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Beyond Performance: Guidelines to Create Holistic Talent Development Environments

Intellectual Output 2 (Executive Summary)

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Modern day high-performance sport is arguably more competitive than ever before. National teams, clubs and sport programmes therefore focus on identifying talented athletes and developing them into the sporting superstars of tomorrow through structured talent systems and tailored talent development environments (TDEs).

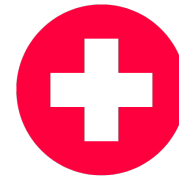
Recently, however, concerns have been raised over the short and long-term physical, psychological and social impact of young athletes participating in the talent development process.

There are two main areas of concern...



Developmental Sacrifice

Talent development is time exhaustive and may result in a sacrifice of social and/or educational experiences ordinarily experienced by young people.



Negative Health Impact

Talent development is physically, psychologically and socially demanding and may impact on the health and wellbeing of young athletes as they progress towards elite levels.

For this reason, the International Olympic Committee have put forth a consensus statement that promotes the safe and balanced development of all young athletes.

“The goal is clear: develop healthy, capable and resilient young athletes, while attaining widespread, inclusive, sustainable and enjoyable participation and success for all levels of individual athletic achievement” – Bergeron et al. (2015)

This executive summary presents the findings of two studies conducted as part of ICK+ to examine good practice in TDEs across Europe, and explores in detail how they create the conditions for holistic development.

What is Holistic Talent Development?

There is a lack of consensus around what holistic development is. We examined existing research and policy documents and arrived at the below definition:

Holistic development is an overarching philosophical approach to athletic talent development that aims to develop young athletes in three interrelated domains:

Athletic Skills

Health and Wellbeing

Life Readiness



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Athletic Skills

The development of the skills and characteristics (i.e., technical, tactical, physical, psychosocial) needed to progress towards higher levels of athletic performance and competition.



Health and Wellbeing

The promotion, development, safeguarding and maintenance of physical, mental and social health and wellbeing.



Life Readiness

The development and application of attitudes and skills required to succeed in and outside of sport, now and in the future.

6 Principles of Holistic Development in TDEs

Using the definition above as a reference point, we researched exemplar TDEs and developed 6 good practice principles that contribute to holistic development. These principles are optimal and aspirational 'ways of working' for coaches and staff to adopt or adapt into their current environment.

#1 A holistic philosophy of athlete development



Adopt a person-first philosophy.
(Re)Define 'success' holistically.
Champion individuality and inclusion.

#2 Stakeholder alignment and support



Proactively and positively engage everyone involved.
Create an interdisciplinary culture.

#3 A climate of care



Promote and support positive mental health.
Amplify the athlete's voice.

#4 A long-term learning and development focus



Conduct long-term planning.
Collaborate on goal setting.

#5 Appropriate challenge



Create stretch points consistently.
Foster striving, surviving and thriving competences.
Provide individualised and timely support.

#6 Integrated life skill development



Facilitate interpersonal growth.
Foster life skill transfer.

Holistic development is an overarching approach to talent development that optimises athletic skills, health and wellbeing, and life skills for the long-term sporting and life success of young athletes in TDEs and beyond.

The guidelines provide practical direction to create holistic TDEs. Ultimately, the success of applying the 6 principles relies on the deliberate and collaborative pursuit of holistic development by all stakeholders in the TDE.

Recommendations

Considering the research findings, there are some practical recommendations stakeholders can follow to ensure everyone works towards the same holistic development goal.

Federations and NGBs

Implement and promote a holistic development philosophy into talent development policy.

Evaluate TDEs and coaches/support staff effectiveness based on holistic development not just athletic skill development.

Provide coach/support staff professional development opportunities in holistic development.

Clubs and Schools

Promote holistic development in coach expectations/standards.

Champion positive physical, mental and social health across the club at all levels.

Allow coaches and support staff to regularly collaborate and learn from each other.

Promote positive interactions amongst all club stakeholders.

Coaches and Support Staff

Align planning and daily practice with a holistic development philosophy.

Use planned and unplanned opportunities to promote life skills and health and wellbeing when coaching.

Proactively work with parents as a valued relationship and as an asset to athlete development.

Parents

See athlete development as a long-term process that requires balance across an athlete's life.

Work with coaches and support staff positively as a team to support your child.

See competition as one part of learning in the long-term development process.

Where to next?

If you wish to know more about how to create holistic TDEs, we would love you to complete our brand new FREE e-learning course "Developing Effective Talent Development Environments". Click [HERE](#) to access our e-learning platform.

You can also check out the full guidance report.



ICOACHKIDS+ is an Erasmus+ Sport co-funded project part of the overall activities of the ICOACHKIDS Global Movement. It aims to enhance sport participation and maximise sport's health enhancing properties for children aged 13–18.

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