher education; there will be academic and non-academic obstacles. The first year of university is an exciting time for all students but it can also be the most challenging in terms of personal growth.

According to Terry and Carron (2000), a sense of belonging is a very important factor in a positive learning experience. Making friends and encouraging positive relationships with teammates, peers and staff are components of belonging (Terry & Carron, 2000; Thomas, 2021). Secondary schools and higher education institutions need to co-operate with one another to facilitate the process of athletes transitioning to higher education (Setlalentoa, 2013). From the information obtained from the interviews, it is evident that higher education does not contact schools early enough, and this can lead to potential and prospective student risk (Bitzer & Troskie-de Bruin, 2004; Thomas & Quinn, 2004). Students should develop the necessary skills at school level to cope with the challenges associated with transitioning to higher education (Nel, 2006).

Students from disadvantaged schools are of great concern. According to Tinto (1993), such learners are sometimes academically less prepared for university than their peers from privileged schools. Being unprepared as a student influence both the transition phase and it seems impossible for universities to catch up in the first academic year with backlogs that remain unresolved in the South African school system. Although universities are not directly involved in the school system, there appears to be room for improvement, better liaison and collaboration between the two parties. Good relationships and partnerships among schools, teachers and learners depend on a holistic approach. Against this background, I explored the role of schools in transitioning to post-school institutions with my participants.

Participant 1 reflected on her experience with transitioning from school to university and said:

No, I don't think the schools really did anything. If you finished school, you finished school. They didn't really help me with anything. Who helped me was my parents at the end ...uhm ...like when I came home, they asked how training was, so I would tell them they were my outlet, and they helped me to go through everything... and my first-year teammates supported me.

Some of the participants had a different experience. Participant 2 said:

The coached help me to improve and mastering my skills.

A similar sentiment was echoed by another participant. Participant 3 reflected on her experiences and stated the following:

Yes, in our university we have academic advisors. Those people they sit down with you they ask for your daily schedule then you go through the classes that you must attend; they help you with your schedule and how you to time manage your schedule. I have kind of struggled mentally getting my head into the high intensity level and the school pressure as well, being a student athlete requires a lot of you. You must attend class and later do

training and come back again and do your schoolwork and then must sleep enough time to recover for the following day. So, that was the biggest challenged I have faced. Balancing my schoolwork and my netball.

Transitioning from school to university can be very challenging for some. This is well illustrated by Participant 4 who said:

I think I was just a bit overwhelmed with the varsity.

A similar sentiment was echoed by another participant. Participant 5 reflected on her own experiences and elaborated as follows:

I spoke to our captain and our coach and told them that I should take it a little bit slower because I had too many injuries because of the intensity and the problems. So, then I just managed my body, and they understood like it is little bit too hard.

Four of the participants mentioned that when one finishes school one does not get any support from school again. Whatever challenges arise, athletes need to find their feet and fight their own battles. There is help available, like academic advisors at universities but only if students choose to make the time and effort to arrange an appointment.

4.8 PLAYERS' VIEWS ON WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE THE MANAGEMENT OF THE TRANSITION FROM JUNIOR TO SENIOR NETBALL

According to Rifkin (1997), management in times of crisis is important; one must plan sufficiently for the medium- and long-term, using the right balance between commercial, public and social sectors. Netball South Africa must know where they are going, what they are and what they want to achieve. Any management team should carry out six basic functions: administer, coordinate, manage, integrate, invest and plan (Blanco, 2012). Planning, structure and organising are the most valuable assets that every business or organisation should have (Consult Chapter 2). Sharing the same goals, improving teamwork and management leadership are key elements.

Leadership is a crucial asset for any organisation for the effectiveness and success of the team (Somech, 2006). In today's world there are people with different abilities and backgrounds within an organisation team. There are also new technologies, communication and economic and social trends that leaders should be aware of (Ng & Burke, 2006).

New challenges arise in a globalised world that require management to fulfil a complex role. Team leadership can be regarded in two ways: abilities and behaviour that members bring to the team that have an impact on group performance; secondly, leadership through group learning that facilitates the adaptation and performance of the team in different stages of development (Day, Gron & Salas, 2004).

A leader of an organisation knows how to use all the resources and not only controls administrators but develops and innovates. In facing many challenges in the sport industry and especially in the netball environment in South Africa, it is crucial to remember that above all, cooperation is needed from players, coaches, officials, schools and universities. During my interviews with the participants, I explored their experiences in terms of the role that management has played in their career.

Participant 1 said:

I like how my university did it, like they told us the December before we go in to be first years, we must join them in the pre-season, so that we can begin to know how they do things and see what we should work on before we start next year. So, I think uhm that helped a lot for us because we saw how things are done and how much I must improve till the next time we practice again and what I need to work on. So, I think that helped a lot. I think more universities can do that. To give the grade 12 players, that is going to be first year the opportunity to see how much they need to improve to be at the same level.

Participant 2 focused on the role that the school should play and said:

I feel at school when you play in the first team at school you should already take it seriously, to win and not to play around. So, I feel there you already train with high intensity. So, if you already train like that you will go further. They gym and conditioning should improve at junior level.

Participant 5 also focused on the role of the school and said:

I think the school level netball should make the netball as fun as possible for the players, they need to enjoy sport itself because on school level most players stop because it wasn't fun anymore. Like they don't want to continue because they don't want that stress and everyone yelling instructions at them, I think they should be more, help them grow growing passion for the sport.

Participant 3 regarded the challenge from a more personal vantage point and said:

I think is a mindset thing, uhm, every challenge is conquered in the mind. So, if it is hard yes, you are up to the challenge and see yourself persevering, and you continuing, where your body will take you. That is where your mind knocks in. That's when we see what kind of person you are when you're facing challenges and being out of your comfort zone. For me, I had this mentality at a very young age. I've been wanting to play netball, and I love being challenged. So, with other players I think it's the shortage of mental strength and fitness. So, if we can maybe as universities teach them how to become stronger in their minds, we will have a lot more different performance from high school into university level and make it easier for everyone.

In their responses, players did not really focus on what could be done to improve management but rather on the transition and the challenges associated with the transition from junior to senior netball. From the responses it could be deduced that it will be beneficial if junior players can get the opportunity to start training with senior level players just before the season starts to give them an idea of what to expect. Not only will it help them with the physical aspect but also mentally. Players will soon realise that there is a gap between the levels of intensity and that it is not a school environment. They will need to step up, adapt, and be able to make their own choices with time management. Netball should always be fun.

4.9 INTERVIEW WITH COACHES

I conducted an interview with Burta de Kock³, head coach since 2002 of the University of the Free State, also known as Kovsies, and re-elected to serve on the new World Netball Coaching Advisory Panel.

Ms. De Kock's coaching career spans the past three decades. She has coached the national SPAR Proteas as well as the South Africa Under 23's for the past twenty years. She has produced 18 brilliant South Africa SPAR Proteas through her coaching. I asked Ms. De Kock what the challenges in terms of the management of the sport are and how can they be handled better. Her first point was that coaches are not qualified at school level. She said:

... our sport (netball) really has a lot of challenges because players are going through a school system where sometimes a lot of the coaches do not have any experience how to learn the skill.

³ Given the small fraternity of senior netball coaches in South Africa, I asked Ms. De Kock's permission to use her name in the report; she gracefully consented.

Her second point was that coaches do try to attend the coaching courses, but it is a challenge because the courses are expensive, and some schools do not assist coaches financially:

Some of them (coaches) are going to courses to qualify themselves but that is also a challenge because that is money. Courses cost lot of money and school coaches do not have the money sometimes because the schools are not paying, so coaches are not being qualified.

Ms. De Kock added the following:

... we (Netball) have brilliant coaches in South Africa, and it is not always the qualified coach that can develop a skill, but it's the coach with a lot of passion and a heart that is burning for netball.

Coaches that have this kind of passion for netball do not worry about coaching extra time and longer hours. Players excel because of coaches who go the extra mile for them. Ms De Kock pointed out the following:

It is about the money and finance as well, not all players can go to better coaches, not all players can stay behind after school for training because of transport. Some schools do not have netball, they do have it, but it is for 'cake and tea', so it is not for players' development, and it is also not affordable for them. So, coaches are just there to do an extramural activity because the principal and staff demand them to do extramural activities, they don't have the heart.

This is something that is happening in schools in South Africa where teachers need to teach and be coaches; some do not understand or do not have the passion for the sport that they are coaching but they must have an extramural activity because it is part of their job, and some schools cannot afford outside coaches.

Ms. De Kock added:

... we are thankful for coaches who are in the system and outside coaches helping schools to be part of the schools and help them with that challenge.

The third challenge that she mentioned is that finances will always be a problem. She said:

Players need transport, kit, and accommodation. They don't have it and it's all the different cultures in South Africa, it is not only one culture, it all of them. You need the right clothing and netball shoes (tekkies) to play netball with.

For her it is important to have the right people to help and to keep the players motivated and focused on their goal setting. She said:

Players from the age eleven to nineteen must know exactly what the pathway is to become a SA SPAR Proteas player that is so important because that is the dream that we all want for them. Netball is the most participated in sport by people and players involved in SA. So, it is important to see that the players get all the support to get them to be a SPAR Proteas player at the end of the day. I really think netball is such and big vast domain with brilliant coaches if we are only appreciative of coaches the netball system will be much better and the sport will be much better because of management. Not all teachers are coaches and will work for free. Because free passion doesn't put food on the table it is a big challenge in terms of the management of the sport.

The second question that I interviewed her on was how the transition from junior to senior level can be managed better. Ms De Kock indicated that this is also a major problem because South Africa is losing many school players and that Grade 12 learners are not developed earlier so that coaches can scout them. She added the following:

Not all players can go to a university; some players only start on a certain level playing higher level like SPAR Proteas, Phumza Maweni with hundred and fifteen caps, who only made the national side at the age of twenty-nine, so not all schools are really at that level.

South Africa has two major school tournaments where the top schools in the country compete and another tournament where players from Under 12 to Under 19 represent their provinces. Currently, these are the main netball events where players are scouted for the senior league.

Ms. De Kock expressed the following view:

There are too few people scouting good players; this means the system is busy dropping us because there is no continuity of a system from schools to seniors. At school level there are top groups being selected that are not always the best players; sometimes certain circumstances change the way that some selectors are looking at players. Not all selectors are up to a standard of what to select, where to look, how to look, when to look, but that is not criticism is just the management in the system and the system is failing us.

We need an uninterrupted system where the management of the junior players from the age of fourteen are put into a system where the management from the schools to the region, to the province and to NSA where there is a certain management committee where selectors, coaches, umpires, and managers are working together to get these people in academics.

In South Africa it is not possible for all players to go to university because it is expensive, and most universities have entry level requirements that not all Grade 12 students can meet. Ms. De Kock mentioned the following:

It is only the juniors that are going to universities that really make the top teams because there are certain systems in place like gym, conditioning, psychology, managing, etc. Clubs in South Africa are not at that level. That is as far as I am concerned, unfortunate. A player coming through a club system is not always up to standard because of the system in the club. Clubs are not having conditioning, and it is also about managing of money, finances.

A poorly developed netball club system remains an enduring challenge within the South African netball system. This is a major problem in South Africa because there are not enough clubs that are on the same standard as universities. Ms. De Kock expressed the following view:

The transition will need to be much better, maybe if there is a certain committee being organised in the district, or province, or in the cities where there is a system like academics where players can stay in a system so that we as coaches can work with them.

De Kock ended off by saying the following:

We are losing a lot of players, transitioning from the Under 21 Netball World Cup into the senior Netball World Cup as from twelve selected only two or three are in the SPAR Proteas system. So, if the Under 21 top players are disappearing imagine how many players are disappearing from the Under 18 side system. Some of them haven't even started to become brilliant players. So, they have dreamt they have goal settings, they have everything. But they need a system to be in a place where they can transition from the schools to senior netball and the seniors must be open to give them the opportunities to train them so that the system can work cohesively.

The interview with Ms. De Kock shows that the system can be improved, and that South Africa has enough coaches and players. However, from the interview it was also clear that there is a lacuna between netball at school level and at senior level; the transition from junior to senior level netball is problematic because of the loss of talent.

Former SPAR Proteas captain and current national Fast Five Head Coach, Martha Masoahle-Samm⁴ gave her opinion on the challenges in terms of the management of sport. During my interview with Ms Masoahle-Samm she indicated the following:

Netball is not well structured in primary and high schools. Players just play for the sake of participation and therefore talent is not nurtured accordingly. As we all know most of the educators will be coaches and they also have their own mandate which is to provide education or to teach so coaching comes as a second priority if not third. So, they don't really pay attention to it. Also, they may not have the necessary knowledge and skills to do the netball or coach it. Therefore, we lose a lot of talent and players also lose interest.

Ms. Masoahle-Samm believed the main challenge is that coaches wait too long for players to attend school for twelve years and then they want to nurture the talent after high school. She believed it is too late and said:

I think this can be managed better by already having fourteen-year-olds in high schools starting to join clubs so that they can have the knowledge outside of school netball and have better and proper coaching. So that when they play for schools they will already belong to some structured clubs. So, you can have a club for U16, U/17, U/18, while they still play at school, and they get more exposure more knowledge and when they go back to school, they are even much more structured.

The suggestion made by Ms. Masoahle-Samm implies that players should be managed from a young age; when they finish school they are already in a system and routine. She elaborated as follows:

Players need structure, so that they don't struggle to transform from school netball into club netball or senior netball. I think that challenge can be accomplished.

When talking about transitioning from junior to senior level netball, Masoahle-Samm's focus was on engaging clubs in South Africa and on their working together with schools as one. She justified her view by stating the following:

Those who are looking after the players outside the school netball structure need to be known so that they can give more feedback, therefore we do this thing together with the educators. They have the children during netball league or school netball calendar and when that is over children transition into club netball. This will help a lot because then players will continuously play where now when school netball is over players are done and they will see school netball next year.

⁴ I asked permission from Ms. Martha Masoahle-Samm to use her name in the report; she gracefully allowed me to do so.

The break between netball seasons has a negative influence that affects the players' fitness for the next season and makes it difficult to build consistency. Masoahle-Samm argued as follows:

... (school holidays) that affects their fitness, conditioning, their preparation, their readiness for the following year, but if you have that transition from when school netball is over, they move into club netball, they go back to off season to in season and then the transition will be so much easier.

For Masoahle-Samm it is important that players get exposure from both school and club level at an early age so that netball, like other sport, becomes continuous. She strongly argued as follows:

Children are also under a lot of pressure when they are at school; they focus mainly on academics, and you know in South Africa academics is prioritised over sport.

As players move into the senior grades at school, the pressure on them increases. In the senior grades, there is the expectation that one must perform well academically and at the same time one must perform in sport to better one's chances of getting a bursary and entry into university. In this regard, Ms. Masoahle-Samm said the following:

Some of the kids will lose interest because maybe the type of coaching style at the schools is not that passionate as from the club level, but if you can have the passion from a young age and work hand in hand with school teachers and they know where the children are when they are not playing school netball, they know their club coaches that will help a lot and the transitioning will be so much easier and will be able to maintain the standard and not lose so many players.

Ms. Martha Masoahle-Samm's hopes that school and clubs in South Africa can work hand in hand. There are not many clubs in South Africa, and they are also not up to the standard.

4.10 INTERVIEW WITH INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS

During the Netball World Cup in Cape Town, 2023, I made use of the opportunity to interview international netball players from Wales, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, New Zealand and England. They were asked the same questions as those explored with South African head coaches in terms of the management of netball and the challenges they face, and how the transition from junior to senior level can be better managed.

In this cluster of interviews, the first interviewee was from Wales; she was of the opinion that the biggest challenge of the sport in terms of management is the fact that it is a very amateur sport in Wales; so there are more opportunities for Welsh athletes to play in the Netball Super league that is owned by England Netball, but in terms of playing in a Welsh league or Wales national team there is no money to be made, which makes it difficult. She said:

For players to fully commit and see it as a career option and really dedicate their time through school or college for something in this country doesn't really pay. I also think compared to other sports now in Wales it use to be the number one female participated sport, but I really think it's been rivalled by football because there is good money to be earned playing for the Wales national team and lots of opportunities in the UK to play for professional football and also rugby, is our national sport for men, but they just also started paying woman, they are full time as well.

Wales Netball is in strong competition with other sport and the talented young Welsh girls try out different sport options. The player interviewed was worried that people choose other sport over netball in the next few years. She said:

There are more and more of the other sports on TV more often over there. You will see lots of woman football on TV, woman's rugby even woman's cricket and there is good money in the woman's cricket over there. It's like that old saying 'If you can't see it, you can't be it' and there not that much netball on week in and week out over there. I also think when it comes down to sponsorship, we do struggle to nail down any big sponsors.

If a company has money to sponsor a team, they may choose another women's sport. The player from the Wales team argued as follows:

Just looking at the size of our organization even having members of staff having to pay them, we have a very small percentage of workers in the office to cover the whole barrier, but in terms of playing all the training and facilities are down in Cardiff which you know is quite hard to get to.

Netball in Wales is not professional; players live across the country and there are still travel expenses:

I live and grew up four hours away from Cardiff and I just happen to move to Cardiff, because I wanted to go to the University in Cardiff just to be closer to the training, but lots of other players don't have that option and don't want to make that move and so then I feel like Wales probably misses out on lots of talent and opportunities to develop talent from other places in Wales if you are not near the capitol city.

During the interview she mentioned that Wales launched a national league and that they have changed the system of how one represents one's country; they are now doing it as a sort of league system. She said:

Three times a year in different places where you meet up and it's like a league format. I think the rebrand has made everyone excited about it again, they've given out free kit, they've sorted out free accommodation and transport for everybody, there have been proper trails in place with lager coaching teams and I think that the rebrand and the whole excitement, maybe is better than just playing local league but not quite good enough to challenge international teams it's even those people get a chance to work towards something and to be a part of.

The approach followed by Wales can help players who are just in between those two standards to play at a high level for Wales, experience tournament netball and to be seen by some selectors. The interviewee mentioned that other countries are outdoing Wales in having a National A-team or Under 23 team and added:

There has been talk in the past that Wales want to do that similar like England A and England Futures which is like a core group of players who train just underneath the senior team, but are too old for England Under 21, I think again the issue with that is it takes money and time and staff and we haven't quite build enough contact time and training time as a senior team never mind to start allocating money for like a Wales A.

The interviewee argued that attracting sponsors remains a challenge compared to other sporting codes like rugby and cricket's ability to attract funding. She said:

What I see a lot of in those sports retired men when they go down to other parts of their career after they finish playing, they stay involved in their local rugby club or team and they end up giving money back into the club because they still feel a part of it and very respected alumni members and they end up, you know with their high paid jobs they get money back into the club.

The interviewee from Wales did not envision any drastic changes in the way netball is managed in Wales. She said:

We don't really have x players still coming to games still staying involved as alumni members and putting back money into the clubs. I think Wales have done a good job recently trying to gather all information on ex feathers bringing them back in giving them caps making them feel a part of something, inviting them to all of Wales's games. Hopefully in the long term that helps people feel like there a part of a special club and maybe still want to give something back.

The sentiment was that, in the long-term, if netball in Wales wants to be serious, they need to look after players better and this obviously needs financial support. I also talked to the interviewee about the British University and College Sport (BUCS) programme that keeps junior players involved in senior level programmes; it is quite an important tournament. She said:

We do often get a lot of talented players from the age between eighteen and twenty-two who are playing in it, but now there are only like four to five good teams so everyone else is not up to the standard. Universities do quite have a lot of money; it is expensive to attend a university. Universities should invest more in netball. Like Cardiff Met University, the rugby has a rugby director, strength and conditioning coach, assisting coaches and they train four to five times a week. Whereas the netball has one paid coach, and they are just not treated the same. If we want netball to be professional, we must make better use of our university's netball programs over here.

The interviewee from Wales also spoke about the Wales netball calendar and the struggle of planning. She said:

For us in Wales lots of players decide to have time out, to do other things like studying, travelling, to focus on their family because often in Wales and between the Commonwealth games and NWC there is not a lot in the calendar. For instance now we can back from South Africa from the NWC and we have not been told anything to do with programs, what's next, when the next competition is, we don't know anything and then you look on social media and see that South Africa already have test series, England have games, Australia and New Zealand have their next matches being advertised so then for players like us if there is nothing in the calendar you know, now is the time to have time off.

Consistency is important for teams to have and to keep on building and growing. The interviewee from Wales is a passionate and hardworking player that said the following:

Making better planning decisions in four years cycles and making sure that there is consistent exposure every year not just when it is Commonwealth games and NWC. We have the staff in place to do that, we have a league we have a CEO, we have head of operations, we do have people in place in the office paid full time. So that is a bit of frustration.

Next, a player from Trinidad and Tobago was interviewed. She said insufficiently qualified personnel assuming managerial and technical staff responsibilities are the challenges of management in her country. The solution is to provide training courses in the relevant areas.

During the interview she mentioned that corruption and mismanagement of funds allocated by the government and private establishments remain a serious problem in Trinidad and Tobago. The interviewee suggested, as solution, to set up structures so that culprits can be held accountable. Thirdly she identified another challenge, namely that no emphasis is placed on the grassroots level and there is too much dependence on natural talent. She feels that resources need to be allocated to the sport from junior level. I used the opportunity to talk to the participant on how the transition from junior to senior level can be better managed. She had very strong views on this and explained that management needs to ensure that they:

... give girls a reason to stay in the sport, (by offering) in season and out of season programmes. Competitions, rewards, incentives. Keep them constantly engaged. Promote a sisterhood in netball that's more than just a game.

The third participant that I interviewed came from Jamaica and we started our conversation talking about the transition from school to professional netball in Jamaica. She said:

Not every student-athlete transitioning from secondary to college or university receives a scholarship and there is also the lack of financial resources for student athletes to get to and from training, no proper recovery and that leads to injury.

According to her, intervention strategies to resolve the crisis of transitioning from junior to senior level are required. She expressed the need to introduce more age groups to competitions as healthy competition is essential, and for the younger athletes to look forward to. She also mentioned that there must be scholarship and sponsorship opportunities for schools and clubs. She added:

Jamaica needs yearly award ceremonies held by the Federation to recognize athletes at each age division, leading up to the senior level.

New Zealand's Silver Fern athlete expressed the opinion that the challenge of the sport is that sometimes for young girls there are many other options in sport. She believed when there is not a bridge between the junior and senior levels it is easy for girls to lose sight of where to go next. For them it is easier to choose another sport and leave netball. She expressed this as follows:

Sometimes there is a lot of pressure too which isn't good for young people, I think it either makes them or breaks them. When you're young you just want to have fun not feel lots of pressure to play a sport. Also, I know here in NZ sometimes at junior college level you must choose one sport only. And when young netball players are told this, they don't always choose netball they choose other sports.

This shows that players must make choices at an early age; it can cause New Zealand to lose talented players for the future. The participant felt that this process should be better managed and explained how it can be done:

... is to identify these talented players early and keep them aware of the pathways they can take because I think sometimes girls aren't sure what paths there are in netball until they are told. I think even having a better pathway for these juniors once they get to that point and maybe funding is a factor and can be a challenge if there isn't enough money for these pathways.

From the interview it became evident that the challenge in New Zealand is different to that of other countries in the sense that in New Zealand they have clear pathways for the girls from junior right to professional level. She said:

There are no real gaps.

It could be argued that this is the reason why New Zealand is ranked second in world netball rankings.

I had the opportunity to interview one of the more experienced players from the England team. I started the conversation by talking about the challenges faced in terms of the management of netball in England. She said:

In terms of the management of the sport in England some schools may not have netball on the curriculum at junior level ...or you may only have it on the curriculum for a specific shorter period... – so there may not be the same opportunities at school level compared to when you get to university level.

It became evident from our conversation that it is important to ensure that netball is in the school curriculum year-round and to give learners the opportunity to get involved in the sport on a more regular basis. She added the following:

Geographically the uptake in netball may not produce high numbers in the school environment compared to the University environment. At university, from my experience the number of tournaments/matches/competitions we took part in was much greater compared to when at school, where we may or may not had one game a week. Creating more match play opportunities at a school level, help players to understand the structure and schedule of the netball programmes at university, as well as giving them more opportunity to play, train and gain a better connection of the sport.

This shows that universities play a vital role in the management of netball. Making sure that junior players continue to senior level is of vital importance and the interviewee believed opportunity is a key component in the success of netball as a professional sport in England:

Having netball in school curriculums is a key element of the success of the sport and thereby, giving people chance to understand and get involved in the game in order to build a connection to the sport.

She emphasised the importance of professional coaching and said:

... specialist coaching – this is a challenge and funding, or access may differ greatly in schools across the country but getting specialist coaches in to build a link between students, teachers and professional players, making it more relatable to the students and providing specialist coaching is an important strategy. Tester days – often, while in school, universities are running tester days which enable learners to go and train at the university or watch a university game and bridging the gap from junior to senior level.

4.11 CONCLUDING REMARKS

From the research it is evident that there are many talented netball players all over the world playing for national or provincial teams. For netball to succeed as an international sporting code, it is essential that it is effectively managed and that it has effective administrators, coaches and other support staff. But it is also about getting sponsors and financial support to help enhance netball with tournaments and players getting exposure.

Universities are of great help and a big asset to netball but not all players get the opportunity to go to university. Although university can be challenging, those players who have the passion and work ethic will reach the top.

Some clubs do well, but there are some provinces that do not have any clubs because there is no money, and netball is not managed properly. There are good schools in South Africa and many players compete in top tournaments, but there are many players who discontinue playing netball after Grade 12. Moreover, there are many players who are not in the best schools, and they are not being scouted because of the system. It is important for young players to know what the pathway is to become a SPAR Proteas player because this is the goal and dream that should never be taken away from a young girl. Anything is possible for a player who works hard and who decides to face circumstances and challenges head-on.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Netball is not a professional sport in most countries in the world and many of the national players, apart from playing netball, have a day job and normal family responsibilities to take care of. In the 2019 international netball championships held in Liverpool, England, four African sides finished in the top eight. South Africa took fourth, Malawi sixth, Uganda seventh and Zimbabwe – that debuted at the World Cup – made up the last top eight spot. These four teams met again in Cape Town when the African Netball Cup was played. Netball on the continent is experiencing a growth spurt. Mary Cholhok who is a star player for her side, the goal shooter for Uganda at six-foot seven-inch tall, and single mother, got her first professional contract in 2019. She said that netball had changed her life and that she wanted other players to believe that it was possible. Before their historic fifth-place finish at the 2022 Commonwealth Games, the team trained for two months on outdoor courts in the blistering heat. *The government should invest in netball*, Cholhok said passionately. *We're such an amazing team. When we come here, everyone is just stunned by how we play. Just imagine if we put a lot of work into it: we would be so good.*

For the first time in history the Netball World Cup was held in South Africa, Cape Town in 2023 (SA News, 2023). South Africa lost to Uganda by only two goals for the fifth place, Malawi seventh and Zimbabwe thirteenth. The SPAR Proteas were disappointed with their loss and their finish at the NWC. However, NSA president, Ceceila Molokwane said that the difference between South Africa and other countries is that leagues are professional and those playing overseas cannot carry the team all the time in major competitions (Eyewitness News, 2023).

Despite these positive signs in the growth of netball internationally, it is evident that the transition from junior netball to senior netball is a challenge in South Africa (Burnett, 2010). For this reason, this research explored why so many potentially good netball players leave the sport after completing secondary education and do not continue playing netball at post-school level. A corollary from this is the question of what can be done to improve this transition and prevent the loss of talent.

5.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the challenges netball players face during the transition from junior to senior level netball in South Africa. The primary objective was to identify the various challenges players face in the transition from school/junior to senior level netball and the support that they receive during their careers.

The focus of the research was therefore to explore the reasons why South Africa is losing talented netball players that do not continue to senior level. The research, in part, therefore focused on uncovering the challenges netball players face in their transition from junior to senior level netball. It explored the possibilities of how these challenges can be managed and, if so, what the results could be. The primary research question was how the management of the transition between junior and senior level netball can be improved. This question was supported by three secondary research questions:

- What management processes and procedures are in place to handle netball players' transition from junior to senior netball?
- What support do schools and post-school institutions provide to ensure that the players are fully equipped for the next level of netball?
- If one compares South Africa to overseas countries, what lessons can be learnt to smoothen the transitioning from junior to senior netball in South Africa?

5.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Modern management theories focus on maximising productivity and often treat employees as a cog in the machine. In today's workplace modern management theories are widely embraced and relevant (Nixon, 2003). The study rejected this traditional view in favour of a postmodern approach to the management of athletes. In this regard, Stelter (2009) argues that we live in a hyper complex society where the individual faces growing diversity in all areas of life.

Consequently, notions of a stable identity have become questionable, and self-reflexivity has become the central basis when dealing with the post-traditional order of our society. The pressing demand of society is to develop constantly – at work, in competitive sport and in one's private and social life.

The postmodernist movement humanises people and encourages management to increase the athlete's productivity by considering the needs of the athlete, developing encouraging systems, training, and outlining career paths. Postmodernism management is focused on decentralisation and empowering athletes, since athletes in the postmodern era are more committed to achieve goals together (Keough & Tobin, 2000).

In today's forms of organisation leaders that can act on postmodern assumptions such as less attention to the rational model, combined thinking and creating integration are required. This means that postmodern sport organisations require postmodern theories of leadership and management. Postmodern theories focus on the process of leadership where modern theories emphasise leadership effects and the legal status of the leader in bureaucracy. Postmodern leadership focuses on one's ability, beliefs, values, behaviours and actions toward others and no longer depends on influencing or valuing exchanges. This is evidenced in present day sport organisations and managers.

Postmodern leaders influence people through a shared system of values and beliefs while modern leaders are normally interested in stabilising legal status, and improved quality of performance through the *boss*. Modern organisations focus on the results and effects of management and leadership instead of the process (Vaill, 1992). In the post-modern organisation, leaders and managers are influenced by their own ideas, values and thought in the decision-making process.

The process of decision making in postmodernism is based on pursuing thoughts and values that managers are seeking in followers (Russell & Kuhnert, 1992). Postmodern organisations have leaders that lead and followers that follow, due to several reasons and aspects. Both the leader and follower are rooted in behaviours, beliefs and experiences individually. In leadership and management studies, reasons should not be separated. Internationally, the quest is to devise strategies to best help sport stars to navigate in a social world characterised by growing restlessness, diverse lifestyles, social disorientation, multitudes of *local truths* and therefore, a loss of commonly accepted values and meanings (Stelzer, 2009). In my study I indicated the need for the following:

- The growing importance of values as a central dimension in a reflective coaching process.
- Focusing on meaning-making as a central dimension in the athlete and coaching relationship.
- A relational and narrative foundation of coaching psychology.

Based on the discussion of the leadership and management of Netball in South Africa offered in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 one can distil the following conceptualisation of the leadership and management of netball as amateur sport in South Africa.

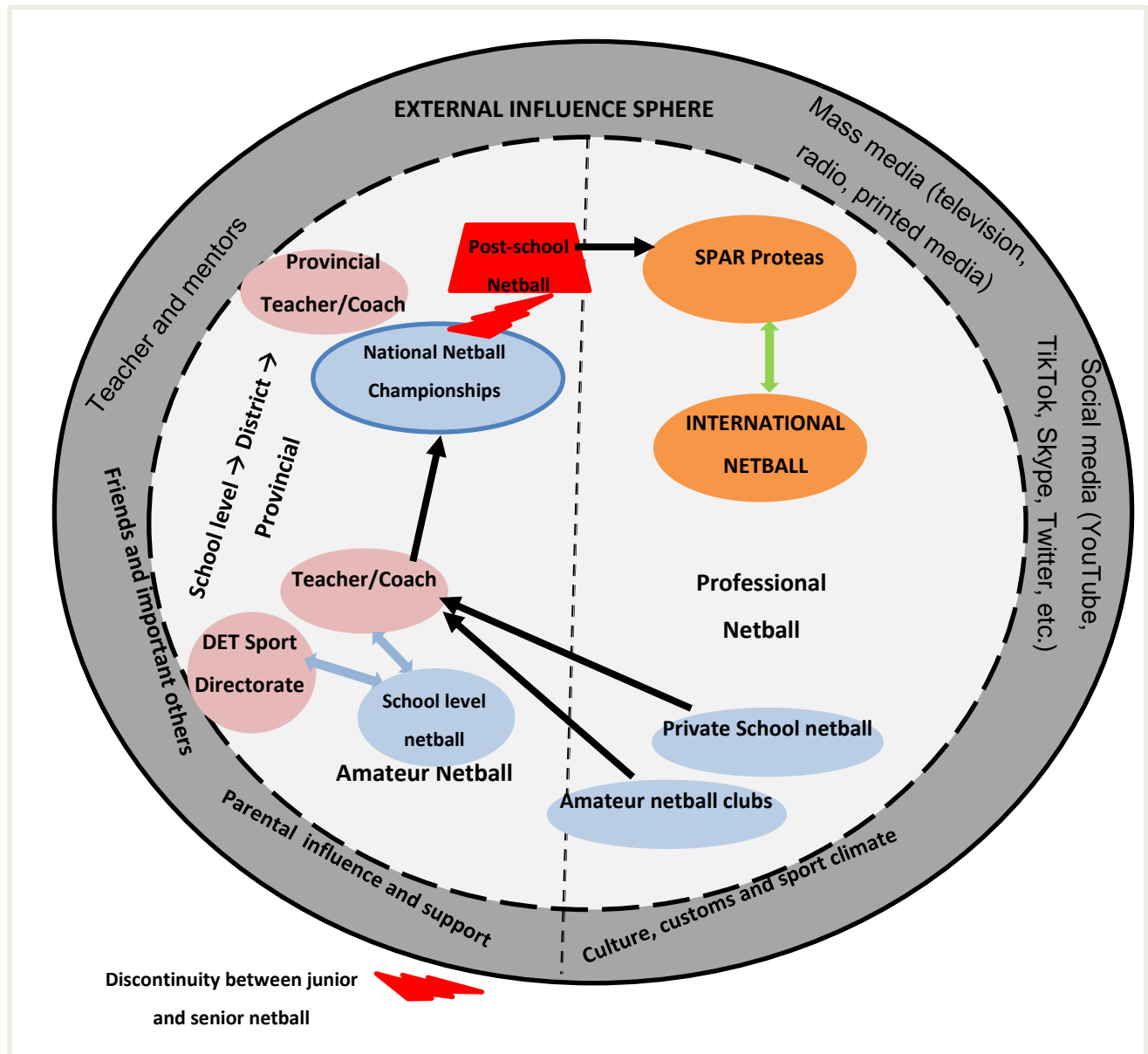


Figure 5: Conceptualising amateur netball and the discontinuity between junior and senior netball.

The following salient points emerged from Figure 5 regarding the management of Netball in South Africa:

- As amateur sporting code, the managers also fulfil the role as coach of the netball team.
- The coach/manager of the netball team fulfils this duty on a voluntary and part-time basis and must, in addition, hold a full-time job.
- As amateur sporting code, players are also learners/students and not full-time netball players earning an income from netball.
- External factors such as parents/family, teachers, friends, as well as the mass and electronic media have a major influence on the netball player, both positive and negative.
- There is no seamless continuity from junior to senior netball and many talented players get lost in the process.
- Netball is not a fully funded sporting code and is exerting additional pressure on the resources of players and parents.

5.4 FINDING A POSSIBLE BENCHMARK TO BRIDGE THE TRANSITION: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE.

Looking at the top four netball countries in the world, namely Australia (first), New Zealand, (second), England (third) and Jamaica (fourth) (World Netball, September 2023), it is evident that the countries have professional and semi-professional leagues. Jamaica has the best goal shooter in the world – Jhaniele Fowler who plays in the elite league SSN in Australia and is paid 300 00 Australian dollars for a season. Some of her fellow teammates play in Australia as well; this is what gives them the confidence to take on the world's best. It is evidenced by the way Jamaica performed at the 2022 Commonwealth Games when they lost to Australia in the final. Almost all the players from Jamaica play professional netball in other overseas countries.

Australia's structure is in place for players from grassroots to senior level and provides players with many opportunities to play club netball for fun or to be an elite athlete. Their league is professional and that is why they are a top-class team in the world. Similarly, New Zealand that has won the NWC gold medal several times, knows what it takes to be number one in the world. Netball New Zealand's system sets out to develop and manage the national programme for participation of coaches, umpires and players. Both Australia and New Zealand have sponsorships that support them and that are a great attribute to have.

England had a historic Netball World Cup (NWC) when they reached the final for the first time in August 2023 and got the silver medal. They have players playing in the Super Sport Netball, ANZ and the Netball Sport League (NSL). It is easy to be part of a local club; one only needs to register and if one wants to go further, there are certain paths to follow. Some players still work and play netball in England because it is semi-professional. England Netball has announced the first step in its ambition to professionalise the domestic game.

In 2021, England Netball commissioned an independent review of the professionalisation of the Netball Super League; officials consulted with stakeholders across the sport, including clubs, the Netball Players Association and its members and other partners, and helped shape a long-term roadmap for the development of the domestic game. The vision for the future was created at a time when there was significant momentum and interest in netball, and in women's sport abroad. The new plans will see transformational change over the next decade on the on and off court product, driven by innovation and delivering extraordinary fan experiences to power the growth of the game (England Netball, 2018).

The review of netball internationally clearly illustrated that netball is very popular and growing in demand. There will be more sponsorships to be managed correctly so that the athletes can be rewarded.

By comparison, South Africa shows definite growth in interest locally and internationally. The South African national team has earned a position amongst the top players internationally. Securing more sponsorships and creating more opportunities for competitive participation in South Africa, Southern Africa and the world at large, is a step in the right direction, but it still leaves the sport facing certain challenges in terms of transitioning from one level to the next.

5.5 FINDINGS

5.5.1 Challenges faced by netball players

The participants faced the following challenges when transitioning to the senior level. They mentioned that netball is not professional in South Africa, so they do not get an income, and this makes it difficult for them to continue. Participants also said that the intensity level is much higher when transitioning to the senior level and to adapt and connect with senior players is a challenge. Players need to learn to manage their time better because it is not like at school where everything is more structured, and players are told what to do. Continuing to the senior level requires self-discipline and self-motivation.

In comparison, participants from overseas countries identified several challenges that they face in their countries of origin. Netball is not regarded as a professional sport in many of the top ranked netball playing countries. Some international players said that they are not professional; only some countries' players are, and their players are able to compete at the elite level and receive remuneration whereas other players still need to study or work to get an income.

A lack of sponsorships, poor management of funds and lack of financial resources in these international countries were listed as some of the challenges faced by the participants. Players mentioned that there is no proper training at grassroots level and that coaches or the countries rely too much on natural talent, and this is not enough to compete against the top teams in the world. Schools' curricula can also lead to the success or failure of netball for young players. When schools do not have netball in the school programme, it puts talented young players on the back foot. The participants also stated that specialist coaching is a key element that schools, and clubs must have in place for countries so that players can develop their skills and grow.

5.5.2 Participants' views pertaining to the way management challenges are handled when netball players transition from junior to senior netball.

From the data collected, it is evident that the role that coaches play in support of their players is crucial. Passionate coaches who go the extra mile for their players create something in their players to believe that they are good enough to embark on the journey of becoming top players. From the interviews with management, it was clear that coaches need to be qualified through Netball South Africa to coach; this is expensive and a challenge for coaches. South Africa has brilliant coaches with lots of heart. From the information collected, it became evident that South Africa needs to get all coaches qualified because it will improve netball players and the game of netball in the country.

In the study the assertion was made that parents are the rock foundation of any child. Players mentioned that their parents motivated and supported them; this resulted in holistic individuals with cohesive social skills, able to give their best at school but also on the netball court with teammates. Players who are happy off the court will be happy on the court. Participants made it clear that there is much pressure at school level as each player tries to be in the first team; being selected for the first team comes with many responsibilities. It is important that players know that making the first team for their school or being selected for their provincial team is not the main goal to achieve; the goal is to continue to the senior level and making the SPAR Proteas team.

From the interviews conducted and the data collected it emerged that it is the responsibility of the coaches and parents not to burn out players at junior level because this will influence the players' decision to continue with netball. From the data presented it is evident that the intensity only gets more at the senior level and if players want to become the best, they will have to do it for themselves and not continue with the sport for their parents' sake.

5.5.3 Support offered to players by schools and post-school institutions to ensure that athletes are fully equipped for the next level of netball.

The research conducted indicated that there is a gap between junior and senior level netball. There are not enough or good netball clubs in South Africa where players can play at an elite level and put their hand up for the senior team. This research showed that universities are a great asset for players to help them train at a high-performance level. Players are in a structured set-up where there are pre-season session tournaments and opportunities to make the Under 21 SA Baby Proteas team, leading to the SPAR Proteas team. However, not all players can attend a university and for those who do not gain admission to university, it is a major challenge and an ultimate loss for Netball South Africa. Fourteen out of the fifteen players named in the World Cup netball squad for 2023 came through the ranks of varsity netball. Varsity Netball is a great platform for player exposure through broadcasting and for selectors to scout young talent. It shows that players who made the SPAR Proteas team had to go the extra mile to be selected in the squad. It has emerged from the research that too many potentially good netball players are lost for netball as they do not proceed to university and other institutions and, thus, they do not catch the selectors' eyes.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

More research is needed on the transition from junior to senior level netball and the effect that it has on players' performance. Participants underscored the fact that the challenges that they mentioned influenced their lifestyle and performance. Further research is required to gain a better perspective on the factors involved. Intervention studies can be conducted by making use of the framework and determining the impact of these factors on the effective transition and development of netball players. Furthermore, the management of the effective transition from junior to senior level can be researched to identify the most important managing functions that will support and facilitate an optimal transition process.

5.7 FURTHER RESEARCH

The present research recognised the importance of team culture, leadership and the emphasis placed on winning; it focused on the views of leaders of the past and coaches and captains of the SPAR Proteas national netball team during the period 2021 to 2023. Future research could focus on secondary school or representative age-group netball teams and how effectively the establishment and maintenance of a strong team culture and leadership could contribute to a competitive advantage at a community-based level of netball. Another possibility of conducting further research relates to netball in southern Africa. The regional development of netball will be to the benefit of the national team as it enters the professional netball league. With reference particularly to high-performance teams, research could be undertaken to test the perceptions of past coaches and captains of the SPAR Proteas national netball team to compare these findings with the responses provided by the past coaches and captains of the national netball team. This research could analyse the differences (if any) in how both national teams view the importance and development of team culture, leadership, and their views on the importance of winning.

5.8 REFLECTIONS ON MY RESEARCH JOURNEY

My passion and love for netball is extremely strong and I hope that I could make a difference by finding what challenges we have in netball in South Africa. My hope is that this sport can be professional, and that people will go to stadiums to watch netball. Netball players train just as hard as or perhaps even harder than other sporting codes and deserve the same acknowledgement and financial support. If netball in South Africa can turn professional there is no doubt that the SPAR Proteas can become number 1 in the world. It should start with the management from NSA. They cannot do it all alone; it is important to appoint qualified people in the positions to help with the management structure. The structure needs to be set in place from junior level to senior level.

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ANNEXURE A

RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

1 June 2021

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Exploring how junior netball is managed to ensure continuity to senior netball

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER(S) NAME(S) AND CONTACT NUMBER(S):

Lefebre Rademan 071 686 9323

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:

Faculty of Education

School of Education Studies

STUDYLEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:

Prof FJ Nieuwenhuis +27827889637

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

In South Africa we have many talented school level netball players, but they do not continue to senior level netball. South Africa is losing talented netball players that do not proceed to senior level and in my research, I am interested to find out what the challenges are that netball players face in their transition from junior to senior level netball and how these challenges could be better managed. I will therefore collect data from interviews that explore the following main questions:

- 1. What are the challenges faced by netball players when they transition from junior to senior level netball?*
- 2. How do schools, post-school institutions and sporting codes assist students with resolving these challenges?*
- 3. What are the management challenges faced by role players during the transition phase?*
- 4. How can the transition be managed better?*

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

Lefebre Rademan as part of my master's degree studies

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the study leader.

Approval number: UFS-HSD2021/0669/21

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

You were selected to participate in this study because of your own involvement in netball, being a player or a coach and to help the researcher gathering information about this topic.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Participants can freely choose if they want to participate in this research study. They will be anonymous and all the information that will be shared will be confidential. Participants who are younger than 18 years can decide whether they want to participate and if they decide to take part in the study, the players' parents need to agree by signing a letter of consent. This will ensure that the participants and I, the researcher, are protected.

I will collect data by using a semi-structured interview method through Zoom. These meetings will be scheduled individually with each participant when it suits them; the interview will last about 30 minutes. This will be an easy, effective and safe way of communicating.

CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

Yes. The participant involvement is voluntary, and any person may decide to withdraw from the research at any stage.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

This could potentially help the role players and netball players in the school to manage players better so that they can continue with their netball on a senior level.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

It will only take 30 minutes to do the Zoom interview.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

All information shared with me will be kept confidential and will not be revealed to a third party.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies of the questionnaire will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard in Room 19 Winkie Direko UFS Building for academic purposes where after it will be shredded.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

No payment or reward will be offered as this forms part of students' research training.

HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

No formal feedback will be given to research participants as the project is only for research training purposes. Informal feedback from the student to the school may happen.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had it explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publication and/or conference proceedings.

I agree to the recording of the *semi-structured interview data collection method*.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Full Name of Participant:

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): Margaretha Lefébre Rademan

Signature of Researcher: **ML Rademan** Date: 1 June 2021

ANNEXURE B

EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEW SCHEDULES USED IN THIS RESEARCH

1 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR NETBALL PLAYERS

1.1 INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED TO PARTICIPANTS

1.1.1 Fact sheet

Netball is the most popular women's sport in South Africa (approximately 649 820 participants). Netball is a fast-paced game that consists of high physical demands such as quick acceleration, deceleration, and a sudden change of direction as well as repetitive jumping. Netball is the most popular sport among young female athletes in South Africa.

1.1.2 What is the purpose of the study?

Despite being so popular very few players proceed from junior level netball to senior level netball, and I want to determine why.

I am interested in finding out why good netball players do not progress to senior level netball. So, the purpose of this interview is to talk to you about your experiences with netball and what made you decide to continue with netball or prevented you from continuing with netball at senior level. All information to be shared with me will be kept confidential and will not be revealed to a third party. In writing my findings it will be free from the names or any identifying particulars of the participant.

1.1.3 Interview Questions

Question	Answer
1. When did you start playing netball?	
2. Why did you start playing netball?	
3. What did you enjoy most about junior (school) level netball?	

4. How important was it at school level to perform at your best?	
5. Who were the people at school that were most strongly in favour of your team winning all its matches?	
6. What incentives were used to motivate you to perform at your best?	
7. How were you rewarded at school level for your performance in netball?	
8. When did you play your last match at junior school level netball?	
9. Were there any people in school that encouraged you to continue with netball?	
10. Are you currently participating in any sport?	
11. Your continued participation in sport, is it on a competitive basis?	
<i>At this point the group is divided into those who have continued with netball and those who have not.</i>	
<i>Note: Questions 12 and 13 are for those who have discontinued playing only.</i>	

Only for those that have discontinued	
12. If current participation is not for competitive purposes, then what do you hope to get out of the sport?	
13. Why did you decide to discontinue with senior level netball?	
Only for netball players that have continued with senior level netball	
14. What are the challenges faced by netball players when they transition from junior to senior level netball?	
15. Why have you decided to continue with netball?	
16. What were the most difficult challenges for you as a player as you transitioned to senior netball?	
17. Did you receive any assistance from schools, post-school institutions or others in overcoming these challenges? Elaborate with examples.	
18. Tell me about your experiences with how senior netball is managed.	
19. From the experiences that you had; do you think that the management of senior netball could be improved? Provide examples.	
20. From your own experiences, do you think that there is a gap between junior netball and senior netball? Provide reasons.	
21. How do you think could the transition phase be improved so that more players continue to senior level?	
22. How can the transition from junior to senior level be managed better?	
23. What changes would you like to see in the future for netball in South Africa?	

24. If you reflect on your experience with netball, is there anything else that you would like to tell me that would assist me in my research?	

Thank you for your participation in this interview. Your cooperation is highly appreciated for the betterment of netball in South Africa.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR NETBALL COACHES OR MANAGERS

2.1 INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED TO PARTICIPANTS

2.1.1 Fact sheet

Netball is the most popular female sport in South Africa, and we want to keep it that way. At school level, the role of the coach and the manager is often collapsed into one single individual. For this reason, it is not easy to separate the roles of coach and manager in this study. Preference will therefore be given to the concept of a coach knowing that the coach often acts as the manager who manages the team. Netball coaches are known as people that have sound technical knowledge of the game as well as in-depth knowledge of the basic strategies, game tactics, routines and practices. You are therefore of strategic importance in this study as your views and opinions are of great importance in answering the research question that I pose in this study.

2.1.2 What is the purpose of the study?

Despite the game being so popular, very few players proceed from junior level netball to senior level netball, and I want to determine why.

I am interested in finding out why good netball players do not progress to senior level netball. So, the purpose of this interview is to talk to you about your experiences with netball and the coaching and management of netball at senior level. All information to be shared with me will be kept confidential and will not be revealed to a third party. In writing my findings it will be free from the names or any identifying particulars of the participant.

2.1.3 Interview Questions

1. Have you ever played netball competitively? Elaborate.	
2. When did you start coaching/managing netball?	
3. What do you enjoy most about coaching/managing junior/senior netball?	
4. What are the management challenges faced by managers and administrators in senior netball?	
5. From your own experiences, do you think that there is a gap in the	

management between junior netball and senior netball? Elaborate.	
6. How do you think could the transition phase be improved so that more players continue to senior level?	
7. What changes would you like to see in the future for netball in South Africa?	
8. If you reflect on your experience with netball, is there anything else that you would like to tell me that would assist me in my research?	

Thank you for your participation in this interview. Your cooperation is highly appreciated for the betterment of netball in South Africa.

DECLARATION OF LANGAUGE EDITOR

**I HATE
MISTEAKS**

TK LANGUAGE SERVICE
EDITING | PROOFREADING | TRANSLATION

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31 August 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the master's dissertation titled **EXPLORING HOW JUNIOR NETBALL IS MANAGED TO ENSURE CONTINUITY TO SENIOR NETBALL** by **MARGARETHA LEFÉBRE RADEMAN** has been edited.

It is the responsibility of the candidate to effect the recommended changes.



Prof. Tinus Kühn