# Cardiff School of Sport

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<td><strong>Title and Abstract (5%)</strong></td>
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2 There is scope within qualitative dissertations for the RESULTS and DISCUSSION sections to be presented as a combined section followed by an appropriate CONCLUSION. The mark distribution and criteria across these two sections should be aggregated in those circumstances.
The management of elite sport development – German tennis: a case study

(Dissertation submitted under the discipline of Management and Development)

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I would like to thank my dissertation supervisor, Greg Dainty, for providing help and guidance throughout the entire project. All along, you encouraged me to bring the best out of me and without your time and constant effort this dissertation would not be what it is.

‘Don’t worry, it’ll be fine’ (Dainty, 2013). Unsurprisingly, you were right Greg – eventually it turned out to be just fine!

Furthermore, I would like to address my appreciation to all participants – your perceptions and statements were invaluable to this study.

Finally, I am grateful for the continuous emotional support given by my family and friends throughout the three years of studying abroad.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this individual research project is to investigate the process of elite sport development in German tennis and to compare it to the current best practice model found in the literature. An extensive review of the literature relating to sport development structures and processes is the prerequisite for this comparison. The German Tennis Federation (GTF) serves as a case study.

To explore the approach adopted by the GTF regarding the development of elite tennis players, a qualitative research design was undertaken. Purposeful sampling was conducted to select the most appropriate participants. Semi-structured, audiotaped interviews were used to reveal GTF’s key stakeholders’ perceptions and experiences. Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed and by using content analysis, key themes were identified, analysed and discussed.

The study found that the talent identification and -development pathway applied by the GTF is well-considered and efficient. However, lack of personnel and -revenue make it difficult for the GTF to provide all the essential resources needed to deliver an appropriate elite sport development framework. Moreover, greater care for the athlete needs to be established to enhance the players’ performance.

These findings suggest that the athlete needs to be at the centre of all strategic- and operational procedures at all times. A revised model, reflecting the findings of the study, adapted from the initial best practice model, was developed by the researcher. Further research is necessary to determine whether the proposed model is an effective representation of best practice sport development in an elite context. This research may include further work with the GTF and other sport organisations and would benefit from an international perspective.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This qualitative study aims to investigate the management of elite sport development in the context of the GTF. Eady (1993) defines sport development as a process, providing opportunities for people to participate in sport – regardless of gender, age and level of ability. Furthermore, it can be a practice, discourse or policy domain and involves a range of tasks performed by sport managers (Girginov, no date). Sport development can also be seen as a vision – the German Olympic Sports Confederation (no date) states that issues such as health promotion, disease prevention, social integration and preservation of the environment become increasingly important in the field of sport development. The delivery of sport development can be undertaken by individuals as well as public, private and voluntary partnerships. Consequently, it is important to manage the process of sport development both strategically and operationally. The aim is to establish a well-organised structure and execution of tasks relating to the development of sport and furthermore to create opportunities for people to become actively engaged in sport.

Girginov (2008) defines the management of sport development as being ‘concerned with a process of inspiring and engaging people, while learning and creating opportunities for participation in sport and enhancing personal and social well-being’ (p. 282). Therefore, the management of sport development deals with determining policies and establishing frameworks in the field of sport. That is to say that applied knowledge can be generated in the form of development policies and implementations (Girginov, no date). Green (2005) argues that more thought should be given to the planning, implementation and evaluation of sport-related programmes. In order to enhance participation, these programmes should be concerned with athlete recruitment, commitment and transition. Shilbury et al. (2008) claim sport development policies – clear and realistic in its outline – and structured systems are pivotal to the sports system. Yet, unplanned consequences can occur due to the complexity of policies in general. The effectiveness and successful implementation can depend on the knowledge and skills of those people administering and implementing sport development policies. Therefore it is important to have skilful managers who constantly monitor and assess sport management policies to see whether they achieved the desired outcomes (Bloyce and Smith, 2010). Continuous monitoring and evaluation can create a significant and reliable basis from which effectiveness and outcomes of sport development policies can be evaluated.
Furthermore, reporting and strategic planning are essential components of managing sport development. Development in general can be seen as an analytical – examining how development occurs – and normative – suggesting how development should occur – concept (Girginov, 2008). He suggests that the management of sport development should be normative, analytical and process-orientated. That is to say that the management of sport development should be concerned with establishing norms with relation to best practice. This requires analysis of existing practice and establishment of new processes whilst allocating sufficient resources to ensure best practice within provision.

Established in 1902, the German Tennis Federation is the not-for-profit, National Governing Body of German Tennis (GTF, 2002; GTF, 2012 (1)). The GTF promotes tennis by: organising competitions; providing coaching education; supporting national teams; and developing high-performance/mass/disabled tennis. The GTF claims that it is the worlds’ biggest tennis association; it controls and guides 18 regional associations. It has more than 1.5 million members (GTF, 2012 (2)) in over 9,000 clubs across Germany providing more than 47,000 courts (GTF, 2012 (3)). A national survey showed that 22.45 million people in Germany have an interest in tennis (Sportfive, 2013). The GTF is led by a presidium – a president and five vice-presidents – that works on a voluntary basis. The presidium is controlled by the federal committee, constituted of the chairmen of the regional associations. Full-time employees are in charge of the operational business in the GTF head office in Hamburg. There are different departments such as high-performance tennis, sport development and marketing.

Specifically, this paper will examine the perceptions of key stakeholders involved with the GTF. They will be asked about their individual views on the practice of sport development within this particular organisation. Results will be compared with the best practice model defined in the literature review. In summary, the study will seek to ascertain whether existing sport development practices in the GTF exemplify best practice. Where they do not, the researcher will suggest potential reasons why the GTF does not follow the most effective sport development pathway.
1.2 Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of the study is to investigate the current sport development structures in the GTF, to compare this structure to what the literature defines as best practice and to examine whether the GTF’s management of elite sport development is of normative nature. That is to say whether the GTF is working to establish certain norms and values – implemented in the sport development structures – that ensure best practice. In order to meet the overall aim, the following related objectives were defined:

1. To conduct a review of the current literature related to the management of sport development at elite level in order to ascertain what is currently seen as best practice in the literature;
2. To undertake primary research to discover stakeholder perceptions of how the GTF manages sport development in the context of elite German tennis;
3. To compare and contrast the findings with the literature;
4. To consider and, if appropriate, synthesise a new model of best practice;
5. To identify areas for future research.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate a critical review of the literature associated with sport development. According to Silverman (2013), the literature can be used to compare existing concepts with actual primary data and furthermore to supplement the validation of the findings, explaining similarities or differences. Definitions of key technical terms to facilitate comprehension will be provided in the first section. The second section will look in more detail at three current models of sport development. Subsequently, one of those selected models will be chosen as best practice. The final section will examine and evaluate the management of elite sport development in Germany.

2.2 Definition of key terminology

It is important to explain the key terminology which will be used in this paper to avoid some common misunderstandings. First of all, Sotiriadou (2010) (cited in Sotiriadou and De Bosscher, 2013) define sport development as a dynamic process which involves stakeholders’ contribution (inputs). These inputs provide both sport development strategies (throughputs) and pathways (outcomes) which enable the process of sport development – the attraction, retention, transition and nurturing of participants. Within the sport development process, talent will be identified. Talent identification implies detecting potential for superior skills in a particular task, which can then be nurtured with the help of appropriate resources and training (Baker et al., 2012). The nurturing of talent which aims to lead to increased performance is called talent development (Abbott and Collins, 2004; cited in Baker et al., 2012). The next step – athlete development – is defined by Sotiriadou and De Bosscher (2013) as a process which involves strategies and programmes that are designed for those athletes who compete on a (inter-) national basis, with the potential to achieve recognition from the government, sponsors and spectators. Essentially, an elite athlete is a person who has taken part in an international sporting event, such as the Olympic Games (Sotiriadou and De Bosscher, 2013). The outcomes and capabilities that athletes demonstrate in a daily training environment and in competing at elite level can be referred to as high performance (Sotiriadou and De Bosscher, 2013). In general, the governing body for a specific sport is called a National Governing Body (NGB). Its purpose is to manage rules, eligibility and championships for its sport (Sotiriadou and De Bosscher, 2013). Finally, a model is a guiding principle that represents meaningful assumptions about various factors that have an effect on particular situations or phenomena and its potential connections or consequences (Bailey et al., 2010).
2.3 The introduction of three sport development models

Three current models that deal with sport development were chosen to be presented in this paper. According to Bailey et al. (2010), the use and building of models is a widespread approach, especially in the areas of policy development and applied research. First of all, Balyi’s (2001, cited in Stafford, 2005) Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model for late-specialisation sports (see figure 1) will be introduced. It focuses on six different stages during athlete development and can be described as a development model which is physiologically orientated (Bailey et al., 2010). The model demonstrates an athlete centred approach and provides flexibility concerning the adaptability to different sports. The crucial idea behind the model is that it takes ten years of dedicated training to reach elite level.

The FUNdamental stage of the LTAD model (girls: 6-8; boys: 6-9) is mostly about fun and enjoyment (Foreman and Bradshaw, 2009). Children should try out various activities and familiarise themselves with the foundation of athletics – skills such as coordination, balance, agility and speed (Stafford, 2005). During the Learning to Train period (girls: 8-11; boys: 9-12), juniors pick up the basic overall sports skills and progress with the movement competencies acquired during the FUNdamentals. Furthermore, the emphasis is on introducing mental preparation and understanding emotional development. At the end of this stage, children might progress with sports either recreationally or at a competitive level (Stafford, 2005). The focus during the Training to Train stage (girls: 11-15; boys: 12-16) is on the development of fitness and sport specific skills (Stafford, 2005). Balyi (2002, cited in Stafford, 2005, p. 39) stresses that ‘athletes who miss this stage of training will never reach their full potential, regardless of compensatory programmes they may participate in.’ The Training to Compete stage (girls: 15-17; boys: 16-18) involves tailored technical-, tactical-, and fitness training programmes and asks athletes to fully commit themselves to their chosen sport. The aim is to learn and develop from competitive experiences (Stafford, 2005). In the Training to Win stage (girls: 17+; boys: 18+) it is assumed that all crucial abilities have been evolved (Stafford, 2005). Hence, maximising performance attracts the most attention during training. The characteristics of this stage include preparation for and taking part in competitions and general maintenance. The last stage – Retaining – begins once the athlete’s professional sporting career is finished. Different options are available, such as staying involved in the sport by becoming an official, coach or mentor; taking part in sport on a recreational basis or continuing with high performance sport (Stafford, 2005).
According to Bailey et al (2010) the rate at which people mature physically is an individual characteristic. This has implications for the development of specific fitness components, such as strength and velocity. The sport development models in the literature do not consistently include this factor. However, Bailey et al (2010) recognise the LTAD model for its inclusion of the stage of maturation as a factor in the sport development process. In terms of limitation, however, Stafford (2005) suggests that children who are younger than ten years old should not specialise in just one sport as this can negatively impact upon their overall development and possibly lead to burnout. However, there is no mention of a potential dropout. In addition, this long-term model lacks any long-term based supportive, empirical data (Bailey et al., 2010).

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Figure 1: The Long-term athlete development (LTAD) model for late specialisation sports (Balyi, 2002, cited in Stafford, 2005, p. 9)

Another elite sport development model is Coté et al.’s (2007) Developmental Model of Sport Participation (DMSP) (see figure 2). This – according to Bailey et al. (2010) – is mainly psychologically orientated. The DMSP involves three different paths of sport participation. Once children have started to take part in sporting activities, usually around the age of 6, they enter the sampling stage, which is about trying out various sports. The main focus is on deliberate play – activities that are enjoyable for children, yet give them the opportunity to develop expertise. Children who are interested in the recreational aspects of sport progress into the recreational years around the age of 12. However, those interested in elite development start engaging in specialising years, from the age of 12 to 15 and then in investment years from 16 upwards. During these stages, the youngsters take part in fewer sports. The focus is more and more on deliberate practice – carried out seriously and done to achieve a future goal – rather than deliberate play. The third path consists of early specialisation and starts at the age of 6.
The children take part in just one sport with high levels of deliberate practice and low levels of deliberate play right from the beginning. However, at all times and stages, children may decide to drop out of sport or to progress on a recreational basis. Coté and Fraser-Thomas (2008) argue that the middle path – sampling, specialising and investment years – is the most suitable one in order to develop elite performance. It presents a healthy development by providing more than just cumulated hours of deliberate practice. Moreover – to stay involved and to experience positive outcomes in sport – it is crucial that physical training is in line with the children’s needs at all stages of development.

Figure 2: The developmental model of sports participation (DMSP) (Côté et al., 2009, p. 9)
Highlighting the training requirements during athlete development, Coté’s and Baker’s (2006) diagram (see figure 3) illustrates the correlation between performance and practice/training during the different stages of athlete development. An almost vertically linear increase in performance is noticeable during the initial sampling stage. As soon as the athlete proceeds to the specialising/investment stage, the progress indicated by the graph flattens off but the trend is still moving slightly upwards throughout the whole period of specific training; the performance peak is reached towards the end.

![Figure 3](image)

**Figure 3**: Shifting Training Requirements during Athlete Development: The Relationship among Deliberate Practice, Deliberate Play and Other Sport Involvement in the Acquisition of Sport Expertise (Coté and Baker, 2006)

The LTAD and DMSP models presented above both suggest an early start to training and show the different stages of the young athlete’s sporting career (Sotiriadou and De Bosscher, 2013). However, even though they ‘… describe development as a progression through different stages, they offer little insight into how individuals move through or between stages and different development pathways’ (Bailey et al., 2010, p. 2). In addition, these models do not involve an organisational or management perspective (Sotiriadou and De Bosscher, 2013). A holistic approach, though, has been considered and implemented in the following model, which can be seen as being best practice for the management of elite sport development.
Sotiriadou’s and De Bosscher’s (2013) ARTN model is about the three different sport development processes – attraction, retention/transition, nurturing. To begin with, the attraction process is supposed to raise awareness and increase participation, with the help of initiatives and programmes such as free taster sessions. Nurturing a wide range of young, talented participants with the potential to become elite athletes is a further aim (Sotiriadou and De Bosscher, 2013). Sotiriadou et al. (2008) state this procedure focuses on the development of juniors. Continuing, the crucial part of the retention/transition process is to identify and develop talent, aiming at ensuring that the most talented athletes proceed to the high performance level (Sotiriadou and De Bosscher, 2013).

Moreover, the sport development strategies, adopted by the sport development stakeholders, ‘… such as player development programmes, competitions and coaching requirements are adapted to a level that reflects the needs and requirements that athletes have at various stages of their development’ (Sotiriadou and De Bosscher, 2013, p. 146). This happens in order to prevent injury, burn-out and loss of interest. The retention/transition stage acts – given that the implemented strategies and outcomes are successful – as a springboard to the elite level (Sotiriadou et al., 2008). The nurturing process involves programmes and practices that are tailored to the individual athletes. The overall aim is to create and maintain continuous success at the top level (Sotiriadou and De Bosscher, 2013). That again has the potential to lead to enhanced participation by increasing awareness, inspiration and interest (Sotiriadou et al., 2008). Consequently, the process of nurturing eventually facilitates the pathways to the process of attraction (Sotiriadou and De Bosscher, 2013).
The ARTN model suggests that sport development is a cyclical rather than linear process whose pathways coexist and are interdependent. Sotiriadou and De Bosscher (2013) clarify that elite and mass participation – instead of being in conflict – will complement each other. The route to excellence is normally believed to be the combination of innate talent and a carefully tailored training plan within a broader organisation of support. This includes opportunities tailored to the enhancement of an individual’s performance as they gain expertise and experience with age. Any individual athlete – no matter how talented – will find progress difficult without the support of an organisation devoted to the promotion of their sport. Sotiriadou and De Bosscher (2013, p. 148) suggest that ‘… strategic, operational and financial planning’ are essential factors. Only with this level of backing will an individual athlete gain access to current sophisticated research from sport science and the latest thinking on effective training programmes. In terms of limitations, however, potential dropout has not been considered in the outline of the model.
Bailey et al. (2010) and Sotiriadou and De Bosscher (2013) believe that, regarding sport development, linear approaches might be inappropriate. Without the encouragement, knowledge and expertise of professionals in a particular sporting administration, individual athletes may not be aware of alternatives to the traditional sport development pyramid. Sporting governing bodies and organisations need to cast their net widely to encourage greater participation with a view to recruiting young men and women who may not have recognised the talent they possess. This is an on-going and long term strategy. As Bailey et al. (2010, p. 100) point out, sporting success is ‘… based on mass participation, numerous participation pathways and good fortune.’ The latter, however, is an almost indefinable element, including not only the athlete’s personal and social circumstances but also any unforeseen medical circumstances such as injury or ill-health. Moreover, a lot depends on an individual’s personal motivation. In order to maximise potential, psychological factors such as goal setting and ambition need to exist in an athlete’s mind.

2.4 Sport development in Germany

In order to develop elite athletes, pathways, procedures and approaches may vary from country to country. This paper aims to explore the sporting strategy implemented in Germany. Over the past twenty years, the system to develop success in competitive sport in Germany has become more and more elaborate and sophisticated. Yet, according to Houlihan and Green (2008), Germany is – in comparison to other countries – less interventionist in recreational sport as well as in elite sport. In Germany, the Federal Government promotes the selection and recruitment of junior talent and supports elite sport on a financial basis. More precisely, the Federal Ministry of the Interior offers performance orientated financial aid and support to selected sports federations. As the Federal Ministry of the Interior (2013) explains, sport organisations, -associations and -institutions are obliged to raise revenues themselves in order to finance their projects. To receive funding by the state, all other feasible ways of funding must be exhausted first. Financial aid provided by the federal government is only available on a supplementary basis; this is known as the principle of subsidiarity and requires cooperation between sports organisations and public sector entities at federal-, state- and local level. What the state does fund, however, is talent selection trials, (Olympic-) base camps across Germany, and sports boarding schools (Federal Government, 2010). Moreover, the federal states provide additional funding. According to the Ministry of Family, Children, Youth, Culture and Sport of the Federal State North Rhine-Westphalia (2013), every federal state encourages a systematic cooperation between the various sports associations, the state sports association and the state government.
The aim is to ensure the continuous development and promotion of young talent. On top of this, the German lottery provides annual funding which gets divided amongst the state sports associations, the German Sports Aid Foundation and the German Olympic Sports Confederation (Federal Government, 2010).

In terms of the elite sport development pathway, it should be noted that the German Olympic Sports Confederation – the National Governing Body for sport in Germany, founded in 2006 – is the guiding and coordinating force. Its purpose is to advise and represent the interests of the (state-) sports associations (Federal Government, 2010). However, Houlihan and Green (2008) believe that sports clubs and -federations are the main bodies involved in the top level sports system. The spotting of young talent usually happens on a local level. Therefore, the collaboration between coaches in sports clubs, teachers who are in charge of physical education at school and parents is crucial. The German Olympic Sports Confederation (2012) for example, organises a school competition called ‘Youth trains for the Olympics’ which is supposed to reveal the best upcoming athletes nationwide. However, the approach to talent spotting varies significantly amongst the federal states and specific sports where decentralised or centralised procedures may be applied. The difficulty within a decentralised system is that different coaches are involved who need to communicate constantly in an effective way to ensure the maintenance of a stable environment for the athlete. There are, however, centralised approaches in some sports, such as fixed hockey talent spotting tournaments across Germany. Furthermore, talent searching and identification takes place on the basis of visual analysis (Houlihan and Green, 2008). Hence, the assessing coaches need to be qualified and committed as well as having pedagogical, social and communicational competencies (German Olympic Sports Confederation, 2012).

In order to ensure the promotion of young talent, the cooperation between schools, sports schools and top-class sport – the combined system of school and high-performance sport – is of immense importance (Federal Government, 2010). According to Baker et al. (2012), there are special sport-orientated schools providing an academic schedule that is adjusted to the individual sporting timetable of young athletes. In addition, there are supplementary schemes such as private lessons or timetable arrangements as required. This is aimed at linking the multiple demands between school routine, training and competition, being aware that the risk of dropping out of sport is on-going. There are currently forty-one elite sports schools in Germany, linked together with residential areas and Olympic centres, where athletes can draw on medical-, therapeutic-, scientific- and social support (Federal Government, 2010; Spahl, 2013).
Houlihan and Green (2008) report that there are also partner schools focused on sport which are situated close to regional or Olympic training centres. This gives athletes the opportunity to train and compete as well as going to school. More mature athletes can also attend ‘… top level sport partner universities’ (Houlihan and Green, 2008, p. 137; German Olympic Sports Confederation, 2012).

The elite athlete development pathway in Germany involves a squad system, which is the foundation for the selection of athletes to ensure targeted support (German Olympic Sports Confederation, 2012). It is run and organised by the national sports federations, providing an organisational framework and comprising different stages of development and support (VIBSS, 2013). Membership is dependent on age, performance and potential (Houlihan and Green, 2008). Members of the D, D/C, and C squads are the most promising junior athletes for long-term international sporting success, selected by the regional sports associations. The D-squad – the lowest level of the squad system – is concerned with regional promotion, whereas the C-squad focuses on national promotion (German Olympic Sports Confederation, 2012). The B-squad is a more advanced squad and incorporates athletes with a distinct prospect of competing at world-class level in near future. A-squad members are mature elite athletes who represent their country at a world-class level and demonstrate exceptional performances (VIBSS, 2013). The squad nomination conducted by the sports federations takes places annually at the beginning of the training- and competition year (German Olympic Sports Confederation, 2012).

According to Houlihan and Green (2008), sponsors – commercial companies and private individuals as well as sports federations and the German Sports Aid Foundation – reward the athlete’s individual performances.

The various approaches to elite sport development in Germany accommodate a range of individual solutions. Yet, this causes problems because the sub-structures do not seem to be connected efficiently, which makes it difficult to coordinate processes and procedures aimed at elite athlete development. According to Houlihan and Green (2008), early success of an athlete is beneficial to club coaches as well as the federations. However, once the athlete develops further and proceeds to the next stage, local coaches and clubs are no longer involved.

In essence, the review of the literature suggests that the German high performance sport management system is built on three pillars – the provision of appropriate training facilities, the squad system and the allocation of experienced coaches.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Perspective and Approach

The chosen research perspective for this paper is qualitative; based on a case study. Creswell (2009) states a case study is a qualitative strategy in which for example a process or individuals are explored in depth. According to Lashley and Best (2001), qualitative research is concerned with people’s views and opinions. Research of this type facilitates the understanding of subjective meanings of topics from the participants’ perspectives (Flick, 2011). Throughout the research process, the focus is on the participants’ opinions of the issues to be addressed. Hence, Flick (2011) argues that the beliefs or assumptions held by the researcher or things that scholars have written in the literature are irrelevant. Qualitative research deals with interpretive inquiry. Researchers interpret what they hear, see and understand (Creswell, 2009). The strength of this research design is that the data can provide richness and detail. However, because interpreting the data gathered is done in a subjective way, the meaning may be decontextualized and in some cases this can be seen as a weakness (Lashley and Best, 2001).

3.2 Sample

For this study, purposive sampling was applied which means that a small sample was deliberately selected (Denscombe, 2007). This type of sampling is a form of non-probability sampling, where participants are chosen for a purpose – as opposed to random sampling, which involves probability. Purposive sampling, a common tool for qualitative research (Creswell, 2009), seemed to be an appropriate method as the researcher knew the participants who were relevant to the topic of the study and most likely to produce valuable data (Denscombe, 2007). The sample consisted of four participants who were chosen on the basis of expertise (The Open University, 2013) and best able to address the research question. According to Flick (2011), the sample usually represents a certain population, which is a mass of individuals to whom the statements of a study refer. For this paper, the German Tennis Federation was chosen to be the case study organisation – in essence, the population being researched was the GTF. However, in this study the sample represented two distinct populations – managers of the GTF and German tennis players. The involvement in the GTF – either as a member of staff, professional player or local club player – was significant, as the research questions focused on individual perceptions about the elite sport development pathway in German tennis. Arguably, nobody has a better understanding and knowledge of the topic than those people actively involved in the system. Thus, the opinions of the selected respondents were crucial.
Although there were only men taking part in this study, they were recruited because of their roles. The gender as such was not considered to be a significant factor.

First of all, one of the GTF managers was interviewed. It was assumed that – out of all the people involved within the GTF – he would have the most extensive knowledge of the elite sport development processes within the organisation. Being a former professional tennis player himself, he has been part of the system for more than thirty years. And, for more than ten years, this participant has witnessed and shaped the process of elite athlete development. Being head of the GTF office with a special focus on the high performance department and national coaches, he actively takes part in decision-making. He also possesses essential knowledge of the management processes within the organisation. The fact that this respondent was able to give a player- and managerial perspective, resulting from broad knowledge and experience, appeared to be advantageous for the purpose of this study.

An employee of the GTF’s public relations department, who has been doing this job for almost twenty years, was also interviewed. Being one of the people who have been part of the GTF longest, he was able to give an insight into the development of German Tennis as a whole but also – working behind the scenes and receiving all the information – to report about internal affairs. Over the years he has built up a reputation within the industry and developed many important contacts within the tennis business in Germany. As a result, he knows many important stakeholders in German Tennis. His perception from an organisational point of view was especially worthwhile for this study.

Having interviewed two people who are part of the GTF office, it was important to acknowledge the players’ perceptions as well. Therefore, a current professional German tennis player who plays on the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) world tour, ranked top 50 in the world, was also interviewed. Being brought up in Germany, he was able to provide detailed background information about the elite sport development pathway from a player’s perspective.

Finally, a local club player was interviewed who is also the chairman and a qualified coach in a German tennis club. Furthermore he has been playing tennis himself for more than thirty years and hence possesses a profound knowledge of the sport. Although this person did not have the same insight into the GTF practices as the other three interviewees, he could look at them from a different perspective and was consequently able to give a worthwhile opinion about the elite sport development pathway in German tennis.
As the study involves a small sample, the results can only be generalised to a limited extent. This could be seen as a weakness of this type of qualitative research. Generalisation means the transfer of research results to a population that has not been completely covered by the study (Flick, 2011), in this case – the wider population of the GTF. However, the benefits of this qualitative approach mean that the researcher can delve more deeply into the opinions of the individuals, concerned to gain a broader picture of what is felt and believed about the development of elite tennis in Germany. This approach also allowed the researcher to arrive at firm conclusions as to the extent to which the elite sport development policy and practice outlined by key personnel in the GTF has had an impact upon this particular pair of German tennis players. Conclusions of this type would not have been so easy to substantiate with a larger quantitative study. The research design facilitated an impact case study examining the extent to which the policy and practice of the GTF affected these particular individuals, giving them the opportunity to tell their stories and express their opinions.

3.3 Research Instruments

Qualitative research was carried out to gain an understanding of the management of elite sport development in German Tennis. The aim of this study was to find out people’s perceptions and opinions about certain procedures in as much detail and depth as possible. According to Denscombe (2007), interviews are suitable when the researcher tries to gain an insight into a person’s experiences and perceptions and furthermore to elicit privileged information. Questionnaires, on the other hand, are highly standardised and include a predefined list of questions and possible answers (Flick, 2011). Hence, they do not provide as much information and detailed insight as interviews. Generally, an interview is more than just a casual conversation. The purpose of conducting an interview is to produce material in a systematic way, for research purposes. Both the researcher and the person interviewed are aware of this fact. However, when conducting interviews, it is essential that permission is sought and given by the interviewees for their words to be used. The interviews also have to be realistic in terms of time, organisation and costs (Denscombe, 2007).

Creswell (2009) suggests that a way of collecting qualitative data is to do semi-structured interviews then to audiotape and subsequently transcribe them. This process has been applied in this study. Mason (2004) argues that semi-structured interviews are associated with qualitative research as they have a more fluid and flexible structure than structured interviews. Some questions will be formulated in advance; however they can be slightly reformulated during the interview (Flick, 2011).
Participants are given the opportunity to come up with new thoughts and ideas and to elaborate points of interest during the interview. This flexibility is created through the open-ended nature of questions, providing the potential to disclose a wide range of information (Creswell, 2009). As a consequence, the respondents may be asked different questions which will add individuality to the information they provide. Thus, interviews provide only a small degree of comparability of common themes. Yet, ‘the interviewer still has a clear list of issues to be addressed and questions to be answered’ (Denscombe, 2007, p. 176). If not enough detail is revealed, the researcher might choose to probe a bit further. However, this can only be decided during the interview.

Due to geographical distance, time pressure and cost efficiency, interviews were conducted over the telephone. In terms of the choice of participants, research suggests that the selected method of gathering data is used in the marketing and services field, where it is assumed that the service quality is known best by the consumer who experiences the service (Chelladurai and Chang, 2000). In the context of this paper, the tennis players represent the consumers. The method also exists in organisational effectiveness literature. Papadimitriou and Taylor (2000) emphasise the importance of focussing research on primary stakeholders in organisations. Perceptions of these groups should be gathered and analysed in order to increase organisational effectiveness. Therefore, the officials of the German Tennis Federation represent the primary stakeholders.

3.4 Procedure

Qualitative data was collected in December 2013 during the University Christmas vacation. As all participants were German citizens living in Germany, they were interviewed in Germany. The participants were told that the interview would last for between thirty minutes and one hour. Beforehand, the participants were given an informed consent form – acknowledging the protection of their rights – and an information sheet, which they were asked to read through and sign. This, in Taylor’s (2001) opinion, is a compulsory action for the researcher. Due to the nationality of the respondents and the interviewer, the interviews were conducted in German; however the data was subsequently translated into English. Furthermore, all interviews were audio recorded, which is a common way in qualitative research to document data (Flick, 2011). According to Denscombe (2007), audio recordings result in complete and permanent records of the narrative which is important when returning to the data for the purpose of analysis at a later date. In addition, some field notes were taken during the interviews.
Denscombe (2007) suggests that taking such notes can be useful as a means to identify relevant information, which on the other hand might be missed in the recording. Gee (1999) asserts that speech involves more detail than systems of recording or transcribing could ever take into account. Thus, ‘clues about the intent behind the statements and comments on aspects of non-verbal communication…’ (Denscombe, 2007, p. 195), giving ‘… a richer meaning to the words that were spoken’ (p. 197) can be written down by the interviewer.

3.5 Reliability & Validity

Scholars (Lashley and Best, 2001; Creswell, 2009) declare that reliability is concerned with the credibility and consistency of the data collected. It focuses on the question of whether the measures are reliable and the results would be the same if another researcher was to carry out the original research again, using similar design and participants, under the same conditions. The researcher believes that, in this study reliability was achieved by providing a clear process and a precise interview guide.

Lashley and Best (2001) suggest that validity is about the integrity of the method which is used to collect data. The emphasis is on whether the method measures what it is supposed to measure (Flick, 2011). Validity seems to be one of the strengths of qualitative research and is linked with the terms trustworthy, credible and authentic (Creswell, 2009). It is one of the advantages of interviews as the researcher is able to check data for accuracy whilst the interview takes place by being in direct contact with the interviewee (Denscombe, 2007).

3.6 Ethics

Denscombe (2007) suggests that an ethical approach needs to be adopted by the researcher to conduct their investigations. Ethics deals with the rights and dignity of the people involved in and affected by the research. Any harm that might arise from being involved in the study must be avoided. Hence, actions such as protecting the identity of participants and treating gathered information confidentially need to be taken before publishing the research paper (Flick, 2011). Creswell (2009) suggests using aliases for participants so that they stay anonymous. Flick (2011) states that all participants should be treated equally. Moreover, Denscombe (2007) argues that the researcher needs to avoid deception and misrepresentation. Deception can occur when the interviewees misunderstand the purpose which the researcher has in mind (Creswell, 2009). Researchers are encouraged to be clear, honest and transparent about the purpose, aim and necessity of the investigation (Denscombe, 2007; Flick, 2011).
3.7 Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed whilst listening to the recordings, providing the opportunity to be paused and replayed, and whilst reading through the contemporaneous notes. Transcription is the process of turning speech into a written document, a transcript (Taylor, 2001). Denscombe (2007) suggests that it is easier to analyse transcribed data than audio recordings. The data gathered has been translated into English; however for the sake of clarity and veracity, the interviews in German have been attached in the verification folder. Content analysis was used, which Krippendorff (2004) describes as a powerful and unobtrusive method to analyse qualitative data, as the interviews are analysed in the context of their use. The content of texts was classified ‘… by allocating statements, sentences or words to a system of categories’ (Flick, 2011, p. 133). According to Denscombe (2007), content analysis is at its best when the communication and information given is simple, straightforward and obvious.

Furthermore, analysis is assisted with the help of coding, which means, according to Taylor (2001), allocating research data to different categories. More precisely, in the coding process, material is organised into text segments, before the researcher decides what each segment means (Creswell, 2009). The texts were broken down, relevant categories for analysing the data were developed, the units were coded in line with the categories and the relationships of the different units were analysed – as suggested by Denscombe (2007). To be able to classify the information from the different texts, interrelating themes were identified. In case studies, according to Creswell (2009), participants are described in detail and the data collected is analysed for themes. This was followed by the interpretation (Flick, 2011) – meaning was drawn from the various themes. The overarching aim of data analysis was to be able to demonstrate similarities and differences in the German Tennis Federation stakeholders’ perceptions concerning how elite sport development is managed.
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Analysis

The process of analysis had three steps. Once transcription was finished, interviews were printed off to analyse and examine them for statements they had in common. Quotes that were connected were collated into discrete groups. On the basis of these different groups, the researcher then came up with the themes.

The following table provides a summary of the themes that were identified by the researcher during the analysis process. A description of the theme and the most significant quote – given by one of the respondents – referring to the particular theme are presented. A more complete record of the process can be seen in Appendix E which shows a table that includes all themes and associated comments from respondents. The full transcripts of the research interviews are available in the project verification folder.

Table 1: Summary of themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description of theme</th>
<th>Concluding quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1: Heyday of German tennis</td>
<td>A certain period of time when German tennis was most successful – in terms of German elite tennis players. All interviewees agreed that the heyday was during the 80s.</td>
<td>R2: 'Becker, Stich, Graf [...] the absolute heyday of German tennis [...] middle of 80s until the end of the 90s.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2: Talent identification &amp; development</td>
<td>A description of the identification of talent and player development pathways, applied by the GTF.</td>
<td>R1: 'For the small ones it starts in the local club and there the talent identification takes place [...] goes from the high performance centres of the regional associations to the national high performance centres where top athletes get promoted.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3: Lack of coaches/-personnel</td>
<td>The interviewees agreed that qualified coaches are essential yet there are insufficient numbers at the moment. The GTF needs to employ more good coaches, especially at the top level.</td>
<td>R2: 'We lack at least 4 or 5 national coaches [...] surely our weakness [...] over the last few years we have reduced our personnel and also economic resources, this is our problem.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T4: Money/sponsor acquisition</strong></td>
<td>The acquisition of sponsors and revenue are difficult to achieve. Yet they are one of the most important things in tennis, in order to be able to provide sufficient promotion and support for (top-) players.</td>
<td>R4: ‘[…] the GTF should have done more during the heyday […] should have used the heyday to establish a better tournament scene […] the GTF does not possess that much money.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T5: Greater care</strong></td>
<td>All in all, a greater care needs to be established by the GTF. This means in particular more coaches who, for example, observe the player’s performances at tournaments and administrative personnel who, for example, oversee the tournament scene in Germany.</td>
<td>R3: ‘To make the current ones more successful, a greater care must be provided […] not enough to have coaches only at the Grand-Slams […] who go on tournaments with the players […] and perhaps with the juniors and who act as a team and train all together.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T6: Competitors</strong></td>
<td>Not every German top player has been promoted by the GTF. There are also private institutions that do not have anything to do with the umbrella organisation and its pathways, serving as competitors.</td>
<td>R3: ‘There are many private institutions […] and private coaches, who develop individual talents that are somehow caught and promoted by the GTF. However, I would not say that all the top people that we currently have went through the GTF school […] I have never been in the squad – my father always coached me privately.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T7: The athlete</strong></td>
<td>The prerequisites and characteristics that a talented player needs to possess besides the level of skills in order to become a professional athlete</td>
<td>R1: ‘[…] in the end it is the athlete himself who has to be successful, because there is this expression in high performance sport which is “I want!” and if players have not internalised this, then they will never be successful.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Discussion

In the discussion, the themes illustrated above will be compared against the best practice model (Sotiriadou and De Bosscher, 2013) introduced in the literature review. For the purpose of clarification and emphasis, respondents’ statements in the form of direct quotes will be used throughout the discussion.

4.2.1 The heyday of German tennis

Initial analysis of the interviews revealed that the perceived heyday of German tennis took place during the 80s, as respondent 4 stated ‘all the big names and successes are linked with the 80s’. In this context the heyday represents the time when German professionals were the most successful and the sport was the most popular. This is interesting in so far as the heyday – instead of being linked with high numbers of participation – is apparently associated with a few German high performance players, such as Boris Becker and Steffi Graf. Hence, according to this research, the tennis boom and mass participation started after just a few athletes had reached international recognition. According to the respondents, the boom did not occur because of a big talent pool being in place. Arguably, athletes like Becker and Graf did serve as role models after their success for many people interested in tennis. Subsequently, awareness and participation levels increased in local clubs. According to Faulstich (2005), member numbers of the GTF doubled from about one million in 1980 to more than two million in 1989. This process shows that, indeed, the development of sport has a cyclical rather than linear nature, stated by Sotiriadou and De Bosscher (2013), who developed the best practice sport development model discussed in the literature review. The literature clearly shows that elite and mass participation levels are linked with each other (Girginov and Hills, 2008) and this current research project supports this notion from the perspective of the respondents. Bailey et al. (2010) point out that sporting success exists because of, amongst other reasons, mass participation. However, the interviewee’s comments in this project present a different perspective. In the view of the respondents, the example of Becker, Graf and some others demonstrates that talented players are able to achieve success in the professional tennis world despite relatively small numbers of participants in the sport at a national level.
4.2.2 Talent identification and development

The second theme that emerged from the interviews was related to talent identification and development – the interviewees emphasised that the GTF has a certain system in place, which works as follows:

- Talent identification and selection take place at a local club level;
- Special tournaments for different age ranges are organised by the GTF across Germany where talented youngsters are invited to play against each other;
- Selection of participants takes place on the basis of recommendation, passed on by the particular local club coach;
- The most talented players are identified with the help of qualified coaches who watch the games. They then become a D- or C-squad member;
- From this point onwards, promotion takes place – the GTF starts to develop the chosen players in order to reveal their full potential. High performance centres, run by the regional associations, serve as training base camps;
- Players who progress and turn out to be top regional athletes proceed to the next level where they have the opportunity to train at the national high performance centres.

Comparing this system to best practice, Sotiriadou and De Bosscher (2013) stress that sports organisations need to encourage large participation numbers. Thus, they acquire a greater chance to find talented individuals who can be developed into elite athletes, bearing in mind that some players initially might not be aware of their potential (Baker et al., 2012). The interviewees recognise the difficult yet vital task of finding the next Grand-Slam winner. Respondent 2 argues ‘the main challenge is to find the absolute top end athlete and to support him or her […] to enhance the media presentation and to attract more members and to show more tennis on German TV, you need Grand-Slam winners.’ Respondent 4 claims ‘the biggest challenge is to recognise talent […] the talent pool should be bigger, so that as many individuals as possible with talent can be found in the beginning, these can then be developed […] you cannot know if any particular individual will be able to establish themselves in the end.’ If the athlete continues playing tennis, however, another emerging challenge is the transition from being a talented and dedicated junior player to becoming a professional, competing at elite level (Green, 2005). ‘It is about the transition […] providing sufficient personnel to travel with the young athletes, preparing them for tournament schedules […]’ (Respondent 1).
Making a comparison between the player development process applied by the GTF and Sotiriadou’s and De Bosscher’s (2013) best practice model, some similarities emerge. The retention/transition process is in fact quite similar to the approaches conducted by the GTF. Sotiriadou and De Bosscher (2013) determine talent identification and development, individual care of and tailored programmes for athletes as key factors of this process. One of the overall aims is to prevent loss of interest. This is also important and simultaneously perceived as one of the main challenges for the GTF – ‘[…] the biggest challenge is to recognise a talent […] to keep children going, this is often difficult’ (Respondent 4, 2013). Another target of the best practice model is to avoid burnout. This issue has also been taken up by one of the interviewees. Respondent 1 argues ‘[…] the challenge for […] management […] is to ensure a reasonable and careful build-up to prevent burnout.’ Moreover, best practice highlights the stakeholder’s input and the throughput of strategies as being important. These elements also seem to be crucial to the GTF with regards to the development of elite tennis players in Germany. The interviewees commonly spoke about the significance of allocating qualified coaches and administrative staff. However, even though an adequate approach appears to exist, it appears that the implementation of this whole procedure could be more efficient. Respondents suggest that a critical factor is the personnel involved. For example, respondent 2 suggests that ‘[…] all regional associations have their base camps with responsible coaches […] we have national coaches and team managers – unfortunately too few […]’. This arguably makes it harder to ensure adequate support of players – be it within regional associations- or at the national level.

4.2.3 Lack of coaches/-personnel

The recognition of the issues discussed above provided the basis for the next theme to be discussed here, which deals with the lack of coaches/- personnel identified by the respondents. The Federal Government (2010), the German Olympic Sports Confederation (2012) and Sotiriadou and De Bosscher (2013) agree that it is difficult for athletes to progress if they do not experience the support of an organisation. Moreover, the burden of planning – be it financial or strategic – can be relieved from players or at least be mitigated for them by the help of the workforce of such an organisation. The analysis of the interviews revealed two different opinions. The GTF employees take the view that the organisation’s task is to administer and form the basis of German tennis and furthermore to provide sufficient manpower to be able to ensure an adequate athlete promotion. However, as respondent 2 confesses ‘[…] we have reduced our personnel […] this is our problem […] we lack at least 4 or 5 national coaches […] surely our weaknesses.’
Respondent 1 also seems to be aware of this issue – ‘[…] you need sufficient personnel and that is what the GTF is currently trying to address […].’ The perspective of the other two interviewees is different. In fact, the respondent who has played tennis professionally has never experienced the GTF system himself as he was coached entirely on a personal basis by his father. He was not part of the GTF squad until he competed for Germany in the Davis Cup in 2013. Hence, in the interview he was able to talk not only about the GTF procedures but also to give an insight into a completely different pathway – that of privately constructed support networks such as private tennis academies. However, when he was asked a question about the GTF personnel, respondent 3 said ‘[…] either they do not have enough people or the people who are there are not capable enough.’ It is clear from this statement that the respondent does not regard the current staffing situation in the GTF as adequate to facilitate effective sport development. Respondent 4 appears to be in general agreement with respondent 3. He is in clear favour of private ‘[…] tennis academies, run by former professionals […] this is how tennis can be promoted, away from federal structures.’ Nevertheless, he agrees with the other respondents that good coaches are fundamental for a successful talent development (Martindale et al., 2007) and states that consequently, sufficient expert coaches need to be on hand and allocated by the GTF.

4.2.4 Money-/sponsor acquisition

Having spoken about the importance of sufficient personnel, being able to implement devised strategies means that enough revenue has to be in place. Sotiriadou and De Bosscher (2013) highlight the significance of stakeholder’s input in the retention/transition level, as previously mentioned. Stakeholders can be defined as all the people that have any kind of ‘interest or concern in an organization’ (business dictionary, 2013). Therefore, sponsors and business partners can be seen as stakeholders. Another theme which emerged throughout the interviews deals with sponsor acquisition. All interviewees perceive this endeavour as a difficult and challenging, yet essential ingredient for not only the survival of an organisation but also the provision of supportive measures. As respondent 3 encapsulates ‘I think sponsor acquisition is the most important thing for the individual players, because without money nothing is possible in tennis.’ Respondent 2 is aware of the issue and sums it up: ‘It is hard to acquire business partners […] especially for the promotion of young talent […] for the GTF it is difficult to achieve any surpluses […] we finance ourselves with the annual membership fees from the regional associations […] it is a massive problem to increase those fees, sums of 0.50 € – 1 € - which would change the world for the GTF completely. Believe it or not but this is not realisable!’
According to the respondents, the acquisition of sponsors seems to be a challenging yet unavoidable task for the GTF. Respondent 4, who is not directly involved in the processes of the GTF, comes to the critical conclusion ‘[…] the GTF should have done more during the heyday […] should have used the heyday to establish a better tournament scene […] the GTF does not possess that much money.’

4.2.5 Greater care for athletes

In the view of the respondents, the GTF could – with more revenue being available – provide greater care for talented athletes, which is regarded as an important measure. The German Olympic Sports Confederation (2012) and Sotiriadou and De Bosscher (2013) suggest that programmes and procedures, especially at the top level where nurturing takes place, should be tailored to each athlete individually. Respondent 3 considers this measure as being necessary in order to maintain the player’s levels of performance and to push their boundaries even further. ‘To make the current ones more successful, greater care must be provided […] it is not enough to have coaches only at the Grand-Slams […]’ More coaches are needed ‘[…] who go on tournaments with the players […] and perhaps with the juniors and who act as a team and train all together.’ According to the respondents, this is one project the GTF seems to be aware of and needs to implement in the future in order to develop more elite athletes.

4.2.6 Private institutions

A further theme that has been identified deals with competition from other pathways of talent promotion, for example private tennis academies. The respondents’ comments suggest that this alternative to the umbrella organisation seems to be coming more and more popular in Germany. This form of competition does not seem to be addressed by Sotiriadou and De Bosscher (2013) as the best practice model merely focuses on one organisation. Notwithstanding – referring to the interviewees – it is a problem that exists in the real world. Respondent 3 explains: ‘There are many private institutions […] and private coaches, who develop individual athletes who are somehow caught and promoted by the GTF. However, I would not say that all the top people that we currently have went through the GTF School […] I have never been in the squad – my father always coached me personally.’ Respondent 2 recognises ‘[…] there are private institutions, the “competitors”. But the GTF […] should not mind whether a talented individual comes from a regional association or a private institution […] in the end the most important thing for the GTF is that the player is really good […] a world-class player does not necessarily have to grow up in a federation system.’
Yet, the perception of respondents is that in reality it seems to be different – certainly the GTF prefers discovering talented individuals and developing and promoting them through their own system. Producing professional players arguably serves as positive publicity and ideally leads to increased awareness, reputation, participation levels and revenue for the organisation itself. However, according to the interviewees, in the end the GTF seems to be able to access the best and most promising players anyway – whether at the transition/retention or nurturing stage. Respondent 3 claims ‘[…] many personal coaches who are doing really good work and when an individual stands out they get recruited by the GTF […].’ According to the respondents, another type of rivalry appears in the form of private tennis academies outside Germany. The USA seems to be a popular destination to foster a professional tennis career. Respondent 4 argues ‘some people do not want to work together with the GTF. Hence, parents send their children abroad to attend private tennis academies, for example to the USA, and invest their money there in the hope of bringing their children’s career forward.’ Perhaps, taking these different arguments into account, it is possible to synthesise a new argument which suggests that all these establishments can only contribute a relatively small part to the player’s development and their potential successes by providing coaches, persuasion, facilities and progression. The main work needs to be done by the individual player (Bailey et al., 2010). Ultimately, everything depends on an individual athlete’s skills and attitudes.

4.2.7 The athlete

The importance of the individual athlete links to the final theme to be discussed here. Noticeably, the role of the athlete has not been mentioned in the best practice model (Sotiriadou and De Bosscher, 2013), which is more about the sport development process as such. In contrast, Bailey et al. (2010) point out the importance of being motivated and ambitious. Moreover, the athlete’s personal and social circumstances ought not to be neglected. This demonstrates that a large part depends on the individual player. Some preconditions that need to exist in order to be able to become a professional have been identified by the interviewees. Respondent 1 brings forward the argument that an ‘[…] umbrella sports organisation […] can only provide the foundation, in the end it is the athlete himself who has to be successful because there is this expression in high performance sport which is “I want!” and if players have not internalised this, then they will never be successful.’ Respondent 4 stresses that ‘the player needs to be persistent and needs to have the correct imagination […] needs to enjoy playing tennis […] the special something, what exactly this is I cannot say, this needs to be scientifically explored.’
Respondent 3 provides a little insight into his life as a professional player – ‘[…] great will, with strict discipline […] I had to change my life – hard training was not good enough. Diet, going to bed early, no alcohol, no clubbing […] there was a stage in my life where I lived, not being a professional player […].’ Finally, respondent 2 alludes to the importance of the player’s personal environment – ‘Looking at the current best up-and-coming players […] they all have a small personal environment, where everything is tailored to their needs.’ Respondent 4 agrees, arguing that ‘[…] families are always involved […] the surrounding needs to be professional […] there are many people who back the professional players up. You cannot handle all this alone.’

4.3 The most important themes

As a result of this discussion, it is possible to suggest that lack of coaches/-personnel (theme 3), money/-sponsor acquisition (theme 4), competitors (theme 6) and the individual athlete (theme 7) are the most important themes. The reasons will be explained shortly. Having analysed the interviews, the importance of qualified and sufficient coaches as well as administrative staff appears to be fundamental to the development of elite athletes. However, in this research, the respondents suggested that the GTF currently lacks sufficient members of staff which, without a doubt, can be identified as one of its weaknesses. Trying to find potential reasons for this deficiency brings attention to the significance of the acquisition of money and sponsors. Without sufficient money being available, certain practices cannot be implemented. Hence, talent promotion cannot be conducted adequately. The interviews revealed that, at the time of the research, the GTF was running short of both revenue and sponsorship contracts, which can be seen as a further weak point. Another issue is that of competitors. According to the respondents, the GTF is not the only institution that develops and is in charge of talented tennis players. There are private tennis academies established in Germany as well as abroad which concentrate on the development of elite athletes. They can be considered as rivals, being able to influence the reputation and participation levels of the GTF. The final theme – the individual athlete – needs to be taken into constant consideration by the key stakeholders of an organisation. Unquestionably, the organisation is crucial when it comes to identifying, developing and promoting talented players (Federal Government, 2010, German Olympic Sports Confederation, 2012). However, it is the individual athlete that plays a major role in this whole process as – to be able to become a professional – a lot depends on their physical and mental skills, attitudes and tenacity.
4.4. The adapted model

Having compared all the themes to the best practice model, a revised model was created by the researcher, based on the new findings that were identified in this study. The revised model takes into account what was said by the respondents and is illustrated below.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 5:** The ARTN model (Sotiriadou and De Bosscher, 2013), revised version
The revised model includes all parts from the best practice model. Albeit it is set up in a different, perhaps more appropriate outline, the connections between the parts remain the same. The only difference is that pathways output is now connected with stakeholder input, as the researcher considered the whole process to be cyclic. Furthermore, different colours have been used to highlight affiliations. Essentially, this model has a specific focus on the development of elite athletes. Stakeholder input is provided during the retention/transition process. Then, developed strategies are put through on the nurturing stage. Finally, the attraction phase benefits from the pathway outputs – professionals arguably serve as role models and encourage participation. However, the three inner elements can circulate which is underpinned by the arrows. This is dependent on the individual user’s emphasis with regards to the sport development process. Moreover, three new components were added. The athlete was integrated into the centre of the whole concept to highlight their importance. Being a fundamental part of the sport development process, the athlete should be considered throughout. The outer circle incorporates the competitors. This paper has shown that institutions such as private tennis academies have an influence on the organisation – in this project the GTF – as well as the athlete development process itself. Hence they should not be neglected in the model. Finally, potential dropout was added as in all stages of development, athletes may decide to stop playing sport.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Overview

This research project focused on the management of elite sport development in the context of the German Tennis Federation. The aim of the study was to investigate the current sport development structures in the GTF, to compare this structure to what the literature defines as best practice and to examine whether the GTF’s management of elite sport development is of a normative nature. The objectives of the study as given in the Introduction chapter were devised to ensure that the aim of the project was achieved.

The first objective, to conduct a literature review and to discover and determine what is currently seen as best practice in the literature, was met in the process of examining the existing literature. The following results emerged: key terminology was explained, three sport development models were presented and analysed and the sport development process in Germany was outlined and demonstrated. Out of the three models, one was chosen to serve as best practice, Sotiriadou’s and De Bosscher’s (2013) ARTN model.

The second objective was concerned with providing data that could be used for the purposes of the research project. Primary research to discover how the GTF approaches sport development was also undertaken. It was aimed at gathering opinions and perceptions of four key stakeholders of the GTF about the management of the elite sport development process applied by this particular institution.

Subsequently, the third objective, to compare and contrast the findings with the literature, was met. Findings were analysed – common themes were identified and arranged according to their importance. Furthermore, they were discussed and compared to the literature. Results will be outlined shortly. In the view of the respondents, some actions carried out by the GTF – such as the process of talent identification – seem to be performed in an efficient and adequate manner. Yet, according to the interviewees, the organisation also has a number of deficiencies. The lack of personnel and revenue, threat of potential competitors and the need for a greater athlete care are ranked among the key findings. However, findings suggest that the GTF is aware of what factors need to be adapted or improved in order to facilitate talent development and generate more players competing successfully at elite level.
During the process of analysis of data and discussion of findings it became apparent that the fourth objective – a model of the findings of the project – would be a useful feature. The model that was synthesised is not an entirely new model – in fact it is an adaptation of the best practice model that was identified during the review of literature. In the light of this study, the revised model arguably reflects the findings better than the original one by Sotiriadou and De Bosscher (2013), presenting a more appropriate way of how to target sport development initiatives.

The final objective of the project was to identify areas for future research. Recommendations for future research are given in section 5.3 below. In summary it can be said, therefore, that all aims and objectives outlined at the beginning of this research project have been accomplished.

5.2 Limitations of the study

The aims and objectives for this study have been met, yet there are still areas for improvement. In terms of limitations of this study, it is clear that the small number of interviewees could only be generalised to a certain extent and not to a whole population.

The fact that this case study only represents a certain population can be regarded as being another limitation. Consequently, the information revealed in this paper is rather narrow and specific. Generally, sport development processes might be different in other organisations.

Furthermore, due to the qualitative nature of the study, subjective interpretation was involved in the process of analysing gathered data. The researcher made every effort to translate the interviewees’ opinions accurately. However, as translation can be subjective, it arguably depends on individual understanding and perception.

5.3 Recommendations for future study

This paper provides the opportunity to do a study of similar nature on an extended basis, drawing on more information, potentially involving additional comparisons. Future studies could aim at testing the revised model, presented at the end of the discussion, in practice.

One area for future research could be to take the new model to the initial respondents to assess whether it fits with how the GTF operates and helps with the identification of best practice.

It would be beneficial to conduct a study with a wider sample of participants who could be asked about their perception of the revised model and whether they think it facilitates their understanding of the sport development process.
Another avenue for future research would be to compare the system applied by the GTF with those from other organisations, such as the Lawn Tennis Association in the United Kingdom. Differences, similarities and potential areas for the improved management of elite sport development could be revealed by this process.
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APPENDICES
Date: 18/03/2014

To: Pola Metze

Project reference number: 13/5/247U

Your project was recommended for approval by myself as supervisor and formally approved at the Cardiff School of Sport Research Ethics Committee meeting of 24th July 2013.

Yours sincerely

Greg Dainty

Supervisor
APPENDIX B
INFORMATION SHEET

Title of the study: The management of elite sport development – German tennis: a case study

Dear Participant,
You have been chosen to take part in this study on the basis of expertise and because you are a member of the German tennis federation.
The present information sheet shall drum up your interest for this study as well as provide you with further details regarding the procedure, intended aims and eventual risks.

Aim of the study
The aim of this study is firstly to increase knowledge and awareness of the different management structures and approaches of elite sport development in tennis and secondly to determine which system is most effective (best practice). Subsequently, the acquired knowledge can be used to improve aspects within the development of elite tennis players, if desired.

Procedure
You are asked to take part in an interview at an agreed time and date which will last approximately 20-30 minutes. The interview will be conducted by the researcher, either via telephone or Skype, in German. The conversation will be audio-recorded and notes will be taken by the questioner so that the gathered information can be used at a later point. However, the whole process – participating in the study in general – is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time.

Risks
It is highly unlikely that there are any risks for you when taking part in this study. In the event of indisposition, the interview will be interrupted or cancelled and potentially continued at another time / date.
Confidentiality and data protection
The gathered data will be analysed and compared by the researcher. However, all participants will be anonymised; hence you cannot be identified from any information you have given away in this study. Your personal data such as name and telephone number will only be used for the purpose of this study – no private information will be forwarded or published.

Further information
If you have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher directly:
Pola Metze
0044-7531-978824
st20009506@outlook.cardiffmet.ac.uk
Title of the study: The management of elite sport development – German tennis: a case study
Name of the researcher: Pola Metze

I have thoroughly read and understood the information sheet about the study and I have received a copy of this writing for my personal records.

I hereby

☐ Agree
☐ Disagree

to take part in the study conducted by Pola Metze (Cardiff Metropolitan University).
I agree with the fact that, for the purpose of this study collected data and results may be used for research and reporting purposes in anonymised form.

_________________________  __________________________
Date                           Signature
APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Hi…

First of all, thank you for participating in my study. I really appreciate your help. If you have any questions or comments, feel free to interrupt at any time.

Okay, let’s start with high performance tennis.

• If I say **German high-performance tennis**, what is the first thing that comes into your mind?
  - Which people do you link with it?
    (Players / PTD / PTTD / coaches / hard work / commitment / dedication / long-term / success / daily training / playing on the ATP or WTA tour / role models / stars / GTF development pathway / sponsors / structures / promotion / funding)

• How, in your opinion, is high performance tennis **developed and promoted** in Germany?
  - Is there a special system / structure / pathway applied by the GTF?
  - Who is in charge and part of the development process?
    (GTF squad system on regional and national level / regional associations)

• What do you think are the main **challenges for the management side** of elite tennis development?
  - Who manages elite tennis development? Who is responsible?
    (Money issues / finding sponsors / to do justice to all performance players / individual support / infrastructure / provision of sufficient resources e.g. facilities, coaches, staff, training)

Great, thank you so far. Let us know talk about resources.

• What do you think, **which resources** are needed in order to be able to develop a tennis elite?
  - Does the GTF provide all these resources?
  - Which ones are missing?
    (Money / staff / coaches / facilities / talented, motivated and determined players)

• **Which** current resources does the **GTF** need to **improve / increase** in order to create more high performance players / to make the current ones more successful and **how** can they do it?
  - More administrative staff?
More qualified coaches?
More money?
Better training facilities? Improved infrastructure?
Better communication between GTF and regional associations / national coaching team / players?
Who can help?
Are there any specific measures / approaches? How would you do it?
(Sponsors / advertisements / PR)

Okay, we are almost done. One last question.

- Tell me about the procedures of elite tennis development in Germany and how the pathway has changed over the last couple of years.
  - Which conditions exist at the moment?
  - Which conditions need to be provided in addition in order to increase player’s success?
  - How can players (m/w) reach top 20?
  - What is different?
  - Is it better now than it used to be? Why?

That’s it from my side. Do you have any more questions or comments? If not then I would like to thank you very much for your time and answers. It has been a pleasure to have you as an interview partner.
## APPENDIX E

### COMPLETE RECORD OF THEMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>R1</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>R3</th>
<th>R4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>T1: Heyday of German Tennis</strong></td>
<td>‘Boris Becker, Steffi Graf, Michael Stich […] big flagships […] that was the heyday of German tennis.’</td>
<td>‘Becker, Stich, Graf […] the absolute heyday of German tennis […] middle of 80s until the end of the 90s.’</td>
<td>‘Boris Becker, Steffi Graf. They have influenced the time when I was little.’</td>
<td>‘Boris Becker, Michael Stich […] the top players known from the 80s […] the heyday was back then.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T2: Talent identification &amp; development</strong></td>
<td>‘For the small ones it starts in the local club and there the talent identification takes place […] goes from the high performance centres of the regional associations to the national high performance centres where top athletes get promoted.’</td>
<td>‘Foundation and talent identification takes place in local clubs […] because of the regional associations we have a good infrastructure […] the GTF who accompanies the best squad athletes to international tournaments […]’</td>
<td>‘There are many private institutions, many regional associations and private coaches who develop individual talents […] not all the top people we currently have went through the GTF school.’</td>
<td>‘[…] regional associations with high performance centres where talent scouting and – promotion takes place […] promotion starts in local clubs.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T3: Money- / Sponsor acquisition</strong></td>
<td>‘I think it is a question of how the present resources are being used […] you need sufficient personnel and this is what the GTF currently works on.’</td>
<td>‘We lack at least 4 or 5 national coaches […] surely our weakness […] over the last few years we have reduced our personnel and also economic resources, this is our problem.’</td>
<td>‘Either they [the GTF] do not have enough people or the people who are there are not capable enough […] It would be good if there were sufficient coaches available […] if money is in place – hire more qualified coaches!’</td>
<td>‘Good coaches […] are the most important thing […] you need a lot of them in a wide range.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T4: Lack of coaches / - personnel</strong></td>
<td>‘It is a big challenge to acquire the financial means, which is not so easy.’</td>
<td>‘Sponsor acquisition is generally difficult […] we do not have the sufficient financial means to be able to possess as much influence as we would like to as the umbrella organisation […] it is hard to acquire business partners.’</td>
<td>‘The most important thing is sponsor acquisition […] without money nothing is possible in tennis […] there is no provision of money whatsoever.’</td>
<td>‘[…] the GTF should have done more during the heyday […] should have used the heyday to establish a better tournament landscape […] the GTF does not possess that much money.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T5: Greater care</strong></td>
<td>‘It is about the transition […] providing sufficient personnel that travels with the young athletes, prepares tournament schedules […]’</td>
<td>‘Top players need to have a private environment […] family as a team.’</td>
<td>‘To make the current ones more successful, a greater care must be provided […] coaches who then go to the tournaments with us.’</td>
<td>‘[…] establish training groups that travel together to tournaments […] the surrounding has to be professional […] families are always involved.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T6: Competitors</strong></td>
<td>‘[…] there are private institutions, the “competitors”. But the GTF […] should not mind whether a talent comes from a regional association or a private institution […] in the end the most important thing for the GTF is that the player is really good […] a world-class player does not necessarily have to grow up in a federation system.’</td>
<td>‘There are many private institutions […] and private coaches, who develop individual talents that are somehow caught and promoted by the GTF. However, I would not say that all the top people that we currently have went through the GTF school […] I have never been in the squad – my father always coached me privately.’</td>
<td>‘Some people do not want to work with the GTF. Hence parents send their children abroad […] to attend private tennis academies […] I like tennis academies run by former professionals […] away from federal structures […] athletes should then attend an academy where further promotion can take place.’</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>T7: The athlete</strong></td>
<td>‘[…] in the end it is the athlete himself who has to be successful, because there is this term in high performance sport which is “I want!” and if players do not have internalised this, then they will never be successful.’</td>
<td>‘[…] they all have a small personal environment, where everything is tailored.’</td>
<td>‘[…] work very hard […] great will, with hard discipline […] hard training was not good enough. Diet, going to bed early, no alcohol, no clubbing […] every day.’</td>
<td>‘[…] families are always involved […] persistent and needs to have the correct imagination. That it is a long way, a lot of training, hard work. And he needs to enjoy playing tennis.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviewer – p (Pola Metze)
Interviewee – h (Participant 1)

p- hello, first of all thank you for your time. I really appreciate that. If you have any questions or comments feel free to interrupt me at any time.
h- ok.
p- let us start with high performance tennis. What is the first thing that comes into your mind when I say German high performance tennis?
h- Boris Becker, Steffi Graf, Michael Stich, Anke Huber ... and some others. Those were the big Flagships but especially amongst the women there have been world class athletes for many years.
P- okay. But those were the older stars from the 80's and 90's.
h- Yes, that was the heyday of German tennis. After 2000 it was a bit quieter around German tennis and when I think about nowadays I think of Angelique Kerber, Sabine Lisicki and maybe Tommy Haas.
p- okay. Very good. And also the GTF?
h- No. This is always the wrong conclusion, thinking that the GTF does that much. As national association can only provide the foundation, in the end it is the athlete himself who has to be successful because there is this expression in high performance sport which is “I want!” and if players have not internalised this, then they will never be successful.
p- And in your opinion, how is high performance tennis developed and promoted in Germany?
h- Very extensively. For the small ones it starts in the local club and there the talent identification takes place to enable the best athletes to proceed to high performance centres, that almost exist everywhere in Germany. It is not only the high performance centres of the regional associations but also the districts offer such institutions where talented youngsters get promoted. This goes from the high performance centres of the regional associations to the national high performance centres where top athletes get promoted. For the women there is the Porsche Team Germany and the Porsche Talent Team Germany who look after the top players and also after the junior talents. The same thing will happen with the men from next year onwards, to create a better foundation.
p- And who organises all this? Only the GTF?

h- No. Initially it starts in the local club - more or less the whole construct of German tennis which takes care of appropriate talent promotion.

It would be impossible without the local club, as there would be no basis. The next step is the regional associations and only then the GTF comes into play. On every level there are qualified coaches as well as people who are in charge of the organisation and talent identification - the whole construct is the decisive factor.

p- Okay. And who is responsible for this whole development process?

h- This is a process that gets coordinated by the GTF and its national associations. The talent identification takes place in the regional associations but then the further procedure gets coordinated between the associations and the GTF - at least this would be the best way to do it! However, sometimes that is not the case. But this process is settled, otherwise it would not work.

p- I see. And what do you think are the main challenges for the management team in the development of a tennis elite?

h- As most players have their own management quite early, it is mostly a challenge for this management to not only take care of the sportive development of the youngsters but also to ensure a reasonable and careful buildup to prevent burnout. Furthermore, it is also about advanced training to make provisions for the time after the active tennis career. From a certain point onwards, the influence of the GTF is rather small.

p- But the GTF being the umbrella organisation takes care of the management of the players or not at all?

h- No, they do not take care of the mere management. The GTF is responsible for the establishment of the junior teams and for the creation of training schedules, trainings camps and the coordination of tournaments. However, it is the personal managers who take care of the actual management.

p- In terms of the promotion of young talents, what are the main challenges for the GTF?

h- First of all it is a big challenge to acquire the financial means, which is not so easy. The second step is to maintain access to the players to be able to become active after all. This requires close teamwork with the personal management and also with the families of these players. The real challenge is to coordinate all this. When it comes to the planning of the employment of coaches then that is no problem as there are many first class coaches in Germany who take care of the talents - this is the smaller problem.

p- Great! Thank you so far. Let us now talk about resources. What do you think which resources are necessary to be able to develop a tennis elite?
h- You need appropriate training facilities, not only being tennis specific but also providing means that ensure the whole sportive development of the youngsters. Often, it is necessary to have close school facilities, such as in the Bavarian high performance centre Unterhaching, so that young people who live there for quite a while are able to go to school. The provision of all this is really important. In many cases the resources have been established - such as the qualified coaches. It is important to ensure further training for coaches so that they can improve themselves. Therefore the GTF organises a yearly congress and also other events where coaches can develop themselves throughout the year. The technical institutions exist in many places.
p- Okay, so the GTF provides all resources or are some missing?
h- I don't think that some are missing. I think it's a question of how the present resources are being used, as it is partly the national high performance centres, partly the regional high performance centres, being linked with each other, working together. Bavaria, for example, focuses more on men whereas the North and Westphalia puts more emphasis on women. As you can see they try to concentrate it a bit which absolutely makes sense. These things are provided by the GTF and its regional associations.
p- Mmh. And which of the current resources need to be improved or increased by the GTF in order to create more high performance players or to make the current ones even more successful and how can the GTF achieve that?
h- currently, some things are missing at some places. In the 80s and 90s, some things were easier; more people were interested in tennis – after the successes from Becker and Graf. Then the interest decreased but now it slowly rises again. It is about the transition and what I said before “I want!” If the will and the assertiveness are not existent, you will not be successful. There are too many good tennis players who are not that different in their performance.
p- but how can you facilitate the transition from youth to adulthood in tennis?
h- by providing sufficient personnel to travel with the young athletes, preparing them for tournament schedules which involve a certain climax – no excessive demand – and to play tournaments that make sense, where you have a chance and not knowingly lose in the first round. To plan all this, you need sufficient personnel and this is what the GTF is currently trying to address regarding the men’s team.
p- and this is how players can reach Top 20? With determination and sufficient support?
h- yes, then they can reach Top 20, Top 10 – this is not such a difference anymore.
Looking at the current professionals there is a Nadal, Djokovic, Federer and Murray … then there is a gap. And then there is this field which can be reached by our top players if they have the ability and will.

Tommy Haas is currently ranked 13 – it is not like we do not have any players ranked that high. Kohlschreiber and Mayer have been in the Top 20 already. You see, this aim can be reached.

p- thank you. That is it from my side. Do you have any further questions or comments?

h- no I do not.

p- okay, thanks a lot!