

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF RECEIVING
FUNDING SUPPORT FOR ELITE SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA**

**A full thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of
M.A. SRES (Sport, Recreation and Exercise Science) in the Faculty of
Community and Health Sciences, University of the Western Cape**

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May 2015

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Key words

Funding support

Elite sport

International lessons of experience

Elite high performance

Elite athletes

International championships

High performance agency



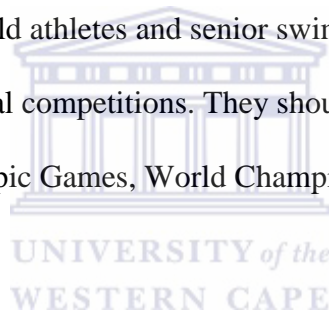
Key Concepts

For the purpose of this study the following key concepts will be referred to:

Athlete Personal Award (APA): financial support given to British athletes that have the potential to win medals at major international competitions.

Development of elite athletes: ensuring that elite athletes get the necessary training support (including coaching, scientific and medical interventions) to perform to the best of their abilities. This does not include the concept of development of athletes from disadvantaged communities, which is not part of this study.

Elite athletes: senior track and field athletes and senior swimmers that have been a part of Team South Africa at international competitions. They should also have won medals at major international competitions: Olympic Games, World Championships and the Commonwealth Games.



Elite high performance programmes: training programmes targeted at elite athletes to ensure that they achieve excellence on the international stage in world class competition – Olympic Games, World Championships and Commonwealth Games.

Elite high performance sport: sport that elite athletes take part in, with an opportunity to achieve excellence on the international stage in world class competition – Olympic Games, World Championships and Commonwealth Games.

Funding support procedures: criteria used by the custodians of elite athletes to provide financial assistance, and to make decisions on who to provide financial assistance to.

Funding support processes: guidelines for elite athletes, including requirements to receive financial assistance.

Funding support: the financial assistance that elite athletes receive to assist with their training preparations and expenses.

International championships: an international sporting event for a single sporting code, whereby the best elite athletes in the world who are able to meet a set qualifying standard come together. This is in order to compete against each other until an eventual winner or champion is crowned. Examples of this: FIFA World Cup Soccer, IAAF World Athletics Championships, IAAF World Athletics Relays and FINA World Championships but to name a few.



Management of elite athletes: providing support (financial, emotional etc.) and guidance to elite athletes.

Support grants: small sum of money given to elite athletes to aid in their training preparations.

Support services: services provided to elite athletes and the financial assistance they receive to assist with training preparations. These services include: medical assistance, physiotherapists, psychologists, nutritionists, mentors etc.

ABSTRACT:

Despite government's formation of financial support grants such as the Operational Excellence Programme to provide much needed assistance, South African elite athletes have not been performing to expectation at recent international championships, such as the Olympic Games. International experiences demonstrate the importance of a well-structured and implemented funding support system to improve elite athlete performance at international levels.

This has led to questions of how to improve this situation for elite South African athletes who receive funding support from the South Africa Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee and to revisit the implementation of the funding support for elite athletes.

This study will take, experiences of South African elite athletes as well as sport managers into consideration and will also look at international lessons of experience of the funding support of elite sport to provide improved options for financial support and elite athlete development.



Using qualitative research methods, this study explored the underlying factors regarding funding support of elite athletes in South Africa based on experiences and perceptions of elite athletes. Within the context of the study, elite athletes would refer to senior track and field athletes and senior swimmers who had been a part of Team South Africa and represented the nation at international competitions.

Data was collected in three ways: a) A literature review in the form of an analysis of the high performance policies of: the National Olympic Committee of South Africa and the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee that has governed elite sport in South Africa post 1994 and the policies that govern high performance funding support within

Athletics South Africa and Swimming South Africa; b) interviews with eight preselected elite athletes to discuss career performances and funding support received and c) interviews with four coaches/managers of the preselected elite athletes to discuss their perspectives on the funding support their athletes received.

Strict ethics considerations were also adhered to insofar as written consent was obtained from all participants beforehand, as the intended interviews would be either audio recorded or video recorded. Pseudonyms were also used for participants with the assurance that participation was voluntary.

The eventual findings of the study brought to light that the implementation of the funding support provided by the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee was good in theory but not necessarily so in practice. Overall, participants were grateful for the support received but felt that certain changes needed to be considered going forward for the improvement of future performances.

DECLARATION

I declare that “An Exploratory Study of the Experiences of Receiving Funding Support for Elite Sport in South Africa” is my own work. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any university and all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Nana Akua Achiaa Adom-Aboagye

Signed:

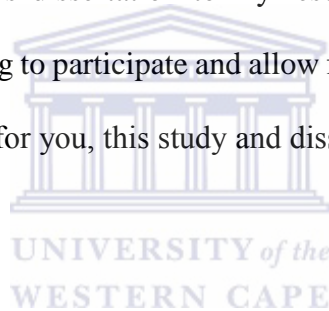
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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family: my father, Isaac; my mother, Grace, my brother, Kwadwo; my “sister” Clare and of course my “other” father, Father Richard. The constant support and encouragement that you all gave me, especially during the dark times when I wanted to walk away from this study and just give up, would never be forgotten. No matter the time of day, all of you made the time to listen to me and give words of encouragement and support when it was needed. And without it, I doubt I would have completed this study and dissertation.

I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my research participants. Thank you for believing in my study and agreeing to participate and allow for your voices to be heard, despite your busy schedules. If it wasn't for you, this study and dissertation would have remained but a dream.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to acknowledge CATHSSETA for awarding me a bursary which provided me with the two year financial assistance that was sorely needed in order to conduct this study.

My second acknowledgement goes to my ICESSED family: Professor Marion Keim; Professor Christo de Coning; Anita Fredericks; Nariman Laatoe; Dr Philomene Nsengiyumva; Dr CAPS Msukwa; Nelisiwe Maleka and Ivy Chinangwa. You are all amazing people who took me under your wing and in your own special way contributed to me finishing this dissertation. 2014/2015 was one of the most difficult years I have ever experienced and without you and my family I doubt I would be writing this.

I would like to also acknowledge and thank Mrs Ilhaam Groenewald for her assistance and support in the home stretch of this paper.



Last and certainly not least, I would like to acknowledge my supervisors: Ms Simone Titus and Dr Marie Young for taking me on as and contributing to the completion of this study.

CONTENTS:

KEY WORDS	ii
KEY CONCEPTS	iii
ABSTRACT	v
DECLARATION	vii
DEDICATION	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ix

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT	6
1.3 AIMS OF THE STUDY	7
1.4 OBJECTIVES	8
1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	8
1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	9
1.7 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS	10

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION	12
2.2 INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON FUNDING SUPPORT	12
2.3 THE HISTORY OF OLYMPIC SPORT MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA	15
2.3.1 National Olympic Committee of South Africa (NOCSA)	15
2.3.2 South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC)	18
2.4 STAKEHOLDER POLICIES AND ELITE ATHLETE FUNDING SUPPORT	21

2.5 NATIONAL FEDERATIONS AND HIGH PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES OF SELECTED COUNTRIES	22
2.5.1 ATHLETICS	25
2.5.1.1 Athletics South Africa (ASA)	25
2.5.1.2 Athletics Australia	25
2.5.1.3 British Athletics	27
2.5.1.4 Partnerships with High Performance Agencies	27
2.5.1.5 Comparison of Olympic Performances in Athletics	28
2.5.2 SWIMMING	30
2.5.2.1 Swimming South Africa (SSA)	30
2.5.2.2 Swimming Australia	32
2.5.2.3 British Swimming	32
2.5.2.4 Partnerships with High Performance Agencies	33
2.5.2.5 Comparison of Olympic Performances in Swimming	33
2.6 ELITE ATHLETE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME FACTORS	36
2.6.1 Institutions Overseeing High Performance	36
2.6.2 Elite Athletes	37
2.6.3 Resources and Support	37
2.7 INTERNATIONAL LESSONS OF EXPERIENCE	38
2.7.1 Funding Support	38
2.7.2 Providing Support	39
2.7.3 Losing Support	41
2.7.4 Institutional Arrangements for Funding Allocation	46
2.7.4.1 Selection Panel: British Athletics and British Swimming	46
2.7.4.2 Appeal Committee: British Athletics and British Swimming	48

2.7.4.3 Selection Panel: DAS	48
2.7.4.4 Appeal Committee: Australia	50
2.8 DIRECT FUNDING (MONETARY) SUPPORT	51
2.9 CHAPTER CONCLUSION	52

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION	54
3.2 STUDY DESIGN	54
3.2.1 Hypothesis	54
3.2.2 Methodology of Qualitative Research	55
3.3 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS	56
3.4 DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS	57
3.5 DATA COLLECTION	58
3.6 DATA ANALYSIS	61
3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS	62
3.8 REFLEXIVITY	63
3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	64
3.10 CHAPTER CONCLUSION	66



CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION	67
4.2 EMERGIING THEMES AND SUB-THEMES OF THE STUDY	68
4.2.1 FUNDING SUPPORT	68
4.2.1.1 Support Procedures	72
4.2.1.2 Losing Support	75

4.2.2 INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR FUNDING ALLOCATION	79
4.2.3 FUNDING SUPPORT COMPOSITION	80
4.2.3.1 Reimbursement	81
4.2.3.2 Delays	83
4.2.3.3 Administrative Process	85
4.2.4 VIEWS ON FUNDING SUPPORT	86
4.2.5. CHANGE IS NEEDED	95
4.2.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSION	98

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION	100
5.2 KEY FINDINGS	101
5.2.1 Funding Support	101
5.2.2 Support Procedures	102
5.2.3 Losing Support	103
5.2.4 Institutional Arrangements for Funding Allocation	103
5.2.5 Reimbursement	104
5.3 CONCLUSIONS	104
5.3.1 Funding Support	104
5.3.2 Support Procedures	105
5.3.3 Losing Support	105
5.3.4 Institutional Arrangements for Funding Allocation	106
5.3.5 Reimbursement	106
5.3.6 Confirmation of the Hypothesis	107



5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS	107
5.4.1 Funding Support	107
5.4.2 Support Procedures	108
5.4.3 Losing Support	108
5.4.4 Institutional Arrangements for Funding Allocation	110
5.4.5 Reimbursement	110
5.5 ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS	111
5.5.1 National High Performance Agency and Directorate	112
5.5.2 Former Athletes in Structures: Mentor System	113
5.5.3 Providing Options for Athletes	115
5.5.4 Engaging with Other Countries	117
5.6 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS	119
5.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH	121
REFERENCES	123
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Athlete Interview Guide	136
Appendix B: Coach/Manager Interview Guide	138
Appendix C: Consent Letter	140
Appendix D: Information Sheet	141



CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“One of the success areas of every nation must be its ability to compete with other nations on the sports field. We have to improve our sports performance.”

(President Jacob Zuma, quoted by Minister Mbalula, in Sport and Recreation South Africa, 2014/15 Ministerial Budget Speech)

1.1 Introduction and Background

Research has shown that athletes from nations which seriously invest in their elite sport systems perform better at international levels (De Bosscher, De Knop & van Bottenburg, 2009). This rationale could have led the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC) to restructure the Operational Excellence Programme (OPEX) that had been passed on after the disestablishment of the old National Olympic Committee of South Africa (NOCSA) in order to create a more formalised elite athlete management programme in 2009. This was done to improve South Africa’s level of competitiveness at international competitions in winning medals (Storm & Nielsen, 2010).

This move was further strengthened after South Africa’s performance at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, where out of a squad of 136, the largest squad ever sent to an Olympic Games, only one medal was won (Official Website of the Olympic Movement, 2014). This in comparison to six medals won at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games; five medals won at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games and the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games respectively (Official Website of the Olympic Movement, 2014).

Over this same period, namely from 1996 – 2008 South Africa won a total of 17 medals in athletics and swimming combined. In comparison one could look to other Africa countries such

as for example, Ethiopia which won 25 medals and Kenya which won 36 medals (Official Website of the Olympic Movement, 2014). Both countries did not have a sports policy at that time.

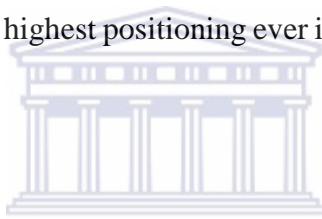
If one reviews performances of world and Olympic medallists before and after their victories, it shows that in the world of sport, elite sporting excellence cannot be maintained or improved upon without understanding the underlying issues impacting upon it – be it positive or negative - and finding solutions to address what has been identified if needs be (Lyle, 1997).

In 2009 SASCOC started to restructure its programme to provide greater support to elite athletes. This restructured OPEX programme therefore identified a squad of 58 prospective Olympians (SASCOC, 2013) for SASCOC's first quadrennial (2009 – 2012) of a structured approach to winning more medals at future Olympic Games. Amongst this inaugural squad were 10 elite track and field athletes and 17 elite swimmers (SASCOC, OPEX Actuals, 2009), who shall be referred to as elite athletes for the purpose of this study.

This study will focus on track and field athletics and swimming for these two sporting codes have brought the most success to South Africa - before and after international sporting exclusion due to apartheid – which was the time before 1964 and after 1988 - in the modern era of the Olympic Games. Within these two codes, South Africa has won a total of 15 medals in swimming (6 gold, 3 silver and 6 bronze) and 24 medals in track and field athletics (6 gold, 12 silver and 6 bronze) to date (Official Website of the Olympic Movement, 2014).

In comparison, over the same period countries without even a sport policy before 2013 such as Kenya won 79 medals and Ethiopia which does not have a sport policy up to date won 45 medals – all of these in athletics (Official Website of the Olympic Movement, 2014).

Hogan and Norton (2000) reported on the discovery of linear relationships between the number of medals won and the amount of money that countries spent during the quadrennials leading up to each Olympic year. This suggests that structured funding support provided to elite athletes during Olympic quadrennials leads to more medal wins. Great Britain proved this by investing £264 million, the most that they had ever invested on their elite athletes in the lead up to the hosting of the 2012 Olympic Games. They finished 3rd on the overall medal table behind the USA and China respectively, their highest positioning ever in their Olympic history (Anderson, 2012).



In South Africa the OPEX programme was restructured in 2009 as SASCOG realised the need to offer better support grants to elite athletes to win more medals at the 2012 Olympic Games in London, for which they set a target of 12 medals to be won (Gabara, 2012).

Support grants were to be offered in form of: living expenses; training support (including coaching, scientific and medical interventions); personal support (studies); expenses for competitions (local and international); training camps (local and international); equipment and technological support (SASCOG, Operation Excellence Programme Eligibility Criteria: Road to Rio 2016, 2012).

These grants were allocated according to a three tier system covering a quadrennial – 2009 to 2012. This system was similar in structure and concept to the one developed by the UK in the

late 1990s through the establishment of a three-tier World Class Lottery Fund to provide much needed support for elite athlete programmes through the UK Sports Council (Green, 2004). This showed that the criteria that SASCO had adopted for athlete inclusion in the OPEX programme was a combination of athletes' present and predicted performances at international level (Lyle, 1997).

The rationale behind this three tiered approach of the OPEX programme can be seen as SASCO's way of promoting talent amongst elite athletes. The support structures of the OPEX programme were established to help accelerate development and management of elite athletes by providing support grants (Vaeyens, Güllich, Warr & Philippaerts, 2009; Houlihan & Zheng, 2013).



The estimated numeric value of the grant support provided to elite track and field as well as swimming athletes within the OPEX programme over the above mentioned period (2009 – 2012) amounted to approximately R 8 587 000 for all 27 elite athletes (SASCO, OPEX actuals, 2009). This was the largest amount ever invested by the South African government towards elite athlete development and management. This could be attributed to the fact that after the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, many countries raised arguments that more resources and funding were needed from government at elite levels to ensure that countries remained competitive and won medals (Storm & Nielsen, 2010).

The money injected over the 2009 – 2012 quadrennial was expected to yield a return on investment of 12 medals. Yet this was not the case, as South Africa only won 6 medals at the London 2012 Olympic Games (Official Website of the Olympic Movement, 2014). Of these 6 medals won in London, track and field athletes were only able to secure 1 medal (silver) within

a squad of 12, whilst the South African swimming Olympians were able to secure 3 medals (2 gold and 1 silver) with a squad of 16. Although this was an improvement from the 1 medal won at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, it still fell short of the targeted 12 medals.

This shortfall in SASCOC's return on investment raised many questions in the media after the 2012 London Olympics as to why performances never reached expectation. Funding was readily available for those athletes who achieved stipulated criteria for the OPEX programme. So if funding was not the issue, then the question considered by the researcher was "What was the difference between the composition of funding support offered to elite sport in South Africa and that offered in other countries and could there be lessons of experience learnt by South Africa to help improve elite performances in the future?"

The above question could prove pertinent to the expected future performances of elite South African athletes, especially once SASCOC released a statement that they were targeting 16 medals at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games (South African Broadcasting Corporation, 2013). If more money was to be invested and more medals were being targeted, then it was expected that research had been conducted into improving SASCOC's return on investment through a study of their funding support composition, since they have been given the mandate by government to oversee elite high performance sport in South Africa.

The researcher discovered that there was a dearth of literature in this particular field, especially in South Africa. This was what led to the pursuit of this research study as completion of it would a) provide - some insight into the underlying issues behind athletes not performing to expectation, despite the funding support being there as well as b) suggest recommendations for term solutions in achieving SASCOC's return on investment at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games,

and c) the study could also lead to other academics investigating the funding support of other sporting codes in order to provide solutions in achieving return on investments at elite levels.

1.2 Problem Statement

After South Africa only won one medal at the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008, SASCOC's OPEX programme was restructured and injected with monetary support from the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund (NLDTF) as well as Sport and Recreation South Africa (SRSA) – the National Department of Sport and Recreation; to provide athletes with greater support than in the past in order to increase South Africa's medal chances at the London 2012 Olympic Games.

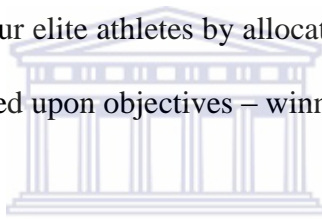
The investments made and the eventual performances of South Africa's elite athletes at the London 2012 Olympic Games raised questions as to why performances did not reach the expected target of 12 medals, despite the implementation of a heavily funded programme to provide support and guidance in the management and development of elite athletes for international success – winning medals (Green, 2004).

At the same time there is limited research material and information available on the funding support procedures of SASCOC and the OPEX programme and this limited access to primary research material and to decision makers in the programme, makes it difficult to properly analyse the situation and to respond to the questions above with adequate recommendations.

However there are elite athletes in the system who receive funding support and are expected to perform at the upcoming Olympic Games next year (2016) and expectations are high to live up to South Africa's vision as outlined in the country's first Sport and Recreation Plan to be a

“Winning Nation”. Even the President of the Republic has been quoted as saying “We have to improve our sports performance.” (President Jacob Zuma, quoted in the 2014/15 Sport and Recreation South Africa Ministerial Budget Speech)

Therefore it is essential to explore the experiences of elite athletes and sport managers in South Africa with regards to funding support received from an athlete’s point of view – to better understand if the challenges are linked to insufficient institutional arrangements or inadequate funding allocations or other reasons. This will be to assess if there are areas when it comes to funding support of elite athletes in South Africa which need improvement – once they have been compared to international lessons of experience. For the creation of the OPEX programme was to provide better support to our elite athletes by allocating resources accordingly in order to support them in achieving agreed upon objectives – winning medals (Lyle, 1997).



This will allow the researcher to test the following hypothesis:

An improved understanding of differences in funding support as experienced by elite athletes may lead to improved options for funding support and elite athlete development.

1.3 Aims of the Study

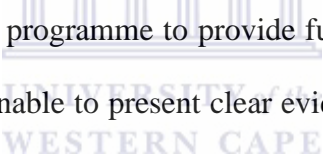
The aim of this study was to explore experiences of elite athletes and managers in South Africa with regard to funding support, in relation to international lessons of experience. The study further aimed to explore if there are lessons of experience to be learnt from South Africa’s sporting counterparts when it comes to the composition of funding support given to elite sport and eventual performances and medals won by elite athletes, especially when looking at: the Olympic Games, World Championships and Commonwealth Games.

1.4 Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

- Explore elite athletes' perceptions of funding support made available to them through the OPEX programme during their careers.
- Explore elite coaches/sport managers' perceptions of funding support made available to their athletes through the OPEX programme during their careers.
- Explore international lessons of experience regarding funding support of elite sport.
- Analyse the policies and procedures governing track and field athletics and swimming funding support for elite athletes' post 1994 in South Africa.

1.5 Significance of the Study



Despite the creation of the OPEX programme to provide funding support for elite athletes in South Africa, research has been unable to present clear evidence demonstrating the influence that the establishment of sports policies have on international sporting success (De Bosscher, De Knop, van Bottenburg & Shibli, 2006). Therefore the findings of this study could help provide guidelines on how to improve funding support in order to provide better services to elite athletes' if gaps are identified during the study. As there is a lack of literature or developed theory that identifies policy factors that determine sporting success at elite levels in South Africa, this study could encourage further research in this field (De Bosscher, De Knop, van Bottenburg & Shibli, 2006). Further research is needed in this field, due to the fact that managerial efficiency is seen as a contributing factor to elite sports systems and eventual international success for nations (Storm & Nielsen, 2010).

It is hoped that this will be of value to South African elite athletes through improved performances in the future, as well as SASCOG, national federations and other sporting codes not included in this study, regarding future management processes.

1.6 Research Methodology

This section offers a brief synopsis of the methods used in the study, and a more detailed description of the methodology can be found in chapter three. The study employed a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research focuses on narrative data in order to identify core themes within the research through thematic analysis to identify and assess if there are any relationships or patterns amongst the data (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). Qualitative research provides rich and informative data, which could give new insights into the experiences of elite athletes in South Africa when it comes to funding support, and could lead to options, regarding how this could be improved in the future once compared to international lessons of experience. This approach was adopted in order for elite athletes and coaches'/managers to articulate their unique experiences in their own words regarding funding support and to assess whether there were linkages between their experiences of the funding support made available to elite athletes and international lessons of experience (Arnold, Fletcher & Molyneux, 2012).

In this study twelve elite athletes (past and present) and their coaches/managers were interviewed with regard to their experiences of the funding support provided by SASCOG/NOCSA during their careers. In-depth semi-structured face-to-face and audio-visual interviews were conducted. Data was analysed using Creswell's (2009) 6 step data analysis approach for qualitative research. More detailed explanation of this can be found in Chapter three of this thesis. The results from the interviews were then assessed against the framework

provided by policies and documents from SASCOC, Athletics South Africa (ASA) and Swimming South Africa (SSA). This was to allow for triangulation to assess what policy stipulates about the funding support of elite athletes, in relation to what the elite athletes themselves experience.

1.7 Overview of Chapters

Chapter one provides the introduction to the study, the motivation behind the researcher's decision to pursue the topic, an outline of the research aim and objectives, as well as the significance of the study within the South African context which could lend to future studies in an under-researched area within sport and sport management.

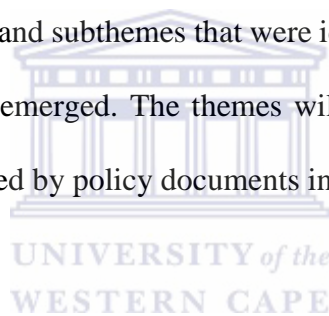
Chapter two will provide a literature review focusing on elite athlete funding support and the impact that government policies and structures have on international sporting success. It shall also focus on the policies created and implemented by and for: the National Olympic Committee of South Africa from 1992 to 2004 and the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee from 2005 to date, for elite athlete funding support. Policies that the South African athletics and swimming federations have in place that can support government's elite sporting support structures will also be presented.

A comparison shall also be provided between the policies established for high performance sport in South Africa by the Olympic Committee and the National Federations, with those of their Great British and Australian counterparts. Great Britain and Australia were pre-selected for comparison purposes because they have performed at relatively similar levels to that of South Africa at international championships and have managed to strengthen and improve their funding support structures over the years. This shall be followed by the three main factors

needed for international success – the institution, the athletes and resources, in order to provide a backdrop for the findings which will be presented in Chapter four.

Chapter three will provide detail into the methodological approach and assessments used in this study. It will outline the exploratory study design adopted followed by the selection criteria used for identifying research participants, the methods used in collecting the data, the modes of data analysis, trustworthiness and reflexivity and the ethical considerations adopted and implemented in the study to ensure validity and trustworthiness.

Chapter four will present the results and findings of the research study in a qualitative thematic format. It will present the themes and subthemes that were identified in this study. To this end, four themes and six sub-themes emerged. The themes will provide information on funding support in South Africa, as is stated by policy documents in relation to what respondents have actually experienced.

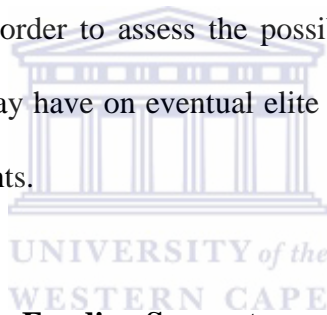


Chapter five will focus on the data analysed and then summarise the key findings identified in Chapter four. It will provide options for each identified theme on the possible way forward for elite athlete funding support in South Africa, along with concluding remarks on the identified themes. Recommendations for future studies and research papers in the area of elite sport management in South Africa will also be given.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of global perspectives on funding support to provide the reader with background information regarding funding support in elite sport. Stakeholder policies governing elite athlete funding support in South Africa will also be provided along with the high performance strategies of SASCOC and South Africa's swimming and athletics national federations. A detailed comparison with the national federations of two other similarly performing countries at international level – Great Britain and Australia - will be offered. This will provide information on the composition of funding support in South Africa, in relation to its international counterparts, in order to assess the possible impact that high performance strategies and funding support may have on eventual elite performances, particularly medals won in international sporting events.



2.2 International Perspectives on Funding Support

In the 1970's and 1980's elite athlete support in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) demonstrated that an organised and systematic approach in supporting elite athletes garnered international success for those athletes in the system (Green & Oakley, 2001).

It took the GDR five years to develop their elite sporting support system which has been seen as one of - if not the - greatest elite sporting framework that the world ever saw and still has to see (Green & Oakley, 2001). This development took place in the 1950's, yet the system was later restructured to further improve performances and the GDR's elite sporting prowess – marked their sporting dominance in the 1970's and 1980's (Green & Oakley, 2001). This system professionalised elite sport in the country, formed a centralised planning system that

oversaw their medal potential sporting codes and invested in training facilities for the identified codes. It also provided qualified and experienced coaches for the elite athletes and formed nationwide training centres for youth talent identification. Such was the effectiveness and superiority of this model, that in the last two decades, many countries have continuously tried to emulate this framework to boost their elite sporting potential and success (Dennis, 2012).

The Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) established a High Performance Programme leading up to the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. This programme adopted some of its core elements from the GDR model and was instituted to provide elite athlete funding support unique to the Australian context. Sports organizations were allocated funds and resources at all levels to meet set objectives for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games (Jovanovic, 2011). Performances achieved after the Sydney Olympic Games by Australia's elite athletes at major international competitions show the benefits of their improved high performance funding support system.

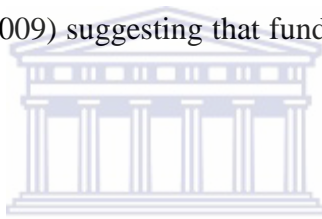


This success, later led to many nations either copying the GDR framework or adopting and/or adapting the AIS model (through policy implementation) without at times allowing for flexibility to ensure a fit to their own unique sporting landscapes, as some nations just perform consistently better than others when it comes to certain disciplines (Bohlke & Robinson, 2009). However, those nations that allowed for flexibility in their elite sport funding support systems through the provision of continuous improvements, were the ones that saw continued success at international level, at times even outperforming traditional “powerhouse” sporting nations (Bohlke & Robinson, 2009).

Despite the adoption/adaption by some nations of the GDR or AIS sporting framework models, current policies do not seem to be enhancing the performance of elite athletes at international

levels as expected, despite research showing that policies can enhance international sporting performances to a degree (Hoffmann, Ging & Ramasamy, 2002).

De Bosscher et al (2009) published findings which suggested that elite sports policies which governed the funding support systems of elite sport in many nations were becoming increasingly homogenous despite there being ample opportunity for diversity. This can be compared to Bohlke and Robinson's (2009) observation that at times countries merely adopted the elite sport systems from nations which excelled in a particular sport that they hoped to emulate – with elements of GDR's system forming the core for many developed nations (Green & Oakley, 2001). If countries at times merely copied successful elite sport systems, this can lend itself to De Bosscher et al (2009) suggesting that funding support systems are becoming homogenous.



International sporting powerhouses like Great Britain and Australia have shown over the past few decades how the primary focus of sport policy objectives and allocated resources for development of elite performances, yields dividends (Sotiriadou & Shilbury, 2009; Robinson & Minikin, 2012). This coupled with developed performance management tools which are constantly evaluated and monitored, enhances rather than limits their medal-related targets during Olympic/World Championship cycles, and at the same time, spills over and contributes to talent identification and the growth of mass participation and a healthier nation.

In the foreword found of South Africa's most recent Sport and Recreation Strategic Plan the Minister of Sport and Recreation, Mr. Fikile Mbalula stated that the strategic direction of sport and recreation in South Africa "...is continuously being evaluated and reinvigorated to ensure that we remain ahead of the curve and latest trends in the very competitive world of sport and

recreation, and equally fulfil our strategic mandate” – which is that of an active and winning nation (Sport and Recreation South Africa, 2011).

The core focus of this strategic plan is on mass participation and sports development at grassroots level, with elite high performance sport being listed as goal number 7 on a top 10 priority list. This is because talent identification at the grassroots level is seen as the pipeline to high performance sports and elite athlete development and management, which could later translate into more medal winning opportunities for South Africa internationally (Sport and Recreation South Africa, 2010).

This approach is the inverse of the “virtuous cycle of sport” – the theory that attests that investment in elite sport promotes mass participation - which most sporting nations adopt. The South African government on the other hand, is not focusing the core of its investments on elite sport development in order to promote mass participation (Grix & Carmichael, 2012). Despite this inverse approach, this strategic plan shows that South Africa is slowly trying to create conditions whereby elite sporting potential can be nurtured in order for international sporting success to flourish (Lyle, 1997) by incorporating sport policies into their national political agenda (Green, 2004).

2.3 The History of Olympic Sport Management in South Africa

2.3.1 National Olympic Committee of South Africa (NOCSA)

The National Olympic Committee of South Africa (NOCSA) was the controlling body that oversaw elite high performance sport in South Africa following the official abolishment of apartheid, by preparing, developing and selecting elite athletes for major international

competitions and was formally recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1991.

After having international sanctions lifted in 1992, South Africa was invited to partake in the Barcelona Olympic Games, where a team of 95 athletes achieved the overall result of 2 silver medals. It was this and later international successes that led NOCSA to establish its Operational Excellence (OPEX) Programme in 1994 to provide funding support to high performance athletes to improve on their medal winnings at the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games.

The rationale behind this was that a structured approach to funding and supporting elite athletes in preparing for major international competitions could lead to improved performances which could later translate into more medals at future international competitions (Grix & Carmichael, 2012; Sotiriadou & Shilbury, 2009). This led to the implemented programme being successful as South Africa went on to win 3 gold, 1 silver and 1 bronze medal at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games from a team of 84, which was an improvement from the 2 silver medals in Barcelona with a slightly larger contingent.

The main objective of the OPEX Programme was to provide identified potential future medal winners for international competitions with support towards their training and preparations. This support was provided through an annual grant that covered elite athletes' basic expenditures relating to training and preparation: training; travel – mainly for overseas competitions/participation; coaching; equipment; medical and scientific testing and training camps (NOCSA, 2004).

Once elite athletes were identified, this monetary support was distributed via a three tier approach (NOCSA, 2004):

- Tier one was allocated to potential medallists - elite athletes, who through their past performances showed that they could win medals at major international competitions;
- Tier two was allocated to potential finalists - elite athletes, who through their performances showed that they could make the final at major international competitions and
- Tier three was allocated to potential participants - elite athletes who through their performances, showed that they could match or exceed qualifying standards set in order to attend future Olympic Games.

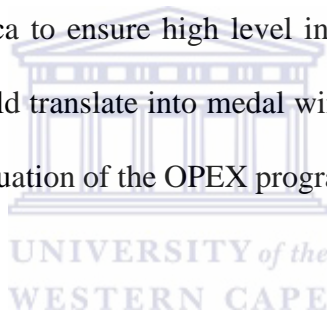
To be placed in Tier one, elite athletes had to: rank in the top 8 in the world in their discipline and have won medals at world championships. Tier two supported those who were: ranked 9 to 16 in the world in their disciplines and were able to reach a final or achieve a top 8 finishing at previous world championships. Tier three was the “development” tier which focused on: those ranked 17 to 24 in the world in their disciplines and who had won medals at continental championships. Tier three also fast-tracked athletes who had the potential to participate at major international competitions – especially athletes of colour (NOCSA, 2004).

Yet, despite the above mentioned achievements and investments in high performance sport, and winning 5 medals (2 silver and 3 bronze) at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games (Official Website of the Olympic Movement, 2014), the then Minister of Sport and Recreation, Mr Ngconde Balfour felt the need to investigate high performance sport in South Africa by forming a Ministerial Task Team. Their purpose was to identify and assess factors which were negatively affecting elite athletes in South Africa. One of the main factors identified by this

task team was that there were too many sporting bodies in South Africa being managed differently, that contributed different views to high performance sport. Subsequently it was agreed that all high performance related functions were to be overseen by one sporting body, thus NOCSA was dissolved along with other high performance sporting bodies and SASCOC was created.

2.3.2 South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC)

The objectives of the newly formed SASCOC were no different from NOCSA's because most of the founding members of SASCOC had been part of NOCSA. This meant that SASCOC's mandate was the same as NOCSA's had been – to oversee, develop and promote high performance sport in South Africa to ensure high level international participation by South African elite athletes, which would translate into medal winners at future major international competitions. This saw the continuation of the OPEX programme that had been established by NOCSA in 1994.



The funding support now being offered by SASCOC through OPEX, built on from what had been initially established by NOCSA. The OPEX programme now covered:

- Living expenses
- Medical aid
- Transport for training sessions
- Access to world class training facilities
- International camps and competitions prior to major championships
- Local camps and competitions
- Coaching fees
- Scientific and medical support services

- Technological services
- Sport specific equipment

The criteria now set by SASCOC for eligibility into OPEX did not only look at international rankings and the medal potential of elite senior athletes as its predecessor NOCSA had done. It was now also focusing on: talented youth and junior athletes with potential for international success at senior levels; the socioeconomic background and circumstances of elite athletes; their performance history at major international competitions year on year and their eligibility regarding qualification and participation for the next Olympic cycle (SASCOC, Operation Excellence Programme Eligibility Criteria: Road to Rio 2016, 2012).

A three tier approach was again adopted, but with some modifications to its criteria. Prior to the London 2012 Olympic Games, a top 8 world ranking was required in order to receive support on Tier one (SASCOC Annual Report 2011/2012, 2012). However, the latest documentation from SASCOC – *Operation Excellence Programme Eligibility Criteria: Road to Rio 2016 Plan*, showed: athletes in Tier one would receive comprehensive support from SASCOC, which meant that nearly all their training and preparation needs would be met. To now be included in tier one, athletes were expected to have won a medal or have been finalists at the previous Olympic Games, London 2012, and would need to still be eligible for the next Olympic Games – Rio 2016 (SASCOC, Operation Excellence Programme Eligibility Criteria: Road to Rio 2016, 2012).

SASCOC's *Road to Rio 2016* presentation to government in 2013 made an inclusion for new athletes who had never received support from SASCOC and had not medalled or made the final at the previous Olympic Games – London 2012 (SASCOC, Road to Rio 2016, 2013). They

could be considered for Tier one as long as they ranked in the top 6 to 8 globally at the time of selection. However, this added stipulation in SASCOG's presentation to government, was not updated as part of the eligibility criteria of their final *Road to Rio 2016* document released in 2012 and which can be found on their website.

Tier two would focus on: junior and youth athletes that won medals or made finals at major international championships within their age groups and would be eligible and have the potential to be considered for the next Olympic Games – Rio 2016. Restrictions were placed on the type of support that SASCOG would provide to athletes and these restrictions were made final in discussions with each individual athlete and his or her respective federation (SASCOG, Operation Excellence Programme Eligibility Criteria: Road to Rio 2016, 2012).

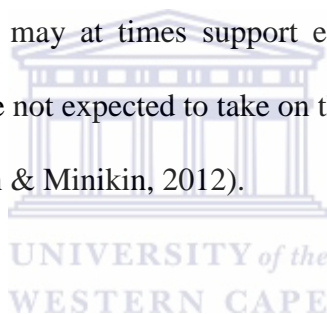
Tier three was for those athletes who were not able to qualify for support from the above mentioned tiers, but had consistently shown that they had the potential to win medals at major international competitions. In this case, their federation would have to motivate for their inclusion into the OPEX programme, but this motivation did not always constitute approval by SASCOG. If approved though, SASCOG would determine the manner of support to be given to the athlete, which would focus on the key aspects pertinent to their preparation as agreed upon by the athlete, their coach and federation for major international championships (SASCOG, Operation Excellence Programme Eligibility Criteria: Road to Rio 2016, 2012).

Not only was SASCOG now exercising discretion regarding support, they were also stipulating that they had the right to remove/exclude athletes from the OPEX programme if they were of the opinion that athletes no longer met the criteria that their federations used to motivate for

their inclusion into the OPEX programme (SASCOC, Operation Excellence Programme Eligibility Criteria, Road to Rio 2016, 2012).

2.4 Stakeholder Policies and Elite Athlete Funding Support

Most sporting powerhouses allow their national sport federations to run and take responsibility of talent identification, manage, develop and prepare their elite athletes and coaches, as well as taking control of high performance programmes in collaboration with high performance agencies (Sotiriadou & Shilbury, 2009; Koh-Tan, 2011; Robinson & Minikin, 2012). This allows Olympic committees to monitor operations across all Olympic codes and to provide funding for high performance programmes and initiatives and logistical support for major international competitions. They may at times support elite athlete preparation for major international competitions, but are not expected to take on the responsibility for preparing and managing elite athletes (Robinson & Minikin, 2012).



This does not appear to be the case in South Africa. The “White Paper on Sport and Recreation” and “The National Sport and Recreation Plan” outline SASCOC’s powers with respect to high performance sport management. Through provisions made in these documents, SASCOC has been mandated by government to oversee elite high performance sport in the country, which is inclusive of the selection and preparation of elite athletes for major multisport events. Through funding provided by the Department of Sport and Recreation (SRSA) and the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund (NLDTF), SASCOC’s main objective is to develop elite athletes to ensure international success for South Africa through the acquisition of medals at major international championships.

This is achieved through the provision of established athlete and coach support programmes and increasing access to programmes in order to ensure that the athletes receive every possible support in order to excel at international championships. The return on investment of these programmes and the monies invested would be evaluated through: the number of medals won at international competitions; improved international rankings for athletes/teams; number of athletes supported by the elite high performance programmes and the number of coaches who are able to produce high performance athletes with medal winning potential (National Sport and Recreation Plan, 2012).

The National Federations (NFs) are therefore tasked to identify and develop talent and improve the international standings and performances of their various codes (Hallmann & Petry, 2013). This would be through the development of strategic plans spearheaded by a national/head coach in connection with the development of a national high performance training programme. Thus allowing for accountability by the federations with regard to the progress of their sporting codes at major international championships (SRSA, White Paper on Sport and Recreation, 2011).

2.5 National Federations and High Performance Strategies of Selected Countries

The success of nations at major international championships and their competitive advantage relies upon their national federations and their abilities to produce world class athletes (Robinson & Minikin, 2012). And in order for this to be done, the national federations need to have clear guidelines on how this can be achieved through the establishment of high performance strategies. These strategies will provide information on what is expected in terms of performances, in relation to the composition of the different levels of funding support and support services that is to be provided in partnership by the national federations and national high performance agency.

An overview of global high performance strategies and policy guidelines will be presented to provide some insight into how high performance is managed in nations with similar performance levels as that of South Africa.

Sporting nations such as Australia and Great Britain - that have seen vast improvements at elite level – can credit this to their separation of management and development powers at elite levels and the formation of strategies for high performance sport (Arnold, Fletcher & Molyneux, 2012). There are other countries from the global South such as for example Kenya, Ethiopia or Brazil that have improved their number of Olympic medals over the years and that outshine South Africa on an elite level, particularly Kenya and Ethiopia. However, this study will look closer at Australia and Great Britain as their Olympic Committees have similarly aligned mandates to that of SASCOC when it comes to elite athlete management - to support, prepare and develop high performance sport for the Olympic Games.



Where the differences come in is that in South Africa, it is widely known that SASCOC gets most of its funding from the public sector – the Department of Sport and Recreation South Africa and the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund and it is SASCOC which is responsible for preparing teams for all international multi-event competitions (SASCOC, 2014).

The British Olympic Association (BOA) on the other hand is independent of government and privately funded through their own fundraising initiatives and events held and have no political affiliations (Team GB, 2014). The Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) also does not receive money from government, except for contributions made to their newly launched Olympic Team Appeal Programme. Rather their funding is derived from: the Australian Olympic Fund; IOC

grants; licensing, sponsorship and fundraising activities as well as: State (provincial) Olympic Councils and Corporate Appeal Committees (Australian Olympic Committee, 2014).

The BOA and AOC are solely focused on the Olympics and on supporting elite athletes during each Olympic cycle, and use other established institutions (such as their national federations) to prepare their elite performers for singular code regional (continental) and world championships.

Table 1: Role of Olympic Committees

	South Africa	Great Britain	Australia
Monitor Operations Across Olympic Codes	✓	✓	✓
Provide NFs with Funding for HP	X	✓	✓
Logistical Support for International Competition	✓	✓	✓
Support Elite Athlete Preparation	✓	✓	✓
Independent of Government	X	✓	✓
Privately Funded Through own Fundraising	X	✓	✓
Focused on Olympic Cycles	X	✓	✓

With regards to national federations, Athletics Australia and British Athletics which are the national federations for track and field athletics in these two countries, found a great benefit in drawing up high performance strategies for each Olympic cycle which would guide them in identifying, managing and developing elite athletes (Athletics Australia, 2013; British Athletics, 2013).

2.5.1 Athletics

2.5.1.1 Athletics South Africa (ASA)

Athletics South Africa has been a federation that has experienced some troubles in recent times, but 2014 was the year that much change came about. A new, democratically elected board was appointed and with this board, a strategic turnaround plan was initiated. With this plan, ASA committed itself to (Athletics South Africa, 2014):

- Developing athletics in South Africa.
- Ensuring that people from previously disadvantaged communities participated in athletics.
- Preparing athletes for participation at international competitions.

This newly formulated strategic turnaround plan is supported by ASA's Constitution which simply states that they are responsible for "... the sourcing of the sponsorship for teams to international athletics competitions" and for "The development of the sport to the highest levels of excellence." (ASA Constitution, 2008).

This is a reflection of their efforts to work towards strategically placing themselves to monitor and obtain support for elite athletes at national and international levels in order to produce world class athletes (Athletics South Africa, 2014).

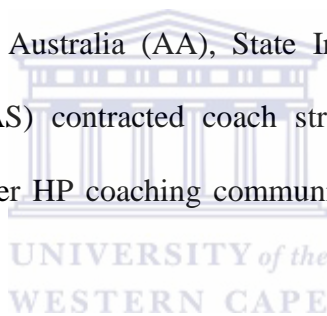
2.5.1.2 Athletics Australia

Athletics Australia (AA) on the other hand with its 2013 – 2016 High Performance Strategy Programme has clearly outlined 12 strategic objectives to ensure that as a national federation they are able to provide a sustainable and affordable programme that is able to identify and

nurture athletes with realistic medal winning potential at international levels (Nathan, 2013).

The 12 strategic objectives are to:

- “Create a database of the world’s best athlete’s performances and use intelligence derived from this information to provide an objective evidence base for the programme;
- Focus support on those individuals most likely to achieve the programmes aims by creating a national tiered structure that appropriately recognises and supports athletes;
- Provide squad based support for the best Australian Athletes in the U19 and U17 age groups (e.g. U20 and U18 in the following season);
- Manage AA’s Member Association’s implementation of squad based support for the best young State / Territory athletes;
- Rationalise the Athletics Australia (AA), State Institute of Sport (SIS) and State Academies of Sport (SAS) contracted coach structure and provide development opportunities to the greater HP coaching community to compliment the formal AA coach education system;
- Rationalise the provision and quality of the non-coaching aspects of NASS athlete’s daily training environment;
- Deliver able bodied major championships teams with athletes selected and supported appropriately for the aims of the program;
- Deliver para-athlete major championships teams with athletes selected and supported appropriately for the aims of the program;
- Deliver age group major championships teams with athletes selected and supported appropriately for the aims of the program;
- Influence peak sporting bodies to re-evaluate the age group major championships calendar;



- Improve communications between AA's High Performance programme and the Australian athletics community;
- Due to a lack of resources some programmes can only be partially implemented or must be held at the planning stage until additional resources can be secured" (Athletics Australia, 2014).

2.5.1.3 British Athletics

British Athletics has a different approach to that of Athletics Australia. They developed a 12 year strategy plan that was broken up into 3 stages (United Kingdom Athletics, 2014):

- Stage 1 Build (2005 – 2009): over this initial period British Athletics put in place foundations for the development of elite performances at the grassroots level.
- Stage 2 Develop (2009 – 2013): they created the conditions for success through such provisions as the creation of more high performance training centres across their counties which offered a pipeline from their increased grassroots initiatives.
- Stage 3 Excel (2013 – 2017): is where the foundations laid down in the earlier two stages see fruition. Through the financial and support services support provided by their partners over the years, there is now a growing increase in medals at major international competitions.

2.5.1.4 Partnerships with High Performance Agencies

There is no established national high performance agency in South Africa, but there are four internationally recognised high performance agencies in the country that partner with coaches and elite athletes to assist in preparing and delivering established high performance training programmes. These agencies are:

- Sports Science Institute of South Africa (SSISA) in Cape Town.

- High Performance Centre (HPC) in Pretoria.
- High Performance Institute of Sport (HPI) in Potchefstroom.
- Stellenbosch University Sport Performance Institute (SUSPI) in Stellenbosch.

Funding support for the elite athletes with respect to these agencies and programmes, however, does not come from ASA in this regard, but from SASCOG. This support is only granted if athletes include it in their budgets and if they are approved by SASCOG and if they have been added to the OPEX programme.

Great Britain and Australia use their high performance strategies in partnership with their national high performance agencies – Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) and UK Sport - in preparing and delivering elite athletes through high performance programmes. AIS and UK Sport focus solely on delivering elite high performance athletes through the various services that they provide: sports medicine, sports science, sport psychology, nutrition etc. and thus, take on the accountability and responsibility for how elite athletes perform when they have to account to their respective Olympic committees.

2.5.1.5 Comparison of Olympic Performances in Athletics

A quick overview of the performances of South Africa, Great Britain and Australia in track and field athletics at the last four Olympic Games (2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012), shows elite athletes performances from these three nations, which can be compared to the high performance management strategies mentioned above, by their national federations (Official Website of the Olympic Movement, 2014).

This will be presented in the following tables below:

Table 2: Sydney 2000 Olympic Games

<i>Country</i>	<i>Gold Medals</i>	<i>Silver Medals</i>	<i>Bronze Medals</i>	<i>Medal Total</i>	<i>Rank on Medal Table</i>
Great Britain	2	2	2	6	6 th
Australia	1	2	0	3	13 th
South Africa	0	1	2	3	29 th

Table 3: Athens 2004 Olympic Games

<i>Country</i>	<i>Gold Medals</i>	<i>Silver Medals</i>	<i>Bronze Medals</i>	<i>Medal Total</i>	<i>Rank on Medal Table</i>
Great Britain	3	0	1	4	3 rd
South Africa	0	2	0	2	25 th
Australia	0	1	2	3	26 th

Table 4: Beijing 2008 Olympic Games

<i>Country</i>	<i>Gold Medals</i>	<i>Silver Medals</i>	<i>Bronze Medals</i>	<i>Medal Total</i>	<i>Rank on Medal Table</i>
Great Britain	1	2	1	4	8 th
Australia	1	2	1	4	8 th
South Africa	0	1	0	1	29 th (tied with Sudan)

Table 5: London 2012 Olympic Games

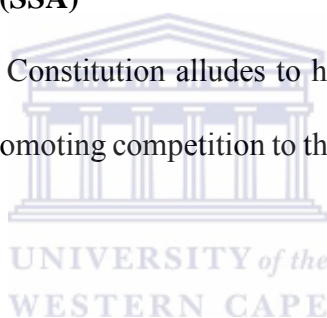
<i>Country</i>	<i>Gold Medals</i>	<i>Silver Medals</i>	<i>Bronze Medals</i>	<i>Medal Total</i>	<i>Rank on Medal Table</i>
Great Britain	4	1	1	6	4 th

Australia	1	2	0	3	8 th
South Africa	0	1	0	1	26 th (tied with Botswana, Colombia, Guatemala, Iran, Slovenia and Tunisia)

2.5.2 Swimming

2.5.2.1 Swimming South Africa (SSA)

Swimming South Africa's (SSA) Constitution alludes to high performance with one of their main objectives focusing on "...promoting competition to the highest level." (Swimming South Africa Constitution, 2011).



Together with SASCOC, SSA has produced a Long Term Participant Development (LTPD) model. The premise of this model is that the physiological, mental/cognitive and emotional development of each individual athlete must be identified and considered as coaches develop the necessary training, competition and recovery programmes towards elite performance. Yet it does not stipulate exact strategies/pathways to reach elite levels and leaves that up to the discretion of each elite coach (SASCOC, 2014).

SSA has created a 4 year strategy plan that covers the quadrennial leading up to the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. The aim of this strategic plan is to ensure that as a federation, they build on from past international success and performances by assessing what changes they need to

implement in order to maintain and even surpass their international competitiveness. To do this they have identified four strategic objectives:

- “Increase participation in aquatic sports - mass participation;
- Improve performance at domestic competitions and increase finalists and medal winners at continental and international competitions - high performance;
- Improve governance, management and communication of programmes and services - governance and organizational development;
- Ensure aquatic sport is accessible to, representative of and responsive to the needs of all South Africans –transformation” (Swimming South Africa Strategy 2016, 2015).

Within high performance, SSA will focus on 6 project areas, namely: domestic competitions; continental and international competitions; talent identification and development; performance centres; sports science and doping control to ensure the following outcomes:

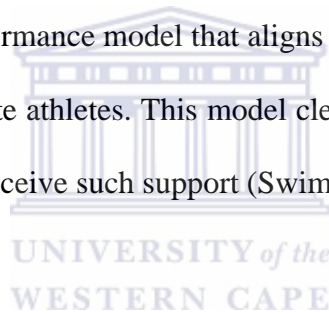
- “The number and depth of participants at domestic competitions are increased and improved;
- The number of athletes meeting A-qualifying times for the Olympic Games is increased;
- A clear athlete development pathway is formulated and implemented;
- The number of active and results driven performance centres and centres of excellence are increased;
- Sports science capacity and implementation is improved;
- Doping control is effectively managed and monitored” (Swimming South Africa Strategy 2016, 2015).

2.5.2.2 Swimming Australia

Swimming Australia also has a strategic plan in place for their elite athletes, with clear aims to develop and strengthen their management, development and talent identification through such objectives such as (Swimming Australia, 2012):

- “The provision of strong domestic and international competitions;
- Providing structured accredited programmes and ongoing learning opportunities to support and develop their coaches to elite levels;
- Creating a strong network of support services for the elite athletes”.

Not only does Swimming Australia have a strategic plan in place for their elite athletes, they also have established a high performance model that aligns itself to this strategic plan in order to help fund and support their elite athletes. This model clearly outlines the funding structure and the requirements needed to receive such support (Swimming Australia, 2012).



2.5.2.3 British Swimming

British Swimming in recent years established a strategic plan and high performance support programme. Their strategic plan clearly states what their objectives are and how they plan to achieve these objectives through:

- “Technical programmes which will target specific events and their technical areas and focus resources on strengthening themselves in these areas;
- Elite coaching development to ensure that elite coaches enhance and strengthen their knowledge base, expertise etc.;
- Provision of a daily training environment to provide the best available resources to elite athletes in order for them to have the needed support to maximise their training and improve on future performances”.

Their high performance programme – World Class Programmes: Podium and Podium Potential

- clearly sets out in detailed documents (British Swimming, 2013):

- The rationale behind the programme.
- The requirements needed to be on the programme.
- Considerations to be made if an athlete on the programme falls seriously ill, becomes pregnant or gets injured (and cannot train).
- The various types of support offered (similar to SASCOC's three tier OPEX programme).

2.5.2.4 Partnerships with High Performance Agencies

As previously stated, South Africa does not have an appointed high performance agency, therefore SSA instructs elite coaches to develop their training programmes with the strategic objectives of the SSA 2016 strategy and the LTPD in mind.

On the other hand, Swimming Australia and British Swimming formulate their federation's strategic plans and then together with their high performance agencies – AIS and UK Sport – they establish their high performance programmes and policies and work in partnership to ensure delivery and accountability.

2.5.2.5 Comparison of Olympic Performances in Swimming

The above mentioned delivery of high performance strategies can be used to compare the overall/combined performances by South Africa, Great Britain, and Australia in swimming at the last four Olympic Games (2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012) (Official Website of the Olympic Movement, 2014).

This will be presented in the following tables below:

Table 6: Sydney 2000 Olympic Games

<i>Country</i>	<i>Gold Medals</i>	<i>Silver Medals</i>	<i>Bronze Medals</i>	<i>Medal Total</i>	<i>Rank on Medal Table</i>
Australia	5	9	4	18	2 nd
South Africa	0	1	1	2	11 th (tied with Russia)
Great Britain	0	0	0	0	-

Table 7: Athens 2004 Olympic Games

<i>Country</i>	<i>Gold Medals</i>	<i>Silver Medals</i>	<i>Bronze Medals</i>	<i>Medal Total</i>	<i>Rank on Medal Table</i>
Australia	7	5	3	15	2 nd
South Africa	1	1	1	3	8 th (tied with Zimbabwe)
Great Britain	0	0	2	2	18 th

Table 8: Beijing 2008 Olympic Games

<i>Country</i>	<i>Gold Medals</i>	<i>Silver Medals</i>	<i>Bronze Medals</i>	<i>Medal Total</i>	<i>Rank on Medal Table</i>
Australia	6	6	8	20	2 nd
Great Britain	2	2	2	6	3 rd
South Africa	0	0	0	0	-

Table 9: London 2012 Olympic Games

<i>Country</i>	<i>Gold Medals</i>	<i>Silver Medals</i>	<i>Bronze Medals</i>	<i>Medal Total</i>	<i>Rank on Medal Table</i>
South Africa	2	1	0	3	5 th
Australia	1	6	3	10	7 th
Great Britain	0	1	2	3	15 th (tied with Canada)

Although South Africa won three medals at the London 2012 Olympic Games and ranked 5th on the medal table, it has to be noted that this was achieved by only two swimmers.

The table below gives an overview of the discussion above, regarding the part that national federations in South Africa, Great Britain and Australia play when it comes to elite high performance sport.

**Table 10: National Federations Part in Elite High Performance Sport**

	South Africa	Great Britain	Australia
Established National HP Agency	X	✓	✓
Develop & Deliver HP Sport	✓	✓	✓
Partnership with National HP Agency	X	✓	✓
HP Strategic Plan	✓	✓	✓
Accountability for Elite Performances	✓	✓	✓
Receive Funding for HP Programmes	X	✓	✓
Set Selection/Performance Standards to Provide Support	X	✓	✓

2.6 Elite Athlete Management Programme Factors

When it comes to identifying the key factors to elite funding support for international success, there is a lack of research and studies which have been able to identify the exact elements that are needed. Despite this, the overarching acceptance is that elite athlete management programmes form part of the core in elite athlete success (Houlihan & Green, 2007). There are various factors within the type of support offered which are seen as positive influences. Yet the three core interlinking factors which stand out in relation to this study are: The institutions that oversee high performance sport (SASCOC; UK Sport and Australian Institute for Sport); the elite athletes and the resources (monetary grants and support services).

2.6.1 Institutions Overseeing High Performance

Considering the institutions involved in elite athlete management, means looking at the custodians of all things related to elite sporting performances. These custodians have the experience, knowledge and human capital to help put in place the support needed by elite athletes in order to succeed. In South Africa's case, SASCOC is the institution that oversees high performance.

It needs to be noted as was previously mentioned that there are internationally recognised high performance centres in South Africa, such as: Sports Science Institute of South Africa (SSISA) in Cape Town, the High Performance Centre (HPC) in Pretoria, the High Performance Institute of Sport (HPI) in Potchefstroom as well as the Sport Performance Institute (SUSPI) in Stellenbosch. On a school level sports schools such as the Western Cape Sports School or the Sports Academy in Knysna, lend support and resources to junior athletes. Noteworthy in this context is also a recent study of assessment of quality management practices in high

performance sport in Swimming Centres of Excellence at the University of the Western Cape and the University of Pretoria (Groenewald, 2014). However, in terms of funding support in form of monetary grants to help elite athletes with training, travel and preparation costs, SASCOC is the overall institution overseeing high performance in South Africa through the establishment of the OPEX programme.

2.6.2 Elite Athletes

The elite athletes concerned are not just those that currently have the ability to win medals at major international competitions, but also those athletes that through their past performances, have shown potential. This potential is seen as the ability to win medals within the next two Olympic cycles - 2016 and 2020.



2.6.3 Resources and Support

When one talks of resources, its immediately assumed that it is monetary based. When it comes to elite athlete management, much needed resources go beyond the monetary aspect, even though funding does form a major component. Resources to the elite athlete include coaching support; training and competition support; medical and scientific services; access to the best sporting facilities possible; talent identification opportunities and pathways (SASCOC, 2014; UK Sport, 2014 & Australian Institute of Sport, 2014). These resources can also be found at the centres of excellence and high performance centres of sport referred to under 2.6.

The relationship between the institutions, athletes and resources provided are key factors when it comes to elite athlete management programmes and an attempt needs to be made regarding this symbiotic relationship. The institutions need to have processes in place which will enhance the performance of the elite athletes and in order for this to be established, resources are needed.

The institutions need to work closely together in order to ensure effective delivery of programmes.

When dealing with resources, any issues that may arise – be it inadequate sporting facilities, inability to access scientific services, lack of adequate funding etc. can also impact on the relationship. For it doesn't matter if the institutions and athletes have an understanding and working relationship, if the means are inadequate, no matter how much time and effort is put in from both sides, athletes may not reach their potential.

2.7 International Lessons of Experience

Now that the importance of the key factors involved in elite athlete funding support have been presented and discussed, the processes and policies related to elite athlete funding support shall be discussed. This to present international lessons of experience, as there was limited access to information pertaining to elite athlete funding support in South Africa.



2.7.1 Funding Support

Great Britain does things differently through their World Class Programme. They provide standardised allocated amounts across five levels of support. Their national high performance agency UK Sport is the custodian of these funds received from National Lottery. The amounts provided at each level of support are all per annum and are paid out to the athletes on either a monthly basis or a quarterly (every three months) basis depending on the level at which the athletes are supported (UK Sport, 2013).

Australia also has a similar approach to that of Great Britain. With a Direct Athlete Support Scheme (DAS) to support targeted elite athletes, funding is channelled through the Australian

Sports Commission (ASC). They offer assistance on four levels and an emerging level. Unlike Great Britain, in Australia the allocated amounts are paid out bi-annually (Australian Sports Commission, 2013).

In addition to the support received from the DAS, Athletics Australia and Swimming Australia have additional funding programmes to support elite athletes. Athletics Australia has a newly formed programme – National Athlete Support Structure (NASS) and Swimming Australia has the Georgina Hope Foundation Swimmer Support Scheme (GHFSS), which is paid out quarterly (Georgina Hope Foundation, 2014).

Great Britain and Australia also provide other resources and services to their elite athletes through their national high performance agencies, as a top up to the monetary grants they receive. And the relevant institutions involved in these two countries have also established combined annual capped incomes that athletes receiving support on their programmes are not to surpass in order to ensure that those that receive support are in actual need of it (Australian Sports Commission, 2013; UK Sport, 2013).

2.7.2 Providing Support

Other nations don't necessarily stipulate expectations of a global top 10 ranking in order to support their athletes, as this is not always an indicator of expected performances at major international competitions as past results have shown. Great Britain and Australia seem to be aware of this as they have laid down specific performance indicators in policy documents focusing on individual and relay athletes.

With the focus of this study being on the individual athlete, only individual athlete criteria from these two nations shall be discussed. When it comes to British Swimming they consider:

- Medallists from previous international championships;
- Those who obtained 4th – 8th position in their respective finals at previous international competitions;
- Those with performance improvements that show a potential to medal at future international competitions such as the 2020 Olympic Games;
- Individual junior medallists at international championships or those who achieve set performance standards stipulated in their policies;
- Junior relay medallists or those who also achieved set performance standards stipulated in their policies (British Swimming, 2013).

British Athletics on the other hand support:

- Medallists from the 2012 Olympics Games or the 2013 World Championships;
- Those who finished in the top 8 in an individual event at the 2012 Olympics Games or the 2013 World Championships;
- Those finishing in the top 16 in an individual track/road event or top 12 in a field event at the 2012 Olympics Games or the 2013 World Championships;
- Athletes who are able to achieve set selection standards (times and/or distances) within a prescribed qualification period (British Athletics, 2013) with the potential of being able to reach the final in their event at the 2017 World Championships and win a medal at the 2020 Olympic Games;
- Athletes with the potential to win a medal at the 2020 Olympic Games in an individual event (British Athletics, 2013).

Australia's DAS criteria is used by both Athletics Australia and Swimming Australia, and it requires:

- Athletes supported in Tier 1 to have their performances ranked in the top 5 of Benchmarked Events (BME) – sports which have continuously proved in the past to provide medals for Australia at Olympic, Commonwealth or World Championship levels results.
- Those supported on tier 2 must have their performances ranked amongst the top 6 to 10 BME results.
- Those supported on tier 3 should rank in the top 3 in the Commonwealth.
- Those to be supported on the Emerging level to show a strong potential to medal at the 2018 Commonwealth Games (Australian Sports Commission, 2013).

Athletics Australia has a National Athlete Support Structure (NASS) programme that provides further support to elite athletes and is split into two main programmes: Enhanced NASS for those with realistic chances of winning medals for Australia and Team NASS for those selected to represent Australia at major international competitions, even if they may not medal (Athletics Australia, 2013).

Swimming Australia's Georgina Hope Foundation Swimmer Support Scheme (GHFSSS) makes use of FINA world rankings and qualifying times to provide Senior Elite Athlete Living Support (Georgina Hope Foundation, 2014).

2.7.3 Losing Support

Great Britain and Australia document the allowances that they make for short term non-performance of supported athletes to allow them time to get back to form. British Athletics

provides clear guidelines in their World Class Performance Programme Selection Policy for what they term “Performance Limiting Factor’s” (British Athletics, 2013). They clearly state that athletes who fail to meet the programmes selection criteria would have their support removed unless it can be documented and verified by British Athletics’ Chief Medical Officer or a Medical Officer that the athlete is not performing due to injury, illness or pregnancy. If any of these issues occur, it is reasonably expected that the athlete may train in a limited capacity or not at all for at least three months (British Athletics, 2013).

If it’s a case of injury or illness, a rehabilitation programme shall be drawn up and approved by all stakeholders involved in the athlete’s performance and the athlete may be retained at their existing level of support or retained without their Athlete Personal Award (APA). They would still be entitled to other benefits of the programme essential to their recovery. With these stipulations and continued support, athletes are given up to a year to produce performance similar to what they had been achieving before injury or illness. If they are unable to achieve this due to the severity of their injury/illness, British Athletics may use their discretion in giving the athlete another year to try to achieve the expected results (British Athletics, 2013).

In the case of pregnancy, athletes who have given birth or who are due to give birth will be retained on the programme only if:

- They wish to remain on the programme.
- If they fully comply with advice given by the Chief Medical Officer regarding their training and preparation for championship years (pre and post birth).
- If the programme selection Panel believe the athlete will still be able to perform post birth (British Athletics, 2013).

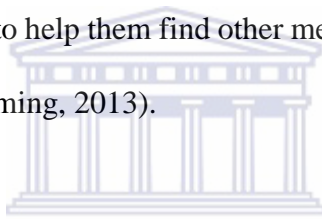
Female athletes will be given a year after giving birth to achieve a top 16 track/road or a top 12 field event placing at the next World Championships or Olympic Games. They will also be given +another year (2 years after giving birth) to produce/fully meet the criteria set down for receiving support in their respective Bands (British Athletics, 2013). In South Africa, along with there being no documentation regarding injured or ill athletes, there is also no available documentation advising on how elite female athletes can be supported once pregnant.

British Swimming offer two scenarios for their Podium and Podium Potential athletes who may find themselves injured or ill as well as providing guidelines for pregnant athletes (British Swimming, 2013). Scenario one is for those individuals already receiving support who become sick or injured before a major international championship or national trials or whose performance is severely affected at specified benchmark events due to illness or injury. In cases like this, British Swimming's Chief Medical Officer (CMO) would have to provide the National Performance Director (NPD) with a report regarding the extent of the injury or illness. This will be used along with the athletes' performance history to assess if they would be able to return to form the following year (season). If it is believed so, they will be kept on the programme and performance targets and timelines related to their recovery will be drawn up and agreed upon by the athlete, their coach and the National Performance Director (British Swimming, 2013).

Scenario two would be a situation whereby an athlete has just recently started receiving support and then they find themselves sick or injured, the extent of which would impact on their training, leading to them being unable to perform at their best in future championships or national trials. In this situation the NPD and CMO will be joined by the Head/National Coach and the Sports Science Sports Medicine (SSSM) Manager in assessing and deciding whether

or not the athlete would be able recover and perform as is required before the appropriate national trials/international championships. If it is believed that it can be done, then just like in scenario one performance targets and timelines will be drawn up and agreed upon (British Swimming, 2013).

With both cases, British Swimming will have the CMO provide a progress report of the injured athlete every one to two months to the NPD. If they believe that the athlete is not meeting the agreed upon timelines and performance targets, the athlete will be removed from the high performance programme and shall be informed in writing. However, they shall continue to receive funding for a further three months after being informed of their removal from the programme. This will be in order to help them find other means of supporting themselves once off the programme (British Swimming, 2013).



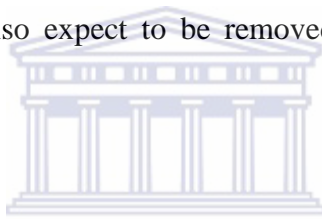
In the case of pregnancy, athletes may receive funding during their pregnancy and after childbirth. This is possible only once they have agreed to a training and competition programme with the NPD. This programme will chart their return to competition and world class performance after childbirth. The athlete's progress will be assessed by the NPD three months after giving birth against their agreed upon targets to check if they are indeed on track in getting back to form. If it is felt that this is not the case, just as with athletes who are injured or taken ill, they will be given a three month notice period informing them of their removal from the programme and any support related to it (British Swimming, 2013).

Australia does not provide comprehensive guidelines for non-performance as Great Britain, but they do make some sort of allowances. Athletics Australia expect year on year progression

from the elite athletes that they support and clearly state so in their NASS Selection Policy document (Athletics Australia, 2014).

Athletes on the Enhanced NASS programme are expected to show improvements in their personal best's (PBs) for their respective events every year. If they are unable to do this for two successive years irrespective of injury or other extenuating factors, it is clearly stated that they should expect to be removed from the programme (Athletics Australia, 2013).

Athletes are also given three years to move up to the next/higher levels on the Enhanced NASS programme. Just as is the case with PBs, irrespective of injury or any other extenuating circumstances, athletes should also expect to be removed from the programme (Athletics Australia, 2013).



Athletics Australia does make mention that athletes may be retained even if they are unable to achieve the two above mentioned requirements. This will only be considered in exceptional cases if their personal circumstances and other extenuating factors give them reason to believe that the athlete still has a chance in meeting the aims and criteria laid down for the Enhanced NASS programme (Athletics Australia, 2013).

With regards to Swimming Australia, no documentation could be found relating to stipulated guidelines for non-performance due to illness or injury for the elite athletes supported on their programmes.

The table which will now be presented below summarises the discussions above, regarding support structure processes made available to elite athletes in South Africa, Great Britain and Australia.

Table 11: Support Structure Processes for Elite Sport

	South Africa	Great Britain	Australia
Budgeting of Training Expenses	✓	X	X
Reimbursement of Training Expenses	✓	X	X
Set Amounts Provided on Each Tier Supported	X	✓	✓
Support When Injured/Ill/Pregnant	X	✓	✓
Provide Proof of Expenditure	✓	✓	✓
Combined Annual Capped Incomes	X	✓	✓
Stipulated Time Period for Removal of Support	X	✓	✓

2.7.4 Institutional Arrangements for Funding Allocation

Great Britain and Australia provide information regarding the processes involved with funding support – from nomination of athletes to the selection panel that takes the final decisions (British Athletics, 2013; British Swimming, 2013; Australian Sports Council, 2014).

2.7.4.1 Selection Panel: British Athletics and British Swimming

In Great Britain, UK Sport grants each federation a specified number of places for their Podium and Podium Potential Programmes. Once the number of places have been made known before the start of each year, British Athletics and British Swimming appoint a selection panel to

review athletes who have achieved set down criteria for each funding level against the number of places made available for funding.

British Athletics also clearly outline the composition and duties of each member of the selection panel in their WCPP Selection Policy. The Panel comprises (British Athletics, 2013):

- British Athletics Performance Director (voting; casting).
- Head of Coaching and Development (voting).
- British Athletics Development Manager (non-voting).
- National Performance Institute Manager (voting).
- Representative(s) of each event as nominated by the Performance Director (voting)
- Medical representative(s) (non-voting).
- Media representative(s) (non-voting).
- Statistician(s) (non-voting).
- Independent Sport Observer (non-voting).
- Note taker(s) (non-voting).
- Performance Programme Manager (non-voting and chairperson).

The Panel convenes in a single selection meeting to decide on who will receive funding and assistance from the programme; at which levels the athletes will be placed within the programme and who will be kept off/removed from the programme. Conditions and targets for each individual athlete on the programme will also be drawn up at this meeting. Once everything has been finalised, athlete contracts are drawn up and forwarded to the athletes for signing.

British Swimming differs slightly with regard to their selection of athletes to support. Nominations are made by the GB Head Coach and NPD in line with those that have been able to meet or surpass the stipulated criteria for support for that year, along with a three year review of their performances. Nominated athletes and records of their performance history are sent to a panel of Technical Staff from British Swimming's World Class Programme. This panel convenes in September every year to review nominations and are given one week from the initial meeting to finalise the names of the athletes to be supported. The chosen athletes are notified in writing of their acceptance into the programme and are provided with athlete agreements/contracts to finalise the process (British Swimming, 2013).

2.7.4.2 Appeal Committee: British Athletics and British Swimming

Both British Athletics and British Swimming allow athletes to appeal decisions made by the panels with respect to decisions taken regarding their level of support and exclusion from receiving support. British Athletics provides clear guidelines on their WCPP Selection Policy on how athletes can appeal decisions made and allow for two appeals per decision (British Athletics, 2013). They also clearly state the extent of the Appeals Panel's powers. British Swimming offer various appeal procedures for decisions made in relation to support programmes, selection for national teams etc. and direct athletes to the British Swimming website for further information related to their specific appeals (British Swimming, 2013).

2.7.4.3 Selection Panel: DAS

As previously mentioned, Australia's DAS (which include Athletics Australia and Swimming Australia) scheme operates on two (biannual) funding periods, which means that nominations need to be made by the federations during each six month period. The federations will of course nominate athletes who meet or surpass the criteria stipulated by ASC for the DAS programme.

The nominations will be reviewed by the DAS Moderating Group in deciding which athletes DAS will support (Australian Sports Commission, 2013).

The DAS Moderating Group consists of members from the ASC as well as a delegate each from:

- Australian Olympic Committee (AOC)
- Australian Commonwealth Games Association (ACGA)
- Australian Paralympic Committee (APC)
- National Elite Sports Council (NESC).

This composition serves to ensure transparency and fairness in the selection process (Australian Sports Commission, 2014).



Once decisions have been made whether to accept or reject nominations, the federations shall be informed of the decisions taken in order to provide necessary documentation to draft athlete agreements for the successful nominees. Once these have been drawn up, they are sent to the athletes in order to finalise the process (Australian Sports Council, 2014).

With regards to Athletics Australia's NASS programme, a selection panel will convene to decide upon which athletes to provide support to (Athletics Australia, 2014). The selection panel will consist of:

- High Performance Director
- Olympic Head Coach
- Paralympic Programme Manager
- National Junior High Performance Manager

The panel will consult with the Chief Medical Officer and relevant statisticians before final decisions are made. Independent observers selected by the High Performance Advisory Committee will also be in attendance to ensure fairness and transparency in the process (Athletics Australia, 2014).

Unfortunately Swimming Australia’s GHFSSS programme does not provide information regarding the exact processes involved in athlete selection for the programme.

2.7.4.4 Appeal Committee: Australia

The DAS programme does not provide guidelines for athletes who wish to appeal decisions made by the DAS Moderating Group. Athletics Australia though does allow for athletes to request a review if they are in disagreement with decisions taken by the NASS selection panel (Athletics Australia, 2014). Their guidelines clearly state that an athlete has 30 days to request a review once the selection panel has made a decision. In this request they must give clear reasons as to why they dispute the decision(s) made by the selection panel. Once this has been submitted, the panel has 15 days after receiving the review request to respond appropriately. Whatever response that the selection panel gives is final and no appeals can be made (Athletics Australia, 2014).

Table 12: Powers and Processes of Elite Athlete Selection for Receiving Support

	South Africa	Great Britain	Australia
Athlete Nominations by NFs	✓	✓	✓
Time Frame/Period Given of When Nominations/Selections Take Place	X	✓	✓
Composition & Duties of Selection Panel Outlined	X	✓	✓

NFs Draws Up Athlete Agreements/Contracts	✓	✓	✓
Athletes Allowed to Appeal /Request Review of Selection Committees Decisions	X	✓	✓

2.8 Direct Funding (monetary) Support

When it comes to direct monetary support to elite athletes other nations follow a different process to that of South Africa's reimbursement process. As was previously mentioned, UK Sport deposits funds directly into athlete's personal accounts. This is done either on a monthly or a quarterly basis on the 25th of every month or the closest working day to the 25th of the month if that date falls on a weekend or public holiday. Whether they will be paid monthly or quarterly is all dependent on the level upon which the athlete is being supported, and when requested, athletes need to present proof that they are using the funding provided in order to improve their performances (UK Sport, 2014). They are also given a website (www.britishathletes.org/advice) where they can access information pertaining to managing their finances appropriately and where they are provided with the contact details of recommended accountants to assist them in doing so.

ASC follows a similar process to that of UK Sport, except that they deposit funds into athletes' accounts on a bi-annual basis and they also expect to receive proof of expenditure upon request (Australian Sports Commission, 2013). However, no information was accessible regarding possible assistance to athletes in managing their finances.

2.9 Chapter Conclusion

The information provided in this chapter shows that in South Africa, SASCOC has taken responsibility for high performance strategies and programmes, which is slightly unusual for a National Olympic Committee, with the federations (ASA and SSA) ensuring the administrative functioning of the sport. Overseas the situation is a different one as was indicated in this chapter. The lessons of experience provided in this chapter regarding Great Britain and Australia provide us with different options of how funding support pertaining to elite athletes could be managed. This in order to reap the rewards of increased medal wins at major international competitions.

Research related to funding support at elite levels of sport within South Africa has also yet to be initiated with the only known sport management processes being the unpublished work of Payi (2009). His research looked at how support structures could be used to aid in sport development at grass roots level within an impoverished community. However, although such a study is necessary to aid in government's strategic plan for overall sporting excellence, research as depicted by the results above, also needs to be conducted to identify areas of improvement at elite sporting levels, also taking good practices of other countries, sporting bodies and where applicable, centres of excellence and other high performance institutions into consideration. This would further lend to the significance of this particular explorative study of funding support at elite levels in South Africa.

It has also been identified that there is a dearth of knowledge within this field of study, as what is currently available focuses on the base level of sport development and mass participation, not on elite level participation. Therefore the findings within this study could also contribute to the National Sport and Recreation Plan's 8 year strategy which is to be reviewed in 2020, in

the same manner that current studies on sport development and mass participation are making a contribution.

The chapter which will now follow will describe the methodological approach which was adopted for the study.



CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will begin with an outline of the study design utilised. It is followed by a description of the criteria used to select participants for the study, and a detailed step by step guide of how data was collected and analysed. Afterwards an outline shall be provided on trustworthiness and reflexivity considerations as well as a mention of ethical considerations.

3.2 Study Design

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of elite athletes in South Africa, with regards to funding support that they received from SASCOC. The study adopted an exploratory qualitative approach. Semi-structured interviews with elite athletes and their coaches/managers were conducted, along with a document analysis of SASCOC's OPEX programme and SASCOC, ASA and SSA policies governing high performance sport – to gain an insight regarding institutional support for elite athlete management in South Africa.

3.2.1 Hypothesis

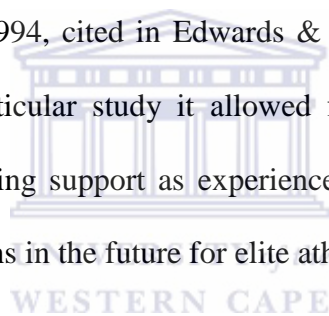
Chapter two provided evidence from available documentation that showed that the composition of funding support made available to elite athletes in South Africa differs considerably when compared with international standards – particularly that of Great Britain and Australia for the purposes of this study. These differences when analysed with the fieldwork results that will be presented in Chapter four and the tabulated Olympic performances of South Africa, Great Britain and Australia provided earlier, can allow the researcher to formulate and present the following hypothesis.

An improved understanding of differences in funding support as experienced by elite athletes may lead to improved options for funding support and elite athlete development.

The hypothesis serves in this regard as a working hypothesis which is often used as a conceptual framework in qualitative research (Shields & Tajalli, 2006).

3.2.2 Methodology of Qualitative Research

Using qualitative research for a sport management study allows for investigations into real-life events in order for the researcher to gain a comprehensive picture and better understanding of the events being studied (Yin, 1994, cited in Edwards & Skinner, 2012; Sparkes & Smith, 2013). With respect to this particular study it allowed for hypothesizing on whether an improved understanding of funding support as experienced by elite athletes would lead to improved financial support options in the future for elite athlete development.



The relevance to this particular study is that interviews with elite athletes and their coaches/managers whereby they shared their experiences and perceptions, allowed for insights and a more comprehensive picture into the funding support provided by SASCOC through their OPEX programme, which once compared with international lessons of experience, was aimed to provide options for future improved financial support (Edwards & Skinner, 2012; Charmaz, 2004, cited in Sparkes & Smith, 2013).

With respect to this particular study, it allowed for the hypothesis on whether an improved understanding of funding support as experienced by elite athletes would lead to improved financial support options in the future for elite athlete development. This improved

understanding, would allow the researcher to interpret the results in order to prove or disprove the hypothesis (Black, 1994).

3.3 Selection of Participants

Purposive sampling was used for this particular study to allow for a degree of control regarding the sample (Barbour, 2001) and due to its relevance and applicability to the sports management research context (Edwards & Skinner, 2012). This allowed for the elite athletes and coaches/managers to be selected according to the criteria of this study (Morse, 1991; Arnold, Fletcher & Molyneux, 2012) which looked at the experiences of elite athletes with regards to funding support in South Africa.

Fifteen elite athletes were initially identified for this study. The criteria for selection was that they would have won medals in their respective disciplines at major international championships. Winning medals at international level is an indication of being considered an elite athlete and having reached the highest level in one's discipline.

Fifteen coaches and managers were also identified for the study. They were to possess international coaching or management certifications from their respective federations – The International Swimming Federation/ Fédération Internationale de Natation (FINA) and The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF). An additional selection criteria was that they had to have coached or managed past and present elite athletes who had won medals at major international competitions. This allowed for further exploration and clarification on issues raised (Patton, 1990) by the elite athletes; as this research presents a unique case to the South African sporting context and informative and accurate data was essential (Edwards & Skinner, 2012).

These predetermined criteria allowed for an in-depth analysis into what is needed in South Africa in terms of funding support for athletes to reach the highest levels of elite sport – from the athletes’ perspective, and from those that train, manage and support them to reach elite levels.

3.4 Description of Participants

Fifteen elite athletes were identified to participate in this study – nine track and field athletes and six swimmers. Five were women and four were of colour. Fifteen elite coaches and managers were identified to participate, two were women and one was a person of colour.

Due to the voluntary nature of the study, twelve people chose to participate in the study out of the thirty that had been initially identified for participation. Out of the possible fifteen elite athletes identified to participate in the study, eight responded and gave their informed consent to partake in the study. Of this eight, two were women and two were persons of colour. Of the fifteen coaches and managers initially identified to also participate in the study, only four responded with their informed consent. Of the four respondents, one was a person of colour and there were no women.

These participant numbers are an indication of the current demographic profile of participants in these sporting codes in South Africa. The same two sporting codes which have garnered the most success for South Africa at international levels – athletics and swimming. However these statistics are not representative of the demographics of the country and are actually inverse to the demographics of South Africa, which can be seen as a limitation to the study.

3.5 Data Collection

The study incorporated two sets of data. The first set of data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews as the focus was on participants' experiences on the research topic (Edwards & Skinner, 2012). An interview guide was developed and externally reviewed to assess the appropriateness of the questions. Subsequently, the semi-structured interview format allowed for the gathering of information on how the structures put in place for elite funding support in South Africa influenced and impacted on the careers of the elite athletes.

The second set of data was by means of policy document retrieval. The information gathered from here which provided information regarding the support structures established by SASCOC and NOCSA was assessed against the interviews conducted. This was in order to establish the possible impact that the structures might have had on the athlete's performances at international championships throughout the duration of their careers. These two data collection methods sought to establish relationships and produce generalizable results through structured data collection procedures.

To ensure the quality of the research data, Edwards and Skinner's (2012) seven step interview process was used:

Step 1: Identified participants were contacted via email, telephone or social media and invited to participate in the study. An information summary of the study was also shared with them, along with the interview guide once initial contact was made.

Step 2: Once participants gave consent to partake in the study, appropriate dates and times were arranged with them to conduct the interviews. The interviews were conducted at alternate

neutral venues suggested by the participants. Participants who were unable to meet face to face with the researcher, an alternate option was offered, whereby the interviewer called them via Skype using recording and audio conferencing equipment. The participants taking part in these virtual interviews were informed that it was being recorded and confidentiality and anonymity was assured.

Step 3: This naturalistic setting allowed the participants to tell their story and relate their experiences in a relaxed and open manner, from their own perspective and in their own words in line with the aim of this study. A comfortable and relaxed environment was important so that they could openly engage with the researcher about the highs and lows of funding support provided within South African sport and the influence and impact that this had on the management and development of the elite athlete's careers.

Step 4: The interviews followed a semi-structured approach and began with general opening questions related to the athletes/coaches/managers backgrounds and careers and the support structures which were in place at the time.

Step 5: This allowed for probing questions in relation to the responses received from the opening questions, in order for the researcher to acquire in-depth information relevant to the study. The researcher asked further questions for clarity and elaboration in order to ensure accurate and in-depth understanding and analysis of what the participants were stating (Woodman & Hardy, 2001).

Step 6: At the end of the interview, participants were invited to summarise the main points that they had shared with the researcher during the interview, to ensure that the relevant and necessary information had been recorded.

Step 7: Once the main points of the interview had been verified in the summary, the researcher concluded the interview.

The interviews were recorded in their entirety using audio-tape equipment. Interviews were scheduled to run for between 60 to 90 minutes, depending on the schedule of the participants and how much they were willing to share on the day. Interviews were recorded in English and transcribed verbatim.

Initially follow up interviews were to be conducted after the initial data had been transcribed and analysed, to ensure saturation had been reached. This was irrespective of the interviewee being a coach, manager or elite athlete (Arnold, Fletcher & Molyneux, 2012). It allowed for clarifications to provide further details on the highlighted themes which arose. However, by the 12th interview, there was a lack of new emergent themes, which showed that theoretical and data saturation had been reached.

Following the interviews, OPEX and other policy documents were collected from the online platforms of SASCOC, as the researcher had been informed by a management official in SASCOC that all relevant policy documents relating to these organizations and the study could be found online. The strategic plans of ASA and SSA were easily obtainable from the president of Athletics South Africa and an affiliated source respectively.

3.6 Data Analysis

The interview data was analysed using Creswell's (2009) 6 step data analysis approach for qualitative research:

Step 1: Once all the data had been gathered, the digitized audio recordings were listened to and transcribed verbatim and compared with the notes that the researcher had taken during the interviews. This allowed the researcher to organise the data to get a feel of what would be relevant to the study and what would not be (Edwards & Skinner, 2012).

Step 2: Data was coded so that the researcher could create a coding index of the raw data for possible themes and concepts (Edwards & Skinner, 2012). The coding was based upon similar words or phrases noticeably used by research participants along with specific incidents which were mentioned by more than one participant (Bayle & Robinson, 2007).

Step 3: The data gathered from the interviews were analysed for themes and concepts to see if there were linkages between the support structures as documented by the OPEX programme and other such elite athlete management policies and elite athletes' eventual performances. This information was then compared with information analysed during the document analysis of SASCOC and other high performance policies.

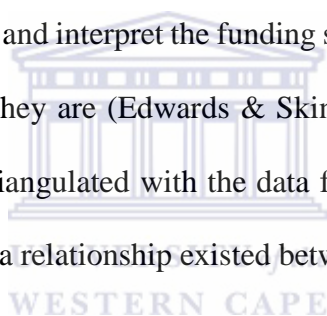
Step 4: The identified categories were then reviewed and analysed for further possible themes. These narrative themes were then grouped together and further analysed.

Step 5: Further analysis of data was conducted by triangulating data with policy documents. This was done through the process of a content document analysis.

Step 6: The data gathered aided in the formation of guidelines for improved funding support within the South African sporting landscape.

Henning (2004) indicates that documents that are collected as entities of data follow the same route through analysis and interpretation as other qualitative methods. The collection of the documents and other artefacts is often neglected in qualitative research, yet they are a valuable source of information and if they are available, should be included in the design.

The document analysis of the policies was conducted by means of content analysis. This allowed the researcher to describe and interpret the funding support put in place for elite athlete management in South Africa as they are (Edwards & Skinner, 2012). Themes that emerged from the content analysis were triangulated with the data from the interviews gathered. This was done in order to determine if a relationship existed between policies and practice.



3.7 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is when the findings of the study provide similar meanings to what the study participants shared (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, cited in Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006). *Peer Debriefing* was one of the methods used to ensure this – verification of data coding. A colleague familiar with the research process employed in this study was called upon to review the findings in order to verify the coding (data labels). This was done by asking him to review two interview transcripts to see if the coding and themes that they arrived at corresponded with what had been presented by the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was to ensure the elimination of bias through assumptions that the researcher may have had during the process (Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006).

Once the first round of interviews had been conducted and transcribed, the researcher shared the transcriptions with the participants before coding to ensure the accuracy of the data. This, *Member – checking* is considered to be the most important technique within qualitative research when it comes to establishing credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This aided in establishing the focus of the follow up interviews.

The researcher kept a journal to document the entire research process from start to finish. This was a log which kept track of the developing data collection of interviews conducted. This *audit trail* will allow any external examiners to assess the processes undertaken in the research and the eventual results presented, to assess if the findings support the data and to ensure that there was no manipulation of data by the researcher (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

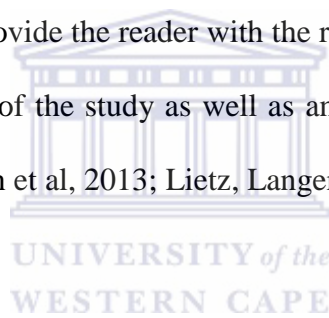
Triangulation was also used to aid in assessing the internal validity of the data collected. This involved looking at the consistency of the information obtained and themes identified from interviews with the coaches and managers, the elite athletes, as well as the information compiled from the policy documents (Edwards & Skinner, 2012). This allowed the researcher to validate the authenticity of the findings and the identified themes, by using multiple sources of evidence.

3.8 Reflexivity

The researcher in this study was once a track and field athlete, although not at an elite level, the researcher still maintained contact with friends and former training partners who rose to elite levels within track and field athletics in South Africa. Their stories and experiences, together with the researchers own personal analysis of the performances of Team South Africa

at major international championships, formed the rationale behind conducting this study. Due to the researcher's personal experience and past interactions, it was important that she acknowledge this and did not allow it to impact upon the study in any way, particularly during data analysis (Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006).

The researcher was aware of this and had a research assistant to observe the interviews and take their own notes when schedules permitted and participants consented. The research assistant came from a different field of study to further ensure no bias. The researcher also kept a reflective diary to document personal interests and personal history which helped shape the research topic and which may have had an impact on the data collection and final analysis and recommendations. This would provide the reader with the rationale behind decisions made by the researcher during the course of the study as well as any personal challenges which may have been experienced (Houghton et al, 2013; Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006).



3.9 Ethical Considerations

With respect to ethical considerations for this research, permission to conduct this research was obtained from the Senate Higher Degrees at the University of the Western Cape. Once this had been given, participants were invited to participate in the study. They were informed about the aims and objectives of the study, why and how they were selected and how their opinions were important to the study as well as the procedures of data collection. Participants were informed that all interviews would be recorded, would take between 60 – 90 minutes to complete, either face to face or via Skype – with audio-taping equipment, and that all recordings would be securely kept and destroyed after three years on completion of the study.

After being informed about the research, its aim and the process, written consent of those who chose to participate was obtained and filed. This was irrespective of whether data collection was done via Skype or by face to face interaction and if the initial agreed upon method of data collection was later changed during the course of the study due to changes in participants' schedules. This was clearly explained to them before they signed to ensure that they agreed and accepted the method of data collection.

Participants were assured that they were doing the study on a voluntary basis and that they could withdraw at any time without penalty; however it was highlighted to them that there may be risks involved when participating in the research study. Which may include for example that the subject may feel uncomfortable by disclosing information that they would not want to share. In situations like this, the researcher did stress confidentiality, but did not press participants for an answer and allowed them to move to the next question should they choose to do so.

Anonymity and confidentiality were also assured in that codes were used for the participants and all recordings were marked accordingly. Recordings were coded according to sport code and type of participant. Once the research findings had been compiled, participants were given access to the transcribed document to offer any further information to assist the study.

For ethical reasons, the names of the participants were not recorded on the audio tapes nor in the research project or coded transcripts, rather pseudonyms were used. As was mentioned above, a journal was kept by the researcher to document the entire process, in case any queries arose regarding the research process and procedures. All transcripts will be incinerated after five years and all recordings shall be destroyed after three years of completing the study.

3.10 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter outlined in detail the importance of qualitative research for this study, this was also due to the exploratory nature of this research and the dearth of literature involved. Study design, methodology including participant selection, data collection and analysis as well as trustworthiness and reflexivity were outlined. The researcher also ensured that the methods and processes adopted yielded unbiased data by incorporating methods such as member checking and peer debriefing. The chapter that now follows will present the results and findings of the study.



CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of elite athletes in South Africa, with regards to funding support that they received. To this end, the primary objective of the study was to explore the experiences that elite athletes in South Africa had when it came to funding support. This was in order to assess whether an improved understanding of funding support as experienced by elite athletes would lead to improved financial support options in the future, which could ultimately aid in improved future high performance results.

Semi-structured interview questions were developed using available policy documents and other relevant literature from international high performance programmes. This helped create a framework in which to gather and analyse the data regarding the funding support that elite athletes received during the duration of their careers (British Swimming, 2013; UK Sport, 2013; Australian Sports Commission, 2012).

The framework used to develop the semi-structured interview questions allowed for the emergence of the following themes from the study: funding support; institutional arrangements for funding allocation; funding support composition and views on funding support. Subthemes were also identified: support procedures; losing support; reimbursement; delays; administrative process and change is needed.

This discussion will begin with an overview of the participants' profiles of the study, in order to give the reader an idea of the demographics of the elite sporting landscape of South Africa due to its unique past.

Table 13: Profile of Interview Participants

<u>Name</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>Sporting Code</u>	<u>Designation</u>
*Gary	M	W	Athletics	Elite Athlete
*James	M	B	Athletics	Elite Athlete
*David	M	B	Athletics	Elite Athlete
*Francine	F	W	Athletics	Elite Athlete
*Elijah	M	W	Athletics	Elite Athlete
Chris	M	W	Athletics	Coach
Sam	M	W	Athletics	Coach
Matthew	M	W	Athletics	Coach
*Ben	M	B	Athletics	Manager
*Warren	M	W	Swimming	Elite Athlete
*Bernard	M	W	Swimming	Elite Athlete
*Sally	F	W	Swimming	Elite Athlete

**Olympic and/or World Championship medallists. M = male, F – female, B = Black, W = White.*

4.2 Emerging Themes and Sub-Themes of the Study

This section presents the research findings of the study within the framework that was created to identify and analyse the key factors that make up elite athlete funding support.

4.2.1 Funding Support

Funding support refers to resources that are made available to elite athletes and their understanding of the structures and resources made available to them. In sport, resources needed are usually considered from a monetary perspective, however, when referring to elite

athletes, resources also need to include: living expenses, medical expenses, coaching, scientific and medical support services, strength and conditioning, local camps and competitions, nutrition services, career and education services.

In many nations the exact composition of the resources made available to elite athletes, depend on their international medal winning potential and performance indicators. Through the funding support of high performance programmes, the resources made available to them are clearly defined in accessible documents and are explained to the athletes (British Swimming, 2013; Nathan, 2013). Justifications as to the varying types of support and the competition cycles they target are also given.

With regards to the resources made available by SASCOC, during the research process some of the participants reported that they were not always initially aware of the exact composition of what was being offered to them at the time of contract signings. Gary, one of the track and field athletes who had at one time in his career been supported on tier one of the OPEX programme attested to this:

“...if you get a contract, if they invite you on the programme, you don’t ask too many questions. You just sign them and mail it back to them as soon as possible. You just so grateful to get something out of them.”

Gary’s views can be supported by that of one of the coaches, Sam. He was also unsure at times of all the details pertaining to the support that his athletes received from SASCOC:

“To be honest, I am not sure what was all the support. I didn’t know about a lot of support. I did know that they got some money from SASCOC.”

This may imply that SASCOC has no standardised criteria on the exact composition and type of support that would be afforded to athletes on each of the three tiers or that there is a lack of communication and accessible information in this regard. However, a review of the SASCOC website, as was suggested by a SASCOC management official in the absence of available public policy documents shows that when it comes to resource support for elite athletes in South Africa, it is monetary. Allocations are seemingly administered on a case by case basis, dependant on each individual athlete's annual expenditure for each of the three tiers. An example being, athletes on Tier one do not all receive the same allocated amounts. This can be verified from the latest OPEX Olympic allocation summary that can be found on the SASCOC website under *High Performance/Operation Excellence* (SASCOC, 2014).

This observation was supported by statements made by James and Francine - both track and field athletes - who were aware of the type of support that they received when signing their contracts. When both were asked about the composition of the support they received, James stated:

“We budget, there’s like categories: accommodation, medical treatment, travelling costs, training camps... for every category, you get like a budget.”

Francine provided a bit more clarity when asked the same question as James, she stated:

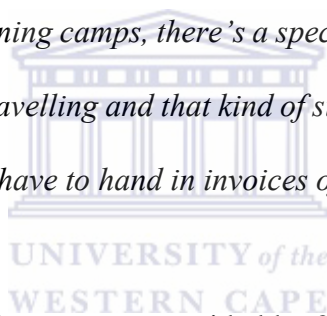
“In the beginning of the year we have to send SASCOC a budget for the whole year, so in the budget itself, you will set out your international competitions, your international plans, your visas, training camps, different international competitions that you will attend, and then also in one part, is set out specifically for equipment.”

This method of having athletes budget their assumed expenses once on the programme was not isolated to athletics, swimmers also experienced the same process as was explained by Bernard:

“We basically had to outline the expenses we need. So you had to put it on a budget and claim on that basis. That would be approved or disapproved.”

Some coaches were not always aware of the support that their athletes received, whereas others were aware of the support their athletes received once accepted onto the OPEX programme, as was indicated by Chris:

“And when they approve it, they have to set up a budget. And in that budget there’s a lot of things, there’s specific amount that’s going for medical support, there’s a specific amount that’s going for training camps, there’s a specific amount that goes to the coach, and a specific amount for travelling and that kind of stuff... and it makes sense, you have to do a budget and athletes have to hand in invoices of the expenses they have.”



As can be seen from above, funding support provided by SASCOC is monetary and is based on each individual athletes’ circumstances. Therefore those who are chosen to receive support have to provide a budget of their projected yearly expenses for that particular year that they are to receive support. However it is unclear if the athletes know how to draw up an appropriate budget and if SASCOC provides assistance in this regard.

Once presented, SASCOC appoints a selection panel to review and decide what they will fund on the budget and by how much. This means that more often than not, no two athletes on the same funding level will receive the same type/form of support, as the support provided is linked to each individual athlete’s needs. This was why participants interviewed mentioned that budgeting was always required if they were to receive support - it was important for SASCOC

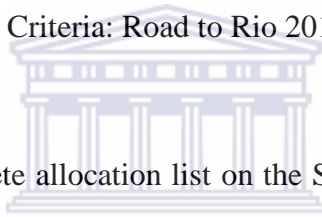
to garner what it actually cost for the athlete to perform at international level. Unfortunately access to information regarding the composition of the budget items, as well as composition of SASCOC's selection panel was not granted – there is communication to verify this - and the information on their official website also provided no clarity. It is important for processes of transparency to ensure fair decisions are taken regarding which athletes receive funding support and how much of their presented budget is approved.

Looking at international lessons, it was indicated in Chapter two how British Athletics, British Swimming, Australian Sports Commission and Athletics Australia provide set amounts for each tier of support and include support services, such as medical support, psychological support etc. as an add on from the monetary support provided to athletes. These services are provided through their high performance agencies. The composition of their selection committees for funding support is also provided. All of this works towards ensuring transparency in their processes and to allow elite athletes the opportunities to have decisions taken reconsidered if there are extenuating circumstances which could lead to them receiving funding support (Athletics Australia, 2013; Australian Sports Commission, 2013; British Athletics, 2013; British Swimming, 2013).

4.2.1.1 Support Procedures

Before any elite athlete can be part of their nation's high performance support structure, certain criteria need to be met. SASCOC states in their *Road to Rio 2016* Operational Excellence Programme Eligibility Criteria that they review rankings, socioeconomic circumstances and performance history of the athletes when considering which athletes to support (SASCOC, Operation Excellence Programme Eligibility Criteria: Road to Rio 2016, 2012).

This would enable them to decide which tiers athletes shall be supported. Their eligibility criteria clearly states that Tier one would be for those athletes who won medals or were finalists at the London 2012 Olympic Games and who would still be able to compete at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. A new inclusion for Tier one in 2013 was that new athletes who had never received support had to rank in the top 6 to 8 globally to receive support (SASCOC, Road to Rio 2016, 2013). Tier two would be allocated to junior and youth athletes who won medals or were finalists at the 2010 Youth Olympic Games and 2011 Commonwealth Youth Games and who would be eligible for consideration for Rio 2016. Tier three would be for those athletes who were not able to be allocated to Tier 1 or 2 but who have continuously shown their potential to win medals in the future at major international competitions (SASCOC, Operation Excellence Programme Eligibility Criteria: Road to Rio 2016, 2012).



A review of the most recent athlete allocation list on the SASCOC website and the levels at which various athletes are supported (SASCOC, Opex Olympic Summary by Sport, 2014) presents slightly different information to what was stated in the *Road to Rio 2016* document. This was further amplified by the interviews with participants, when they were questioned about the required criteria needed to receive support. Gary stated that:

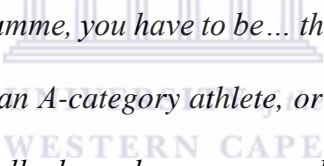
“And, remember, to get on the OPEX, you have to be top 10. If you not top 10, you can’t make the cut for the OPEX.”

James also made a similar comment to Gary’s:

“Yes, I mean you have to be ranked in the world in terms of your different sporting codes. They want to have athletes that are competing and not just filling up teams.”

The statements made by both James and Gary differ slightly from information provided by SASCOC through documents pertaining to high performance athletes. In their *Road to Rio 2016* (2012) document obtainable on the SASCOC website, there is no mention of world rankings being a criteria for inclusion in the OPEX programme. Yet in a PowerPoint presentation prepared for Sport and Recreation South Africa, titled *Road to Rio 2016* (2013) which is not on the SASCOC website, but available on another online platform accessed by the researcher, the only mention made of world rankings pertains to Tier one. It was stated that new athletes who were not medallists or finalists at the London 2012 Olympic Games, would have to rank 6th to 8th globally in order to receive support (SASCOC, Road to Rio, 2013).

Further clarifying points regarding world rankings needed for funding support were made by Francine:



“To get on the OPEX programme, you have to be... there are different criteria’s. So they have criteria’s like you are an A-category athlete, or you are a B-category athlete or a C-category athlete. That totally depends on your world ranking...”

When Bernard was asked the following question by the researcher:

“So you said you got funding in 2008 up to your retirement in 2010. So were you ranked in the top 10 or 20 in the world at this time?”

His response was:

“Yes I was. Every year I was ranked in the top 10. Since 2007 to 2010 I was ranked top 10 in the world every year.”

His response adds further support to statements made by other athletes above that world rankings were a criteria that needed to be achieved in order to receive support from SASCOC.

There seems to be minor discrepancies with regards to the stipulated criteria in SASCOC's *Road to Rio 2016* document when it comes to athlete support. If one was to look at the athlete profiles of those recently receiving support from SASCOC and compare it to stipulated criteria for the various levels of support, there would seem to be some inconsistencies. One concern regarding this inconsistency is that there was an athlete being supported by SASCOC in 2014 who was not even ranked in the top 100 globally in their event due to injury, and continued to get support despite non-performance in 2014. The continued support the athlete received despite injury can be verified through a media release made by SASCOC in November 2014 and a review of the 2014 IAAF top rankings list in this athlete's event (IAAF, 2014; SASCOC, 2014).



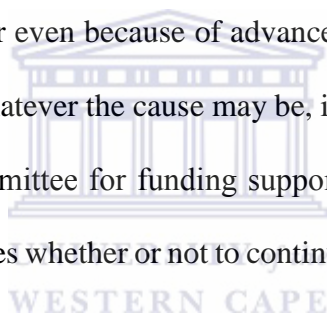
Additional support to this can be shown by the reviews undertaken of the recent performances at the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games. Of the ten swimmers who won medals for South Africa in individual and relay events, only four were being supported on the latest available OPEX programme. Of the seven track and field athletes who won medals, five were being supported on the OPEX programme (Glasgow 2014 XX Commonwealth Games, 2014; SASCOC, Opex Olympic Summary by Sport, 2014).

4.2.1.2 Losing Support

Just as there are specified criteria that athletes need to achieve to gain support, there are also specified criteria stipulated under which circumstances athletes may also lose support. SASCOC clearly states in their *Road to Rio 2016* document that they reserve the right to

exclude athletes from receiving support if they (SASCOC) believe that an athlete is no longer meeting specified stipulated criteria to receive support. However, no further clarification is provided regarding exclusions, except the statement made in SASCOC's *Road to Rio 2016* document. The statement being, support provided is solely for those athletes with the potential to qualify, participate and perform at major international competitions within the 2013 to 2016 Olympic Quadrennial (SASCOC, Operation Excellence Programme Eligibility Criteria: Road to Rio 2016, 2012).

Non-performance by athletes at elite levels is at times due to extenuating circumstances beyond their control (Gould et al., 2001). It may be due to illness, injury, physiological changes that they may not be able to control or even because of advancement of other nations within their event (Anderson et al., 2006). Whatever the cause may be, it could be taken into consideration when SASCOC's appointed committee for funding support (composition of committee was unavailable to researcher) evaluates whether or not to continue support for certain elite athletes.

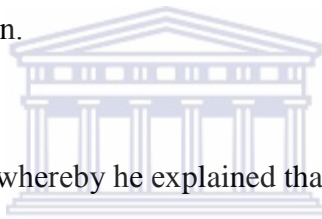


David, an elite track and field athlete provided a detailed opinion on his views of discontinued support:

“The difficult part of being in the OPEX... they can speak long term, they can speak 2016... but actually for an athlete, it's not like that. Because I can be in the top 10 this year, and for example they give me R 60 000. Next year I go a little bit down, I'm not in the top 10, but I'm still training for 4 years, I'm still training for 2016 you know? At that time they will not look at long term, they cut...they cut you off assistance. That means I will not be benefitting the same as last year. That means you can't do the same preparation as last year. If it happens I have a bad year, I don't rank, let's say injury, I was not competing, then you out, but we still talking 4 years. This injury is just a setback,

then they cut you off, you don't get support. That means you have to go back again and force to be in the top 10 without the support."

The support that David was discussing is annual, in that SASCOC supports elite athletes on an annual basis, based upon performance. From this perspective, what may come to mind is that athlete's may only be supported when they perform to expectation. Once injured or taken ill and their performance drops, the support is taken away which is an added setback for the athlete. Such a view of SASCOC's support structure elicits questions as to whether this was a word of mouth opinion since David had been supported throughout his career. Gary and Elijah – track and field athletes - gave insight into their own personal experiences which could be seen as supporting David's opinion.



Gary's experience was injury led whereby he explained that:

"I don't know what happened but it was just an awful year. I had a knee injury. I didn't perform, and SASCOC cut all their support. That's why, that's why I'm not on OPEX at the moment. Because last year and the year before I didn't make the cut for the top 10."

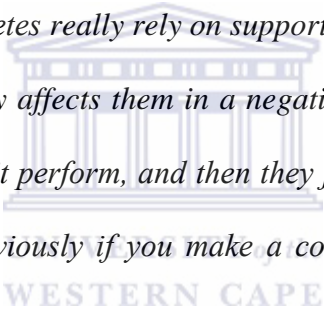
Elijah's experience was also similar:

"SASCOC, ASA was really happy with my performances, they were standing behind me and then a couple of weeks later I picked up an injury, a stress fracture in my foot. So basically what happened is I couldn't run, I couldn't go to Europe, I had to pull out of all my races and I was injured. And that's where SASCOC and ASA came to me and said they can't support me because I'm not running and I'm injured. So they took away the contract."

Through their statements Gary and Elijah revealed that they were supported when fit, healthy and performing, but as soon as they became injured, support was removed. For Gary it seems the removal of the support set him back in terms of making it back from injury to get back into the global top 10 in his event. As was previously mentioned, in other countries athletes still receive support when they become injured, although the support provided is limited and is dependent on injury recovery performance targets (Athletics Australia, 2013; British Athletics, 2013; British Swimming, 2013).

Such actions may seem drastic in the eyes of an athlete, but even the coaches are at times aware of the impact that it has on their charges. Sam stated:

“You know some of the athletes really rely on support and if that support just gets taken away completely, that really affects them in a negative way. But the sporting world is very, very cruel. If you don’t perform, and then they just forget you and get you off the programme so quickly. Obviously if you make a complete cut, sometimes it’s harsh, sometimes it’s legitimate”



What was shared by participants was that as soon as one becomes injured or falls ill, funding ceases. Due to this setback athletes such as Gary struggled to get back to the performance levels that they had achieved before they got injured. There were athletes like Elijah who had managed to come back from injury and were performing even better than before they had been injured, but were still to receive any form of support from SASCOC.

Elite high performance sport is cutthroat and extremely competitive and extenuating factors can and usually do occur which impact upon athletes’ short term but not long term (career ending) performances. SASCOC’s available documents do not show any evidence of

allowances made for athletes who become injured or ill whilst being supported, and could therefore not perform to expectation in the short term. There was also no available documentation from SASCOC stating what athletes needed to achieve or do in order to regain support, once they had recovered from illness or injury.

However, as was previously stated, there was an athlete being supported by SASCOC in 2014 despite that athlete being injured. A media statement was released regarding this athletes injury midway through 2014 (Etheridge, 2014) and the injury continued until the end of the athletics season, thus making the athlete unable to compete at the Commonwealth Games and African Championships (News24, 2015). The athlete did not compete and continued to be supported by SASCOC towards the end of 2014 (SASCOC, 2014). This despite a handful of athletes having medalled at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow who had not managed to receive support during this same period (Glasgow 2014 XX Commonwealth Games, 2014; SASCOC, OPEX Olympic Summary by Sport, 2014).



4.2.2 Institutional Arrangements for Funding Allocation

As is the case with anything performance related, there are processes involved once minimum requirements have been met, and elite sport is no exception. SASCOC simply states in their *Road to Rio 2016* document that the National Federations (NFs) nominate athletes for consideration once they have achieved set criteria for the OPEX programme and they (SASCOC) then have the final say as to whether the athlete will be supported. No documentation was made available or was accessible in providing information about the composition of the funding support selection committee and the processes involved from nomination by the NFs to final selection and notification of the athletes by SASCOC.

Participants were also unable to provide any clarity regarding institutional arrangements when they were asked of their knowledge of the processes regarding selection.

As mentioned previously, there was no accessible or available information, on those who are appointed to make decisions regarding who shall be given funding support. The only information that was garnered from the participants that took part in the study, was that they were always contacted by SASCOC administrators and informed that they were to receive support. They were unaware of the processes involved once their federations had nominated them for selection nor the composition of the panel that made the final decision that they were eligible to receive support, especially regarding the specific tiers on which they were placed. There was also no provision provided if the athletes wanted to appeal decisions made by SASCOC if there were legitimate reasons as to why their support should not be removed.

Referring to international lessons of experience in this regard, Australia and Great Britain clearly document the processes to be followed from the nomination of athletes to the awarding of funding support, as well as the composition of the selection committee and the inclusion of independent observers to verify the decisions taken. They also provide time periods during which these processes are to take place (Athletics Australia, 2013; Australian Sports Commission, 2013; British Athletics, 2013; British Swimming, 2013).

4.2.3 Funding Support Composition

A visit to the SASCOC website does not provide insight or any available documentation into how funding is structured for those athletes that they support in terms of the processes involved. It was only during the study that participants provided information into the processes as is experienced by them. These processes involved reimbursement, delays in monies received and

a seemingly protracted administrative process in order to receive their funding, which was experienced by the participants affected, as unsatisfactory.

4.2.3.1 Reimbursement

SASCOC utilises a different approach to that of other nations in that they reimburse the athletes for the costs that they incur.

Warren, a swimmer, was the first to admit that:

“What they would do is they would just, they would reimburse us for all of our expenses. So for those, let’s say four and a half years, they supported us in reimbursing our costs, which was probably between R 7 000 and R 15 000 a month, depending on where we were at.”



Similarly, James shared similar sentiments and recalled:

“Give invoices and then they reimburse all that’s on the invoice. So in a month they tell me to give in all my receipts of the food, massages if I had a massage. If I went to a chiropractor, or to the doctor. If I travelled to a track meet or anything.”

Warren and James’ experiences are fortified by those of Francine who, in disbelief claimed that:

“Can you believe it, we have to hand in receipts every month to get our money. Yes, that is how it works. We have to buy the food with our own money, we have to keep that receipt. So then I can calculate it at the end of the month and then I have to send in the receipts. So everything I give out, I will keep receipts, I send it to SASCOC and then I will see whether I get the money back or not.”

This means that athletes have to use their own money, and apply for reimbursement as reported by Gary:

“No, you first use your own money, and then afterwards they refund you on that, but not always.”

Upon further probing, Gary purports that the consequences of not having the money to cover one’s costs whilst waiting for reimbursement could result in resorting to seeking credit elsewhere. To this end, he replied:

*“It’s tough s***, then you have to borrow it.”*

The OPEX programme and the support from SASCOC was not always conducted in the manner in which it is today. David was one of the first athletes to get support when SASCOC and been NOCSA and he stated:

“When it started, the Operational Excellence, it was a bit different compared to now. I would give them my budget... and they would put money into an account. Compared to now, it’s different, it’s not like when I started being part of that because they put money into my account... but also obviously I need to give them a report. I would just have to give them a report, invoices, like this is what I have done and this is what I am going to do.”

This information shared by David shows that since the establishment of SASCOC, improved protocols have been observed. Thus ensuring that athletes are held accountable for monies spent – that their invoices tally up with what they have budgeted for.

As has been indicated by the participants above, reimbursement is not a process that they find altogether favourable, as Gary and Francine stated that at times not all their monies spent was reimbursed. International lessons of experience indicate that in Australia athletes received set allocated amounts biannually directly into their personal bank accounts (Athletics Australia, 2013; Australian Sports Commission, 2013). Great Britain on the other hand pays out allocated funding support amounts either monthly or quarterly depending on the level of support athletes are allocated to (British Athletics, 2013; British Swimming, 2013).

4.2.3.2 Delays

Another contentious item amongst those interviewed was the seeming inconsistency with respect to their reimbursement. Francine put it best in a detailed explanation of her experiences.

“That’s a very big problem, I think for all the athletes, the inconsistency when they pay out money. Sometimes it will be on the 25th, the 15th and then it’s on the 20th, and really it is so frustrating. Because you don’t know whether you will have enough money in your account when the debit orders go down. We also have to make a living, but with the inconsistencies that SASCOC is paying money out, sometimes it makes it crazy. They have a thing where you only get your money in 14 working days I have had so many times I have had to move my debit orders. And they want to run the receipts from the 20th to the 20th of every month. But on the 20th we don’t have so much money or receipts yet. The inconsistency that SACOC has with paying out money is a very big problem and I think most of the athletes will tell you.”

Gary had similar experiences to that of Francine:

“Sometimes they late you know? I remember we had to send our slips in before the 25th of every month. And ah, sometimes they don’t pay until the 12th or 13th of the next month or something...”

Warren also echoed similar experiences to that of Gary and Francine:

“And then they would not pay for 2 months, and pay it all at once. You’ve got debit orders that goes off and these things you know? So that’s super frustrating.”

Yet it was Bernard’s experiences that seemed the most interesting:

“Yes, payment was delayed you know? Then you wouldn’t get money for this and you wouldn’t get money for that. So now, so the slips won’t add up or something and they would only pay out R 8 500 of that R 10 000. So what happened to the other R 1 500? If I was approved with R 10 000, then I would get less... then I would have to wait for my payment, when would I get my payment? Sometimes I would have to go there and beg for my money. You could question whatever you want but you never get answers.”

Despite his seemingly negative experience as compared to the others, they all translated to a delay in receiving their funding, which was in actual fact a reimbursement of monies spent.

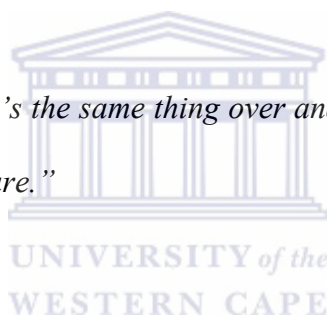
This delay in funding experienced by athletes somehow managed to get reported in the South African media just after the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow (Sport24, 2014). This could perhaps raise further questions as to why delays in reimbursing athletes seems to be an ongoing problem for SASCOC. Some of the research participants who mentioned delays in reimbursement, retired from their disciplines years ago and it still seems to be an ongoing problem for elite athletes in South Africa even today.

Many elite athletes, especially those who are full time athletes, depend on the reimbursement from SASCOC, and constant delays as were expressed above by Francine, Warren and Bernard can lead to frustration as was noted. This frustration and financial worries which come with it, could also ultimately be seen as a hampering factor to athlete's eventual performances (Gould et al., 2001).

4.2.3.3 Administrative Process

SASCOC's administrative process as was experienced by some participants also seemed to be an issue that could be put under consideration to be addressed. Warren summed up the process as follows:

"I mean the paperwork... it's the same thing over and over again, there's no database. The paperwork is a nightmare."



Gary provided the following feedback from his experience:

"Sometimes there is some confusion and then they miscalculate your slips or they don't understand it and then they don't pay it. So you have to write with your pen on every slip, like travel, the date, travel national champs or hotel costs... So there's like, there's a lot of fights between SASCOC and the athletes as well."

In summary, regarding the support that SASCOC provides to elite athletes, it was shown that they follow a reimbursement process, a process that was adopted after the formation of SASCOC back in 2005. This process was highlighted by Gary, Francine, Warren and Bernard to have a few flaws in its actual implementation – namely constant delays in the reimbursement of monies spent by the athletes and at times the miscalculation of invoices sent in, meaning

that athletes were at times not fully reimbursed. These issues were highlighted as being sources of almost continuous strain for the athletes whilst trying to focus and prepare for competitions, with no direct communication channel with SASCOC for athletes to have their frustrations addressed, an issue which was mentioned by Gary:

“You actually never deal with SASCOC direct. So if you have a problem, that’s how it supposed to work, you have to mail your federation. Your federation, they’ll sort it out with SASCOC and then come back to you. So there’s no like communication channel between the athletes frustrations and SASCOC.”

As was mentioned in Chapter two, Australia and Great Britain have provided direct channels and processes for their elite athletes to use if they are in disagreement with any decisions taken regarding funding support (Athletics Australia, 2013; British Athletics, 2013; British Swimming, 2013). These two countries have focused on streamlining the funding support processes and procedures that they offer, thus allowing elite athletes to focus primarily on their preparations. For Great Britain, it seems to be working if one is to review their performances at the 2012 London Olympic Games.

4.2.4 Views on Funding Support

SASCOC states that its support structures are there to aid in helping those being supported in reaching levels of excellence (SASCOC, Operation Excellence Programme Eligibility Criteria: Road to Rio 2016, 2012). The intent is there, the support is acknowledged, but as has been indicated by the findings above, the processes and experiences may not always be aligned with what SASCOC intends to achieve. The common theme identified was stated the best by Gary:

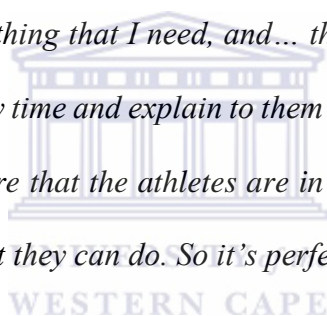
“SASCOC, they first want something, then they’ll support you. ASA were other way around. They support you, and then they hope you make something out of it.”

Despite this view of the intention behind receiving support, it was still acknowledged that the OPEX programme provided the greatest support at times, as was further supplied by Gary:

“Well for the years it was really not too bad, they actually helped me a lot. It was some admin to get something out of them, but as I already said, it helped me a lot. After a while I had such a good relationship with them they paid like... even if it was, even if it was not in my budget, they paid. I wouldn't say I'm happy, but at least they did something. They, they helped me.”

James had a similar opinion to Gary on the good that SASCOC was doing with its programme:

“I like it, it, gives me everything that I need, and... they are very open to their athletes. And... you can call them any time and explain to them whatever it is and... they just there for the athletes, to make sure that the athletes are in perfect condition and if they need anything, then they see what they can do. So it's perfect for, for me.”



Both Gary and James admitted to the good that SASCOC was doing with its funding support programme, and for this, they were very appreciative.

The common thread in many of the interviews was that SASCOC does indeed support athletes with medal winning potential, but it is small in the grander scheme of things when one looks at what is actually needed in order to become an elite athlete with international medal winning potential. Francine puts it simply:

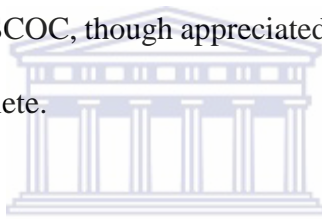
“Personally, I am very grateful for what SASCOC is doing for me at this stage, but it's only a small amount, the money that I get from SASCOC monthly. I don't have a problem

with SASCOC regarding that, they invest so much money into athletics but the money doesn't always come to the athletes.

David had a slightly differing view to that of other participants when it came to the support he received during his career:

“Most of my money that I got and assisted me to prepare, it was from the contract with Reebok, then I signed a new contract with Nike. And the appearance money that I am getting from Europe from competitions... add more power to my preparations.”

This quote above may imply that for some athletes (for varying reasons known to them and SASCOC) their support from SASCOC, though appreciated was not nearly enough to dedicate oneself and to train as an elite athlete.



The following view from David implies that the present SASCOC funding support may need a review, as it seems that not all our athletes are fully supported during each four year Olympic cycle, especially once they become injured. It must also be remembered that David is a former Olympian and medal winner at major international Championships:

“For me, that's not fair. Other countries in Europe, they know that this guy is our medal chance, we are going to work four years with this athlete and this is the plan... for four years. We are not going to expect that each and every year that top class performance from this athlete. For me, from my experience, that is our problem in South Africa.”

This implication is echoed through Elijah's views on the initial and later lack of support he received from SASCOC in a compelling manner that does raise possible questions:

“Now at the end of the day I feel that I have been proving myself the last 3 years. If I tell athletes from other countries that I’m not getting any support, they do not believe me. And that’s what irritates me because when I’m performing well, and I’m not injured, almost like I didn’t need the support, but once I’m injured, then this is the time I need you. You need financial support getting yourself out of that injury back on the track where you can train again. And that’s where I think our federation and SASCOC does not understand that. For myself I really hope that I can get a call from them. I hope so, I really do because I really think that I am an athlete that can perform at that level and I have proven it. I haven’t only proven it in 2013 but now in 2014.”

Elijah went on further to emphasise his views:

“Coming into the Olympics they say they don’t have money to support us and then in getting there they say if you win a gold medal they will give you R 500 000. If you take that R 500 000 and you cut it by 10 and give R 50 000 to 10 athletes for the year to prepare yourself to go to the Olympics... I can’t say that you will get 10 medals, but you might get 2 medals. And 3 athletes that didn’t make the semi-final, they make the final. And 2 athletes that get to the semis and not just the heats. You can’t put R 500 000 up when the guys are there at the Olympics. It’s not gonna help us run faster, it’s not gonna help us perform better.”

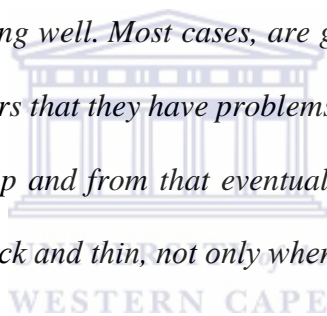
Sam is a veteran coach who has not only coached for nearly 30 years, but has produced a handful of world championship medallists. He made a statement that draws further attention to the current situation of funding support in South Africa for elite athletes:

“But we need to get structures in place. The structures were there years ago, and it worked very well and now the structures aren’t there. Get the structures in place and

communicate! Communicate with your clients, that's the athletes and the coaches. And that's not happening at the moment."

Matthew, another one of the coaches further emphasises this possible review of the funding support through his views regarding SASCOC's decision making when it comes to elite athletes:

"The structures are not what it should be. The problem is not the people, the problem is the structure... our system is wrong. And I have a problem with how they decide, they not the experts in athletics, how they decide who to fund and who not to fund, I have a big problem with. They should start assisting athletes when they really need the assistance not only once they start doing well. Most cases, are guys that actually improve year by year, they have their off years that they have problems when they have injuries. They get through it and they build up and from that eventually they win a medal. They should support athletes through thick and thin, not only when it's going well."



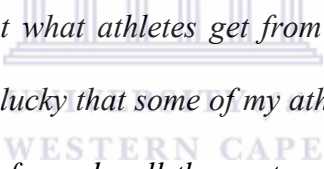
Yet, despite the implied thought of a possible review of our structures, David acknowledges that SASCOC's processes are an improvement from when he was an athlete on NOCSA's programme:

"If I compare it to those years, that time – NOCSA... it's more structured. Reason being, the athletes don't get cash, compared to those years where they can put R 100 000 in your account, without you as an athlete being accountable for it. Now it's more structured, you accountable. You bring your slips say for your groceries is R 2 000, they will give you R 2 000. They also need to be accountable for the money they have received... say from Lotto or from government on how the athlete has been using it. I'm

not saying its 100% but compared to NOCSA, it's more structured, more planned, more reporting is going around. There's more they can do, but for now it's more structured."

By his concluding statement asserting that more can be done, again implies a possible review of how SASCOC is presently managing funding support for elite athletes. Especially seeing as there was no accessible documentation regarding the processes involved in the decision making when it came to providing elite athletes with funding support.

Despite the frustrations experienced by the athletes regarding the support received from SASCOC, some coaches like Chris are still positive regarding the work that is being done, although it seems from his statement that the composition of the funding support received is unknown:



"So I'm very positive about what athletes get from SASCOC now. They have to get support from SASCOC. I'm lucky that some of my athletes get support. And some of my other athletes when they performed well they got money from SASCOC and they went overseas and went to meetings there. I'm very grateful to SASCOC for the things they do, so I'm positive about it."

Chris goes on to further emphasise that despite the positivity, he felt more trust should be placed on athletes regarding their long term performances and related support:

"Yes they need the support, and I don't agree with some things... I would like it if they can show their trust and their positive attitude for very talented athletes who are unlucky to pick up an injury. But at the moment no, if you don't perform well you will not get support...But if a very good talented athlete, an Olympian athlete picks up an injury, I

don't agree they have to remove all the support. I would like it if they would help that athlete."

Another one of the coaches, Sam also concurs that SASCOC has done well in providing support:

"So I really take my hat off to SASCOC for supporting the athletes and the coaches and believing in the athletes and their coaches."

Ben, a manager for some of South Africa's elite athletes made a comment which also throws a slightly different light onto the funding support:

"OPEX as a support structure is brilliant for the top tier athletes."

This view from a manager who may be more aware of the support that elite athletes receive than a coach, shows that support is probably given to a selected few, chosen by SASCOC's management. That they may not take into consideration those elite athletes that have the potential to win medals in the mid, if not short term.

Ben also goes on to add further emphasis onto the general view that SASCOC is doing a good job overall, although things could perhaps be improved:

"I wouldn't say it's perfect, I think there's always room for improvement. And I think what they've done with the amount of commercial partners that they've got on board, they have done ok. And could there be more support? There could always be more support, but are they doing a good job versus other Africans and let's call it or other national federations globally? Yes, I think they are doing a good job."

The views on structures, including those for coaches from those elite athletes from the swimming fraternity were just as strong as their athletics counterparts. Warren stated that:

“But that’s another big problem if you talk about structure, is that there’s no incentive for the coaches in South Africa to focus on quality. They don’t get any money from SASCOC or from Swimming South Africa. And what that does is that they have to get as many kids in the pool as possible to get the money to make a living. Where any other top swimming country in the world, they’re being subsidized by whoever. Most coaches, top coaches only have 10 to 12 swimmers.”

Warren went further to share the frustrations of the support received and their processes and the impact that it can and does have on performances at elite levels:

“So if you’ve got something niggling, you have a bad credit record, because your debit order went off and flipping SASCOC didn’t you know pay you, you’re gona worry about it. And you’re probably gona lose a bit of sleep about it. And that’s why I’m saying the people don’t understand the impact that these things have on an athlete. They can’t empathise with the stress that high performers go through. And I think most athletes will maybe echo my experiences. That’s the biggest thing is that they make decisions that has a huge impact and you can train as hard as you want, and watch your diet, you can go to sleep early, and then you have things that you can’t control that has an impact on your performance.”

Despite sharing such a strong opinion, some of his athletics counterparts, as was discussed above, echoed similar but slightly more subdued views.

Just as he presented strong views on the support structures, Warren was also ready to admit that SASCOC can also get it right:

“People are missing the point, the swimmers don’t want to get rich from SASCOC, but they do just want support to be able to achieve their potential. That’s all they want. And I must say, the people that they do support, like Cameron before London, it had a huge impact. I mean he broke a world record, an Olympic gold. So when they do get it right, it has a huge impact.”

This view from a former Olympian suggests and may just imply that there is much more that SASCOC can do when it comes to funding support that they provide.

Bernard also provided some interesting insight by summing up his experiences with SASCOC and the support provided throughout his career:

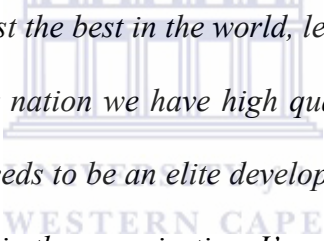
“I’m sure your question is if I had to survive on only the funding from SASCOC, the answer would be no, I wouldn’t be able to be a professional athlete.”

This last statement from Bernard encompasses his experience as an elite athlete in South Africa. Those few, simple words exemplify some of the challenges that our elite athletes at times have to experience in order to succeed at the highest level. To minimise this and to foster future talent, from what the study has presented thus far, possible change is needed regarding the funding support provided, which would be discussed in the final chapter under recommendations.

4.2.5 Change is needed

From everything that has been shared and stated about funding support during the study, it seemed to imply that change should be considered within the structures. Therefore each interview was concluded by asking participants what their views and opinions were regarding the way forward for elite South African sport, in light of all that had already been discussed. The reason for this inquiry was that all the participants were former Olympians or coaches/managers of former Olympians. They had reached the highest levels of their codes either as an athlete or a coach/manager and therefore had lessons of experience to share as well regarding their experiences, which could add further insight to the study.

Warren's had the following views regarding the way forward:



“We want to compete against the best in the world, let's work together so we get to that point where as a swimming nation we have high quality... So maybe the answer is to create a separate leg... it needs to be an elite development unit, there is not enough top sportsmen that are involved in the organization. I'm not saying former athletes make the best administrators, or the best coaches even, all I'm saying is that they understand what it takes and the pressure and stresses and the mind-set. There's nobody in Swimming South Africa that has a swimming background.”

Warren's suggestions are points that need to be considered, as Australia and Great Britain not only have elite development units through their national high performance agencies, but their NFs have former elite athletes and/or coaches within their structures (Athletics Australia, 2013; British Athletics, 2013; British Swimming, 2013; Swimming Australia, 2013; UK Sport, 2013). These former elite athletes and coaches have the experience and exposure to guide the present structures as is mandated by high performance strategies and goals.

Sally, who was one of the elite swimmers, stated that:

“With the two exceptions of Chad and Terrence, everyone we have produced in the swimming pool since we have been back after '91, has been people that have competed and gone on scholarship to the United States. Graham and the other coaches, they are doing a world class job, but they are at a disadvantage because they cannot ensure that level of competition frequently. So there's a huge opportunity, it's just not being utilised the way it should.”

Sally's views suggest that what South Africa now needs is possible partnerships with other nations to provide frequent training and high level competitions for our athletes to compete against the best. It worked well in the past for those who were able to go overseas, especially to the USA on scholarship.



As a coach Sam touched on two key issues that did not form part of the focus of the study:

“So yes things have changed and I think today the athletes have more support, but once again it's only a selected few athletes that can really say 'I can compete almost as a professional athlete'. I see the warning signs but I don't know if Athletics South Africa is acknowledging the warning signs and that is the lack of women in athletics. Shouldn't we be addressing that problem? Where are the international coaches for each event? It's not there, I mean where do the people go to gain knowledge? Get those structures in place, I mean adopt new paradigms.”

Sam's observations indicate that the lack of women and international coaches for most events in South Africa is something that needs to be discussed and rectified. How this can be done of

course, is beyond the scope of this particular study, but the researcher does encourage future studies into these two areas.

Matthew gave his views on the overall structures in elite sport in South Africa:

“The structures is not what it should be. The problem is not the people, the problem is the structure. I do know we are doing something wrong because the administration in sport in South Africa in general is not good. I think that sometimes we’ve got to realise that we only have a handful of athletes that can bring medals back, so do whatever is possible to help them and their coaches to bring that medal back and if they don’t bring it back there’s gotta be a very good reason for it... I think in many cases we are actually obstacles for these athletes instead of helping them.”

Matthew’s statement that in South Africa there are only a few elite athletes that can win medals at international competitions is true, and recent performances of Team South Africa at major international competitions proves this. His view that this may be due to the overall administrative processes in the country is something that needs to be investigated in future studies.

Chris was of the opinion that:

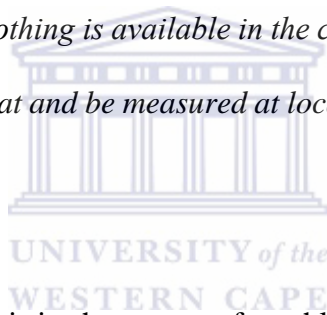
“The things I think they should do better... is help the athletes who are medal prospects and for maybe a longer period and not stop everything if you get injured.”

Chris’ opinion can be supported by statements made by some of the participants during the study and which were presented above, about discontinued support, especially when injured.

With the overall opinion being that support needs to be given over longer periods, even if and especially when athletes become injured – as that is when they really need support.

Ben offers an opinion which can be viewed as valid and true in the context of athletics:

“The question must be why are we not delivering? I’ve got multiple views on it... One, we lack the coaching support in the country and the coaching expertise. And the coaches cannot sustain their livelihood as it’s a fulltime business in developing athletes. So they fluctuate instead of continue development of their athletes. We don’t have a sustainable track and field circuit in the country. We don’t have an international track and field circuit in the country which we did have a few years ago. So from a global perspective in terms of performances, nothing is available in the country. So therefore athletes don’t have a platform to compete at and be measured at locally, which has an effect ultimately on performances.”



An attempt at a competitive circuit in the country for athletics has been started through the Varsity Athletics challenge. The only problem with this is that it targets athletes in university, who make up about half of the elite athlete pool in South Africa. This can be seen as a springboard for a future internationally competitive circuit similar to what South Africa had in the past. SASCOC has also started a Long Term Coach Development (LTCD) plan (SASCOC, 2014). Both are in their initial stages, but hopefully in the long term, they will provide the coaching support and expertise needed, along with high level competitive meetings.

4.2.6 Chapter Conclusion

The opinions and experiences of the participants show that support received is not nearly enough to be a full time elite professional athlete in South Africa. It was felt by the participants

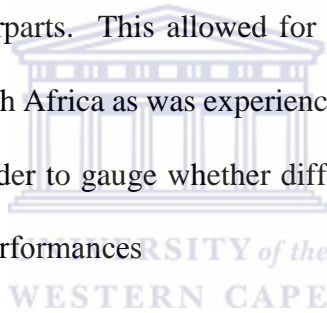
that: SASCOC needs to provide some form of support when athletes get injured and not abruptly discontinue their support; delays in reimbursement of funding does and can affect the athletes' performances as their focus will not be entirely on their training and preparations but on trying to obtain funds to meet their expenses; and ineffective administrative processes need to be addressed as they have been shown to contribute to the delays in reimbursement. The feedback received from the experiences and opinions of the athletes and sports managers interviewed, as well as the available literature shall now be used to provide recommendations for the study and concluding remarks.



CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The objectives of this study was led by research objectives which focused on the perceptions of funding support made available to elite athletes in South Africa. These perceptions were taken from the point of view of past and present elite athletes, their coaches and/or managers. International lessons of experience on funding support of elite sport were also introduced. This was in order to assess and analyse the stipulated policies and procedures presented in documents by the stakeholders who oversee elite athlete management in South Africa, with that of their international counterparts. This allowed for an assessment and comparison of stipulated funding support in South Africa as was experienced first-hand by elite athletes, with what is happening overseas in order to gauge whether differences in funding support affects athletes' eventual international performances



Chapter one provided the background and motivation for this study, which was to assess the funding support made available to elite athletes in South Africa. It also looked at the eventual impact and influences that funding support received from SASCOC might have on elite performances in the future.

Chapter two offered a literature review of various global funding support systems and their possible impact on athlete performances, and the dearth of literature in this field in South Africa. It also provided a detailed analysis of the funding support functions of SASCOC, ASA and SSA in relation to that of Great Britain and Australia – countries with similar international performances to that of South Africa.

Chapter three provided the methodological approach which was adopted in this study and the significance of using a qualitative approach in order to fully explore the funding support made available to elite athletes during their careers. This was in order to assess whether an improvement in funding support processes and procedures would result in improved high performance results (medal wins).

Chapter four presented the findings of the study – through interviews with athletes and coaches/managers, which allowed for the emergence of themes and sub-themes through the sharing of experiences.

Chapter five will now outline the key findings of each theme and sub-theme, along with recommendations for each theme and sub-theme. Concluding remarks about the study will also be provided. Thereafter additional recommendations shall be made regarding other issues presented in the findings. The chapter will then conclude with limitations experienced during the research process and provide suggestions for areas of possible research in the future.

5.2 Key Findings

A summary of the findings presented shall now follow, to give the reader insight into the experiences of the participants when it came to funding support. This will be in order to assess if the study hypothesis was proven.

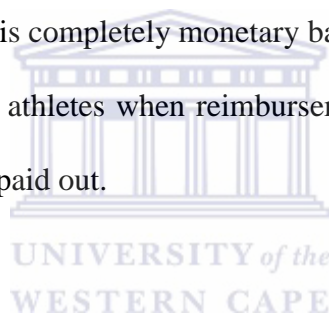
5.2.1 Funding Support

The first theme highlighted in this study pertained to funding support. This was explored in the following way: analysing international lessons of experience and measuring it up against South

African elite athletes' experiences. In the context of this study, funding support in South Africa looked at the exact composition of the support made available to elite athletes by SASCO. The accessible information showed that the support received in South Africa was monetary and also covered support services that athletes also needed.

From the participants' experiences the following key findings were raised:

1. Participants had to project and draw up a budget of their expenses for the specific year that they were to be supported.
2. There were administrative processes that had to be adhered to before funding support was received.
3. Funding support received is completely monetary based on budgets submitted.
4. It was not predictable for athletes when reimbursements would take place and when monthly allocations were paid out.



5.2.2 Support Procedures

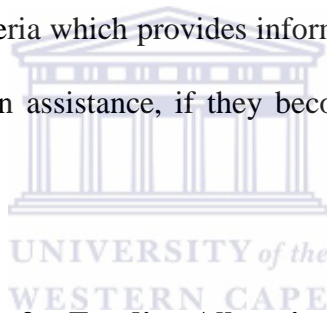
Before athletes are able to receive support, specified criteria need to be met. SASCO clearly outlined the expected criteria that needed to be matched in their *Road to Rio 2016* document in order for them to support athletes. However, the study revealed that:

1. Athletes were informed they needed to rank in the top 10 globally in their event in order to receive support.
2. A review of the latest (and outdated) athlete allocations document made available showing the different levels at which the athletes are supported, reveals that not all the athletes on this list meet the criteria for the levels at which they are receiving support.

5.2.3 Losing Support

When it comes to losing support, SASCOC clearly states that they have the right to discontinue supporting athletes if they feel they don't meet the set criteria for receiving support (SASCOC, Operation Excellence Programme Eligibility Criteria: Road to Rio 2016, 2012). No further information is provided regarding potential scenarios which could lead to such exclusion. Yet the findings based on the athletes and manager's experiences during the study showed that:

1. As soon as athletes make it known that they are injured, SASCOC removes their support.
2. As soon as athletes fall out of the top 10 global ranking in their event, SASCOC removes support, without consultations regarding what may have led to this.
3. There is no stipulated criteria which provides information on the course of action that athletes can take to regain assistance, if they become injured and/or ill and cannot perform.



5.2.4 Institutional Arrangements for Funding Allocation

Once funding support have stipulated criteria, processes also need to be presented to ensure accountability throughout the entire process. Yet the study showed that:

1. No documentation was available from SASCOC at the time the study was conducted to show the processes involved from the nomination of the athletes to them being notified that they shall receive support.
2. There was also no information available regarding the composition and voting powers of the selection committee involved in athlete selection, retention or exclusion.
3. Participants were also unable to provide any clarity on these matters.

5.2.5 Reimbursement

Funding formed the main component of the support that athletes received in South Africa. Yet no information was obtainable regarding the structure and processes involved in the funding received. From the study, participants provided insight into the processes involved in receiving funding support:

1. The funding support that athletes received was always in the form of reimbursement. Once their budgets had been approved, they would in essence have to keep receipts and invoices of their expenditures and submit them for reimbursement, of which they were not always fully reimbursed.
2. Athletes were usually never reimbursed on time and delays were always experienced. This issue was also documented in the media just after the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games, where it was alleged that some **athletes** had not received their funding for nearly 3 months.
3. The administrative process involved in receiving funds was not streamlined and involved a lot of paperwork, whereby for some athletes, the same information was requested each time claims for reimbursement were submitted.

5.3 Conclusions

Conclusions will now be provided which will address each key finding presented. It will also discuss whether or not the hypothesis of the study could be confirmed.

5.3.1 Funding Support

The findings showed that the funding support provided was based on each individual athletes' circumstances and what SASCO considered was relevant and necessary to their preparations once individual budgets were reviewed. This differs from most countries setting standardised

funding amounts for each level of support and allowing (to a degree) for additional sources of income (Australian Sports Commission, 20213; UK Sport, 2013).

The challenge with this type of approach adopted by SASCOC is that the budgets that the athletes prepare annually are mere projections. As the year progresses expenses may and usually do rise, especially if one is to assess the state of the South African economy over the last 12 months. So in effect athletes would have to prepare and find ways to top up their expenses when circumstances beyond their control push their expenditure beyond the allocated budget.

5.3.2 Support Procedures

The findings regarding the required criteria needed in order to receive support shows that SASCOC themselves may not always be adhering to their own established and stipulated criteria, which can bring into question why some athletes are being supported and some not. Evidence of this was discussed in chapter four whereby SASCOC supported an athlete that had been injured for most of 2014, but there were a handful of athletes who won medals at the 2014 Commonwealth Games who did not receive support from SASCOC in 2014.

5.3.3 Losing Support

The findings with respect to the loss of support and possible continuation thereof does raise some questions with respect to SASCOC's processes. When athletes experience injury, they still need some form of support in order to regain their lost performance levels. Removing athletes from the support structures once injured or out of the global top 10, can be viewed by many as a harsh and unnecessary action, which can impede and possibly eventually have a

negative impact on the athlete's career and future success, depending on the severity of the injury.

5.3.4 Institutional Arrangements for Funding Allocation

The lack of information on the processes involved from the nomination of athletes to finalising who shall receive support as well as lack of transparency with regards to decision making procedures at SASCOG could be seen as a cause for concern, as it does not seem to allow for coherent monitoring and evaluation.

5.3.5 Reimbursement

Reimbursing in its present form is not always advisable, especially when some athletes may not always have the means to cover expenses and will need to find alternate methods to raise money so that they can later get reimbursed. Delays in reimbursement and always having to provide standard/basic information which should have been captured on a system can all lead to stress for athletes.

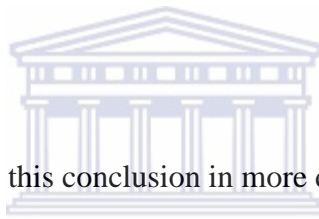
Elite sport is not only physical, but mental as well. If athletes have to worry about finances, delays in monies received etc., as mentioned by the elite athletes affected, it can and will eventually impact on their performances as they are not 100% focused on what they need to be – which is their training and performance.

This study therefore concludes that if SASCOG would put better systems in place for financial support of athletes, athletes themselves would feel more supported and perhaps better able to deliver their best performance in their chosen field.

5.3.6 Confirmation of the Hypothesis

Lessons of experience that were provided in this study from Great Britain and Australia show different examples of funding support, and the benefits of this can be noted in their medal wins over the years, in comparison to that of South Africa. The results from this study have provided a better understanding of funding support given to elite athletes and experienced by elite athletes in South Africa. It has shown that compared with international experiences there are different options and areas for possible improvement that should be addressed in South Africa when it comes to funding support.

Based on the limited sample of participants and the findings of this study, the hypothesis could be confirmed.



The following section will outline this conclusion in more detail:

The international lessons of experience provided a greater understanding of the processes and procedures involved in funding support at international levels. This understanding can therefore provide workable options to South Africa for future funding support of our elite athletes. These options will now be discussed under recommendations.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Funding Support

Based on the findings, it is recommended that SASCOC reassess the method of budgeting that is required of athletes, and should sit down with relevant stakeholders to assess the costs incurred of being a full time professional athlete in South Africa. It is recommended to explore this across the various disciplines, and that they should consider the budgets presented of the athletes that they already support or are to support. This will allow for the provision of a

standardised amount for each level of support provided for, and will cater for cases when economic factors impact on athletes' budgets and their expenditure becomes greater than what was anticipated. Based on the evidence that was provided in the discussion of international lessons of experience regarding Australia and Great Britain, providing standardised set amounts at each level of support, is a more effective way of managing funding support (Australian Sports Commission, 2013; Athletics Australia, 2013; British Athletics, 2013; British Swimming, 2013).

5.4.2 Support Procedures

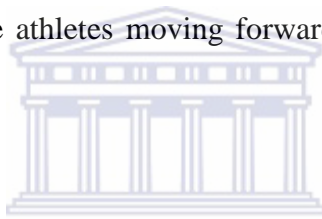
Based on the findings, it is recommended that SASCOC reviews their criteria for supporting elite athletes, by looking beyond just world rankings and medal wins and rather to consider incorporating assistance from statisticians, in setting performance standards of an international level for elite athletes to achieve in order to obtain some form of funding support. The discussion regarding international lessons of experience in Chapter two indicated that British Athletics and Athletics Australia incorporate assistance from statisticians (Athletics Australia, 2013; British Athletics, 2013) to ensure that athletes who have the potential to achieve international success, especially junior athletes, also get the necessary support and assistance in order to do so. Accessible and realistic deadlines for athletes should be set to achieve agreed upon performance standards. Most importantly, it is recommended that SASCOC adheres to the criteria that they themselves stipulate.

5.4.3 Losing Support

Based on the findings it was discovered that elite athletes at times may underperform due to illness and injury. When this occurs, especially if the athlete has never given reasons to doubt their commitment to their training and performance, SASCOC should make provisions to

continue support, albeit limited. It is recommended that SASCOC in consultation with medical experts should assess the athlete's situation and use the findings to provide limited funding support, and should use discretion to limit what the funding support will cover or provide.

Before doing this, SASCOC first needs to have the necessary stakeholders involved in assessing the athletes' situation. Once this has been established, it is recommended that SASCOC ensures that a relevant rehabilitation programme is drawn up, together with set performance timelines and targets. Progress reports should also be requested after each assessment by the relevant medical/training stakeholders in order to assess the athletes' recovery process. This is a process that is practiced in Great Britain and which could prove beneficial for South African elite athletes moving forward (British Athletics, 2013; British Swimming, 2013).



It is also advised that SASCOC allows for a reasonable time period for athletes to get back to peak performance, as shown in this study by examples from Australia and Great Britain (Athletics Australia, 2013; British Athletics, 2013; British Swimming, 2013). A final consideration would be to forewarn athletes if they are to have their support removed. For a lot of athletes, the support they receive from SASCOC is their main source of income and this needs to be remembered. Therefore an appropriate period (1-3 months), similar to what Great Britain offers should be given to let them know that they will no longer receive support due to stipulated reasons so that they may find alternate ways to support themselves once they are off the programme (British Athletics, 2013; British Swimming, 2013).

5.4.4 Institutional Arrangements for Funding Allocation

Based on the processes and procedures that are practiced in Australia and Great Britain when it comes to institutional arrangements for funding support, it is recommended that SASCO document in detail the processes involved once they have received nominations from NFs and make this available to all. They need to provide information on the selection panel/committee that will make the final decisions and the powers that each member of the voting panel has. As well as the processes involved once final decisions have been made regarding the athletes to support or not to support. This will allow for transparency in ensuring the fairness of the decisions taken regarding those who will be supported or not, especially when it comes to retention or exclusion of athletes already being supported.

5.4.5 Reimbursement

It would therefore be advisable for SASCO to reconsider eliminating this process of reimbursement as it has been shown in this study not to be entirely effective. Rather, as in the past, athletes should maybe be paid their monies on a specific date and should record and account for their expenditures. This is also a process that is conducted by Australia and Great Britain (Australian Sports Commission, 2013; British Athletics, 2013; British Swimming, 2013) and can be seen as a good practice model. Financial advisors (perhaps from the finance team in SASCO) could also be made accessible to those athletes who struggle with budgeting as well as monitoring and managing their finances in order to ensure no one misappropriates the money that they receive. This is an added service that Great Britain offers as well (British Athletics, 2013; British Swimming, 2013).

Whatever date has been chosen for the paying out of funds to athletes should also be adhered to in the same manner that employees working for any organization are paid on a monthly basis for their services.

The athlete database used for those on the OPEX programme needs to also be reassessed to find out where the ineffectiveness lies. Paperwork should be eliminated as much as possible and good practices need to be adopted by reviewing what other countries like Great Britain and Australia are doing in order to streamline their processes as they support and manage far more athletes than South Africa.

This study has highlighted gaps in our understanding with regard to elite sport funding support in South Africa. To this end, the implications thereof are the varied funding support experienced by elite athletes as the study has indicated. Therefore, if SASCOC as a national Olympic body, offers NFs greater responsibility over elite athlete funding support and decision making, whilst they adopt a more supportive administrative and planning role; then perhaps elite sport in South Africa may build upon its past successes as a result of better synergy between all stakeholders.

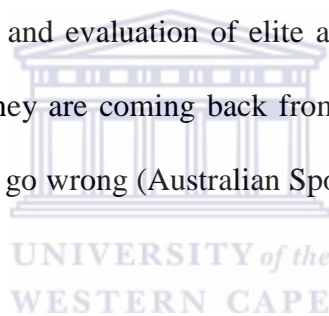
5.5 Additional Recommendations

This section shall provide some additional recommendations on minor issues which were presented in the findings when participants were asked their views on the way forward for South African elite sport. It may not have formed the main focus of the study but was non-the-less mentioned or alluded to by participants during their interviews and were presented and discussed in Chapter four. These additional options are also supported by the international lessons of experience that were also previously presented.

5.5.1 National High Performance Agency and Directorate

Based on a suggestion of the creation of an elite development unit, made by Warren in Chapter four – one of South Africa’s most prolific past Olympians – it is advised that SASCOC consider the appointment of a National High Performance Agency and the creation of a High Performance Directorate.

There are four internationally recognised ones in South Africa and they should each be allowed to bid as the National Agency. Having a central high performance agency has shown to benefit Great Britain and Australia as they have the same vision as their Olympic Committees and NFs. It improves the monitoring and evaluation of elite athletes’ preparations and eventual performances, especially when they are coming back from illness or injury. It also ensures accountability if and when things go wrong (Australian Sports Commission, 2014; UK Sport, 2013).



Although SASCOC has a High Performance Department, not much information was obtainable regarding their functions, except that they ensure the preparation and delivery of Team South Africa for major events (SASCOC, 2014). SASCOC should consider a High Performance Directorate for each code of sport that they support. If this is not initially feasible, it is recommended to start with one as a pilot. Within this structure they should have a National Performance Director for each code as well as a full team within each directorate to support the director such as statisticians, performance advisors, mentors (former athletes and coaches), nutritionists, sport scientists, sport psychologists and medical officers. It takes more than just a coach and funding to help an athlete reach international levels. A specialised team is needed to assist and this is what the national performance agencies of Great Britain and Australia

provide, a team at a centralised base to assist coaches and athletes through their performance directorates (Australian Sports Commission, 2013; British Athletics, 2013; British Swimming, 2013). We have enough individuals in these professions in South Africa, it is just about finding a way to bringing them all together for the good of South African sport.

This will allow them to assess when most athletes peak and have Season's Best (SBs) performances, because global rankings change all the time. They can also then use identified trends to work with identified athletes to follow the trends in their performances and align it to international levels to ensure/prove that even if athletes are not in the global top 10, they would still have a chance to perform and win a medal, especially when coming back from injury.

5.5.2 Former Athletes in Structures: Mentor System

Retired elite athletes (besides coaches) know more than anyone, what elite athletes go through and what they need in order to reach the pinnacle of any sport. In South Africa, none of our past Olympians and World Champions are part of the structures of Swimming and in Athletics, there is only one former Olympian in the structures who has been appointed as a High Performance Officer.

Finding ways to include former Olympians and World champions in the structures could prove beneficial to South African sport going forward. Reflecting on the information provided throughout the study regarding the structures and performances of Great Britain and Australia, it is interesting to note that:

- Of the 21 Board Members in the BOA, 9 are former international athletes/Olympians and 2 are former coaches (Team GB, 2014).

- Of the 8 board members of British Athletics, 2 are former international athletes (British Athletics, 2014).
- Of the 5 board members of British Swimming, 1 is a former coach and 2 are former athletes (British Swimming, 2014).
- Of the 12 Executive Board Members of the Australian Olympic Committee, 9 are former Olympians (Australian Olympic Committee, 2014).
- Of the 9 Board members of Athletics Australia, 2 are former athletes (Athletics Australia, 2014).
- Of the 9 Board members of Swimming Australia, 3 are former athletes/Olympians (Swimming Australia, 2014).

The above presented facts and the information and results shared throughout this study regarding the sporting structures of South Africa, Great Britain and Australia alludes to the benefits of having former elite athletes at the decision making levels and within the structures of elite sport. Australia and Great Britain, through their past performances at major international competitions have shown the benefits of this as documented in the following table:

Table 13: Former Elite Athletes in National Federations & Olympic Committees

	South Africa	Great Britain	Australia
Athletics NF	✓ (1 former elite athlete in management structure)	✓ (25% of board members are former elite athletes)	✓ (22% of board members are former elite athletes)
Swimming NF	X (none)	✓ (60% of board members are former elite athletes/coach)	✓ (33% of board members are former elite athletes/Olympians)

Olympic Committee	X (1 former elite athlete on the board)	✓ (52% of board members are former elite athletes/coaches)	✓ (75% of board members are former Olympians)
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5.5.3 Providing Options for Athletes

Based on Sally's comments in Chapter four that when it comes to swimming, with the exception of Chad le Clos and Cameron van den Burgh, all of South Africa's most successful swimmers have competed and been on scholarship at University in America. This supports the recommendation that going forward, NFs and/or SASCOC should give athletes an option to train in South Africa or to train abroad, and possibly look at athlete exchange programmes and opportunities.

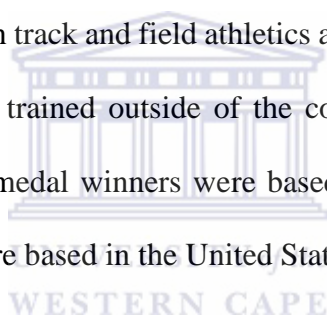


Funding has always been presented as one of the major issues hindering sport in South Africa, especially elite high performance sport. A possible solution to this is for SASCOC to research various universities abroad, especially in America, which provide full scholarship opportunities to international athletes and to possibly partner with them. The reason for considering the US as the first country of choice, is because of the level of competition and training offered by the American universities. It is a known fact that the American Collegiate Athletic System is the most competitive in the world and that it produces a great number of world champions. Their scholarship system and support is also unrivalled.

This will allow SASCOC to give athletes (especially on junior level) the option of staying in South Africa to receive support or being aided in going to America through scholarship programs, to compete and train amongst some of the best elite athletes their sporting code has to offer, especially when one looks at track and field athletics and swimming.

One of the main reasons for this recommendation is that if some athletes choose the option of going abroad, they will be looked after for 4 to 5 years at almost no cost to SASCO. Athletes will be trained and managed to elite levels and be provided with free tertiary education as well. This would assist in freeing up some much needed funds to strengthen and improve structures in South Africa going forward. Once these athletes have graduated from university in America, and have retired from elite competition, they should be asked to consider coaching or mentoring when they return to South Africa.

There has always been a debate regarding local and overseas based athletes. An analysis of 129 individual medallists competing in track and field athletics at the 2008 Olympic Games, shows that 21 of them were based and trained outside of the country that they represented. This indicates that about 16% of the medal winners were based in foreign countries, and of this amount, about a third of them were based in the United States.



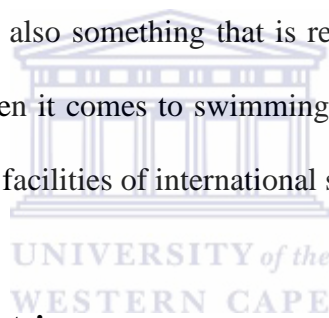
Moving onto the 2012 Olympic Games, of the 131 individual medallists competing in track and field athletics, 24 of them were based outside of the country that they represented. This indicates that about 18% of the medal winners were based in foreign countries and just like in 2008, about a third of them were based in the United States.

This analysis of foreign based track and field athletes shows a marginal increase in overseas based medal winners, which could be attributed to better facilities and/or structures being offered abroad (depending on the track and field event) as opposed to what they have in their home countries.

With regards to swimming, at the 2008 Olympic Games, of the 53 individual medal winners, 6 were based outside of the country that they represented. That shows that about 11% of the medal winners were based in foreign countries.

At the 2012 Olympic Games, of the 57 individual medal winners, 4 of them trained outside of the country that they represented. That shows that about 7% of the medal winners were based in foreign countries. Unlike athletics, swimming saw a drop in overseas based medal winners. This could be attributed to the fact that NFs and governments (mainly in Europe) improved and upgraded the facilities and structures made available to their elite swimmers over time.

These above mentioned facts are also something that is recommended for SASCOC to take into consideration, especially when it comes to swimming as there has been a call in recent times for improved and upgraded facilities of international status.



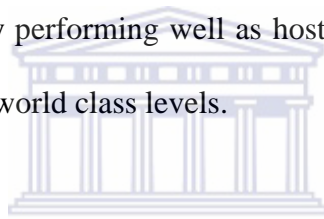
5.5.4 Engaging with Other Countries

This final recommendation is based on recent international trends of countries and tertiary institutions engaging with their international counterparts in order to find ways of improving future elite athlete performances (Athumani, 2014; Sports Directorate University of Ghana, 2014; Tuoi Tre News, 2015). It is advised that SASCOC should consider engaging more with other nations, especially Great Britain and Australia to assess how they improved elite performances in athletics and swimming because there was a time when South Africa performed better than these two nations but in recent times this is not the case.

South Africa may not have the GDP and economy that these two countries have in order to assist their elite sports, but lessons can still be learnt from them. There was a time when South

Africa performed better than Great Britain in athletics and swimming, but Great Britain implemented some changes which allowed them to improve their elite athletes and medal numbers. The result of this was their 4th place finishing on the overall medal table at the 2012 Olympic Games, the highest ever placing on the medal table in the history of their Olympic participation.

Australia's population stands at 44% of that of South Africa, meaning that they have less future potential athletes to choose from. Their geographic location should also be a stumbling block as they can be considered nearly isolated from the rest of the world, but this is not the case. Leading up to the 2000 Olympic Games that they were to host, they were able to establish structures to aid them in not only performing well as hosts, but also ensuring some form of sustainability of performances at world class levels.



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Although over the years performances have dropped somewhat for Australia, they have good monitoring and evaluation structures which has allowed them to reassess and make changes to their structures in order to improve performances.

Engaging with Great Britain and Australia could enable South African coaches and their athletes to visit their national high performance agencies to assess their facilities, share training techniques, new advances in sport science and sports medicine etc. One country which has seen the benefits of engaging with Great Britain and Australia in this manner is China. They have sent some of their top coaches and swimmers to Great Britain and Australia to learn from their structures (Lei, 2011; University of Bath, 2012). This move saw China winning 9 medals at the 2012 Olympic Games, which was quite an improvement from the 4 that they won in 2008 when they hosted the Olympic Games.

It is therefore recommended that South Africa engage and learn from both countries on how they were able to improve their funding support and structures. This may allow SASCO to adapt their findings to the South African context so that the cash injection that they are to receive from the National Lottery and government over the next 10 years can be used optimally, as they look forward to possibly hosting the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

It is therefore not about merely copying what countries such as Great Britain and Australia have done, but about identifying what lessons can be learnt from how they assessed and made changes to their structures to suit their context.

5.6 Research Limitations

As is the case with any type of research, especially exploratory studies - this study had its limitations. As previously mentioned, only 40% of those identified agreed to be part of the study and within this group, 41.7% of them had retired from competition. Having nearly half of the respondents in retirement may be seen by some as not an entirely clear indication of how support structures are currently managed, despite their experiences being similar to those currently still competing.

There were no women of colour within the final participant pool, although two had been identified. Only two (16.7%) women finally agreed to be part of the study from the initial seven that were identified. This is very worrying for a country where women make up about 50% of the population. This indicates that there may be a gender bias in this study, however, it does not detract from the rich information obtained in this study.

Of the twelve respondents, only three (25%) were of colour and this is another point of concern in a country where about 90% of the population are of colour. There were also no coaches of colour in the final participant pool, although one had initially been identified.

Access to the participant pool was also a major stumbling block for the researcher as very creative methods had to be used in order to reach participants. Once some form of contact was established and information regarding the research and study was shared, the problem that arose was that many ignored correspondences. Of those who did not ignore the correspondence, about a third would arrange interview times and then just not avail themselves. Even when contact was made regarding rescheduling, at times they rescheduled, but at times they also did not pay heed to the researchers follow up correspondence.

There was also a lack of support from SASCOC for this study. It may have been this lack of formal support that led to a less than adequate response from potential participants.

These limitations mentioned above, although frustrating, did not hamper the study. Of the twelve participants, nine (75%) were white and two (16.7%) were women. Persons of colour and women were wary to participate in the study and this is worrying as they are the least represented groups in South Africa when it comes to elite sporting levels on the international stage. Having no woman of colour and only a 25% representation for men of colour amongst the respondents' raises a lot of questions about the current state of elite sport in South Africa which should be addressed in future studies.

5.7 Suggestions for Areas of Future Research

The findings of this study showed that there is a lack of women involved in elite sport in South Africa, as well as persons of colour at elite levels. These are areas where research needs to be encouraged, especially with regards to the call for transformation in South African sport by government.

Another area of interest which could not be explored in this study but which is relevant in this context is that of the benefits of “development support”, as in the support provided to elite athletes through the Centres of Excellence at the University of the Western Cape and University of Pretoria.

Furthermore, research around various meanings of the concept of ‘development and development support’ for example ‘development’ support for athletes coming from disadvantaged communities who may require special development support, beyond what athletes from advantaged communities may require for example with regard to codes such as swimming is another topic which would benefit SASCOC and South African sport.

More research on sport management practices as a whole, especially at elite levels needs to also be encouraged as this study was the first of its kind. Meaning that future studies could and would assist in improving the funding support of elite sport in South Africa across all codes, especially when it comes to transparency and results based monitoring and evaluation on monies spent.

It is further recommended that formalised and specific strategies and policies need to be considered and formulated for elite high performance sport in South Africa. The benefits of

which can clearly be seen through the performances of Australia and Great Britain as were presented in this study, especially Great Britain when one reviews their outstanding performances and achievements at the 2012 Olympic Games.

Recommendation 18 of the *Olympic Agenda 2020: 20+ 20 Recommendations* encourages all countries to strengthen the support provided to athletes and to put athletes experiences at the heart of the Olympic Games and to invest in supporting athletes on and off the field (IOC, Olympic Agenda 2020, 2014). With this in mind, the researcher hopes that the study would be seen as trying to contribute towards this.



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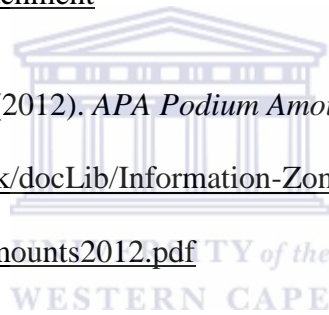
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Athlete Interview Guide

Interview Guide for Athletes/Swimmers

- **Purpose of the interview:** *Explore perceptions of support structures made available to you prior to/within the formation of the OPEX programme*
1. When did you first start participating in track and field athletics/swimming, and how many years into participation before you first represented South Africa at international level?
 2. Can you please take me through the journey/build-up of your career? From when you first developed an interest in track and field athletics/swimming to when you first represented the country at a major international competition.
 3. How many international championships have you qualified for and how many have you been able to attend and represent South Africa?
 4. How many medals have you won at international level/major international championships?
 5. Can you describe to me your preparations and build up leading to each major international championships whereby you were able to win a medal?
 6. How did you fund your preparations for major international competitions when you first started competing at elite level?
 7. What kind of support did you receive from your federation once you started representing South Africa at elite levels – before and after winning a medal?
 8. From which source did you receive the most support for your preparations during your career – private (sponsorships) or public (grants) support?
 9. What programmes for athlete management, development and support are you aware of that are provided for elite athletes/swimmers in South Africa? Could you please provide details regarding these programmes?
 10. Can you explain to me the criteria that has been set down in order to be considered eligible to be invited to be a part of such programmes?
 11. When you were first invited into the programme, what were the reasons given for your invitation and what were the processes involved?
 12. What is/was your understanding of why the programme was created?

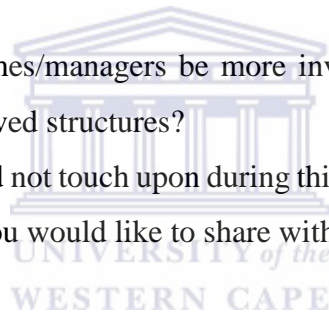
13. Have you received/did you receive support from this programme (financial or otherwise) year on year since becoming a part of it/during your career? And what are/were the stipulations that needed to be met in order to receive continued support?
14. Can you please tell me the exact breakdown of the kind of support that you received each year during your involvement in the programme – financial or otherwise?
15. Can you tell me what steps are followed (if you know) if an athlete is not able to meet the criteria set down when they join any of the programmes mentioned above?
16. How would you assess the support from these various structures during your career:
 - a) SASCOC?
 - b) ASA/SSA?
 - c) OPEX/elite athlete management programme that you were a part of?
17. What are your views on the impact that this management programme has had on your career and the performances that you had as compared to before you joined it and when you left/if you were to leave the programme?
18. What is your opinion on the state of the current support structures in place for elite athlete management?
19. Should athletes and coaches/managers be more involved in the future regarding the process of possible improved structures?
20. Is there anything that I did not touch upon during this interview that you feel is relevant to my research and that you would like to share with me?

Appendix B: Coach/Manager Interview Guide

Interview Guide for Coaches/Managers

- *Purpose of the interview: Explore your perceptions of support structures made available to your athletes prior to and within the formation of the OPEX programme during their careers.*
1. When did you first develop an interest in track and field athletics/swimming in general?
 2. Can you please take me through the journey/build up that led to you becoming a coach/manager, especially at elite level?
 3. When was the first time that you had an athlete/swimmer under your charge qualify for a major international championship and can you recollect how many you have had qualify and participate since?
 4. Can you give me details regarding your experiences with your athletes – prior to and following winning medals at international levels?
 5. Can you describe to me the preparations that were laid out and the build-up leading to all the major international championships where your athletes were able to compete and win medals?
 6. How did your athletes manage to fund their preparations for major international competitions when they first started competing at elite levels?
 7. What kind of support did your athletes receive from their federations once they started representing South Africa at elite levels – before and after winning a medal?
 8. From which source did your athletes receive the most support for their preparations during their careers - private (sponsorships) or public (grants) support?
 9. What programmes for athlete management, development and support are you aware of that are provided for elite athletes/swimmers in South Africa?
 10. Can you explain to me the criteria that has been set down in order to be considered eligible to be invited to be a part of such programmes?
 11. When were any of your athletes first invited into the programme, the reasons given for their invitation and what were the processes involved?
 12. What is/was your understanding of why the programme was created?
 13. Did your athletes receive support from this programme (financial or otherwise) year on year since becoming a part of it/during their career? And what are/were the stipulations that needed to be met in order to receive continued support?

14. Can you tell me the exact breakdown of the kind of support that your athletes received each year during their involvement in the programme – financial or otherwise?
15. Can you tell me what steps are followed (if you know) if an athlete is not able to meet the criteria set down when they join any of the programmes mentioned above?
16. How would you assess the support from these various structures during your athletes' careers:
 - d) SASCOC?
 - e) ASA/SSA?
 - f) OPEX/elite athlete management programme that they were a part of?
17. What are your views on the impact that this management programme had on your athletes career and the performances that they had as compared to before they joined it and when they left/were to leave the programme?
18. What is your opinion on the state of the current support structures in place for elite athlete management?
19. Should athletes and coaches/managers be more involved in the future regarding the process of possible improved structures?
20. Is there anything that I did not touch upon during this interview that you feel is relevant to my research and that you would like to share with me?



Appendix C: Consent Letter



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2245 Fax: 27 21-959 3688

e-mail: sititus@uwc.ac.za

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: An Exploration of Support Structures of SASCOC in Management and Development in South Africa: The Elite Athlete and Manager's Perspective

The study has been described to me in language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason, and this will not negatively affect me in any way.

Participant's name:

Participant's signature: Date:/...../201...

Witness Name:

Witness Signature: Date:/...../201...

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study coordinators:

Study Coordinator Name: Ms S. Titus

Cell: +27(0)21 959 2245

Email: sititus@uwc.ac.za

Appendix D: Information Sheet



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e-mail: sititus@uwc.ac.za

INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: An Exploration of Support Structures of SASCOC in Management and Development in South Africa: The Elite Athlete and Manager's Perspective

What is this study about?

This is a qualitative research project being conducted by, Nana Adom-Aboagye at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project. You are a possible candidate to participate in the study because: a) you are an elite track and field athlete/swimmer and have represented Team South Africa at major international championships; or b) you are an elite coach/manager that has coached an elite athlete that has represented Team South Africa at major international championships. The purpose of this research project is to explore support structures of SASCOC in management and development of elite athletes in South Africa.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

You will be asked to participate in an interview to discuss the topic researched. The discussions will be recorded (audio or video recording) with your permission. All data obtained, transcriptions and recordings will be kept confidential and you will remain anonymous. Your participation in the study will provide valuable contribution to the management and development of elite athletes in South Africa. The interviews will take place at neutral venues suggested by yourselves during a time period that is suitable to your schedule and will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes of your time and shall be audio recorded. For those who may be unable to attend a face to face interview, video-conferencing can be arranged and this too shall be recorded (video recording), with confidentiality and anonymity assured. After analysis of the data, if the researcher feels it is necessary, follow up interviews will be conducted for clarification on themes/points identified.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, your name will not be used in the data collection procedure, rather pseudonyms would be used. Data will be stored in locked filing cabinets and storage areas, using identification codes only on data forms, and using password-protected computer files. If we

write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible.

What are the risks of this research?

There may be some risks from participating in this research study.

The study may include risks that may be better described as things that could make the subject feel uncomfortable such as disclosing information that you don't want to share. You may then ask to move to the next question and are under no obligation to answer. You may withdraw from the study at any time. Other than that there are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about the state of the support structures of SASCO, with particular focus on the OPEX program. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved management structures for elite athletes within South Africa to ensure improved performances in the future.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Nana Adom-Aboagye from the Department of Sport, Recreation and Exercise Science at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Nana on: +(27) 79 483 1975 / +(27) 84 293 4619 or email: nanaakua85@gmail.com.

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

HOD: Dr S. Bassett
Supervisor: Ms S. Titus
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535
Telephone: (021) 959 2245
E-mail: sititus@uwc.ac.za

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee