THE EFFICACY OF ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT MODELS

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Thesis submitted for the degree of
Master of Arts in Sports Studies (Research)
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Abstract (with keywords)
The Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model in Canada and the Junior Sport Framework (JSF) in Australia are two platforms used to establish athlete development policy. This study analysed the perceptions of sports practitioners in relation to the effectiveness of selected athlete development policy and whether those perceptions reflected the intent of the policy makers. It did so in relation to three sports in Canada and three in Australia. Competition structure, coach education and athlete development pathway were areas of policy that were specifically focussed upon.

Limited research had been applied to athlete development policy. This study used qualitative research and semi-structured interview to seek the perceptions of the practitioners in relation to the intent and the effect of the athlete development policy of their sport. Insight into the motivation, intent, core beliefs and philosophy behind the policy platforms was gained.

The perception of the coaches interviewed in some sports (Speed Skating – Canada; Netball and Cricket - Aus) reflected the intent of the policy and its platform, whilst others (Basketball – Australia; Athletics and Cycling - Canada) were unclear as to the intent of the NSOs policy.

Close review of the LTAD model suggests that there are some contestable elements to its claims. The research provided evidence to suggest that the segregation of the LTAD policy from the LTAD model could be an effective manner in which the advancement of athlete development policy in Canada could occur. The intent and core philosophy of the LTAD was not clear to either the practitioners or the policy makers.

The research sought the ideas of practitioners as to what a good athlete development policy should encompass. Such input provided a template upon which future policy makers could use and future policy analysts in this genre could base their analysis to determine the effectiveness of athlete development policies.

Recommendations to government, NSOs and policy analysts around the advancement of athlete development policy were provided.
Acknowledgements
I would like to thank my primary supervisor Dr John Dodd for the patience and guidance provided in ensuring the completion of the research. The manner, assistance and empathy helped guide the thesis to its completion. I would also like to thank and acknowledge the assistance and guidance of my secondary supervisor, Dr Robin McConnell. Robin's frank and forthright assessment in the closing months of this thesis proved to be invaluable in shaping the final product. His depth of knowledge and wisdom in thesis writing was warmly welcomed and accepted. My primary supervisor at the time that I embarked upon the Masters thesis was Dr Daryl Adair, and I thank him for inspiring me to initiate the thesis and providing the essential guidance that is required in the early stages.

The inspiration and wise words that was provided by the coaches and administrators involved in this research has spurred me in my deliberations. It is hoped that their philosophies and idealism is sufficiently reflected in the following pages and will be a source of inspiration to others – particularly those able to influence the direction of athlete development policy.

As an employee of the Australian Sports Commission, I thank those responsible for providing me the time and flexibility required to undertake and complete the thesis.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my family in persevering with my pursuit of the research that has taken me away on occasions from my family duties. To my wife Robyn and my children Jessica and Cara – a massive thank you.
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<td>Centre of Excellence Program</td>
<td>A high performance program established within Cricket Australia to focus on the development of the high performance athletes of Cricket.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spirit of Cricket</td>
<td>An ethos of fair play and respecting the rights of all when undertaking the game of cricket.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Game Sense</td>
<td>An approach to coaching that encompasses a strong level of participation and activity by those involved. It is aimed to enhance the strategic senses of participants by applying game-based activities that are appropriate to the standard of play.</td>
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<td>SIS/SAS Network</td>
<td>The network of State Institute of Sport and Academy of Sport administrative structures that are state / territory government owned and underpins many high performance programs in the states or territories of Australia. The institutes or academies collectively form the National Elite Sports Council (NESC).</td>
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Abbreviations

AC1 Manager of Coach Development, Athletics Canada
ACCoach1 Athletics Canada Coach interviewee number one
ACCoach2 Athletics Canada Coach interviewee number two
ACCoach3 Athletics Canada Coach interviewee number three
ACF Advocacy Coalition Framework
ACProvince1 Athletics Canada Provincial representative interviewee number one
ASC Australian Sports Commission
BA1 Basketball Australia Development Manager
BACoach1 Basketball Australia coach interviewee number one
BACoach2 Basketball Australia coach interviewee number two
BACoach3 Basketball Australia coach interviewee number three
BAState1 Basketball Australia State interviewee number one
CA Cricket Australia
CA1 Game Development Manager, Cricket Australia
CA2 Education and Training Manager, Cricket Australia
CACoach1 Cricket Australia coach interviewee number one
CACoach2 Cricket Australia coach interviewee number two
CACoach3 Cricket Australia coach interviewee number three
CAState1 Cricket Australia State interviewee number one
CCA1 Canadian Cycling Association CEO
CEO Chief Executive Officer
DMSP Development Model of Sports Participation
FSLA Funding and Service Level Agreement (used by the ASC for all NSO funding)
Certificate of Authorship of Thesis

Except where clearly acknowledged in footnotes, quotations and the bibliography, I certify that I am the sole author of the thesis submitted today entitled –

The Efficacy of Athlete Development Models

I further certify that to the best of my knowledge the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

The material in the thesis has not been the basis of an award of any other degree or diploma except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

The thesis complies with University requirements for a thesis as set out in


Signature of Candidate

..........................................................

Signature of chair of the supervisory panel

Date: 6 August 2010
CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION

Background to the Research

Traditionally, Australian sporting bodies had been left to their own devices in developing policies and procedures around their sport (Adair & Vamplew, 1997). From the early 1970s however, the Australian Government became increasingly involved in the development of nationally based sporting policies (Stewart, Nicholson, Smith & Westerbeek, 2004). National governments throughout Europe, America and Asia have more recently moved to developing national elite sports policies within their nation (Houlihan & Green, 2008; de Bosscher, Bingham, Shibli, Bottenburg & Knop, 2008).

The development of a national sports policy has inevitably been born of an aspiration to attain a high performance outcome. The Australian Institute of Sport was born out of the perceived failure of Australian sportsmen and sportswomen to perform at the 1976 Montreal Games. As nations mature in the development of their policies there are an increasing number of countries seeking to implement policies that relate to athlete development - and broader sports development policies that are not purely focused upon high performance outcomes. This has been most recently evident in the policies being pursued and adopted in England (Stafford, 2005), Ireland (Irish Sports Council, 2004) and Canada (Canadian Government, 2002; Canadian Government, 2008). Within all of these countries they have used (to various levels) a framework for athlete development called the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model.

The emergence of this model across many areas of the English speaking world requires a closer analysis to determine the efficacy of such a model. The LTAD has been developed and promoted by Canadian Istvan Balyi. Sport Canada (the national funding body for Canadian sport) has recently mandated the development of an LTAD policy for all National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) if they are to receive funding from the Canadian Government.

*The implementation of LTAD is fundamental to the realization of the Vision and Goals of the Canadian Sport Policy. LTAD is the framework from which several priorities and actions will be developed and monitored over the next several years* (Canadian Government, 2008, p. 3).
The LTAD is a model that identifies specific areas of physical and athletic development that, it argues, are essential to develop at given phases in order to effectively progress an athlete in their development and to provide them the best opportunity to perform at the highest level. Whilst the model focuses upon athlete development, the implementation of this model into a compulsorily implemented development policy requires some closer analysis. Referred to as a “framework” for its policy development by the Canadian Government, the LTAD has a cousin in the southern hemisphere.

The Junior Sports Framework (JSF) was developed by the Australian Sports Commission and has been used by some sports within Australia. It is a framework that seeks to address athlete development and, similar to the LTAD model, provides a platform for the development of athletes within the sport and the basis for the NSO’s Junior Sport Policy or Athlete Development Policy. The JSF establishes the mechanism for NSOs to determine the most appropriate development pathway for their athletes. Whilst not as internationally known or accepted as the LTAD, the JSF is similar in intent and potential outcome for the NSOs. Formed in 2003, the effectiveness of the JSF should be cast under the same spotlight as the LTAD for the same reasons.

The Labor Party was elected to power in Australia in 2007. The recent Australian Government policy statement highlighted the need for direction in the area of sports development. The opening statement identified -

*The Federal Government believes rather than debating the merits of elite sports versus community sport, we should embrace and recognise the vital interconnections between the two. The reality is that our elite sport system only prospers when we have a strong talent base on which to draw. Equally, having successful and high performing role models in sport is integral to encouraging children to take up sport and aspire to reach their own dreams (Australian Government, 2008, p. 6).*

The “non-elite” policies developed by government can vary markedly and are heavily influenced by the current political desires of the day (Stewart, Nicholson, Smith & Westerbeek, 2004). Nonetheless, if one was to determine the effect of the LTAD or the JSF, one should have an understanding of the essential elements of the model or framework, how it was implemented as a policy and the intent of the policy.

In a strong push for greater clarity around capacity-building and the development of appropriate infrastructure for sporting organisations, this research provides a valuable link.
that could not only focus the spotlight onto the effectiveness of the LTAD or the JSF as a basis for the development of Athlete Development Policy but also further assist the Australian Government and the Canadian Government in the development of any sports policy in this area.

Purpose of the Study – stating the Research Questions

The impact of an athlete development policy can be profound. No policy should be adopted because of a flippant or cursory approach to athlete development. The determination of a “curriculum” or series of competencies that each athlete should develop at certain stages and the repercussions on coach education, athlete pathway, competition structure or broader sports development cannot be underestimated.

The emergence of such models being adopted across various countries provides an ideal opportunity to apply the magnifying glass to such policies. Implementation of the LTAD as a compulsory element to the strategic and operational plans of the sporting organisation in Canada is a bold move and warrants a level of scrutiny to determine how effective such a policy is and recognition of what the policy is expected to yield.

Similarly the Junior Sports Framework (JSF) has emerged as the background to the development of “Junior Sport” policies within some Australian NSOs. The JSF provides the template upon which National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) base their junior sport policies.

The need to scrutinise the LTAD in particular takes on greater meaning when a number of countries and sporting organisations are referring to this model as a basis upon which they shape their athlete development policy. The JSF is the basis for junior development that has been proposed by the Australian Sports Commission for NSOs to adopt.

The implementation of such policies within the complexity of the sport environment must be viewed and analysed. The advancement of athlete development policies may be theoretically sound, however there is a need to identify the implementation issues that are faced in bringing these to fruition. The implementation of any policy is fraught with a multitude of issues, some of which can be controlled and some that are outside of the control of the sporting organisations. It is possible that the implementation of athlete development policies generates specific issues within itself.

Recognition that the practices provided by sports practitioners (coaches) should reflect the policy outcomes being sought by policy makers in athlete development policy had led the researcher to seek their perception as to the effectiveness of the policy that they have been charged to implement.
Thus, as a research method that could validate the stated intent of the policy makers, the perceptions of practitioners in relation to key elements attached to the policy was identified as the most suitable means to determine the how effective such policy is.

Researchers have failed to utilise the principle people responsible for policy development or implementation to determine the intent or effectiveness of such policies in the past. The major research question thereby becomes

What are the perceptions of sport practitioners in relation to the effectiveness of the athlete development policy of their sport and do these reflect the intent of the policy makers?

Asking such a question allows the practitioners to provide some essential input to the discourse around the worth and effect of athlete development policies. Given the context of their environment, it provides a perspective that has not been drawn upon in the past but would be rich in value, depth and relevance.

The research project was able to further explore;

a) The intent of the policy as expressed by the National government representatives;

b) The intent of the NSOs and the motivations behind the implementation of the policy within their sport;

c) The issues associated with the implementation of such policy; and

d) A snapshot as to whether the key messages associated with the policy are being implemented by the practitioners.

In posing such a question, and in recognition that there is limited research attached to the creation of athlete development policy, a secondary question was established. The elements that should be applied in the debate around athlete development policy have not been established. Thus a secondary question that is generated out of the search for a heightened understanding of the policies in question is:

How do the perceptions of stakeholders inform the essential elements that one should address when critiquing athlete development policy?
This research informs the literature of the issues associated with putting into effect the policy aimed at athlete development. It highlights the manner in which two models have been shaped, implemented and understood by key people in the industry.

This research will;

- review the LTAD and the JSF as appropriate athlete development models upon which policy should be developed;
- review the implementation of these models / frameworks into specific NSO policies;
- look at the intent of the policy by the policy makers (national government bodies and the NSOs);
- look at how effective such a policy has been in its implementation with three sports from Canada and three sports from Australia that have used the identified models;
- provide some analysis as to the veracity of each policy platform as a model to inform policy; and
- make recommendations to policy makers on the issues that are faced when seeking to effectively implement athlete development policy.

The Research Problem

There has been limited academic research applied to athlete development policies. The emerging popularity of the LTAD and the subsequent requirement by Sport Canada to ensure that all NSOs have an LTAD policy in place, if they are to receive funding from the government, necessitates the review and analysis of the LTAD in its current form. The formation and limited role-out of the JSF necessitates a similar analysis to ascertain its viability as a framework. The JSF has been formed since November 2003 with limited exposure and limited up-take by NSOs within Australia.

Athlete development policy is enacted to produce behavioural change in organisations and individuals and provide an appropriate environment for an athlete’s development. Those charged with that responsibility are the practitioners – the coaches and sports administrators that are required to enact the policy developed by the NSO or peak national body (Sport Canada or the Australian Sports Commission). If one is to attain any indication as to the effectiveness of such a policy, it is important to engage the views of the practitioners.
Clarity around the specific elements of athlete development policy has not been established. Research into this area -

- enables discussion as to the whether such a policy should focus upon the entry level athlete;
- provides comment upon the developmental stages of the athlete;
- examines the environment that is provided for the athlete;
- looks at the support structures that surrounds the athlete;
- provides guidelines on the capacity for the athlete to lead into a high performance program;
- questions whether the focus should be on an increase in the numbers of participants in the introductory years, or on the capacity to produce high performance athletes; and
- seeks clarity on whether the physical capacity of the athlete is the most important area of development in athlete development policy.

That both Canada and Australia have frameworks or models upon which an NSO can shape their athlete development policy allows for such a review. Similarity between the two sporting structures and systems of Canada and Australia is reflected in their sharing of a number of common elements including;

- a national government arm that implements broader sports policy (ASC and Sport Canada);
- a federated structure of government that extends to the sport environment;
- autonomy in decision making by the states / territory / province sporting bodies;
- similarity in size in both geography and population; and
- a recognition that sport is an important part of the nation’s culture.

The fact that both countries operate with a similar structure means that a review of each model, framework and NSO policy can inform each system.

The research on sport development policy is limited. The research on athlete development policy is even less. Research into two existing athlete development models or frameworks will inform the current literature and add to the literature void in athlete development policy.
Seeking the perceptions of those charged with the responsibility to enact the policy, and using that information to inform researchers, policy makers and policy analysts requires a methodology that will elicit informative responses, views and opinions.

**Methodological Considerations**

With limited research into the specific area of athlete development policy it is important to be clear about the policies themselves, what they support and the evidence that they bring in developing appropriate policy. Providing any review or analysis requires the voluntary contribution of the policy makers, the National Sporting Organisation, the State (or Provincial) Sporting organisations and the identified coaches.

Whilst a prime aim of the research is to establish the effectiveness of the LTAD and the JSF as a platform for policy development, it serves no purpose to identify a sport that has chosen not to accept / adopt the principles of the LTAD or the JSF into the development policies of their sport. Indeed there were a number of sports that were approached to ascertain the extent to which the national organisation had adopted either the LTAD or the JSF.

The researcher sought the opinion of significant players in the identification of NSOs that were most likely to provide meaningful input to the research. The founder of the concept of the LTAD, Istvan Balyi was approached. So too were a number of others that had some knowledge of the implementation of the LTAD within the sports including Richard Way and the Sport Canada representative responsible for the implementation of the LTAD. Past and present members of the Junior Sport Unit (JSU) at the ASC were approached to determine the sports that they had worked with to implement a Junior Sport policy, utilising the JSF as its foundation. As a result there is a level of complicity attached to the final selection of NSOs that were able to be involved in the research.

Whilst access to Australian NSOs and their affiliates was relatively easy, access to Canadian NSOs and affiliates was less so. Attendance at the *Petro-Canada Sportif Coaching Conference 2008* in Calgary by the researcher and the NSOs provided a focal point to meet, interview and further pursue the NSOs and the necessary people required to interview. In the limited time available in Canada (2 weeks) the researcher was able to further travel to other appropriate destinations in order to conduct the interviews. Subsequent interviews were conducted via phone.

**Research Methodology Outline**

The author utilised qualitative research methods to seek abstract elements such as intent, perceptions and beliefs. Whist quantitative methodology could be effective in ascertaining or
reinforcing some set constructs in this research, the utilisation of semi-structured interviews as an appropriate process to gain valuable information from the participants was preferred. When seeking accuracy in perception or clarification or interpretation of policy, the use of qualitative research lends itself to yield some richer results. Another consideration in using such methodology was the youthful position that athlete development policy finds itself. By further exploring the policy and its nuances, it allows researchers to attain a more substantial depth of knowledge around such policy.

Interviews with the CEO (or nominated representative), the governing institution for sport in Canada and Australia (their nominated representative), selecting state / provincial / territory CEOs (or their nominated representatives) and a choice of coaches nominated by the NSO constituted the participant group that informed this research.

Interviews in both Canada and Australia as well as interviews via the internet or phone were conducted. The semi-structured interview questions allowed the researcher to pursue some specific elements of policy perception with both the policy makers and with the practitioners charged with implementing the policy.

Only those sports that had been recognised as having implemented a Junior Sport policy (in Australia) or an LTAD policy (in Canada) were selected. Three sports from each policy platform were selected – Netball, Cricket and Basketball in Australia, and Athletics, Cycling and Speed Skating in Canada.

**Ethical Considerations**

All interviewees were provided an outline of the research and volunteered to be a part of the research. A copy of all data was maintained within a password-protected area of the computer of the researcher. A further backup of electronic data was maintained on an external hard drive.

All interviewees were provided the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview. The transcript was sent via email with a minimum period of two weeks to reply or modify the original records if they chose to do so.

No interviewees were referred to by name, but by pseudonym throughout the thesis.

**Justification for the research**

With such a paucity of athlete development policy analysis, it is important to identify the elements that allow and impede the successful implementation of such policy. The capacity
to review such policy and identify whether the policy has been successful in its implementation will provide valuable data to policy makers.

Under the current structures in both Canada and Australia, it is the responsibility of the NSO to set and implement its policies. Whilst Sports Canada has enforced the introduction of a LTAD policy onto its constituents, it remains the NSO as the policy drivers for athlete development policies within their sport. Whilst the JSF is available to all NSOs within Australia, it is the NSO that creates and owns its policy and chooses whether it should have such a policy or not.

Sport provides such a rich environment in which to gain data with a host of variables that can influence the ultimate outcome of a sports performance. Recognising that there are a multitude of variables that could be considered in any sports policy research, the research focussed upon accessing those individuals that are deemed most influential in the outcome of such a policy.

**The Researcher**

The author carries a strong background in coach education and athlete development. The author has been a career professional in coach education since the late 1980s. This has enabled him to witness a series of presentations from Balyi as far back as 1994 and has witnessed the emergence of the LTAD as well as the Junior Sport Framework to their present form. The researcher has operated at state and national level over a period of approximately 20 years and has a profession that enables him to provide input and direction in coach education across many NSOs in Australia. Through this exposure, the researcher is well known to a number of active players within both the Australian and the International sporting community.

**Outline of the Thesis**

Chapter 2 of the thesis provides a review of the literature surrounding the Long Term Athlete Development model, the Junior Sport Framework and the Junior Sport policies or LTAD polices of the selected sports. A review of the literature that informs the manner in which sport policy, sport development policy, and athlete development policy is analysed within the academic research is also provided.

Chapter 3 provides an outline of the methodology used in the research, establishes the research questions and provides justification for the use of qualitative research and semi-structured interview as the methodology. An outline of the model that was applied to this research, and selection of the sports and the interviewees was provided and justified. The
method of data collection and the specific components of the interviews, as it related to the research question, were outlined.

Chapter 4 establishes the results of the interviews for each of the participants to the research.

Chapter 5 analyses the data gained from the interviews and provides responses around the perceptions of the practitioners in relation to the effectiveness of the policies that their sporting bodies had implemented. Further discussion is provided around the LTAD policy and the LTAD model; the practice of the JSF; the means by which the policy is measured (or could be measured); and the essential elements to athlete development policy as determined by the practitioners. Further discussion is provided as to how this informs policy analysis within the research.

Chapter 6 answers both the primary and secondary research questions. This chapter outlines the role that athlete development policy plays in the sport policy context and highlights the manner in which this research can be effectively used into the future. Recommendations to government, national sporting organisations, policy analysts and future researchers – based upon the results of this thesis, are provided.

**Contributing factors and Limitations of the Research**

The limitations of time and resources greet all researchers. An ideal world would have allowed a comprehensive interviewing of key practitioners across many sports to enable a strong determination of the areas focussed upon within this research and a clearer picture as to the acceptance of the policy or issues surrounding its interpretation, implementation or effectiveness could have been gained.

This research can only provide an indication as to the issues surrounding the adoption, acceptance, implementation or effectiveness of a given model or framework for that group of administration. Importantly, the perception of those involved in this process should be recognised for the strength that it is – a strong indication, and the only indication provided to date – of those practitioners charged with the implementation of such policy.

**Conclusion**

Whilst many nations have developed sports policies aimed at the high performance end of sport, few have implemented policy related specifically to athlete development. The LTAD model has gained in popularity with a number of nations that are looking to provide guidance to the NSOs in the development of their athletes. The recent emergence of athlete
development models such as the Junior Sport Framework and the LTAD and their interpretation into policy requires some scrutiny as to their effectiveness.

NSOs are the bodies asked to provide policy for their constituents. As a result, the efficacy of policy must be determined against the specific sport policy that the practitioner operates within. The similarity of sporting structures in Canada and Australia as well as each country having a model or framework upon which athlete development policy has been established, provides an ideal opportunity to seek to examine the effectiveness of each policy platform.

Research into the area of athlete development policy is limited, and any analysis in this area enables an increased awareness of the issues surrounding entry level athletes, the developmental stages of the athlete, the environment and support that is provided for the athlete, the capacity to produce high performance athletes and other important areas of development in such policy.
2.1 Introduction

The emergence of the Long Term Athlete Development model and the subsequent adoption of the model in Canada, the United Kingdom and Ireland in the last ten years has focussed attention on athlete development policies. The review of such policy has come under limited scrutiny from academic research. The analysis of sport policy has primarily focused upon high performance policy analysis – the policy focus for most national governments sport policy.

There are few models in existence that have focused upon the development of the long term needs of the athlete. The LTAD model, through its international acceptance, appears to be one of the more popular models. There has been little research applied to its formation and capacity to shape policy. There has been little research applied to its formation and capacity to shape policy. The LTAD has established itself in recent years as the model to base such policy upon. Côté and Hay (2002) have identified an alternative model with a different basis.
for its development. The Junior Sports Framework has looked at both of those models and applied a framework upon which NSOs could develop their policy. The relatively short timeframe with which this area of policy has emerged and formed means that there has been no academic scrutiny applied to any of these frameworks or models.

The purpose of this literature review is to outline the available literature that informs athlete development policy and to determine whether such literature has considered the perceptions of practitioners in the development of such policy. It requires a review of the literature that surrounds the Long Term Athlete development Model and the Junior Sport Framework. A comprehensive review of material that surrounds these models is required so that the research gains some clarity as to what each model represents. Because athlete development policy is formed and endorsed by the NSOs responsible for the athletes within their charge, the review will also cover the relevant policy documents of each of the NSOs that have taken part in the research. Chapter 3 provides the justification for the use of these sports. The review will ascertain whether the perceptions relating to those charged to implement athlete development policy have been utilised. The literature review will also look at the manner by which other academics have chosen to review sports policy - how current researchers are seeking to analyse sports policy (Henry, Amara, Al-Tauqi, & Lee, 2005; Houlihan B., 2005) and be mindful of the people most responsible for the promotion of the policy platform – referred to as “actors” or “agents” by some researchers – within the formation of such policy (Sam, 2003; 2005). The review places this research in context and identifies how the current research will add to the literature that surrounds each of those areas.

Each NSO is responsible for the setting of policy guidelines for their states, provinces, territories and participants. This is done in the context of the National Government sport policy and – in the case of the athlete development policy – the model upon which the NSO policy is based. This review analyses the NSO’s policy, how it is expected to be implemented and to whom it is targeted. As a result this literature review covers the following specific areas;

- the Long Term Athlete Development model;
- the Junior Sport Framework;
- the Canadian Government Sport Policy and the emergence of athlete development policy in Canada;
- the Australian Government Sport Policy;
- the relevant NSO policies in the selected sports; and
- the manner in which Sports Policy has been academically reviewed.
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The review provides the platform required to further investigate the intent of the policy makers and assess the perceived effectiveness of the policy. Given the recent emergence of athlete development policy as a platform, this review establishes a basis upon which such policy can be measured and through this thesis, informs policy makers as to the what some practitioners see as important in such policy.

2.2 Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) Model Literature

The review of LTAD literature will provide an acknowledgement of the basis and the evolution of the LTAD model. Balyi had developed some preliminary concepts as to the role that periodisation has played in the development of high performance athletes and provided a synopsis of his interpretation as to why periodisation had not been accepted as well within Western cultures as it had within the Eastern-bloc countries (Balyi, 1992; Balyi, 1993). It is in the same article entitled Beyond Barcelona: a contemporary critique of the theory of periodisation that he refers to “interest shown in the biological aspects of the theory of training, and particularly in the process of adaptation” (Balyi l, 1992, p. 10). Preceding the literature that Balyi produced which focused upon the LTAD model, Balyi had some exposure throughout international coach education forums in relation to his education and articles on planning and periodisation (Balyi, 1992; Balyi, 1993; Balyi, 1995). Balyi evolved the concept of developing a long term athlete development model in literature published in 1995 with one of the first articles in an Australian Strength & Conditioning publication (Balyi & Hamilton, 1995). In his presentation at the National Coaching conference of 1994 held in Australia, Balyi addressed the strength and conditioning adaptations and introduced the terms “training to train”, “training to compete” and “training to win” (Balyi, 1995). This was built upon in the article promoted in Strength & Conditioning Coach – a magazine for which Balyi was also an associate editor – where competition and training ratios were identified for the different phases that he had earlier labelled. In this article Balyi and Hamilton identify that “Unfortunately, the first two phases of training are not considered seriously by coaches and training to win is the objective from the very beginning of the athletic career” (Balyi & Hamilton, 1995, p. 4). Whilst not providing any evidence for this, Balyi and Hamilton begin to bring the biological factors for development into a planning and periodisation context and begin to articulate “phases” of training for the development of a high performance outcome. There is a premise suggesting that all athletes who undertake the proposed prescription of staged and periodised training intend to compete to attain a high performance outcome.

Whilst a series of articles in Strength & Conditioning Coach (Balyi & Hamilton, 1995) outlined the early thinking around identifying sports as early or late specialisation sports it was
through the magazine of the National Coaching Foundation of Great Britain that Balyi and Hamilton expanded upon their thoughts around the phases of training. In four articles published in *FHS – the UK’s quarterly coaching magazine* – from September 1998 through to July 1999 the concept of the LTAD was explained and promoted (Balyi, 1998a; Balyi, 1998b; Balyi & Hamilton, 1999a; Balyi & Hamilton, 1999b).

A series of articles were then produced in the Australian *Sports Coach* magazine from 2000 through to 2002 that reflected the UK articles and further expanded on the focus of biological factors in the determination of training loads for developing athletes. This is best summed up by Balyi and Hamilton when they stated:

> Using a modified version of Scammon’s model, Balyi and Hamilton (1998) identified training strategies based upon ‘critical’ or ‘sensitive’ periods of trainability during childhood and adolescence as well as strategies for the adult athlete for late recruitment sports. This generalisation has its limitations, but it can help coaches to better understand the complex processes and applications of ‘optimal periods of trainability’ from childhood to adulthood (Balyi & Hamilton, 2000, p. 12).

In 2004 Balyi and Hamilton introduced the term “Peak Height Velocity” (PHV) to their literature (Balyi & Hamilton, 2004). Peak height velocity refers to the period of time in a given child’s development where their growth rate is the most rapid – colloquially referred to as the growth spurt. It is suggested that the manipulation of training around the onset of PHV can assist the coach in optimising adaptations in speed, endurance, skill, strength and flexibility. The PHV has since become a central platform by which Balyi suggests is the cornerstone to the LTAD.

As will be detailed in later literature, the capacity to identify the time that the onset of PHV will occur and the duration of the growth period – how long the PHV will be maintained – is beyond most researchers, recognising that each child is different.

Figure 1 shows the diagram that is often used in LTAD literature that seeks to explain the windows of opportunity for training each of the physiological parameters of suppleness, speed, skill, stamina and strength. It suggests that there are given periods that surround the peak height velocity where one is able to attain better results if the training that surrounds those parameters is emphasised.
All of these articles referred to the various “phases” of development that were integral to the model. The initial phases were termed:

- FUNdamental Phase (4 – 7 years)
- Training to Train Stage (7 – 11 years)
- Training to Compete Stage (11 – 14 years)
- Training to Win stage (14 – 18 years)

Balyi added a further Stage called the Retirement / Retaining Stage in 2000 (Balyi & Hamilton, 2000). Further development and apparent refinement of the model has led to the current identified stages (Canadian Sport Centres, 2007) that suggest that there are 7 stages to the LTAD – see Figure 2 below. It is these stages that have formed the basis of the most recent Canadian Sport consultation paper (Canadian Sport Centres, 2007). They are:

- Active Start – (Males & Females 0 – 6)
- FUNdamentals – (Males 6 – 9; Females 6 – 8)
- Learning to Train – (Males 9 – 12; Females 8 – 11)
- Training to Train – (Males 12 – 16; Females 11 – 15)
• Training to Compete – (Males 16 – 23 +/-; Females 15 – 21 +/-)
• Training to Win – (Males 19 +/-; Females 18 +/-)
• Active for Life – (Enter at any age)

Figure 2: The 7 stages of the LTAD – Canadian Poster (Canadian Sport Centres, 2007, p. 8).

Balyi continued to publish articles in sport specific magazines (Football, Cycling) outlining the LTAD to the readership of some of those sports (Balyi & Hamilton, 2005a; 2005b), however these articles have all been based upon the Olympic Coach article of 2004.

It is difficult to gauge from the literature the core philosophy of the LTAD. The early literature spoke of the need to look at different training parameters for athletes at different ages based upon the maturation of the athlete and not on the chronological age of the athlete (Balyi, 1995; Balyi, 2001). In all the earlier articles (c. 1995 – 2001) there is reference to early and
late specialisation sports and a recognition that the model has been developed out of a review of planning and periodisation of sport. There is scant regard for factors other than the biological factors – such as psycho-social, emotional, cognitive and psychological factors – that contribute to the development of the athlete and it is non-apologetic about its emphasis and reliance upon the sciences in its framework.

There is a constant reference to the “10 year” rule and all correspondence places the LTAD model as a model that can be used to address the poor performance of countries at Olympic events (Balyi, 2001a). In nearly all articles written by Balyi and many articles written on the LTAD by other authors (including the material promoted by Sport Canada) the quote from the Nobel Laureate, Herbert Simon is used – “It takes 10 years of extensive training to excel in anything” (Balyi, 2001a, p. 25). This seeks to places the LTAD as a model for the development of excellence and thus high performance outcomes.

Whilst alluding to some of the scientific data that reflects the varying maturation rates of boys and girls in the early data it was not until 2004 that a specific reference to the Peak Height Velocity was formed within Balyi’s LTAD literature. From this time, there is constant reference to the peak height velocity and the necessity to ensure that the training requirements take into account the individual differences for each person’s peak height velocity. In 2008 at a presentation provided by Balyi at the Petro-Canada Sport Leadership sportif 2008 coaching conference, Balyi confirmed that the central platform to the LTAD was the biological factors. Further he identified that Peak Height Velocity was central to the determination of the processes that should be put in place in each of the stages.

**International Adaptation of LTAD**

It is the adaption of the LTAD in a resource that has been developed primarily for coaches within the UK (Stafford, 2005) that has assisted coaches in interpreting the model and provided some detail as to how best coaches could apply the principles of the LTAD to their current coaching practices. This booklet (written by Ian Stafford but edited by Istvan Balyi) utilises the principles that the LTAD has provided, but adapted those principles to be practical in their implementation and specifically seeks to utilise the LTAD as a series of principles.

Cryer (2006) notes the appearance of the LTAD as the preferred model – the only model – in the UK government’s 2002 National Sports Policy document *Game Plan*. Given that this was a draft policy document for the UK it exemplifies the embryonic formation of athlete development policy.
What Stafford had done in compiling the booklet for Sports Coach UK, is to utilise some of the principles of the LTAD and integrate some of the findings of other researchers in the field of athlete development to provide some guidelines for UK coaches. The significant elements of the LTAD – as espoused by Balyi and Hamilton – that Stafford maintains include;

- Adherence to the terminology of the stages (6 stages in the UK)
- Recognition of early and late specialisation sports
- The 10 year rule as a key principle
- Utilisation of the windows of trainability to optimise potential (using PHV)

The elements that Stafford further enhances and suggests are intrinsically linked to the LTAD model (at least in the UK version) but have not been evident in LTAD literature prior to this publication are;

- An increased emphasis on physical literacy and lifelong participation
- An emphasis upon continual improvement
- A reliance on good coaching practices
- An emphasis upon the LTAD as principles and should not be viewed as rigid rules
- Linking athlete development to coach development

The Sports Coach UK book (Stafford, 2005), the subsequent Canadian Sport policy documents and Sport Canada’s LTAD information represent a further modification of the intent of the model. The increased emphasis upon the introductory level and the physical literacy of participants in the FUNdamental stage, prior to their progression into the subsequent phases of the model, is introduced. This soon became a central platform of the model. This represents another shift in the interpretation of the LTAD and the element that the model is based upon.

A review of overseas athlete development structures and coach education programs has identified that both the UK and Ireland have produced material that supports the LTAD as a model to be adopted within their structures. The review by Sports Coach UK and the subsequent adoption of the LTAD model began in a different manner to that of Canada. Sports Coach UK originally brought together a UK wide strategy group of key partners including coaching, school based education, and sports councils. They also spent a great deal of time with Balyi in the formation of their position. Sports Coach UK engaged staff that were responsible for the implementation of the LTAD within specific geographic boundaries (Moir, 2006). These LTAD development officers were responsible for linking agencies together, tutor training and broader development of sport within their regions. This group
“championed” the application of the principles of the LTAD with the broader sports community.

As Balyi has produced articles for specific sports, so too Sports Coach UK combined with the National Governing Bodies to produce pamphlets and guidelines for coaches, administrators and others that emphasised the elements to focus upon in each of the phases of training. Such pamphlets have been produced for Badminton, Paddle sports, Judo and many other sports. They provide more practical guidelines around the elements that coaches and others should focus upon within the age group range of each stage. “Position statements” were also produced by some sports, in particular in relation to the adoption of the LTAD. A strong emphasis has been placed on the early Fundamental Stage which incorporates the physical literacy of participants (Moir, 2006).

The National Coaching and Training Centre of Ireland produced a report in 2003 entitled Building Pathways in Irish Sport that provided a strong basis for its future documents (Irish Sports Council, 2004). Within this consultation paper there were constant references to the LTAD model that Balyi had proposed and an indication that the Irish Sports Council were likely to adopt the LTAD (with some minor modifications) as the framework upon which they would build their player development pathway. Opening with the Nobel Laureate Herbert Simon quote and dedicating a series of chapters to the model as proposed by Balyi, it had strong links to the LTAD. Balyi was an international advisor to the National Coaching and Training Centre at the time.

In October 2005 the Irish Sports Council published a consultation document that looked at the Irish model for the “Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity: the LISPA Model”. Within this model the Irish Sports Council modified the context of the LTAD once more. The focus of the LISPA model was to address the inter-relationship between physical activity, sport and health and to provide support for high performance involvement, whilst at the same time attempting to increase participation rates. Some key features of the model included:

- Promotion of a child-centred approach
- Distinguishing the difference between deliberate play and deliberate practice
- Recognising individual difference
- Promotion of both
  - a long-term recreation pathway and
  - a long-term player/athlete development pathway
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- A strong emphasis on the physical literacy required to underpin both pathways (Irish Sports Council, 2004)

Whilst the philosophy behind the developmental needs of the athlete and player were different, the proposed model used the same terminology of the LTAD model in its structure. This structure has since evolved. Figure 3 provides a pictorial representation of how the LTAD fits within Coaching Ireland’s structure (Coaching Ireland, 2008). It bears little resemblance to its 2004 predecessor, provides limited reference to the LTAD as a model but appears to incorporate both LTAD and Côté & Hay Developmental Model of Sports Participation (DMSP) terminology (Côté & Hay, 2002).

Figure 3: Representation of the LISPA Model (Coaching Ireland, 2008).

2.2.1 Anomalies Associated with the LTAD

As a model upon which to base an athlete’s development, the LTAD does appear to have some structure that appears logical and progressive. However there are some anomalies and questions that have surfaced as a result of the analysis of the literature. These include;

- Training to Competition ratios provided throughout the early literature is very generic and highly contestable. There is no foundation for the determination of these ratios and it is simplistic in it connotations, failing to allow for the type of sport, the competition structure and the training routines that may be applied. It does not identify whether the ratios are based upon time, intensity or frequency.
- The LTAD is based upon a retrospective analysis – if you are to be a high performing athlete, then you should adopt the various stages of development in order to attain the high performance outcome.
There are assertions that “Scientific research has concluded that it takes a minimum of 10 years and 10,000 hours of training for a talented athlete to reach elite levels” (Canadian Sport Centres, 2007, p. 19), that the LTAD has drawn upon many sciences including “pediatric (sic) exercise science, exercise physiology, sport psychology, psychomotor learning, sport sociology, and nutrition” (Canadian Sport Centres, 2007, p. 13) and that the LTAD document “is fully based on and supported by the coaching and exercise science literature”, yet the only published works of Balyi refers to the physiological growth spurts (or peak height velocity) and the need to periodise in relation to such. Further, there is little evidence that any of the other disciplines of science besides that of biology, anatomy and physiology has informed the formation of the LTAD.

Whilst there is a list of references attached to most LTAD articles published by Balyi, there is limited referencing as to where or how these references have informed the document in question.

There is rarely ever agreement by the “scientific community” on any aspect of science. There was no evidence to suggest that the LTAD model was fully supported by the coaching and exercise science community.

The LTAD has never been published in a peer reviewed journal, but has gained exposure through periodicals that are not peer reviewed.

“LTAD requires the identification of early, average, and late maturers in order to help to design appropriate training and competition programs in relation to optimal trainability and readiness. The beginning of the growth spurt and the peak of the growth spurt are very significant in LTAD applications to training and competition design” (Canadian Sport Centres, 2007, p. 23). However, in the review of growth and maturation provided by Don Bailey (reviewed later in this chapter) it is noted that “the range of variation in the tempo and timing of each stage is highly variable in humans” and “The onset, duration and magnitude of the adolescent growth spurt are highly variable among individuals” and again “There appears to be no relationship between the onset of puberty and the length of time from beginning to the end of puberty” (Bailey, 2007, p. 14).

If the growth rate and onset is so variable and this is so critical to the design of LTAD programs it would appear that there is no mechanism to determine the onset – or the period of time in which one would be able to so critically periodise strength, endurance or speed based training.
• Statements made in the supporting documentation are not supported with any evidence. Great leaps between a statement and a solution are made without any effort to explain it. Explanation around each of the phases is insufficient.

• Clarity surrounding the reference to the LTAD is required. There appears to be one LTAD that is based upon the physiological and biological parameters of the PHV and a different LTAD that adopts a policy type position. The later LTAD refers to physical literacy, 10,000 hours, gold medal development, active for life involvement, a holistic approach, mental cognitive and emotional development, single, double and triple periodisation, and many other aspects. This is not reflected by the material that appears to form the basis of the LTAD.

If the LTAD is used as a platform for the formation of an athlete development policy for sport in Canada, it is important to seek to identify

i) what the policy makers perceive the LTAD is;
ii) what the expected outcomes would be (the effect) if it were to be implemented; and
iii) what is the perception of the LTAD by those charged to implement the model.

2.2.2 Other Athlete Development Models

Whilst the focus of this section of the literature review is upon the literature that surrounds the LTAD, there has been other literature that has been dedicated to reviewing the developmental stages of children and young adults. Armstrong (2000) provided a structured approach that was based upon his experience with cycling development programs and expanded to reflect the needs of developing athletes more generally. Sanderson (Sanderson, 2003)(2003) provided a similar article to inform coaches within the Track and Field community of the importance of youth development – recognising that physical, motor, cognitive and social / emotional development can occur at continually variable stages. Others (e.g. Cowan, 2005) were beginning to use the terminology of Balyi and refer to the LTAD and its stages in articles for coaches.

A strong body of work in youth development as it relates to sports performance came from Côté and Hay (2002) who identified the sampling years (7-12) where an emphasis upon deliberate play should occur, and the specialising years (13-16) where sport-specific skills development through deliberate practice should occur. They further promote that the specializing years (17 and above) is where a higher focus upon deliberate practice should occur and recognise that youths may choose a path of recreational years. Throughout their model, Côté and Hay recognise and emphasis the social development of the athlete and pay
a much higher level of attention towards the socialisation into sport (Côté & Hay, 2002). Côté and Hay referred to this as the Development Model of Sport Participation (DMSP).

Importantly, this volume of work has not just focussed upon the biological factors to determine the optimal training regimes or mechanism to develop sporting, physical, social and emotional development. Further discussion around these areas of development will occur through the review of the Junior Sport Framework literature. These factors of emotional and social development have been referred to in Balyi’s literature but have not been given any significance within the development of the model – and have certainly not been the basis upon which the development of the stages within the LTAD has evolved.

2.3 Junior Sport Framework Literature

In the early ‘90s the Australian Sports Commission published a Junior Sports Policy document that sought to identify the issues facing Junior Sport and primarily was accepted by NSOs at the time (Australian Sports Commission, 1994). The exception was a recommendation that no national level competition should be held for children below the age of 12 years. Sports such as BMX cycling, gymnastics and swimming felt that this did not match the culture of their sport and rejected the implementation of this document as policy within their organisations.

This policy document was written by informed and well intentioned officers of the ASC. Recognising that such a policy lacked some evidence for the proposals that were placed within it, this document provided the impetus to establish the Junior Sports Framework. The development of the Junior Sport Framework was based upon a perceived need for Junior Sport in Australia to draw upon evidence-based practice. A series of academics were commissioned to develop some “briefing papers” that would inform the ASC and NSOs as to how to best shape their junior sports programs, education and competition.

There is a clear statement of intent, identifying the framework as “a resource that aims to assist all sporting organisations, including National Sporting Organisations, to build safe, fun, quality and inclusive environments for the delivery of junior sport” (Australian Sports Commission, 2009).

The information provided addresses the broader and very complex issues associated with athlete development including the environment in which they operate and the system that allows (or limits) children’s capacity to engage effectively in sport. As identified in the introduction
A common theme across the chapters is the importance of providing experience that is positive and rewarding for children and young people. Safety, enjoyment, inclusion, understanding, support and learning are pivotal to the foundations for lifelong sporting engagement (Australian Sports Commission, 2007, p. iv).

A review of the briefing papers and the surrounding material identified that the JSF is a framework that looks at athlete development - but not just athlete development – and places it in a much wider context than that of the LTAD. Specifically, the research papers cover the following topics:

- Historical, cultural and social perspectives of junior sport
- Trends in sport and physical activity in Australian children
- Growth and maturation
- Opportunities and pathways for beginners to elite
- Physical activity pedagogy
- Health and welfare of junior sport participants
- Coaching and officiating for junior sport participants
- Preparation of personnel responsible for junior sport
- Legislation regarding safe and appropriate junior sport
- Delivery systems at national, state and local
- Models representing best practice nationally and internationally

The resource document (Phillips, Macdonald, & Hanrahan, 2007), refers to the “performance ethic” as being a strong factor in junior sport. The performance ethic encourages children to evaluate their experience in relation to technical skills that may have been developed through the sport and encourages children to continue to attain a higher level of performance in one or more sports. They suggest that this can be applied in either an ego-centred motivational climate - where children compare their performance to others with an emphasis upon being better than others; or a “task oriented” approach to participation – where the emphasis is based upon their own personal development of skills. They identify that;
• Children are more committed to sport when they enjoy it, and when they perceive the benefits gained from participating are not available elsewhere.

• Children drop out of sport when there is an over-emphasis on winning, they don't get enough playing time, they don't have enough fun, they are not as good as they want to be, the coach is an autocrat, or they want to pursue other interests.

• Parental pressure to participate, concerns about unfavourable evaluation by their parents, and concerns about meeting parents' expectations are linked to children’s anxiety.

• A task-orientated climate is related to greater perceived progress, greater satisfaction, lower boredom, and higher intrinsic motivation.

• An ego-orientated climate is related to lower perceived autonomy, lower satisfaction, avoiding training/practice, and higher levels of competitive anxiety (Phillips, Macdonald, & Hanrahan, 2007, p. 2).

The research papers address the specific issues surround the development of the athlete and provide some background and context as to how coaches and sports administrators could shape the manner in which they approach athlete development in these years.

In his LTAD articles, Balyi refers to the Peak Height Velocity and suggests that this is the basis for the development of the LTAD and the appropriate phases. The briefing papers (Bailey, 2007) focus specifically upon the physical aspects that surround the growth and maturation of children and refer to the peak height velocity and the phases of growth. This does provide the same level of information (and not contested) as that to which Balyi refers. As referred to earlier in the literature review of the LTAD, Bailey raises strong doubt around the capacity to identify the time, speed or duration of the peak height velocity curve in children.

Côté makes a salient point when he addresses opportunities and pathways for children that will lead to life-long involvement in sport (Côté, 2007) when he states that “The objective of an appropriate model of junior sport development is to be able to develop fundamental motor skills and sport-specific skills in children while keeping children interested and motivated” (Côté, 2007, p. 20).

Through the text, Côté identifies the following phases and relates each of those phases to the types of activities that should be provided to athletes as they develop:
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- Sampling Years (ages 6-12)
- Recreational years (aged 13 +)
- Specialising years (aged 13-15) and
- Investment years (aged 16+).

He further identifies that with some early specialisation sports (such as gymnastics or ice skating) that there may be a necessity to move into a specialisation phase much earlier (such as 6 – 7 years). Côté utilises empirical research to support his proposals and provides some identification as to what each of these phases involves. During the sampling phase the athlete gets involved in a variety of different sports and in a manner that is inherently enjoyable.

The informality of deliberate play allows children to play sports with minimal equipment, in any kind of space, with any number of players, and with players of different ages and sizes. ... Through sampling various sports and engaging in deliberate play, the sampling years are considered essential building blocks for recreational sport participation (Côté, 2007, p. 20).

The Recreational years are seen as an extension to the sampling years recognising that there is more deliberate play than deliberate practice. It is here that Côté proposes an alternative path for those seeking a greater performance-oriented outcome. Côté proposes that the participant can move into a phase where there is a lesser variety of sports that the athletes embarks upon, and a greater mix of deliberate play and deliberate practice for those sports still associated with – termed the Specialising phase.

A lot of the evidence that Côté refers to is retrospective elite studies that support his concept of sampling – specialising – investing phases. In doing so, he does provide some evidence for an approach to establishing a structure for sport that

- allows a greater variety of activities to occur in the younger ages, in a less formal environment that allows some self-determination as to the level and intensity to which it should be played;
- enhance activities that require some social integration;
- place a higher emphasis on variety and a reduced emphasis upon early specialisation;
- provide options for athletes to seek a form of specialisation at approximately 13 years or to continue to sample sports with opportunities for both deliberate practice and deliberate play.
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Côté appears to provide a viable, well researched alternative model to that of the LTAD that has as its foundation the needs of the participant. It caters to the physical needs but places a much reduced emphasis on the physical development of the athletes than that of Balyi and recognises the social and psychological needs of the athlete – both at the beginner and at the elite level. Côté’s chapter provides strong evidence for a model that is different to that of Balyi, however it is difficult for the lay person to read and decipher and is not coherently presented as an easy model to follow.

Other authors expand on Côté’s model by providing further pedagogy structure for coaches in each of the phases identified by Côté. Strong recognition is given to the role of the coach at each of the phases and importantly, the role is expected to change significantly in different phases (Macdonald, Cote, & Kirk, 2007).

Kirk et al. (Kirk, Brettschneider, & Auld, 2007) looks at some developmental models of sports participation in general (comparing the structures of Côté to that of Balyi) and models of young people’s participation in particular (comparing the structures that are inherent for young people within 4 different countries of Great Britain, New Zealand, China and Germany).

Athlete development models that inform sports development policy necessarily operate within a myriad of variables. The fact that sports development is relatively new in the field of public policy, that its objectives are rarely fixed and that it cross other areas of public interest and policy (such as education, economy and leisure) makes it difficult to establish its boundaries (Houlihan & White, 2002).

To this end, Kirk et al. (2007) identifies a series of principles that they engage in order to compare the sports systems of the different countries. They rate each country’s program based upon the models being comprehensive (has a range of levels that are linked), inclusive and equitable (can accommodate all people irrespective of gender, race, disability, etc), coherent (pathways are feasible, supportive and complimentary), developmental (caters for the physiological, social, emotional and cognitive changes that occur in children) and informed by research and links to present society values.

Kirk goes on to use these same criteria in a comparison of the LTAD Balyi model and the Côté & Hay model. Here the authors suggest that both models are;

- comprehensive with identified stages from beginner to elite. Both models discourage early specialisation and competition
Chapter 2

- inclusive and equitable recognising an introductory phase for all with an emphasis on fun & learning
- focused around developmental principles
- Informed by research. Although “Côté and Hay’s perspective is more strongly informed by scholarship in social psychology and sociology, while Balyi’s emphases are psychological and physiological.” (Kirk, Brettschneider, & Auld, 2007, p. 97)

However they do suggest that

By including the possibility of recreational participation or drop-out from physical activity, Côté and Hay’s perspective manages to retain all young people.

Balyi’s model, on the other hand, does not suggest explicitly that fewer and fewer young people might progress through each of his stages, though this would seem to be implied. Balyi’s model does include retired and veteran sportspeople, suggesting that there can be a life in sport after the elite competition phase has ended …Balyi’s model is prescriptive where Côté and Hay’s is descriptive (Kirk, Brettschneider, & Auld, 2007, p. 97).

The review of the sport structures across a number of countries has allowed researchers and policy makers to seek the best of the various models and to conceptualise the most effective model for sport.

If the principle of reduced competition and increased sampling is supported by both Balyi & Côté in the formative years, the potential to enhance this through a broader “super-club” style of system that is effective and operational in Germany could be attractive for the policy makers at governmental level. Such a model also allows for continued sampling (at all ages) so that participants are afforded the freedom of multiple activities at any phase of their development.

As noted earlier, the JSF provides a reference upon which NSOs (and other organisations) can base their policy. The briefing papers provide some background information for policy makers that is both informative and based upon empirical research and supported by academic papers that are peer reviewed. The briefing papers provide excellent material to ponder the most suitable junior development structure for sports with good supporting evidence, but it does not provide clear recommendations to NSOs or others as to the best means to implement them.
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The Junior Sports Unit of the Australian Sports Commission provided a series of guidelines documents that were designed to assist NSOs in interpreting the briefing papers and shaping their junior sports policy (Australian Sports Commission, 2009). The establishment of the nine guidelines documents was meant to provide some of that clarity to sports within Australia. The documents do provide an easy to read format that appears to ensure that all the necessary elements in shaping a policy for NSOs would be covered. The guideline titles are:

- Physical Growth & Maturation
- Long Term Involvement
- Getting Involved
- Sport Pathways
- Law
- Forming links
- Quality Coaching
- Making Sport safe
- People Making it Happen

Each guideline provides some specific information on the topic, some strategies that sports might use to address the areas raised, some “key messages” for each of the topic areas and some case studies of sporting bodies or programs that have incorporated some of the principles identified. Simple and comprehensive, it provides some good quality material for NSOs and others to review and consider when developing a junior sports policy.

Recognising that the implementation of a junior sports policy was as important as the development of one, the ASC provided a series of checklists and templates for NSOs to use and refer (Australian Sports Commission, 2009).

Overall, the material provided for the implementation of the Junior Sports Framework was comprehensive and founded upon some sound principles. However the framework was exactly that – a tool by which an NSO could choose to engage in or choose not to engage in.
Between 2002 and 2006 the ASC had been working with nine NSOs to implement junior sport policies with the use of the framework. An independent consultant (Sports Business Solutions – SBS) was engaged in 2006 to undertake a review and evaluation of the JSF to determine how effective the resource had been in assisting the nine NSOs in their policy development.

SBS interviewed each of the nine NSOs and other external stakeholders (School Sports Associations and State Departments of Sport and Recreation). To this end, the 2006 review utilised the perceptions of NSOs and others to form the basis of the review. The review provided 15 recommendations to the ASC that were aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the JSF. The recommendations are summarised in Table 1 below.

As a result of the above review, there was the introduction of additional resources including:

- A “Readiness Assessment Tool” that assisted NSOs to determine their capacity to embark upon a Junior Sport Policy;
- A “Modular Policy Planning Guide”; and
- Policy templates

The SBS review was not specifically designed to determine the worth of the JSF but, more particularly, the resources that were attached to the JSF. It is clear from the recommendations listed in Error! Reference source not found. 1 that the JSF did not substantively lack in its foundation or basis upon which NSOs could develop appropriate policy. However the review could not provide comment on the resources without addressing some of the core elements attached to the JSF. The effectiveness of the resources was only a part of the equation when assessing the effectiveness of the policy. As was highlighted in recommendation 12, it is imperative to place some measures upon the impact or effectiveness of the policy to make any determination about the resources. In fact one could argue that a review of the resources could only ever tell part of the story that surrounds the JSF and from its initial implementation – without specific and measurable performance indicators – the worth of the JSF could never be determined.

Many of the recommendations centre around the support material that can be used by NSOs in shaping policy (recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10) however many also refer to the implementation process that faces NSOs in applying the policy (recommendations 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15).
Table 1: A summary of the recommendations provided to the ASC by Sports Business Solutions (Sport Business Solutions, 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Commitment to Research Investment</strong> - to identify gaps in the current research resources, and commission specific research where appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Provision of Additional Research</strong> - added to the briefing papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Planning Guidelines for NSO Junior Sport Policy Development</strong> - that provides clear sequencing of the policy development in a user friendly (plain English) format.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Additional Tools for NSO Junior Sport Policy Development</strong> – (examples provided)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Development of Multi-Dimensional Case Studies</strong> - document tangible examples of best practice approaches at various delivery levels (NSO, SSO, Club) within the policy development environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Investment in Policy Activation</strong> – NSOs should be required to develop full budgets for policy development and policy activation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><strong>Leveraging Government Stakeholders</strong> – the ASC provide guidelines on effective leveraging with the various government partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Leveraging Partnerships with Schools</strong> – NSOs using the roll out of their junior sport policies as a catalyst to bring the two delivery streams together and activate alliances and collaboration between school sport and club sport at the local levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><strong>Development of Guidelines for Parents in Sport</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><strong>Development of Supporting Education Programs</strong> - Sports develop a well structured and resourced supporting education program well before they attempt to launch and implement their policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td><strong>NSO Commitment and Leadership</strong> - Participating sports provide strong statements of commitment in their strategic plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td><strong>Quality and Performance of Junior Sport Policy</strong> - NSOs to develop specific and measurable performance indicators that monitor the impact of the policy’s effectiveness in enhancing key areas such as participant recruitment, participant retention, coach and officials’ development, and parent education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><strong>Cohesion within the ASC</strong> - The JSU continues regular dissemination of information on junior sport policy throughout ASC internal programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td><strong>Maintaining the Momentum</strong> - The ASC allows sports 12 -18 months to develop their junior sport policies and prepare for implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><strong>Ongoing Support and Review</strong> - The ASC continues to drive and support NSOs by providing resources, practical assistance and public commitment including a national awareness campaign.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through the review, the authors were able to identify some specific issues in implementation including;

Many were pleasantly surprised at the flexibility and freedom they were afforded by the ASC in developing their own policy.

…Adjusting to the modified approach had the effect of causing some NSOs to rethink their processes and begin their policy development again.
Chapter 2

... the process of junior sport policy development identified the lack of structured pathways in some sports ... supporting other key elements of sport development including club development, coach accreditation and member protection (Sport Business Solutions, 2006, p. 4) ... In many ways the process unwittingly broke through key related and integrated areas (high performance, member protection, school and club integration etc.) of the NSO and SSO businesses ... the JSF has ... evolved as a vehicle that can stimulate real and positive change that improves the delivery of sport across a far broader spectrum than the junior sport domain (Sport Business Solutions, 2006, p. 6).

NSO and stakeholder perception of the elements that make up a good junior sport policy included that

Policies should be supported by well structured and resourced marketing and communication strategies. The policies should be supported by resources and practical tools within the sport to ensure implementation at all levels. The impact and change associated with the policy should be able to be measured for success and sustainability (Sport Business Solutions, 2006, p. 4).

2.3.1 Summary of the JSF Literature

The JSF provides a platform for NSOs to utilise and in this regard is similar to that of the LTAD. Both seek – through markedly different mechanisms – to influence the thinking of NSOs in shaping their athlete development policies and best cater for the development of the athlete within their sport.

It was clearly highlighted in the review of the JSF that there should be some means by which NSOs and others are able to determine the effectiveness of the JSF – or for that matter the implementation of the LTAD if that is part of their policies. The primary features of the JSF in the formation of athlete development policies are:

- It is not specifically built around high performance;
- It offers a suite of informed choices to NSOs and allows NSOs to make a decision / determination as what is most effective for their sport;
- It is an implementation strategy as well as an athlete development policy. The JSF offers a suite of options that does not just propose a model for athlete development
but encompass a series of areas that surround the implementation of the policy and aims to assist NSOs in shaping that structure;

- It can (and sometimes does) include the LTAD as a development model that NSOs choose to embed into their athlete or junior policy platform;

- The athlete development within the JSF does not just focus solely on the physical development of the athlete but seeks NSOs to be mindful of the social and cognitive development of the athlete;

- The JSF is NSO driven and ASC supported and is not a policy requirement – i.e. it is non-mandatory in its implementation.

Table 2: Comparison of policy details for the LTAD, JSF and DMSP (Developmental Model of Sports Participation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Detail</th>
<th>LTAD</th>
<th>DMSP</th>
<th>JSF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Compulsory (Canada)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential in progression</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retrospective</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescriptive / Descriptive</td>
<td>Prescriptive</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>Encourages exploration of a number of models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peak Height Velocity</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Not referred to</td>
<td>Peripheral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International use</td>
<td>Canada, UK, Ireland</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Australia (partial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption by Sport</td>
<td>Moderate – Canada</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Sparse – Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic</td>
<td>Possibly</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central values and assumptions</td>
<td>Development of high performance athletes</td>
<td>Sociological development; sampling, specialising, investing and recreational</td>
<td>Development of fun, safe and supportive environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance oriented</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Partially</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked to Coach development</td>
<td>Yes (in Canada)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes - partially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive – from beginning to elite</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Partially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive and Equitable</td>
<td>Partially</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused upon developmental principles</td>
<td>Yes – primarily physical</td>
<td>Yes – Primarily social</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed by research</td>
<td>Yes – partially. (Physiology, Biology)</td>
<td>Yes – completely. (Social Psychology)</td>
<td>Yes – completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer reviewed</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting material</td>
<td>Canada – Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Australia – Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation Strategy offered</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The LTAD and the JSF

Both the LTAD and the JSF appear to have an influence upon the development of sports policy in their relevant countries.

The JSF, through its research papers, has identified Côté’s Development Model of Sport Participation as an alternative to Balyi’s LTAD model. Table 2 above provides a snapshot of each of the models and discerns the difference in policy formation or implementation in aspects of athlete development policy.

2.4 Canadian Sport Policy

In 2001 the then Secretary of State for Amateur Sport convened a National Summit on Sport to “determine strategic orientations and priority actions that would support the establishment of a first Canadian Sport Policy” (Canadian Government, 2001, p. 2). Indeed the outcome of that Summit did lead to the formation of the Canadian Sport Policy 2002. The outcomes of the Summit are not surprising but did indeed include a consensus that sport should “… be accessible to all,… a need to professionalize the coaching function, establish an integrated sports system and set performance and accountability objectives” (Canadian Government, 2001, p. 21).

Under the title of Closing the Gaps in Athlete Development the 2002 Canadian Sports Policy clearly states that “The Canadian Sport Policy calls for a systematic, analytical, and collaborative approach to the development of high performance athletes” (Canadian Government, 2002, p. 9). The policy provides guidelines by which government seeks to provide the necessary level of services.

It is the additional document entitled The Canadian Sports Policy: Federal-Provincial/Territorial Priorities for Collaborative Action 2002-2005 that the specific actions of the Canadian government are outlined. Throughout this document there is no reference to the LTAD as a model upon which policy is formed.

At a conference of Federal-Provincial /Territorial Ministers responsible for sport physical activity and recreation held at Regina on August 5 2005, the ministers produced a statement surrounding the development of sport & recreation within Canada (Canadian Government, 2005). Whilst there was a focus placed upon the infrastructure that was required in Canada as a priority for their attention, the introduction of the LTAD within government policy emerged. Part of the media release stated
Ministers agreed to proceed with the implementation of a new approach to sport and physical activity development called long-term athlete development (LTAD) in consultation with national, provincial and territorial sport organizations. Through the development of physical literacy (fundamental skills such as throwing, running and jumping), the LTAD models will help to develop a lifelong involvement of Canadians in physical activity and sport participation as well as developing future athletes (Canadian Government, 2005, p. 1).

The emergence of the LTAD as a policy within government had occurred. Probably in response to the Regina statement of 2005, the government did produce a resource paper entitle Canadian Sport for Life that was dedicated to the Long Term Athlete Development in Canada in 2007. Whilst not accurately described as a policy document at this stage, the paper completely endorsed the model that Balyi and Hamilton had espoused and produced in earlier publications. Within the introduction, the resource paper makes reference to the many sciences that it has drawn upon including

“pediatric (sic) exercise science, exercise physiology, sport psychology, psychomotor learning, sport sociology, and nutrition” and “This document is fully based on and supported by the coaching and exercise science literature, but is written particularly for coaches and technical and administrative sports leaders” (Canadian Sport Centres, 2007, p. 13).

This statement might be contested, given the information provided in the literature review. It further clearly states the reason for implementing the LTAD, noting that “The need for LTAD arises in part from the declining international performances of Canadian athletes in some sports and the difficulty other sports are having in identifying and developing the next generation of internationally successful athletes” (Canadian Sport Centres, 2007, p. 14) but also refers to declining participation in physical activity.

Canadian Sports Policy was further enunciated in the document entitled The Canadian Sport Policy: Federal-Provincial/Territorial Priorities for Collaborative Action 2007-2012. In seeking to determine what were the priorities for federal-provincial/territorial governments in this period, sporting communities were approached in 2005 and 2006 for input. During this process, respondents “overwhelmingly identified” that the implementation of the LTAD model was a priority (Canadian Government, 2008, p. 4). As a result, the introduction of the LTAD into government policy was reinforced and clearly identified as a priority.
“... one of the potentially most significant advances in Canadian sport since the adoption of the Canadian Sport Policy has been the endorsement of the generic Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model, known as Canadian Sport for Life, by Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers. The LTAD model focuses on the general framework of athlete development with special reference to growth, maturation and development, trainability, and sport system alignment and integration. It acknowledges that physical education, school sports, competitive sports, and recreation activities are mutually interdependent.

LTAD is an inclusive model that encourages individuals to get involved in lifelong sport and physical activity. It does this by connecting and integrating physical education programs in the school system with elite sport programs and with recreational sport programs in the community. The implementation of LTAD will ensure that all children correctly learn the fundamental movement skills and that these skills are introduced during the optimal point in their growth and development.

The implementation of LTAD is fundamental to the realization of the Vision and Goals of the Canadian Sport Policy. LTAD is the framework from which several priorities and actions will be developed and monitored over the next several years” (Canadian Government, 2008, p. 3).

A model that was based upon biological parameters has been adopted and adapted into a generic model that integrates many aspects of the sport community through national sport policy. The extrapolation of the Balyi born LTAD has been moulded to reflect the above values within a sports policy without any explanation. There are now two LTAD models - that which is based upon the periodisation of physiological parameters around the peak height velocity; and another that places great value upon physical literacy and integrating sport systems across Canada. They both bear the same name and are difficult to separate.

Any model that has a focus upon integration of those elements and allows government to provide much-needed attention to systems that provide for enhanced athlete development should be recognised for its contribution. Canadian policy has now endorsed and seeks to ensure implementation of this model.
2.5 Australian Sports Policy

In April 2001 the Australian government produced a policy statement entitled *Backing Australia’s Sporting Ability – A more active Australia* (BASA). It was made very clear in the introduction that this policy document was focused upon the high performance development of the sport. “The objective of our policy is twofold — to assist our best athletes to continue to reach new peaks of excellence and to increase the pool of talent from which world champions will emerge” (Australian Government, 2001, p. 2). This is not significantly different to any other national government sport policy document generated at that time in that it focused primarily upon the high performance development of the sport.

The document aspires to a more integrated national sports delivery system and provides direction for the development of high performance outcomes as well as grass-roots participation. It proposed to do this through;

- World class coaching techniques;
- Support services to NSO;
- Tailored high performance athlete development programs for NSOs;
- Targeted high performance athlete assistance;
- Encouragement of people with a disability into sport; and
- Partnering with all stakeholders to attain high performance outcomes.

It also identifies the aspiration to improve the participation numbers “Our aim is to see more sport played at the grass roots level, particularly amongst school aged children and in rural areas, where sporting groups are often a vital factor in the cohesion of local communities” (Australian Government, 2001, p. 6).

Within that area of the sport policy, it did identify that it would “provide more effective pathways from participation in sport into high performance development for those talented individuals who aspire to compete at higher levels” (Australian Government, 2001, p. 7). This is the only area where the BASA policy statement alludes to an athlete development framework. It did not identify nor prescribe the manner in which that would occur.

This was the only sport policy that was produced in Australia until the election of the Labor government in 2007. Whilst there were extensions to the BASA statement and continued commitments to the funding of sport through the Olympic cycles, there was no further release that identified any level of commitment to athlete development.
Chapter 2

In May 2008 the new Australian government produced the *Australian Sport: Emerging Challenges and New Directions* paper that provided some guidelines towards which the Australian government may progress. It identified that “The Rudd Government believes we need new direction in two key areas: the way we support elite sport; and the manner which we use sport to boost participation and physical activity to help build a healthier nation” (Australian Government, 2008, p. 2). At no point throughout the document was there any reference to an athlete development policy or plan.

The *Emerging Challenges* document provided some guidelines by which the government may choose to proceed without providing obligation. It later (August 2008) announced the establishment of an independent panel of experts that would investigate the reforms required to shape Australia’s future direction in sport. The panel, chaired by David Crawford, provided this report to government late in 2009 and was released to the public on 17 November 2009. The report (referred to as the Crawford Review) was wide-ranging in its review of sport within Australia.

Within this report there were significant gaps as they relate to athlete development policy. Chapter one of the report related to identifying the vision for Australian sport. There are some central themes that can be applied to any sport policy and it would be foolish to ignore the development of a comprehensive set of principles that can be applied to an athlete development pathway that caters to all levels of sport.

Part of the report identified that “… The areas of elite and community sport are strongly related and the link needs to be reflected at the policy and strategic level” (Australian Government, 2009, p. 22). This does provide the opportunity to explore the establishment of an athlete development pathway that provides for increased opportunity and potential for both success and progression for all sectors of the community. Part of the report does identify the importance of ensuring that the talent pathway is available for national sporting organisations from a commercial perspective (Australian Government, 2009, pp. 29-31).

It is important to recognise that the Crawford report is simply a report that has been commissioned and provided to government. It is now up to government to respond appropriately to the report and perhaps establish sport policy, given the report. At the time of submission of this thesis, the Australian government had not provided a response to the Crawford review. However it is highly anticipated that the Crawford review will have a major impact upon the direction of Australian sport policy and, with the report questioning the current allocation of funds and resources, has the greatest potential to impact upon the Australian government developing an endorsed athlete development policy or framework.
Thus there is no current Australian sport policy that provides the framework for NSOs and others within the sport environment to base athlete developmental policy upon.

2.6 NSO Athlete Development Policy

Speed Skating Canada

Speed Skating Canada’s (SSC) Long Term Athlete Development Plan primarily follows the format, recommendations and text of the Canadian Sport for Life document. In the adaptation of the principles to Speed Skating, the document has identified some key areas that it seeks to adopt, that fit within the principles of LTAD. These include:

- A slight modification of the ages identified within the stages of the LTAD in the “Learn to Win” stage, reflecting a difference between Short Track and Long Track;
- Further detail to the “rule of 10” for short & long track speed skaters, recognising an earlier age for talent identification for short track than for long track; and
- Recognising the wide variability in developmental age, the resource questions SSC’s current practice of selecting youths based entirely upon performance times.

The competition calendar is the area that seeks most reform. Listed below are the areas that Speed Skating Canada sees as important in its competition calendar review. The document refers to training to competition ratios in the calendar planning for competition:

- Optimal sport specific competition ratios are required for all stages of LTAD.
- Level and length of the competitive season should be aligned with LTAD stages.
- Over-competition and under-training at the Learning to Training and Training to Train stages result in a lack of basic skills and fitness.
- The appropriate level of competition is critical to the technical, tactical, and mental development at all stages. Specific strategies will need to be analyzed and implemented by the provinces and regions across the country, as strengths and weaknesses will vary considerably.
- The current system of competition is based on tradition. It should be planned to enhance optimal training, performance and development of the skater depending upon their LTAD stage.
- Competitions in Canada must be created and scheduled considering strategic planning and with due regard for the optimal
performance of an athlete and the tapering and peaking requirements.

- While international and national calendars are usually well integrated, a systematic competition and training review needs to be undertaken, with regard to our club and provincial level skaters. Specifically, we need to look at the integration of both Long and Short Track training and competition (Speed Skating Canada, 2006, p. 17).

During each of the specific stages of the LTAD, guidelines are provided for a wide range of activities that would be present in this period. The parameters that are covered include the level of emphasis that each of the physical capacities (speed, strength, stamina, etc.) should have, the objectives for testing, psychological development, training, competition, equipment and other related factors.

This document is a comprehensive guideline to SSC’s members outlining how LTAD principles should be applied to the speed skating environment and the manner in which the LTAD policy is proposed to be rolled out.

It is clear that the introduction of the LTAD to Speed Skating Canada has allowed them to provide a structured and comprehensive development program that can cover a great deal of developmental needs of the athlete and allow them to question and revise the current practices of competition, coaching and training.

**Athletics Canada**

The Athletics Canada document uses a great deal of the text of the *Canadian Sport for Life* document and follows the same principles (Athletics Canada, 2006).

Not as comprehensive as Speed Skating Canada’s document in its recommendations around competition, equipment and specific elements that the coaches and administrators should adhere to, it did identify the important role of the coach as the essential thread throughout each of the stages.

Athletics Canada adapted the standard LTAD framework to add a *Winning for Living* stage to make it a nine stage approach to its development.

Whilst simpler and perhaps broader in its context than Speed Skating Canada, the Athletics Canada document does still provide some guidance to the coaches around what the emphasis should be within each of the phases. This broader, half-page type summary per
stage may be more effective in that it does not overload the reader and allows for the general principles of the model to be applied. This may be due to the fact that Athletics was one of the first sports to engage in the development of the LTAD document and was the second sport to publish.

Through each of the phases there is regular referral to the hours per week of training that should occur and the practice to competition ratio. This is an interesting concept that appears to be prescriptive in nature and differs to the philosophy of deliberate play and deliberate practice in the different phases.

The inclusion of the Winning for a Living stage provides only scant description of the areas of focus (compared to the other phases) but seeks to identify parameters that allow the athlete to peak at the appropriate times and work within a high performance environment at the most elite levels.

Far more telling is the information provided in the presentation slides and speaker notes that the author has been able to access from the National Development Officer of Athletics Canada. Within this documentation it outlines a series of key objectives for Athletics Canada. Of primary significance was the identification of the following items;

- Athletics Canada have been imposing adult competition structures (pee wees and senior athletes do the same events and follow the same timelines for competition) on developing athletes. The current competitive structure does not account for early and late maturers because athletes are sorted into competitive groups sorted by chronological age. Athletics Canada allow athletes to specialize in an event group much too early and until the introduction of Run, Jump, Throw, did not have a national program for teaching fundamental skills.
- There is a need for a fundamental skills program – the Run, Jump, Throw program. A new event structure for competition needs to be established that takes into account the developmental needs of the athletes.
- Detailed changes to the competition structure for men & women in the Pee Wee, Bantam, Midget and Youth categories in track, off-track and field events were identified with a timeline for implementation (Kaye, 2009).

Table 3 provides an indication of the changes that Athletics Canada seeks to make in just one of their age categories – with each event and distance identified, being a change from
the current practices. The table outlines the change and the rationale. This widespread change to the competition structure across all the provinces and territories in Canada again reflects how the introduction of the LTAD and the interpretation of the principles within that have allowed Athletics Canada to provide a focus on and make significant changes to its development structure.

**Canadian Cycling Association**

The brochure developed by the Canadian Cycling Association (CCA) is, like the Speed Skating brochure, comprehensive and far-reaching in its implication for the sport. Cycling, like athletics, is multi-disciplinary and the CCA document seeks to address all aspects of cycling with its LTAD implementation plan.

**Table 3: Changes to Athletics Canada Pee Wee category (Kaye, 2009)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Technical Notes</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60m – indoor and outdoor</td>
<td>60m – indoor and outdoor</td>
<td>No blocks</td>
<td>At this age the speed window is developed through efforts of 6-8 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60mH – indoor and outdoor</td>
<td>60mH – indoor and outdoor</td>
<td>12m to first hurdle; 7.0m between; As low as possible (scissor hurdles); No blocks</td>
<td>At this age the speed window is developed through efforts of 6-8 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150m</td>
<td>150m</td>
<td>No blocks</td>
<td>200m is a lactic speed endurance activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600m</td>
<td>600m</td>
<td></td>
<td>Aerobic activity should be less than 12 minutes, this is a good short endurance option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000m</td>
<td>1000m</td>
<td></td>
<td>Aerobic activity should be less than 12 minutes, this is a good long endurance option that also allows the athlete to maintain technical proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800m Race Walk</td>
<td>800m Race Walk</td>
<td></td>
<td>This distance meets the developmental needs for aerobic development and also contributes to skill development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, drawing upon the *Canadian Sport for Life* document for content, there appears to have been strong consideration as to how the general principles of the LTAD model could inform cycling and all its disciplines. It certainly recognises the stages as per the generic model and has primarily adopted the different phases of development and adapted the terminology to better suite cycling (as per Athletics). Within each of the identified stages, Canadian Cycling Association seeks to provide some guidelines around the following focus areas of:
Chapter 2

- Development – covering the physical requirements; Motor and Mental requirements; Tactical Skills; Technical Skills
- Sports Environment – covering some aspects of coaching; delivery environment and competition framework
- Sports Participation – prescribing training hours; numbers of sports and number of disciplines and periodisation considerations
- Testing and Talent ID – identifying the types of tests and the frequency that one should test.

The document recognises the potential for change that the introduction of the LTAD could have within cycling. It links many other aspects of cycling development (facilities, organisational structure, pathway development) to the LTAD principles and recognises the necessity to modify some of its pre-existing cultural elements if it is to effectively adopt the LTAD and its principles. Like both Athletics and Speed Skating, Cycling recognised that the introduction of the LTAD could provide an opportunity to address some of the areas of concern within the sport.

In response to these and other related challenges, the LTAD Working Group has endorsed Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) as a cornerstone to the process of reinvigorating cycling at all levels of competition and participation in Canada. LTAD presents a progressive pathway for athletes to optimize their development and improvement according to recognized stages and processes in human physical, mental, emotional, and cognitive maturation. In the bigger picture of sport development, LTAD also has implications for the transformation of key aspects of the cycling sport system, including cycling organizations, competitions, facilities, coaching, and leadership” (Canadian Cycling Association, 2008, p. 2).

Whilst stating that LTAD had the potential to make significant changes to the cycling world in Canada, it appeared to lack sufficient depth for the coach or parent to determine the types of activities that should be embarked upon in each of the disciplines. No specific changes are identified within the competition structure across all the disciplines in cycling.

Perhaps this is as it should be, allowing the flexibility of the coach and others to made determination as to how they can best adopt the principles to their charges. However, the lack of clarity could lead to confusion as to how or if the LTAD should be adopted at grassroots level.
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Cricket Australia

The development policy and guidelines that have been adopted by Cricket Australia are published in a booklet entitled - “Well Played” Australian Cricket’s Playing Policy and Guidelines.

Similar to many of the Canadian documents it does cover ethical issues including codes of behaviour for coaches, umpires, parents, players and teachers and broadly refers to the “Spirit of Cricket” as being the essence of the game.

In line with some of the guidelines provided under the Junior Sport Framework, significant space is allocated to the safety and legal considerations in providing cricket to all participants. Particular risk management and injury prevention tips are referred to including the use of helmets, child and member protection, accreditation and screening of coaches, ground and weather conditions and guidelines for heat, hydration and sun protection.

Importantly, there is significant focus given to the player pathway and appropriate game formats for male and female players at different ages of development. Guidelines around the restriction and areas of focus surrounding;

- Training practices
- Game format
- Appropriate equipment usage including ball and protective equipment
- Play restrictions including boundary size, overs and duration, innings, numbers per team, batting, bowling or fielding restrictions.

Clear and easy to reference guidelines in each of these areas is provided for the following age groups;

- 5-8 years
- 8-10 years
- Under 11 & 12 years
- Under 13 years
- Under 14 years
- Under 15 years and above
- Social, Recreational or Lifestyle Cricket

The introduction makes it clear as to where the focus is placed for the document.
It is an important document that offers advice and guidelines to help administrators, teachers and volunteers provide fun, safe and nurturing cricket environments for players of all age levels. We have updated the policy (formerly known as the Junior Cricket Policy), to make it current and relevant not just for junior cricketers, but wider groups in the cricket community (Cricket Australia, 2008).

This document appears to establish guidelines that are aimed at enhancing the enjoyment of the game, ensuring it is done in a safe manner and is relatively easy to use and determine the most appropriate rules or guidelines that would be suitable to youth at different ages. Whilst providing some background, it appears to focus upon what is usable and required information for the parent, coach or administrator.

Figure 4: An excerpt from the Crick Australia “Well Played” document. The format allows members to easily gain an understanding of the requirements at different ages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training/practice</th>
<th>Under-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Game type</td>
<td>One-day limited-overs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball</td>
<td>428 leather composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protective equipment</td>
<td>Yes – helmets, pads, gloves, protectors, helmets for ‘keepers’ when keeping up to the stumps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary</td>
<td>50m maximum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overs/duration</td>
<td>Maximum 50 overs per team for one day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum game time – 2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innings</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Maximum of 2 players per team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batting</td>
<td>Retire at 40 runs (retired batters can return when all others have batted, in the order they retired)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling</td>
<td>Eight overs maximum for day (four overs maximum per spell)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bowling from one end in five over blocks is recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fielding</td>
<td>No fielders within 10m of the batter and stumps except slips, gully and wicket-keeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitch Length</td>
<td>18m through to standard (20m)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Modifications for representative cricket**
- Slightly longer games permitted
- Bowlers same restrictions
- Batters have no restrictions

**Modifications for girls**
Where alternatives do not exist and where participation poses no danger to any participants, girls may participate in 'boys' competitions two years above the age limit e.g.: a 15 year-old girl may play in an under-15 boys competition
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Clearly appropriate for junior cricketers, it appears to recognise that development is not just about juniors but across all sectors.

It was not clearly evident that either the Junior Sport Framework or the phased approach of the LTAD influenced the formation of the policy document. It could be that sound development principles were applied to the development of appropriate policies that suited the structure of Cricket Australia and that neither the Côté & Hay model nor the Balyi & Hamilton model overtly influenced the articulation of the policy in its written form.

**Netball Australia**

The Junior Netball Policy document is no different to any of the other athlete development policy documents previously covered, in that it is clearly designed to assist its members in the establishment of an environment that encourages the participation and development of young netballer in a fun and safe manner.

Within the introduction it notes the manner in which the policy has been formulated and clearly identifies its purpose.

In particular, the Junior Netball Policy will help:
- create safe and supportive environments for enjoyable participation to encourage lifelong involvement;
- provide an environment for the development of skills, cardiovascular and musculo-skeletal health;
- foster social benefits and encourage good sporting behaviour;
- provide equal opportunities for all young people to participate in netball programs and competitions;
- encourage and actively cater for talented young sports people;
- develop a consistent and co-ordinated approach to all netball programs in both the school and the community (Netball Australia, 2006, p. 2).

It is apparent that the document has been well informed by the Junior Sports Framework, utilising headings that are similar to those listed in the JSF Guidelines (Physical Growth & Maturation, Netball Pathways, Forming Skills, People Make it Happen, Quality Coaching, Safety Considerations and Legal Management for Netball). Small reference is made to the physical development process (growth & maturation) but a much reduced emphasis compared to each of the Canadian policy documents. Of particular note is the table presented on pages 10 & 11 where stages of development are identified by age where, within each stage issues relating to the “Skill Descriptors”, “Social Descriptors”, “Implications
Chapter 2

for Netball” and “Recreational Players of Netball” are identified. Where an LTAD approach would have listed physical descriptors, Netball has nearly ignored that as an important element to focus upon and has replaced it with the social descriptors.

Within each of the age categories, guidance is provided in the following areas;

- Primary consideration to focus upon (e.g. Fun, learning, improving performance, etc)
- Specific issues to consider (e.g. equipment, rules, tactics, etc)
- Recommended session duration, frequency and content
- Competition considerations
- Approach to physical conditioning

Strongly influenced by the Junior Sports Framework and the Côté model of sampling – specialising – investing, the Junior Netball Policy is comprehensive, clear and ensures a focus is upon matters that are not about physical maturation but many of the other areas that surround developmental athletes. It presents as a well balanced and comprehensive policy document that provides some detail attached to the needs of developing athletes and covers a broad range of topics that relate to athlete development. It provides an interesting contrast to all of the Canadian LTAD documents.

Basketball Australia

The influence of the Junior Sports Framework is apparent throughout the Basketball Australia Junior Sports Policy document (Basketball Australia, 2008). Whilst referring to all the areas that the JSF would seek of a NSO, it is clear that this document is aimed at informing and allowing the associations and clubs to make decisions based upon the information within the document.

Like Netball, the headings reflect those that the JSF have provided in their guidelines documents. A primary focus of the Basketball document however appears to be in the provision of templates or checklists for the associations and clubs to use to make their own determination as to whether they are meeting their needs.

Checklists are provided across four essential areas including;

- the provision of fun based activities,
- the provision of a safe environment,
- attracting and retaining the right personnel within the game, and
Chapter 2

- the provision of a Basketball pathway.

The checklists are comprehensive in that they cover competition, rules, improving coaches and officials, first aid, nutrition, retention programs and linking to the organisational structures in Basketball.

This document differs markedly to the other Australian sports within this research, in that it does not focus on the athlete development pathway to any great extent, nor provides strong direction for coaches or administrators in this area.

The document allows the associations and clubs to make their decision on where they see is the biggest need and does not provide the same level of direction that Cricket or Netball have provided. This is not to suggest that the document does not have good information for those seeking it. It simply identifies that there is a different focus to the other sports. The document itself is not easy to read, in that there is a great deal of text and does not lend itself as a “quick reference” brochure.

This may well be the focus that Basketball were seeking – placing the emphasis upon the clubs and associations to enhance their structure to sufficiently cater to junior sport needs.

It should be noted that prior to submission of this thesis, the Junior sport document that is referred to here, unlike all other NSO policy documents, was not accessible via the Basketball Australia website.

2.7 Reviewing the Literature of Sport Policy Analysts

The literature review of the specific sports policies of Canada, Australia, identified NSOs, the LTAD and the JSF are important in establishing the context in which one might seek to determine the effectiveness of a given sport policy. A review of the manner in which sport policy has been analysed by other researchers provides further insight as to how athlete development policy could be analysed.

This thesis is focused upon the effect of two athlete development policy platforms and an analysis as to whether the effect of such policies is reflective of the intent of the policy makers through the eyes of practitioners. However, athlete development policy does not operate in a vacuum. There is a limited level of academic research dedicated to the analysis of sport policy and even less dedicated to development policy. There is no research dedicated to athlete development policy or the impact of such policy implementation.
A review of the current literature on the analysis of sport policy provided a platform by which athlete development policy could be reviewed and analysed. There has been no academic rigor applied to the effect of the LTAD or the JSF as policy platforms. Thus a review of the literature that does analyse sports policy was required.

Green (2005) identifies that sport is now a particularly malleable and high profile policy instrument that governments in countries as diverse as China, Singapore, Japan, Australia, Canada and the UK are increasingly utilising to realise an array of objectives in a range of policy sectors (Green, 2005). As governments look for broader participation and health related outcomes and with sport being used as a policy instrument, they would look to frameworks such as the LTAD and the JSF to help achieve them.

2.7.1 Sport Development v Athlete Development

The clarification and use of the nomenclature of sport development policy and athlete development policy within this thesis is required. Coalter (Coalter, 2006) would consider “development” policy to mean those policies that impact upon the social good of broader society. In a broad context, there has been a great deal of appropriation of sports development officers throughout the UK as a means of enhancing the social needs of broader society through their engagement in sport. Such an investment looks towards sport as being a vehicle that could possibly lead to reduced youth crime and improved social outcomes of the society. Whilst this is in a very different context to that identified by other researchers (Green & Houlihan, 2005) it continues to reinforce the use of government policy to affect broader outcomes.

Sports development can also be the term utilised when referring to the physical, social, emotional, and mental development of the individual within a sports context. It is this specific aspect that is central to the Long Term Athlete Development model and the Junior Sport Framework, and one that both, when incorporated into policy, focus upon. To ensure clarification, this thesis refers to such elements as the athlete development policy and refers to the broader development of the sport beyond that of the athlete as sport development policy.

2.7.2 Analysing Policy

Hoye (2003) in his analysis of the ASC role in governance reforms, identified the limited academic analysis of Australian sports policy, but had chosen to adopt Chalip’s framework (Chalip, 1995) for the analysis of sports policy (Hoye, 2003). Chalip’s framework suggested an analysis based upon the five elements of
Chapter 2

i) government legitimising their operation in the policy space,
ii) identifying the focusing events that led to their involvement,
iii) defining the problem that led to their involvement,
iv) problem attributions and
v) determining decision frames.

However Hoye’s analysis – and the use of Chalip’s framework – was focussed heavily upon the role of government in policy development.

Houlihan (2005) believes that there is little utilisation of standard models that are used for other aspects of government policy analysis (such as economics and foreign policy) in sport. Houlihan proceeds to suggest that the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) is the mechanism most suited to analysing sports policy.

The advocacy coalition framework is a meso-level theorising model that provides the platform to compare and analyse policy – in this case, sports policy. Meso-level would be regarded as that at National level - NSOs and government instrumentalities such as the ASC and Sport Canada. This framework seeks to understand the core beliefs that surround the development of policy and looks closer at those agents (or actors) that support or develop such a policy.

Recognising that this framework is applied at a meso-level, it does provide a starting point for policy analysis that has been used and primarily accepted within the policy analysis genre. It has “generally proved a useful tool for analysing the complex, fluid, multilayered and often fragmented sport policy-making process in both Canada and the UK” (Green & Houlihan, 2004, p. 400). In justifying the use of their framework they further suggest its usefulness “regarding the role and significance of government departments and agencies in influencing, and in some cases determining the discretion and character of coalition behaviour and the trajectory of sport policy” (Green & Houlihan, 2004, p. 400).

There are a number of factors that influence policy development. Green in his analysis of elite sport development policies in Canada and the UK noted that “Prior and enduring social and political structures which constitute the policy framework for current sport policy actors, produce the conditions for, and basis of, agents’ power” (Green, 2004, p. 390). Thus Green provides significant weight to environment that shapes and allows the role that agents have in determining policy.

The formation of policy is often based upon the influences that certain sectors exert upon government. When New Zealand handed down the “Graham report” (2002) it was informed
via the use of a task force as a means to inform government around the development of sports policy within New Zealand. Sam recognised the influences that agents played in such policy formation and that even task forces “must be viewed within their political and procedural contexts” (Sam, The Makers of Sport Policy: a Task Force to Be Reckoned With, 2005, p. 93).

Henry et al. (Henry, Amara, Al-Tauqi, & Lee, 2005) noted the dearth of recent academic research that seeks to provide a comparative analysis of sports development policies. In their analysis Henry utilised four methods of analysis when comparing different nations policies. The four approaches are broadly described as

i) seeking similarities;
ii) describing differences;
iii) Theorising the Transnational; and
iv) Defining discourse

Analysts recognise that the way in which sports policies evolve – such as sports development policy – is as much around chance and opportunism as it is around strategy and planning (Sibeon, 1997) as well as the ambiguity that can surround the interpretation, analysis and concept of policy (Houlihan & Green, 2008).

In the analysis of Athlete Development Policy, one must recognise the manner in which policy at different levels has been reviewed and determine whether it is appropriate to use and adapt such analytical methods to the present research.

2.7.3 High Performance Policy Analysis

The development of high performance (elite) sports policies are showing a level of commonality across countries – a “globalisation” of the manner in which high performance outcomes are best obtained, with such policies adopted from the former Eastern Bloc coming to the centre of Western cultures (Green & Oakley, 2001). The continual pursuit of a high performance outcome is often questioned. As one journalist has stated “Some might have wondered again about the principle whereby sports are funded not according to intrinsic worth, but the likelihood of any one yielding an Olympic medal” (Baum, 2005) summing up an article that questioned the worth of funding the winter sport of skeleton in Australia.

Government policy and subsequent funding to National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) is often predicated on high performance outcomes of the organisation - the number of medals
that the given sport can feasibly attain at the next Olympics and to a lesser extent, Commonwealth Games and World Championships (in Commonwealth Countries) (Stewart, Nicholson, Smith, & Westerbeek, 2004). There has been a strong weighting of funding provided by the Australian Government to NSOs that have multiple medals at Olympic and Commonwealth Games such as Swimming, Cycling and Rowing (Australian Sports Commission, 2008).

Whilst many analysts have reviewed the effects of high performance policy, one consortium of authors sought to determine the specific factors within high performance sporting policy that would lead to success. De Bosscher et al (2008) believe that there are nine essential “pillars” that determine international sporting success. The pillars of:

- Financial Support
- Integrated Approach to policy development
- Participation in Sport
- Talent Identification and development system
- Athlete and post career support
- Training Facilities
- Coaching Provision and Coach Development
- International and National Competition
- Scientific Research

The authors themselves note the need for stronger level of analysis at the sport specific level and recognise that a number of these policy components reflect on broader sports policy that goes beyond high performance sports policy. These “pillars” resonate with the elements that Houlihan and Green identify in their comparison of elite sport across a number of countries (Houlihan & Green, 2008).

As previously noted, there is limited academic analysis of sports policy. The analysis that does exist primarily revolves around elite or high performance sports policy. To provide the necessary level of rigor of analysis to athlete development policy, it would be wise to identify those elements that have been applied to elite sports policy and sport development policy, and seek to determine the relevance when applied to athlete development policy analysis.

The research findings of the current thesis will inform the broader literature dedicated to reviewing sport policy. The findings should have relevance to the manner in which Hoye, Houlihan, Green and others choose to review broader policy outcomes. In seeking a deeper knowledge of practitioners’ perceptions around the intent and philosophy behind each of the
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athlete development policies being reviewed in this research, one will be able to make judgement as to whether the pillars identified by De Bosscher are just as relevant to athlete development policy effectiveness.

Policy analysis entails a web of agents, actors, philosophies, technical details and implementation methods that needs to be explored in detail in order to gain a heightened understanding of specific policy and a more informed view for those that establish policy. Across each of the possible platforms by which sports development policy can be analysed, the literature continually recognise that there is no one way in which policy analysis should occur.

2.8 Summary of Literature Review

The literature review examined the original concepts of the LTAD and the theory upon which such a model is based. The initial documentation that surrounds the LTAD places it as a model that is based upon the biological and physiological parameters specifically associated with the peak height velocity. The original theory was born out of the theories associated with periodisation. This has been reinforced by its creator as recently as 2008.

The LTAD has evolved into a policy platform that espouses a staged progression of skill development, is progressive in its concept (i.e. one must attain competence in one level before progressing to the next) and is designed to attain a high performance outcome.

The LTAD has never been exposed to peer review and is contestable in its content and its application. There are strong “actors” or “agents” that have promoted the principles of the LTAD in Canada and abroad. Canadian government has adopted the LTAD as a platform that espouses the development of physical literacy, linking communities across sectors (school and health) and a model that compulsorily requires all NSOs to establish a policy around. This emergence of the LTAD is referred to in the same manner as the original model but has developed into an all-encompassing athlete development plan.

The JSF is based upon a series of briefing papers that have been used to inform guidelines documents. These documents are made available to NSOs in Australia on a voluntary basis and are used to assist NSOs in their policy formation. The JSF is not just an athlete development model but a framework that incorporates athlete development as well as other elements that would inform sports policy. It does provide an alternative model for sports to consider – the Developmental Model of Sports Participation (DMSP) that is informed by the sports psychology literature.
Canada has recently incorporated the LTAD as an important and integrated element of their sports policy platform. The interpretation of the LTAD as a policy is different to the interpretation of the literature that has shaped it.

The Australian government has provided no policy direction or emphasis in athlete development. A recent report provided to government (Crawford Review) may provide the opportunity for government to provide some guidelines around an Athlete Development Policy into the future. Australian government policy has focussed upon the development of sport primarily for high performance outcomes.

Most analysis of policy has been focused upon the analysis of a given country’s high performance outcomes. There are some elements of high performance policy analysis that may be equally important in athlete development policy analysis. Those same elements of athlete development policy could inform high performance policy.

Very little analysis has been provided in the area of sports development policy and an equally limited level of analysis has been provided in the area of athlete development policy. Utilising the Sports Discus database and other search engines yield no articles that provide critical analysis of the Junior Sports Framework or the LTAD. Sotiriadou (2005) reviewed sports development policy and processes in Australia – with the focus for that review on the utilisation of annual reports of NSOs as the basis for the analysis (Sotiriadou, 2005). No research has gone to the practitioners to seek their understanding of the effect of development policy or athlete development policy.

Academic research has not established the method by which one would apply an analysis of athlete development policy, let alone sport development policy or high performance sport policy. The research does identify some models by which an analysis could be applied, but recognises the immense diversity that can be associated with policy analysis.

A mechanism that can inform the development, effectiveness and implementation of sports policy is through the identification of important actors or agents within the policy development formation and seeking further information from those that are commissioned to implement the policy. Such a mechanism has not been applied in the past and will be undertaken in this research.

This literature review clearly displays a gap in the discourse around the LTAD and the JSF, their veracity and their capacity to provide an appropriate platform for athlete development policy. The implementation of athlete development models into policy has had no scrutiny by
researchers. The identification as to the motivation or sets of values and assumptions that underlie such models has not been pursued.

The determination as to whether the LTAD has been effective in its implementation has not occurred. There has been one review (commissioned by the ASC and unpublished) into the resources that surround the JSF and no external review of the effectiveness of the JSF. The identification of appropriate implementation strategies for such policy has neither been analysed nor reviewed.

Athlete development policy is aimed at impacting upon the participants of the sport and no analysis of such policy has occurred through the interviewing of key actors or agents in the development or the efficacy of the policy. Rarely does the analysis of sports policy become a critical reflection of people charged with the implementation of that policy.
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology utilised to gain the perception of those that implement policy and those that are asked to put that policy into effect. Through their perceptions the research will attain a deeper knowledge of what the practitioners perceive the LTAD and the JSF to be, how effective such policies are and what they believe to be essential components of athlete development policy.

It explores the methodologies that are available in such research and provides the justification for the use of semi-structured interview as a valid technique for gaining the information required. The primary research question is established and the questions utilised during the interview process are formed to elicit a deeper understanding of each participant's knowledge of the policy intent, their interpretation of its effectiveness and the manner in which it is being implemented.

It explores the identification of sports for this research and the process used in the selection of individuals as either policy makers (ASC, Sports Canada and NSO representatives) or those asked to bring the policy into effect (SSO / Provincial / Territory representatives and coaches).
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The literature review identified the complexity associated with the analysis of any sports policy. It further highlighted the lack of academic research into the analysis of policies related specifically to athlete development. Importantly, no research in this area has asked the practitioner about the policy. There is an ever increasing level of correspondence that comments upon the LTAD but none critically analyse it. There is no critical analysis of the JSF. This chapter highlights the manner in which the data were obtained to allow such an analysis of both the LTAD and the JSF.

3.2 Purpose of the Research

The literature has highlighted a dichotomy of views around the intent and the perceptions of the LTAD. The pursuit of a research program that provided a heightened understanding from the practitioners as to their perception of the primary purpose as well as the values and assumptions that underlies its implementation was formed.

As the LTAD was emerging into prominence, the JSF in Australia was being formed. From 2003 the framework was provided by the ASC to a number of sports to establish guidelines or policy. Both the LTAD and the JSF provided a basis upon which the sporting organisations could shape athlete development policy.

The literature review has identified the different interpretation as to what the LTAD is, what it is based upon and what its implementation as policy is designed to do. It has identified different athlete development models and recognised a framework that has been employed by some sports to develop their junior sport policy. It has identified the dearth of literature that surrounds the analysis of sport policy and lack of any literature on athlete development policy. In this light, the findings of this research identify that the practitioners’ perceptions in the efficacy of implementing such policy is a critical aspect of analysis that could be applied in future research.

The gaps identified in the literature review have placed this research into an area that will allow a stronger level of scrutiny into the core values that should underpin the implementation of athlete development policy.

The widespread adoption of the LTAD across a series of western countries and the period within which the JSF has been introduced to NSOs provided an excellent opportunity to apply some critical analysis of athlete development policy. Whilst each platform is slightly different in orientation, application and implementation, each are applied in Commonwealth countries that have federated structures and similarity in sports-based administrative frameworks.
Chapter 3

Both platforms seek to influence the NSOs in the shaping of their athlete development policies. Both are supported by the government instrumentality and both seek to develop appropriate motor skills for the advancement of athletes within the sports sector.

With such paucity of critical analysis being applied to either model, the research question presented itself. The literature review reinforces that researchers have failed to utilise the coach practitioner to determine the intent or effectiveness of such policies in the past. Rarely does the analysis of sports policy become a critical reflection of people charged with the implementation. Thus the research question, as stated in Chapter 1 is reinforced i.e. - What are the perceptions of sport practitioners in relation to the effectiveness of the athlete development policy of their sport and do these reflect the intent of the policy makers?

The literature review identified that that there are some elements that researchers have applied to the analysis of sport policy and specifically high performance sport policy that seeks to yield international success in high performance endeavours. Whilst this no doubt provides a base for discussion later, the literature review reinforced the importance of asking the secondary research question - How do the perceptions of stakeholders inform the essential elements that one should address when critiquing athlete development policy?

3.3 Research design

3.3.1 Qualitative v Quantitative

Research design often involves the “intersection of philosophy, strategies of enquiry and specific methods” (Creswell, 2009, p. 5). The determination of an appropriate research methodology is often associated with ones philosophical view as to how best gain the necessary results from the research in order to better inform the world. Often epistemological considerations are categorised into four broad areas - Postpositivism, Constructivism, Advocacy / Participation and Pragmatism (Creswell, 2009; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004).

Whilst postpositivism primarily seeks to attain a given outcome to an identified problem, it seeks to use empirical data to justify, validate, counter or refute a given theory or construct. Often used within the scientific literature, this method seeks to contest or affirm theories and seeks a definitive view of the world. Within this style of research objectivity and rationalisation are key components to its determination.

The social constructivist view tends to recognise that there is a strong level of human interaction attached to many research enquiries and this philosophical view seeks a higher
level of understanding of the world in which they live and work. Within this context it is recognised that there are a diversity of views, thoughts and opinion and such research recognises the view that is provided by those involved in the study. “Constructivist researchers often address the processes of interaction amongst individuals” (Creswell, 2009, p. 8).

The advocacy / participatory view has grown out of the broader philosophy of constructivism but seeks to attain a stronger level of action as a result of the information obtained through such research. This philosophical view is often associated with politics and will inevitably have a call to action based upon the research at hand. A key feature of this research is that it seeks to be collaborative with the participants of the study.

The pragmatist view suggests a level of research that is often generated upon an action or situation that has arisen. Rather than necessarily focussing on the manner in which the research is applied, the researcher seeks a variety of methods to recognise the problem that presents itself and ensure a high level of understanding around it. Researchers that ascribe to this theory will look for the most appropriate manner of study to meet their needs and attain a better understanding. This view often recognise the social, political and historical context within which research occurs.

Each of these methods has validity within the research domain and it should be made apparent that this researcher brings a level of advocacy / participation and pragmatist view to this research. It is recognition that athlete development policy cannot be implemented without those commissioned to do so actively engaging in the beliefs and philosophy associated with it. The interpretation of the policy at each level of administration in itself has an impact upon the manner in which the policy will be adopted. Their perception is important in the enacting and fostering of policy.

Recognising the adoption of such a philosophy leads the researcher readily to a qualitative methodological approach to the research. This is not to suggest that the use of quantitative data to support such research is not effective or useful – quite to the contrary: the use of quantitative data could assist in validating any of the research findings. Within this research it could be justifiable to use a survey questionnaire where the respondents could identify their liking, use, interpretation, beliefs, recognition, knowledge and many other aspects of athlete development policy via a scaled scoring and such data be analysed and conclusions drawn based upon such a survey. The limitations to this approach however surround the incapacity to seek opinion, beliefs, concepts from such an important group. At this stage of
athlete development policy implementation and research, such data could be valuable in determining the future direction of such policy.

However the construction of a research design that provided a greater insight into the motives, the values and the proposed outcomes that could lend itself to further exploration, extrapolation and interpretation had the capacity to do more than the limited response that a survey may have produced. Such a design allowed the research to be further informed of the elements, the values, the motivations, the intent, the expectations and the impact of the LTAD and the JSF beyond the literature. The design needed to inform and expand the current literature on sports policy and provide insight to athlete development policy.

If one recognises that a quantitative approach to the research question would be grounded in a postpositivist view of the world and would tend to support a definitive (the theory was correct or not), it would be seen that this method of enquiry would not attain sufficient data to inform the many areas of athlete development policy that need to be highlighted. Qualitative methodology however was considered the most appropriate method for this research project. Such a methodology deals with people and it evokes insights from people that quantitative does not do.

In seeking the perceptions of those charged with either developing or implementing the policy in question, it was necessary to utilise a methodology that would yield a rich source of information for the researcher to utilise. The emergence of their perception would allow the researcher to reference their comments against the stated literature and their fellow participants. Such an approach allows one to build a dense level of information around the topic to further inform those associated with athlete development policy and policy analysis. A research method that allowed some of the key actors or agents to more acutely express the intention of the policy and the manner in which it is implemented was framed.

A series of data collection methods have been made available for the qualitative researcher. Data collection could include observations, interviews, document analysis or other such analysis.

Observation would prove to be time consuming and would not have necessarily provided the information that was central to the research question. Such a method would have proved to be one dimensional in that it would not have readily involved the interaction of the participants and would only have yielded some elements that were immediately observable. The implementation of athlete development policy is not just through observable criteria. The use of observation could be very effective if one were able to specifically identify observable
elements that the policy was seeking to elicit from coaches or athletes. The maturity of the literature and the policy was not such that this method would be effective in gaining the data required to further inform researchers and policy makers.

The use of documents and audio-visual material was another method that was considered. Indeed such a methodology was used in the only other research conducted on Australian Sport Development policy, and done so to great effect (Sotiriadou, 2005). The analysis of public documents in Sotiriadou’s study (primarily the annual report of NSOs and affiliate organisations) highlighted the roles and responsibilities of the sports development stakeholders and placed the context within which sport development occurs. Again, the limitation of such a methodology was the failure to sufficiently gain the perceptions of those asked to put the policy into effect. This method provided limited capacity to follow-up on items that may have been able to be identified through some form of correspondence. The incapacity to seek further and immediate exploration of ideas would have restricted the research in its findings.

3.3.2 Interview

Interviews are often employed in qualitative data collection. Such a methodology allows the research to be focused upon a given topic but allows the participants to be free in their interpretation of events and the depth to which they choose to respond. It allows for rich data to be provided and is an excellent method by which one can gain the perception of the policy in question.

Qualitative research is not quantitative research with the numbers missing (Bryman, 2004). Qualitative interviewing tends to be much less structured with an emphasis on interviewees’ own perspectives and a greater interest in the interviewee’s point of view. Interviewers can depart from any guide that is being used and can ask follow up questions to interviewees’ replies. Such an approach tends to be flexible, responding to the direction in which interviewees take the interview and perhaps adjusting the emphases in the research as a result of significant issues that emerge in the course of interviews.

The approach to an interview can be as far reaching as the almost totally unstructured interview where the researcher may seek to identify a theme and simply use at most a brief set of prompts to deal with a certain range of topics. A single question asked by the interviewer allows the interviewee to respond freely and is conversational in its tone.

An often used approach of qualitative researchers is the use of a semi-structured interview. The researcher has a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered with the
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interviewee allowed to reply as they see fit. The questions are used to guide the conversation and may be asked as they pick up on things said by interviewers – so long as all the questions are asked and responded to. In both cases, the interview process is flexible. Such a technique places the emphasis on what the interviewee identifies is important in the question posed.

A structured interview approach is used when seeking specific answers to specific questions and better allows for the data to be analysed in a quantitative manner. Whilst using a qualitative approach this method of interview is often used when incorporating a mixed-method of analysis. Often applied in a far more formal manner than the previous two methods, it provides a strong basis to attaining specific answers to clearly specific research questions. This style of questioning is often used in quantitative analysis (Bryman, 2004).

There is a level of variability between the different types of interview methodologies used in qualitative research, but most qualitative interviews are close to semi-structured or unstructured. In neither case does the interviewer slavishly follow a schedule, as is done in quantitative research interviewing; but in semi-structured interviews the interviewer does follow a script to a certain extent. Such interviews can be conducted in a face-to-face environment or via phone or alternative online electronic mediums. The strength attached to such a technique include;

- capacity to build rapport with the interviewee in order to gain a heightened level of information with regard to the subject matter at hand
- capacity to engage in a greater level or depth to the initial question – to allow one to be drawn back to the question at hand and seek clarity of explanation to the subject matter.

The kinds of questions asked in qualitative interviews are highly variable. The questions used within the interview process used in this research have been categorised as meeting the following styles -

- Introducing questions
- Follow-up questions
- Probing questions
- Specifying questions
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- Direct questions
- Indirect questions
- Structuring questions
- Silence
- Interpreting questions

Interviews require the researcher to be attentive and focused upon the discussion at hand, active in the process, with body language (in face-to-face interviews) and tone being important cues to the interviewer. Equally, both silence and listening can be essential elements to the process in determining what the interviewee is saying or failing to say. The interview provides a very good means to seek elements of research that can include values, beliefs, behaviours and emotions. In determining the most appropriate mechanism to undertake this research one had to be clear about the type of information that would be gained from the research methodology chosen. The emergence of the LTAD as a policy platform and the recognition that athlete development policy is a new field of enquiry required a mechanism that would allow the core values and beliefs of an athlete development policy (and individually the LTAD and the JSF as policy platforms) to be investigated.

A qualitative research strategy was employed as the most appropriate mechanism to gain further information. Qualitative design tends to work better if there are not sufficient numbers within the study to justify quantitative analysis. “Generally speaking, qualitative researchers are prepared to sacrifice scope for detail” (Silverman, 2005, p. 9). The use of a semi-structured interview allowed this research to gain important elements of perception, core-beliefs, motivation and perceived effectiveness in relation to both the JSF and the LTAD – elements that will build on our understanding of the athlete development policies that are active in Canada and Australia. Semi-structured interview questions that allowed the participants to expand as they saw fit was identified as the most appropriate method in the research design.

3.3.3 Research Model

The research required a method that would enable informed individuals in government, national organisations and practitioners to provide a qualitative opinion as to the policy and the intent that surrounded it. Green has highlighted the importance of influential people,
bodies, lobby groups and others (that Green calls “actors”) in the development of any policy (Green, 2004). It is important to seek further information from the actors / agents that both make or generate the policy and those that are required to implement the policy. It is not sufficient to recognise that a policy exists, but – if the policy is meaningful in any way – to determine to what extent the policy is able to be implemented.

For those actors attached to government instrumentalities, further clarity of the intent of the LTAD or the JSF provided some insight as to the influence that such policy has when introduced to the NSOs and their affiliates.

Each sport is different in the manner in which they seek to apply their policy. The LTAD and the JSF provides a framework upon which NSOs are asked to adopt and integrate into the development of their athletes, coaches, competition and broader environment. The NSOs of Canada are asked to incorporate the principles attached to the LTAD model into the conduct of their sport. It is therefore important to gain a heightened understanding of the intent of the NSO in implementing the policy that they have been asked to undertake. So too the NSOs of Australia, whilst not required to adopt the principles of the LTAD like their commonwealth cousins, it is important to gain an understanding of the intent attached to their policy. By articulating the difference and the similarity of intent between the government instrumentality and NSO one can make comment as to whether the translation of the LTAD model or JSF into policy is perceived as the same.

Policy is designed to shape the behaviour of individuals to attain an outcome. Those that are most likely to see the effect of athlete development policy are the practitioners at state and grassroots level. The federated structure that exists within both Canada and Australia required executives from Provincial / Territorial / State organisations to implement changes required by the national body. This research recognises the function that this group play in the implementation of policy and were included in the research.

It is the practitioners at “grass-roots” level that ultimately are required to ensure that the elements of the policy are implemented. The influence of coaches cannot be underestimated. “Coaches are a major adult influence in children’s sport participation. They influence children's competence beliefs, sport enjoyment, and motivation for sport participation” (Cote & Fraser-Thomas, 2007, p. 278).

Interviews with state / provincial operators and a representation of coaches that work with the athletes at the developmental age that the policies seek to address will provide an indication as to the effectiveness of the policy. Thus the research design necessitated the
interviewing of these two important subsets to gain a thorough understanding of the policy in question; the policy makers - Government and NSOs; and the policy implementers – SSOs and coaches. Figure 5 provides a diagrammatic representation of the two groups in this research design. With policy development being a complex area to review and analyse, the research methodology focused upon gaining further information in relation to the following areas:

a) a heightened understanding by the key actors / agents as to their perception of the intent and values of the specific sport policy and broadly, athlete development policy; and

b) the specific elements of athlete development policy that were regarded as important by the research literature and the researcher in influencing athlete development. These were;

   i. competition structure;

   ii. athlete development pathway; and

   iii. coach education / development.

Figure 5: Model identifying the intent & effect of policy makers and policy implementers
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A model that accounted for the limitations in distance, travel and resource capacity of the researcher was designed (see Figure 6) to be used in both the Australian and the Canadian context.

This model sought to interview one government authority representative, three NSO representatives, three SSO / Provincial-Territory representatives and nine coach representatives per country. This necessitated 32 individual interviews.

Figure 6: The model used to explore athlete development policy in Australia and Canada

[Diagram of the model]

**Canada**

Whist a great deal of communication between NSOs in Canada and the researcher could occur via email and other electronic means, the motivation for inclusion in the research by Canadian NSOs was markedly enhanced once it was apparent that the researcher would be in Canada during November 2008. This allowed the researcher, within a limited timeframe, to travel to the identified cities to enable some of the interviews to occur.

Time constraints and opportunity to access a number of SSOs and Coaches in the one forum for one sport, meant that the proposed structure of separate individual semi-structured interviews could not be completely adhered to. The opportunity to interview a combination of state and coach representatives in one forum was presented for one sport (Canadian Cycling Association). This was a unique opportunity that was presented to the researcher as a one-off opportunity and would not be able to be reproduced. The integrity of the interview process and the intention to access the necessary actors / agents in both policy development and implementation was not compromised. Recognising the essential elements
that surround the manner in which qualitative research should occur, a group forum interview process was utilised with this group.

Thus, a model that was able to cater for the specific needs of the sport and availability of access led to a research model as illustrated in Figure 7 below.

**Figure 7: Research model applied in Canada**

A total of four policy makers (one Sport Canada; three NSO) and eighteen policy implementers were involved in the interview process in Canada.

**Australia**

A similar model was applied in Australia, although issues of access were much easier to resolve, allowing a closer model to the original proposal of one NSO, one SSO and three coaches per sport was primarily adhered to. Two NSOs (Netball and Cricket) provided two officers for the same interview. Again, this did not compromise the methodology – it enhanced it. Figure 8 identifies the model by which the interviews occurred within Australia.

### 3.3.3.1 Sport Selection and Identification

Policy determination is dynamic. At any point in time the policies of a given organisation can change, emerge, develop or cease. These changes are beyond the control of the researcher, but the research outcomes can be affected by the maturity of the policy within a given organisation. With this in mind, preliminary discussions with those most closely involved in the roll-out of the LTAD or the JSF to the NSOs occurred. Telephone and email contact with Richard Way and Istvan Balyi (two members of the LTAD “Expert Panel Group”
established in Canada) sought to identify those NSOs that had been provided the best opportunity to implement the LTAD as a policy within their sport.

**Figure 8: Research model applied in Australia**

![Research model diagram](image)

The researcher had access to the Junior Sport Unit of the Australian Sports Commission on a regular basis. Discussions with that unit were had to establish the sports that were most likely to have implemented the JSF within their policies. Discussions were directed to identifying those sports that were most likely to have been able to indicate that the JSF was implemented. Whilst the researcher had ready access to the Junior Sport Unit, this approach was no different to that applied in seeking the sports that were most likely to be successful within the LTAD model applied in Canada. This did not lead to any level of insider knowledge nor to any specific bias that the researcher may have had, as the protocol in seeking the appropriate sports was the same in both countries.

Such discussion with entrepreneurs of both models sought to provide the best opportunity to identify sports that had the longest opportunity to begin the implementation of policy formation and development. This also allowed a better sense as to whether the policy was effective.

Through this process, the identification of the sports involved in this research was not random. Rather, it was in some way targeted. However in order to retain a higher level of integrity that could be attached to any results from the research, the primary promoters of the framework or model (ASC, Sports Canada or LTAD expert panel members) simply
provided the researcher the background to their perceptions as to which NSOs were more advanced or less advanced in the development of the implementation of the JSF or LTAD.

In a report prepared by the LTAD Expert group that surveyed all 56 Sport Canada funded sports (LTAD Expert Group, 2008) it was recognised that a number of the NSOs had not yet incorporated the LTAD into their current frameworks. Table 4 provides a snapshot of the level of progress of the NSOs in adopting the LTAD. The progress markers are those identified by the LTAD expert group. This table gives an indication that only 50.9% of NSOs had endorsed an LTAD policy at the time of survey and only 7.1% had completed a competition review.

**Table 4: Adaption of NSO Implementation of LTAD as of September 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Progress Marker</th>
<th>Not Started (%)</th>
<th>Working on it (%)</th>
<th>Completed (%)</th>
<th>Not planning to be done (%)</th>
<th>Not applicable (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical Matrix</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing of English document</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratified, endorsed or approved by NSO Exec or Board</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition Review</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New initiatives identified relating to the LTAD Model</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCCP is aligned with LTAD</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration into NSO strategic plan</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratified, endorsed or approved by PSO Execs or Boards</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance for PSO implementation</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sports that were identified as having well developed LTAD policies and were worthy of further pursuing for this research project included the following sports:

- Athletics
- Cycling
- Rowing
- Football (Soccer)
- Canadian Football (Gridiron)
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- Snow Boarding
- Speed Skating
- Baseball

Correspondence occurred with a number of these sports prior to determining which sports would be utilised for the research. It was highly possible that those responsible for the promotion of either the LTAD or the JSF would seek to identify those sports that were best able to highlight the positive elements attached to either model. Indeed the research was about providing every opportunity to see how effective either model could be. However the reason for identifying three NSOs in each model was to attain a cross-section of sports and enable different issues around policy implementation and formation to be highlighted.

In Canada, a number of sports were approached, yet the capacity to meet with and interview those across the sport was a strong determinant in the selection of that sport. Three sports other than those finally selected were also approached. For various reasons including availability, accessibility and readiness, the final selection of sports was made – Athletics Canada, Speed Skating Canada and Canadian Cycling Association.

The NSOs identified as having involved the Junior Sport Framework in a review of their junior development policies include the following sports;

- Netball
- Swimming
- Volleyball
- Wrestling
- Golf
- Cricket
- Softball
- Badminton
- Rugby Union
- Hockey
- Basketball
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Again, contact was made with some of the sports prior to the determination of the three selected. The final selection of which NSOs were involved remained with the researcher. Indeed, there were a number of occasions where sports were approached because of a perception by the advisors that they were relatively advanced in the development of their policies, only to be told by personnel within the NSO that they had not developed their policies and were not as advanced as others had suggested.

It was important to identify those sports that have had the best opportunity to develop and implement their policy, but not be directed to those sports that best highlighted the attributes of one framework over another. The sports of Cricket Australia, Netball Australia and Basketball Australia were selected.

3.3.3.2 Participant Selection
National Government Representatives

Sports Canada and the Australian Sports Commission are large organisations that play a multitude of roles in relation to the development of sport within their respective countries. Respecting the hierarchy and bureaucracy of each organisation was important. As government institutions, there were various levels of managers within the organisation.

Each organisation had an identified section and officer within their hierarchy that specifically looks after the management, organisation and roll-out of the LTAD or the JSF respectively. Phone discussions with those departments and their managers ensued in an endeavour to identify the most appropriate person from within their organisation to best interview.

After verbally discussing the requirements of the research with the authorities within each organisation, the government instrumentality determined the most appropriate person within their structure to be interviewed. Written correspondence followed, ensuring that all parties were well informed of both the requirements and the processes involved as part of the research. The identified personnel were contacted and agreed to be involved in the study.

It is important to note that the organisation themselves determined who was the most appropriate personnel to interview and that the interviewees were reminded throughout the interview process that they were the representatives of the organisation that they worked for in relation to this research. They, like all other participants in the research, were provided the opportunity to review the transcript before finalisation.

This process adds strength to the discourse that occurred, as they were representing the views of the organisation that they worked for, and in each case, that organisation was the leading government authority for sport in Canada or Australia.
National Sporting Organisation (NSO) Representative

Each NSO that was approached in both Canada and Australia were provided written correspondence outlining the intention of the research and the obligation that was being asked of the organisation. The correspondence was directed to the CEO (or equivalent) of the organisation and was copied into the National Development Officer or the person best identified as the one responsible for the implementation of the LTAD or JSF.

Within the correspondence it was asked that the CEO and / or their identified representative be able to undertake the interview. It was made very clear as to the intent of the interview and the specific topics. Further, all interviewees were offered the opportunity to view the main questions that would be asked throughout the interview process prior to the interview. Each sport nominated the person or persons to be interviewed. In most cases it was the person appointed within the organisation that had carriage for Sports Development, although the CEO of two sports chose to be involved.

State / Provincial Organisation Representative

In the same manner that the NSOs were invited to nominate the most appropriate person for interview, they were also asked to provide a list of at least three State or Provincial CEOs or equivalents that were able to respond sufficiently to the questions around the implementation of the policies that they had set. In order to limit the NSO to direct who the researcher was able to speak to, and in order to provide some credibility to the fact that any national policy required it to be able to be implemented across the nation, the selection of the State representative was randomised. In this manner the NSO was provided the option of identifying people with some level of knowledge of the subject. They could exclude those that they felt would not provide sufficient information to add to the research yet could not dictate to the researcher the person to whom they should direct the interview.

Each SSO that was approached in both Canada and Australia were provided written correspondence outlining the intention of the research and the obligation that was being asked of the organisation. The correspondence was directed to the CEO (or equivalent) of the organisation or the person best identified as the one responsible for the implementation of the LTAD or JSF and highlighted the support that the NSO had provided in agreeing to be involved in the research. All interviewees were offered the opportunity to view the main questions that would be asked throughout the interview process.
Again the limitations of time, access and availability shaped the capacity to remain true to this format whilst in Canada. Speed Skating were not in a position to identify a provincial coordinator, but were able to provide a Board member that has had some carriage of the introduction of the LTAD to the provinces. Recognising that the Speed Skating LTAD policy had not yet attained a full level of operation throughout the provinces / territories, it was deemed appropriate to interview the board member as it was anticipated that they could provide a valuable addition to the research through an exploration of the processes that were being applied to engage the provincial organisations.

**Coach Representatives**

The underlying process utilised for the section of coaches for the interview process was similar to that applied to the state / province / territory selection. The NSO was asked to identify up to ten coaches “…that work with developing athletes so that I may select three to approach for interview” (NSO Invitation letter – see Appendix 3). Clarification was sought from some sports as to how best to define coaches that work with developing athletes. Further correspondence articulating the type of coach was provided. An example of the correspondence with Speed Skating in this regard is outlined below:

> Typically these coaches are not necessarily the high performance coaches and not always the head coach of the State / Province team but are known to you as coaches that work well with developing skater (15 – 18 yrs) and know what is needed to deal with this age group. I am open to a broad definition of “development” coaches, as the LTAD model does not necessarily cater to just one age group, however my experience is that … coaches that work with this age group recognise what is required to cater to the needs of athletes at this age and tend to intuitively recognise the specific skill development required of any individual in order to allow them to compete on the national stage in the senior ranks. They understand the nuances around developing the athlete from some basic / intermediate skill levels and inevitably have an opinion (often a strong opinion) on what should happen to assist these skater(s) to get to the next level!

Each coach approached in both Canada and Australia were provided written correspondence outlining the intention of the research and the obligation that was being asked of the coach.

In order to limit the capacity for the NSO to direct who the researcher was able to speak to, the selection of the coach representative was randomised. In this manner the NSO was
provided the option of identifying coaches with some level of knowledge of the subject, yet not dictate to the researcher the person to whom they should direct the interview. The process allowed interviewees to provide concepts, ideas and suggestions as to how they thought their sport was able to improve their athlete development policies without fear of recourse.

Again the limitations of time, access and availability shaped the capacity to remain true to this format whilst in Canada. This proved to be the case when seeking to interview the cycling coaches and provincial representatives. However the capacity to interview a group of ten people in one forum also provided an opportunity that was unable to be replicated through normal circumstances. The CEO identified that a number of coaches and provincial representatives were able to be present at one time and the interview could be conducted in this forum at this time or not at all. It did not detract from the essential elements of the research and the forum provided a rich environment whereby coaches and provincial representatives were able to feed off each other in order to respond to the questions proposed.

3.3.4 Interview Process

When conducting the interviews with participants, the researcher endeavoured to meet with the interviewees in a face-to-face environment. This proved difficult to undertake on all occasions due to distance, cost and capacity to make a suitable time that was conducive to both parties.

The original research design proposed a total of 32 people to be interviewed individually. As previously indicated, circumstances surrounding the capacity to undertake one-on-one interviews was not realised in all instances. The manner described above for interviewing the Canadian cycling coaches realised an increase in the numbers. As a result the number of people able to be accessed for interview increased to a total of 40 people - 22 people from Canada and 18 people from Australia. Figure 9 indicates the number of people involved in a face-to-face, compared to telephone or web-based interviews that the researcher was able to undertake. A total of 70% of people who participated in the interviews did so in a face-to-face environment.
Interview Questions

Whilst the interview questions were shaped slightly differently for each target group (government representative, NSO, SSO and coach), there were some central themes to the questions asked of all participants. Specifically, the questions sought information in relation to:

- Knowledge of the policy;
- Specific impact of the policy upon;
  - Competition structure;
  - Coach Education / development; and
  - Athlete development pathway opportunities
- How the policy could be measured as to its success or otherwise;
- Identification of the essential elements that should be included in any athlete development policy

Interview questions for the government representatives responsible for the implementation of the LTAD or the JSF were wide ranging and designed to elicit a higher level of understanding than that able to be determined from the literature and surrounding material. A greater level of freedom was provided to the researcher to explore elements that were either of concern or warranted a higher level of scrutiny to ascertain specific element attached to policy development and implementation.
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Each government representative brought different elements to the fore, and it was important to gain the perspective of those that implemented the policy through the interview process. Questions were framed around the following themes;

- Background to the Model / Framework;

- Identification of actors that were involved in the establishment of the model / framework;

- Motivation for inclusion into policy;

- Expectations of government in the implementation of the policy;

- Process used to assist in the implementation of the policy;

- How the model or framework informs
  - Coach Education;
  - Competition structure;
  - Athlete development pathways;

- Specific exploration around nuances particular to the policy.

A series of specific questions were designed as the basis for the interview with the NSOs / SSO and coach representative. The focus for these questions was initially around the formation of the policy and the relationship that the LTAD (in Canada) or the JSF (in Australia) had in the formation of the policy. NSO representatives were questioned around the motivation for the development of such a policy whilst SSO and coach representatives were questioned about their perception of the NSOs motivation. The NSOs were further questioned as to the depth by which the whole of sport acknowledged and accepted the policy, including the board of that sport.

The NSOs were questioned as to the proposed impact the policy would have upon their sport – specifically the SSOs and P/TSOs, their coaches and their athletes, whilst the SSOs and coaches were asked of their perception as to the impact or effect the policy has had upon their sport and the athletes. The impact of the policy upon the three specific areas of competition structure, coach education, and competition or athlete pathway were pursued across all sub-groups. Participants were then given the opportunity to determine how they believe the success or otherwise of the policy that they were trying to implement should be measured and what an ideal policy would look like.
The results outlined their perception as to the intentions in implementing such a policy, what they thought the motivations behind the implementation of the policy by the NSO were and how effective the policy implementation has been. The results specifically look at the impact that the policy has had upon the specific elements of competition structure, coach education, and athlete development pathways as well as any other elements that they believe are important to the implementation of athlete development policy. Figure 10 below provides a schematic as to the elements that interviewees in each category were asked to make comment upon.

3.4 Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded via an electronic recording devise and digitally stored. The recordings were then transferred and stored on the computer and back-up storage device. All interviews were transcribed and a copy of the transcription was provided to the interviewee to review. Each interviewee was provided the opportunity to modify or add to the information provided via the transcript and in some cases asked to assist with identifying some terms or wording that was not clear through the transcription process.

Figure 10: The variables sought from the coaches and SSO/PSO representatives

Each interview was imported to a file within the computer based software program of NVivo8 where the data were coded against the parameters that were seen as important in the analysis. The coding followed standard qualitative data analysis, in that there were some specific elements that the researcher pre-defined and specifically sought within the text to provide the necessary material in addressing the research question (perceptions of...
motivation, intent, philosophy, impact and others). However, there were also elements that presented themselves as justifiable to code in their own entity that added to the analysis of the data. Elements such as interviewee background, financial support, the federated structure, physical literacy and others provided the rich source of information that only qualitative data can provide.

Table 5 provides an outline of all the data codes used in the analysis. The software program enabled the same data to be recorded in more than one category if it was justified. The software also enabled “queries” whereby one could analyse a set or group to seek common coding (e.g. the group of all cricket coaches could be analysed against a federated structure). Any group or individual interviewee could be analysed against any number of the coded parameters.

The development of the codes were established via a combination of emerging themes that presented themselves upon the review and analysis of the data (adopting a grounded theory approach, as well as seeking to specifically identify components that could answer the research questions. An example of “pre-defined” codes includes seeking to identify the elements that previous policy analysts (such as Chalip or Hoye) identified problem attribution or legitimization or a focussing event as being important when one reviews policy.

Other codes were pre-determined, such as perception, intent, coach education, competition structure, physical literacy and athlete pathway, as these were specific areas that were pursued through the semi-structured interview process.

Others emerged as a result of the interview process and the information provided by the interviewees, whereby they identified the element as important in the emergence of athlete development policy – thus justifying the formation of a code for that purpose. Codes such as social interaction, TID, Facilities, Buy-in, Leadership, umpiring and burnout fell within this category.
Table 5: Coding used for analysis categorised into major spheres of influence

<table>
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<th>Name</th>
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<td>Relevance</td>
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<td>Beliefs &amp; Philosophy</td>
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<td>Effect of policy</td>
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<td>Veracity</td>
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<td>High Performance</td>
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<td>Federated structure</td>
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<td>Integration with other policy</td>
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<td>Leadership</td>
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<td>Mandatory v Voluntary</td>
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<td>Policy awareness</td>
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<td>LTAD Anomalies</td>
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<td>Process of formation</td>
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<td>Accessibility</td>
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<td>Decision Frames</td>
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<td>Focussing Event</td>
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<td>Policy Analysis frameworks</td>
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<td>Athlete Development Policy utopia</td>
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<td>Measure of success</td>
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Figure 11: The highest ranking of nodes based upon the number of sources that it drew from

![Source Ranking Graph]

Figure 12: The ranking of nodes based upon the number of times that it was referenced

![Reference Ranking Graph]
3.5 Summary of Research Design and Methodology

The research was designed to elicit the perception of the sports practitioners at each level of government, NSO, SSO / PSO and coach as to the effectiveness of the policies that were in question. The design had enabled the research to identify the prime actors within the promotion of the policy and allow the sport to gain a deeper understanding of the intent and proposed outcomes of the policy through those participants eyes.

Semi-structured interviews were employed as the most suitable method of eliciting the perception, intent, beliefs and motivation of the policy, its effect and the manner in which the models have informed the policy.

All interviewees were provided the opportunity to espouse what they believe an appropriate athlete development policy should look for and attain. The specific areas of coach education, competition structure and athlete development pathway were identified for comment.
4.1 Introduction

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, reviewed and coded to provide the information necessary in determining the perceptions of the practitioners in relation to the effectiveness of the athlete development policy pertinent to their sports. The data were analysed to gain the following information that would answer the major research question;

- the intent of the model / policy (as provided by the ASC, Sport Canada or NSO representative)
the perception of the intent of the model (as provided by the SSO or Coach representative)

the motivation behind the implementation of the model / policy (as provided by the ASC, Sport Canada and NSO representatives)

the perceived motivation for the policy (as provided by the State or coach representatives)

the effect of the policy or the expected effect that the policy may have

the impact of the policy on competition structure, athlete development pathway and coach education

how one might measure the success of such a policy

what the participants believe a good athlete development policy might look like.

Whilst there is some comment made upon the information gained from the results of the interviews, the author has refrained from interpreting the information in this chapter, but attempted to provide a presentation of the data without opinion. The interpretation of the results will be expanded upon in the following chapters.

4.2 Sport Canada

The Sport Canada representative (SC1) was able to provide some insight as to the emergence of the LTAD into sports policy, additional information surrounding its intent, the mechanisms that were used to further develop the policy and the role that some of the primary actors / agents (or entrepreneurs) of the LTAD played in the formation of such policy.

Part of the motivation for the development of the LTAD rested in its perceived capacity to provide a unified force for Canadian Sport. “There was a feeling that there was no cohesiveness in the development of sport in Canada, …each sport was … developing their own things, … and there was just a general feeling that things weren’t working right” (AC1).

There was also a perception of poor performance at the elite level “… the Canadian public wasn’t happy with Olympic results” and that “high level athletes were missing basic skills” appeared to be some of the other primary drivers. This supports the literature that surrounds the LTAD in that the model was generated to seek a solution to the perceived problems of
Chapter 4

Canadian sport (Balyi I., Sport system building and long-term athlete development in Canada: the situation and the solutions, 2001).

Another key motivator appeared to be the role that the LTAD could play in the development of a higher national level of physical literacy. “So we’re going on the premise that a child who knows how to move, who knows how to run and kick a ball, is more likely to play soccer, than if he can’t kick a ball or run” (SC1).

In seeking clarity as to the expectations placed upon the NSOs that incorporate an LTAD policy (its intent), SC1 suggested

It’s two-sided. You have an excellent stream, where some will go on to the highest pinnacles, … but at the same time we’re hoping it’s going to have an effect on participation, in that if people have learned the right skills at the right time, but aren’t of the personality and whatever else it takes to be a high level competitive athlete, they’re going to want to participate for life (SC1).

However the dichotomy surrounding the model’s prime purpose for existing that appeared in the literature review was evident in the SC1 response when asked to describe the LTAD. The interviewee reflected the philosophy that many others through the research project have done –

I think it is a philosophy in many ways, of … athlete/participant centred-sport, where it is both developmentally appropriate and it’s also child and young person and adult friendly. So that … people … are given the best training, the best opportunities to play and to compete, the best knowledge, in a way that’s conducive and friendly for them to want to stay in it, to want to improve, to either just be active for life or to reach the highest levels of excellence (SC1).

SC1 confirmed that the LTAD was based upon the physical and biological factors that Balyi had identified in his papers and when asked of the expectation of NSOs in this regard replied

So they look at their sport through that lens, if you will, and say … are we teaching the right stuff to the kid at the right age? Should we be teaching strength at this point in the kid’s life? Should we be teaching speed, should we be doing endurance, how are we doing skill verses competition verses practice?
In seeking the core philosophy of the LTAD and the expectation of NSOs in their implementation, clarity was sought as to the essential drive for the program – was it about the physical literacy or was it about attaining high performance outcomes? One response yielded a push for the increased physical literacy and not towards the high performance athlete – “a lot of what we’re realising with LTAD is it’s, at least where we are now in its development, is not yet geared to the high performance athlete”. If it was not geared to the high performance athlete, clarity around the prime motivation for the LTAD policy was sought. The following excerpt indicates that the focus for the LTAD is to produce high performance athletes, yet it appears the means to do that is not yet defined.

JA Can I just affirm …, the primary motives are around the change in … physical literacy?

SC1 I can’t say it’s the primary drive. It was not the drive that started it. The drive that started it was to produce better Olympic athletes.

JA So the drive was a high performance outcome?

SC1 Yes, to give the pathway to excellence. And it’s through that drive that we knew that the framework to develop that athlete was not strong, that the foundations weren’t good.

JA Even though the drive might be for better high performance athletes, the link isn’t there, the drive at this stage within the LTAD structure is around that development, there isn’t that link to the high performance programme.

SC1 I don’t want to use the word drive there, I really don’t want to use the word drive and I don’t want to use the word lack of link. … The realisation that the structure at the bottom is weak, and that a partial change of focus has come to realise that if we can’t fix that structure, then that poor athlete at the top of the ladder has really got nothing to sit on, so we’re going to try and help him a little bit by doing things like with periodisation and some of the other stuff that we’ve got going, but at the same time we’re trying to pull together the resources and forces that we need to make sure that structure’s strong so that the next athlete will have a much bigger stronger ladder to go up.

JA If a sporting organisation produces quality high performance outcomes, but does not incorporate any of the principles
necessarily of the LTAD within their programme, and doesn’t change that, will they be supported?

SC1 Can’t answer that because I don’t know the exact area.

JA It’s a tough question, yes.

SC1 I can’t answer that. How do you penalise a group who’s got success, we don’t even know if their LTAD is going to say it’s not the best way that they’ve gotten to where they are. So I can’t answer that, that’s way too hypothetical.

This excerpt from the interview transcripts indicates the possibility of a link between the LTAD and the proposed high performance outcomes, but this could not be articulated. Stated as a clear objective of the LTAD, there was confusion as to how one could obtain a high performance outcome on the basis of the implementation of the LTAD model.

SC1 identified some public research commissioned by Sport Canada to seek an idea of the public recognition of some aspects of the LTAD. SC1 affirmed that the research indicated that parents believed that i) winning isn’t everything; ii) sport is important; iii) children need to learn fundamental movement skills; and iv) sport is an important tool in preventing obesity. Such research confirms the progress of where the public policy of LTAD is at present and how it is perceived by the community. It, however has little affirmation as to whether the LTAD is aimed as attaining a high performance outcome.

In response to a further question seeking to determine the intent of the policy a surprising response was provided in …

...we have not sat down and said “okay, what’s our strategic direction, what’s our framework, what are we in Sport Canada going to be responsible for and what are we not?...we haven’t looked ahead to say “once you’ve got your LTAD (policy document), and we’ve given you a little bit of money, for implementation, what next?” … it’s moved so much faster than we expected it to, and I don’t think anybody, including the experts, had any idea it would move this quickly.

The lack of articulation of the direction of the policy could be confusing for the NSOs seeking to implement such a policy.

At the time of interview (November 2008) there was limited linkage of the LTAD policy to any other jurisdiction that Sport Canada had. Discussions were occurring with the hosting branch
and there was, as discussed, a requirement of NSOs to have an LTAD plan (or working on one) in order to gain funding from Sport Canada. The lack of integration of the LTAD principles across Sport Canada policy was highlighted by a story told by an NSO within the research: A sport’s funding was reduced because they did not operate provincial titles for under 9 and 10 year olds (in line with the LTAD principles) and therefore led to a reduction of total number of participants. This was later addressed by Sport Canada but exemplified the limited policy awareness of the LTAD across the organisation.

SC1 indicated that the emergence of the LTAD as policy has allowed discussions with the Education, Health, School and Community Recreation sectors. It would appear that the LTAD has the potential to lead to a higher capacity for cross-policy integration.

The significance of the impact that an LTAD policy could have on an NSOs competition structure (through their competition review) appeared to be a revelation to Sport Canada – only in the last year that we’ve realised the importance of the competition review, … we only realised it to a great degree when one of the sports first did one, and they came back and went “holy mackerel, we’ve got some big changes to do”, and until that had been done by someone we didn’t realise the importance of it (SC1).

Sport Canada’s initial expectations of an NSO in relation to the development of an LTAD policy was that they simply had to produce an LTAD policy document. It was later in the evolution of the policy (judged to be 2005-06) that “… we realised ‘wait a minute, having an LTAD (document) isn’t anything if you can’t implement it’ and this was like a collective light bulb going off.” (SC1). This is a further indication that the policy was simply evolving.

The emergence of the policy and its impact upon coach education and competition structure was made far more evident. The emergence of the LTAD appeared to coincide with the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) moving towards a competency based approach. The NCCP is the national framework upon which all Canadian Sports’ coach accreditation is administered and sets the industry standards for coach accreditation in Canada. The transition to competency based training provided a significant departure from its former construct and the addition of incorporating the LTAD into those changes appeared to fit well. To this end, Canada has closely aligned their coach education framework to their athlete development model.

When asked how one might be able to measure the effectiveness of the LTAD, SC1 suggested that they were currently grappling with that question “because we’ve realised that
this is no longer this 18 month long project”. SC1 proceeded to suggest the following measures in priority order

- Production of an LTAD policy document by the NSO;

- That the NSO had identified a number of initiatives – then a measure as to how the NSOs acted on those initiatives;

- That the NSO undertake a competition review – and then determine whether they had acted upon the recommendations of the competition review.

There was no indication that a measure would be that of a high performance outcome or indeed a specific physical literacy outcome. All measures were geared towards the actions to be determined by the NSO. This does reflect the broader philosophy of NSOs determining policy for their members.

The role of the actors / agents appeared to be important in the promotion of the LTAD as a policy platform. “Istvan (Balyi) and Richard (Way)…had caught the ears of some of the managers and directors in our excellence division” (SC1). As a result, funding was provided to some NSOs to develop a long term athlete development plan. Whilst Way and Balyi could be seen as entrepreneurs of the policy, it could not have taken effect unless the Executive of Sport Canada endorsed it. “Sport Canada executive directors … granted (approval) that the sports would be funded. An amount was decided upon” (SC1).

Seven sports were provided the initial funding. Funding was also provided to a “team of experts” to oversee and guide Sport Canada in the delivery of the LTAD to the NSOs. The team of experts included Richard Way, Istvan Balyi, Dr Colin Higgs, Dr Steven Norris and Dr Mary Bluechardt. Part of the $1Million initial funding went to the expert panel group (undisclosed sum).

The funding allocation by Sport Canada to the implementation of the LTAD, when compared to the funding provided for high performance sport, was considered “significantly, significantly smaller” (SC1). There was some funding (between $70,000 and $120,000) to the NSO. When asked of the expectation of NSOs in relation to the funding provided to them for LTAD purposes, it appeared that they were initially required to simply provide a document. They are then asked to undertake a competition review and an implementation plan. The latter elements were not recognised as “compulsory” in the attachment of funding for the NSOs.
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The interview with SC1 reinforced some of the literature in relation to the motivation for the policy, but recognised a significant volume of work generated to develop physical literacy in young people was required. The action of policy entrepreneurs was evident in its formation, with the practices used to engage them worthy of comment.

The most confusing element of the LTAD remained in its motivation and basic reasoning for the model’s existence. Stated to be clearly aimed at a high performance outcome, the rhetoric that accompanies the policy (through this interview and the literature) reinforces that the mechanisms that are currently being utilised are primarily seeking higher participation and physical literacy. The interview failed to indicate how the link between the physical literacy and the high performance was to be articulated. It also failed to gain clarity on the manner in which the biological factors could be employed to sound effect in the articulation of policy.

It could be that the NSOs could interpret their obligations differently. The indication would be that they would be required to;

- Develop an LTAD policy document (required)
- Undertake a competition review (optional)
- Implement the findings of the competition review
- Have an effect on high performance outcomes
- Influence the physical literacy of their members

The implementation of LTAD as an adopted policy by Sport Canada sought to act as a unified force that would yield high performance outcomes and was born out of poor national results at the elite level. Its role in addressing the physical literacy of the nation was not undersold and the potential to impact across a number of other policy areas was apparent. The interview failed to address an athlete development pathway – an element that is central to the staged philosophy of the model.

4.3 Athletics Canada

Athletics Canada were one of the first NSOs to be involved in the development of an LTAD policy document, publishing in 2005. Whilst recognising that the impetus for the development of this came from it being mandated by Sport Canada, AC1 welcomed the questioning of the
way in which the sport was operating and how athletes were being developed, noting that they had simply never been asked the question before!

AC1’s perception of the intent of the LTAD model was that it sought to be both a model that would seek to attain high performance outcomes and a model that provided the fundamental skills. AC1 recognised that it may not be clear to the broader community, noting that “you’d get a skewed answer depending on who you talk to” – that the high performance manager would likely see it as a model to attain high performance outcomes, with the board reflecting the same, whilst the CEO may have a broader view. The support for the LTAD was across the spectrum in Athletics Canada with AC1 noting the CEO, Head coach and High Performance manager all supporting its implementation.

There was recognition that effective implementation of the policy (and thereby a motivation to its implementation) should see a reduction of the level of burn-out or chronically injured athletes in their late teens.

The integration of the LTAD into a number of areas of the NSOs activities was evident. Coach education, competition structure and the athlete development pathway were identified as areas upon which the LTAD has impacted Athletics Canada.

it’s mentioned in our strategic plan, we’ve linked it to an athlete pathway that we’re using for high performance development, (high performance manager) has worked with it and linked in terms of when an athlete starts to access a (national team training) centre, and now we’ve been working on a review of our competition, both competition structure and the events that are contested within each event (AC1).

In articulating the intent of the LTAD policy implementation, AC1 reflected that of SC1 in the pursuit of high performance outcomes

It’s dual purpose, right, definitely linked to club development and effective development of the grass roots and junior levels, … but long-term Athletics Canada’s mandate is producing consistent international performance, right, so everything we do, even if it takes a long time to get there, has to relate back to that goal … I think the board would certainly say “well we’re investing in this now as a long-term investment, we see medals at the end of it.

Another stated intent was that of ultimately ensuring the education of parents and others so that they seek out clubs that incorporate LTAD principles. Similarly, there was an
expectation that the LTAD policy would have a strong influence on Athletics Canada coaches. Recognising that the competition that is offered to competitors drives the type of coaching that would occur, and that the competition structure is an element that requires some alteration at some age groups, the expectation would be that the coaches were sufficiently educated around LTAD principles and could apply those to the coaching environment. The coach education has been modified to reflect the NCCP principles in relation to the LTAD.

A revision of the competition structure was occurring at the time of interview. AC1 provided further information (that was referred to in the literature review) indicating significant change across all areas of competition in the developing age group. Such changes have a significant “knock-on” effect, with modification to equipment heights, weights and length impacting upon a major source of athletics events – the schools. This was not lost on Athletics Canada but it was recognised that it was a long-term process that would need to occur to effect such change in the schools. The structure of the competition was also being assessed so that the younger aged competitors were not required to be in attendance at a venue for prolonged periods, as is currently the case.

The federated structure of Canada has necessitated a high degree of collaboration if the modifications proposed are to be put into effect. The competition changes cannot occur without the support of the provinces. The implementation strategy proposes a phased approach that will allow the awareness level of each of the provinces to increase. Since the interview (November 2008) Athletics Canada have met with all the branches and have agreed upon a new national event structure and the implementation timelines.

Change is scary, and this is a huge shift, and even thrown with the NCCP is all changing, our coaching education system, and now the very way that we implement our sport is changing significantly from the way it’s been forever (AC1).

When asked how one could measure the effectiveness of the policy AC1 suggested the following could occur;

- A “pre and post” measurement of the participants in a Run, Jump Throw program that might measure fundamental motor skills, attitude to physical activity and some basic physical abilities;

- A long term measure of the attitudes, physical skills and ability, fitness levels and level of enjoyment of children (general population studies) at different stages of their
growth after they have been through the LTAD process and assess them against children that have not (perhaps those in the present population);

- Measure the numbers introduced through a *Run, Jump, Throw* program and a measure of enjoyment;

- Monitor the (perhaps reduced) number of chronic injuries that youth track & field athletes are displaying;

- Provide tracking and exit surveys of current athletes to determine the reason why they have left the sport.

When provided the opportunity to identify what AC1 thought were the important elements in ensuring a quality and ideal athlete development environment (with no limitation of resources), AC1 suggested the following;

- Equipment was a major hurdle to overcome. In an ideal world AC1 would ensure the purchase of the correct equipment for all clubs and schools and ensure the modification of the tracks and their markings to correspond to the competition changes;

- Every club would have a continuum of coaches that were skilled in the delivery of athletics in line with the LTAD principles;

- Every coach would have ready access to the education and training required;

- A research team would be employed to monitor all the aspects of development that they were seeking to change.

The perceptions of the intent and motivation for incorporating the LTAD policy within Athletics Canada were aligned with those expressed by Sport Canada. A strong link to high performance outcomes was seen as important in its acceptance and adoption and eventual outcomes. A high level of integration of other policy areas of the sport – coaching, competition, high performance – was evident within Athletics Canada LTAD policy. There was a high recognition of the importance that coaching played in the development of the athlete.
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4.4 Athletics Canada Coaches & SSO

The perception of three coaches and a provincial CEO from Athletics was gained against a range of elements attached to the LTAD policy for their sport. The perceived motivation for Athletics Canada’s reasons for implementing the policy reflected closely that expressed by SC1. Whilst a number of the group recognised the necessity for compliance by Athletics Canada to Sport Canada requirements, this was not the sole perceived motivator. A need to develop a generic athlete development policy and one that provided a more cohesive system for high performance outcomes was identified. One coach felt that the NSO was taking it on simply because the NCCP required re-writing & a need to fit into the changes made within the coach education structure was in order.

The motivation for the policy implementation led to a discourse around the intent of the policy. A variety of responses were attained that again reflected the diversity that the LTAD model has espoused. Many responses recognised it primarily as a high performance model. They saw it as a means of attaining better performances at the higher level and suggested that the policy was one means by which the sport could keep the athlete in the sport longer by assisting in reducing chronic long term injuries.

One identified the policy as an “information piece” that assists in shaping a development pathway for the athlete and applying a holistic approach to an athlete’s development – seeking a better, general all-round athlete. Others expressed that the intent reflected a common approach to coaching philosophy and practice, suggesting it provided a focus on the science and application of the sciences in the coach education.

Some of the coaches expressed how their own personal beliefs and philosophy around physical literacy resonated with the LTAD message and suggested that the policy is as strong as any other nation’s policy in athlete development.

The expectation was summed up well by ACCoach3 -

We’re hoping to get more participation. And if we get more participation and we do a good job of providing these athletes with a positive experience, in that they’re going to be exposed to activities that are safe and reasonable and are going to help them improve, and it’s not going to burn them out. Then we’re going to see an improvement in the high performance end of things as well.
When asked to quantify the effectiveness of the policy to date, all coaches had reflected that there was minimal change as yet. The provincial representative was quite clear – when asked “…how has it influenced what you do within your province?” ACPProvince1 responded “It hasn’t.”

There was a perception that a large shift in focus on the education of athletics coaches needed to occur to ensure that they did not treat the children like little adults and that they did address the correct mix of social / emotional / cognitive development needs of the athlete. This concept was strongly supported by all interviewees and all felt confident that the “new” system would meet that need.

There did appear to be a mixing of the concept of the LTAD with that of competency based training by some. All felt that there would be minimal impact of the coach education changes at the high performance level and a larger impact at the introductory level “I think to a certain extent at all levels but the greatest impact…will be in those early phases” (ACCoach1).

Few coaches believed that it had impacted upon them and their practice, although one coach reflected on how the LTAD education had given the coach greater confidence in restricting some of the events that adolescents may seek to undertake – in line with their understanding of the principles of LTAD.

In the area of athlete development there were some interesting responses. A senior coach who was primarily supportive of the LTAD model, contested the notion of a second strength phase after puberty for girls – as suggested in the LTAD literature. All coaches were mindful of the social, emotional and cognitive elements that constituted coaching the developing athlete. These are essential skills for the coach and – depending upon which LTAD model you subscribe to – is reflective of some dissertations of the LTAD.

When specifically referring to competition structures as a result of the LTAD policy one coach suggested “some of the changes have been made before it was there, common sense changes” (ACCoach1). Whilst this may be true, others have attributed the changes to the policy. Irrespective of the motivation for the changes, they should be welcomed in a strong athlete development model.

The present policy that recognised the age group for international / national level competition should be for 18 year olds and higher was supported, as was the current practice of allowing provincial level meets in schools to occur up to the age of 18. The affirmation that the provinces could choose to operate differently from each other in implementing a competition structure – and the dilemma that are created by that – was raised by ACPProvince1. However
it would appear that Athletics Canada has attained support for a common set of competition rules by all provinces and territories since this interview.

No new rules had impacted upon the coaches at the time of interview.

When asked how they thought one could measure the success of the LTAD policy, the coaches suggested the following means;

- Measure the change in the incidence of obesity in the pre-pubescent children over 5 year intervals
- Monitor the number of participants throughout each stage; seeking increased numbers and increased retention after 17 or 20 years of age
- Measure the high performance success; see an increase in Olympic medals
- See more well-rounded athletes; Improvements when undertaking skills based tests
- Identify better performances across all levels – that athletes are attaining personal best performances
- Improved group-based performances (higher standard of performance in each event, category and division; (“the whole Bell curve” - ACCoach2)
- Increased participation numbers broadly and in athletics
- Determining whether the schools system accept the changes

When asked of their thoughts as to some of the elements that they would like to see in an ideal athlete development policy every member of the athletics sub-group suggested a higher standard of coaches and the essence of a fun-based enjoyable experience were at the heart of good quality athlete development. The responses included;

- Fun-based enjoyable experience - The fun can come from a combination of the social or tied in with success
- competitive opportunity to see athletes through a logical set of steps
- enhanced use of role models, heroes, “we … don’t do a very good job of celebrating our heroes” (ACCoach1)
- bring athletics competition INTO Canada (rather than sending athletes overseas)
- provide a social atmosphere with good group dynamics, led by energetic, full of life coaches that can instil confidence – social contact is a major issue

- Quality programming – (ensuring that) everyone knows what the skill sets required to be successful in track are

- Ensure the provision of high performance coaches at youth development - understand exercise, physiology, growth and development

- Capacity to have objective testing - a pre and post

- a national database with norms for all sports

- Talent identification - potential to get earmarked to maybe a different sport

- Have a coach that could take 30 kids, and all of them would improve

- A better club structure in all of the provinces, and all of those clubs would have well-trained coaches

- Increased number of volunteers

### 4.5 Canadian Cycling Association

CC1 identified that part of the motivation associated with the implementation of the LTAD policy within cycling was in a form of compliance with the peak body, Sport Canada, suggesting that they needed to “engage in the social policy” as part of the obligations of funding. It was made very clear that it was not necessarily the will of the NSOs in adopting the policy but a condition of funding – all be it with a level of buy-in from some.

Clearly there was a perception that the LTAD was both a philosophy and a basis for establishing training regimes.

> it changes the perception of all the contributors to a person’s physical (and) mental health, by showing them how they contribute to that journey rather than looking the other way. But it’s also understanding through clear physiological research, age-appropriate programme development (CCA1).

Canadian Cycling saw the LTAD as a model that was both geared for high performance and for establishing a development model. “It’s everything”. However there was a perception that it was even more than both of those. The physical literacy element and the interaction with
other areas of policy was perceived to be just as important a part of the LTAD philosophy as anything else.

I do think it is much more about the other stages of development, and making sure our school system and the local clubs and the gymnastic clubs, figure skating, are doing things that are in line for a person’s long term well-being rather than the specific aspect of that one little component (CCA1).

The perception that it was “everything” was not quite reflected when CCA1 referred to the financial allocation from Sport Canada, but referred to it as a social policy. The limited funding was stated as an impediment to the implementation of the LTAD and again that funding was “the only driver!” and again “They ask you the question in funding. If you do not have it, you need to have it. It’s not an option”.

So it’s the tension between the government social policy, which I would put LTAD in there at some point, versus the podium approach of “show me the medals”, and it’s the tension between the two. But even if you look at kind of a valuing of LTAD, and we can take cycling as an example, versus the valuing of high performance, and you express it in financial contribution, I have $15,000 for LTAD and this year because it’s an Olympic year I had a million for high performance (CCA1).

CCA1 alluded to the “consensus” model where there was a need for all to agree before things got implemented in Canada and felt that Canada was still working out what the LTAD would be “… we’re building the consensus around what the model should be, even though it is supposed to be based on science, you know, even science as far as I’m concerned isn’t always factual, there’s so many different opinions” (CCA1).

Like Athletics, CCA1 suggested the impact of the LTAD would be with the parents and the participants having a heightened knowledge of the elements needed in their development. However as an NSO, CCA1 appeared to wrestle with the manner in which they could integrate the training philosophy into the programming of the sport nationally.

Honestly I don’t know what it’s going to mean to a national sport federation, I’m really wrestling with this concept of what the traditional role of a programme and how we integrate a different model, which is more of an emphasis on training, (and) multi-sport development (CCA1).
Recognising the potential impact that the implementation of the LTAD could have on the national competition environment, CCA1 appeared to be tentative in modifying these elements immediately and looked to some “early adaptors” to lead the change environment both within cycling and within Canadian sport.

CCA1 indicated that there was support for the LTAD policy from Board level - that they “intuitively understand the need”, however the level of commitment may be limited, choosing to reflect on the capacity for any Board to understand the detail of many aspects. “I’d say they have a better understanding at national level of high performance aspects, … I do think they understand the principle of it, … I think where the limitations are is understanding the implications or the impact that it would have” (CCA1).

The impact of the LTAD on coach education was seen as a positive addition to the NCCP courses, recognising that the LTAD principles “filled a gap” in the content and supported the move to more individualised coach education. Equally, the potential for the policy to impact upon competition at all levels was there particularly with the Canadian Cycling Association encompassing BMX – a sport that has traditionally catered to national and international championships at very young age groups. Cycling was in the early stages of adopting the LTAD and there was a sense of reluctance attached to its implementation. Where Athletics had proposed clear changes to competition structure, equipment and facilities, cycling had no clear idea what such changes would look like – “it’s hard for me and for cycling to probably tell you what that is until we get there” (CCA1).

The difficulties that were associated with the implementation within a federated structure were highlighted, identifying that health and education were the responsibility of the provinces and territories.

When prompted for a means by which one could measure the success of the LTAD, CCA1 found it difficult to provide an answer – perhaps reflecting the unclear nature of the LTAD implementation in Cycling. However the suggestion of working across a number of other sports (speed skating, rowing, skiing) to attain better high performance outcomes was proposed – very close to a talent transfer model.

### 4.6 Canadian Cycling Coaches and PSOs

The forum of cycling coaches and provincial administrators provided a single venue where the understanding, recognition and perception of what the LTAD was and how it applied to cycling varied markedly.
Some coaches described the LTAD as a “road-map” that provides structure and guidance for the sport. It provided the opportunity to assist them in generating the most appropriate structure within their clubs and province to determine how best to develop their athletes. Others suggested that it was more of a philosophy by which coaches and administrators could choose to adopt. Another coach suggested that it was a means by which you could choose to develop all aspects of the sport.

The same coach did identify that “whether or not we use it is neither here nor there”. This was supported by another who suggested that “It’s really important to recognise that the goals of government are not necessarily the goals of the sport.” This reinforces the information provided by CCA1 in their interpretation of the LTAD as a social policy agenda. Yet another coach described it as a “waste of space”, reflecting the wide variety of thinking attached to the interpretation of the LTAD policy.

The group were sceptical of the effectiveness of developing an LTAD policy document, noting that Canada were “really good at writing documents but we’re terrible at putting them into action”.

The essence of the LTAD as a policy was questioned, with some coaches overtly disagreeing with the philosophy. The philosophy, as they perceived it, was all about the younger developmental needs and did not believe that it was a model for the development of high performance outcomes. This perception reflects the confusion that surrounds the LTAD policy by others interviewed in this research. The implementation of the policy was questioned with at least two coaches noting that they had not been consulted and that one would not agree with it.

I’m not going to say that I agree with it, I agree with the engagement, perfect, yeah, multi-sport – yeah. We did it in the UK, we spent 20, 30 million on it, we’re going “wow these kids are having great experiences”. But we’re not bloody winning. The actual goal is (winning). Maybe there does need to be a separate (policy for) participation, healthy living, good lifestyle, everything else that goes with it, but you’re giving us those dollars to win.

Yet others lived and espoused the philosophy - as they saw it. One interviewee perceived that Cycling were taking a leadership role in the way in which the LTAD was being implemented – that it had been around since the early 2000s and was an important part of the way he approached his professional coaching.
There was strong recognition by a number of participants that the federated structure meant a fracturing in the manner in which such a policy was being implemented – each province choosing to do its own thing.

The diversity of uptake was reflected in the following comments;

Everyone’s working independently, like I’ve been here two years, and not touched the LTAD” and another “and in Ontario it’s just becoming part of the lexicon in terms of funding, streams, et cetera. But I’ve been around a few years and don’t really use it at all.

These can be contrasted to the following;

and now we just started a Fundamentals where we have 6 to 8 year olds in the programme. So that’s why in our world LTAD is a strong part of our programme” and another, “But for a club coach I think the LTAD is really good value and a good purpose just to know if what he’s doing is in line, but is it happening all the time? Sure it’s not”.

One of those interviewed identified that LTAD as a policy would directly impact upon the athlete development pathway in their sport – recognising that it was likely to be in the 12 to 15 year range where the coach would focus upon the cycling fundamentals before providing those athletes to another coach for a higher level of development.

The competition structure modifications had not been put in place in all provinces, and reflected the general nature that the policy document provided. Some referred to the distance that junior cyclists were being asked to compete in and suggested it assisted in determining appropriate distances for juniors and should impact upon the race calendar. One administrator recognised the ideal of the LTAD would be for it to influence the race calendar and had been using the LTAD model to plan their rides in three provinces that he had been involved in. This indicates some level of acceptance of the LTAD principles could apply to cycling. Another suggested the race scheduling in his province was “totally disconnected” to the LTAD philosophy.

Recognising that, like athletics, the coach education within cycling would be affected by the introduction of the LTAD, it had not had an impact at the time of interview. However the recognition of its worth was reflected in one coach’s comments:

You can have expert coaches in each area, you can have a youth expert coach, you can have a developing coach, a junior coach, and then you can have an Olympic coach. It doesn’t mean that the
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Olympic coach is a better coach than the youth coach; it just means we have experts in each area.

When asked how to measure the success of such a policy the forum responded with two opposing views. One suggestion was to measure it by the success attained at a high performance level - Olympic and International medals. The opposite view was that goals could be established at each level of the LTAD stage and measured against that. The forum could not be more specific in establishing the goals – perhaps a reflection of the Canadian Cycling Association LTAD policy.

The forum identified the following elements when asked to identify those things that should represent a good development policy;

- Club structure needs to be broader, which in turn means more coaches
- Make cycling more attractive
- Buy-in by all aspects of cycling to provide a unified direction
- Well educated / trained coaches and support staff
- A program that supports retention of the athletes and one that allows a cross-over from other sports

The cycling forum provided a diversity of views and raised perceptions of the LTAD both as a policy and as a philosophy that were diametrically opposed and reflective of the issues identified in the literature review. The discussion chapter provides opportunity to reflect upon the implementation of the policy and whether the views expressed in the forum indicated to the national body the necessity to provide a stronger level of direction and communication.

4.7 Speed Skating Canada

The motivation for the implementation of the LTAD into Speed Skating Canada started prior to the policy implementation by Sport Canada. SCC1 felt it was all about long-term sustainability of the athlete development programs that Speed Skating Canada had in place – initiated by the chief operations manager after witnessing a Balyi presentation.

The primary motivation was a clear high performance objective - to have better speed skaters. SSC1 identified that there were some “side benefits” to the policy development but did not shift from its central reason for its existence, with Speed Skating clearly stating its objective of 16 medals at the 2010 Olympics.
In 2003, when it was first introduced, the provinces were having difficulty with the present competition structure being able to cater to the increased numbers in the sport. The reshaping of the competition structure in line with LTAD principles allowed for a more streamline approach to the development of the athlete. A process that included presentations to the Board; endorsement by the provinces; and a vote of endorsement by the members, led to a strong level of buy-in to the LTAD policy by the necessary affiliates of Speed Skating Canada. With a good level of buy-in and an internally identified need to change the structure of the sport, the adoption of the LTAD and its principles led to some significant shifts.

The modified competition structure by the Quebec Association led to junior competitors spending less time at competition venues (reduced from 2 days to 7 hours), competitors getting the same number of events, and requiring less driving time for the parents. The effect that the competition change has had on the level of the competition was monitored by SSC1; the depth of field went from there being 2-3 very competitive skaters within a 1-2% range, to the top 10 skaters that were really in that range, ... then looked “what’s that concentration, where’s that real concentration of highly competitive skaters?” and so it went from four or five skaters who were highly competitive, to a group of 10 or 12 (SSC1).

The improved overall performance in this 14-15 year age category was attributed to a competition structure that allowed them to be competitive each race “so there were that many more young kids that were having a positive racing experience...better quality competitive opportunity, and more accessible, because of it being lower cost, certainly there were less barriers to participation” (SSC1). Further in the “Midget” category (11 & 12 years) Quebec withdrew from the National Championship based upon the result being a measure of maturation and development rather than a measure of speed skating prowess – aligning with the principles espoused by the LTAD model.

The Quebec experience was not reflective of the national experience with the process of seeking implementation of the LTAD across the nation seen to be more of educating the provinces. Similar to Athletics, Speed Skating Canada is seeking to modify the events, distances, equipment and rules of competition, withdrawing of the younger age group from the National Championships and, with that seek the modification of the coaches behaviour. It is noted that this has not occurred as yet (at time of interview – November 2008).
Recognising that skating skills are important across a number of sports (speed skating, ice hockey, figure skating) Speed Skating Canada are modelling some integrated programs across sports to seek that “physical literacy” for skaters.

The integration of the LTAD principles to the NCCP coaching structure was seen as a good fit, however there was significant resistance to the changes being proposed. The initial approach was to get the support of the coaches and that would lead to the modification of the competition structure. Again, like Athletics, they have realised that the competition structure dictates the type of training that the coaches will undertake. “Let’s stop making the coach’s life difficult by telling them to do one thing and reinforcing the other” (SSC1). The significant changes to coaching practice were seen as being at the introductory level and not at the high performance level.

Seeking a measure of the success of LTAD policy implementation was not easy for SSC1, but included;

- the depth of quality in racing context was viewed as being the primary measure
  - the first phase being more skaters achieving the same standard, and
  - the second phase is skaters achieving a higher standard of performance
- less injuries in those that attain national training centre status
- more talented athletes who do have the technical skills at national training centres
- an improvement of competition standards from provinces outside that of Quebec at the national level (Quebec won nearly all medals at the national championships)
- monitor “the culture and the engagement of people at those lower levels”.

The importance of the role of the coach was highlighted through every aspect of Speed Skating Canada’s responses and when asked of the ideal development model, it involved the support of clubs being able to provide a professional structure for coaches.

SSC1 also proposed a model that allowed coaches at the stressful high performance end to be able to go back into an environment where they were paid, and recognised for their worth and allowed to “regenerate” - “(they) certainly could provide significant leaderships in club programmes and the skill development, and it will allow them to regenerate and maybe return to our national programmes later” (SSC1).
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The motives and the measures of the LTAD policy’s effect are heavily focused upon a high performance outcome. All skill development and physical literacy elements that are engaged are on the basis of attaining a better high performance outcome.

4.8 Speed Skating Coaches and Board Member

An interesting philosophy that appeared to underscore the Speed Skating Canada LTAD policy was that they were building a “school for life” with the introduction of the LTAD because “…it was not just an athlete we were building, we were building a citizen” (SSC4).

When asked as to the motivation for developing the policy the coaches perceptions were well educated. One coach recognised the agreement between the Ministers of Health and Sport (Canadian Government, 2008) and the unifying direction that the LTAD policy at a national level is seeking. Prior to the introduction of the LTAD SSCCoach1 suggested that few people at the club or provincial level considered how they were developing their athletes and recognised that the impetus that has surrounded the introduction of the LTAD policy has heightened their awareness.

All recognised the primary motive was for the development of high performance athletes and primarily supported that view, although one suggested that it should be about the lifelong involvement in the sport. All also recognised the international standing that Speed Skating Canada has and were supportive of the policy in helping to maintaining the sports high ranking in the world. Whilst not the primary motive, there was one that suggested it was also about building the numbers in the sport.

Interestingly, no coaches alluded to the mandatory requirement of Sport Canada as a motivation behind the policy implementation. SSC4 did recognise the necessity to comply with the national government but felt the compliance was to ensure a “sport for all” approach.

Whilst recognising the motivation for the policy, the coaches perceived the intent to be slightly different. Both the physical literacy and the strategic use of periodised elements throughout the growth phase were identified as elements that were important in the LTAD. SSCCoach2, whilst recognising that high performance outcomes were the driver, suggested that the appealing element was the development of sport throughout life – “I think really now, it is a development policy … it became really obvious that this is not a high performance programme per se” (SSCCoach2). SSCCoach3 suggested the prime intent was outlined in the ten key rules identified on the LTAD poster (referred to in Chapter 2), indicating a high level of awareness of the LTAD model.
SSCCoach1 identified that there had been little effect of the LTAD policy in the two provinces that he has recently been working as a coach and that there had been no implementation of the policy to date. SSCCoach2 reflected such a view and proffered that each person has their own take on what the LTAD is and, as a result, find it difficult to necessarily address some fundamental issues such as competition structure. He suggested that this will not be resolved for some years. The proposed nation restructure of competition was one concrete element that he supported and would have, what he considered to be, a positive impact upon the athletes. The impact that the LTAD policy has had on his coaching was more about reinforcing the beliefs that he has had and giving him the confidence to further explore the LTAD concepts with his coaching.

This contrasted to SSCCoach3 who attributed the introduction of the LTAD principles to a marked change in their approach to their coaching of athletes in the early developmental years – noting the emphasis on physical literacy becoming central to their coaching. It should be noted that the introduction of the LTAD principles had occurred in this instance prior to the LTAD policy by Speed Skating Canada.

... (we) saw that it was making a huge difference. Just that easily...and we have lots of skaters that are very, very strong in roller skate, and in cycling, ... our skaters are not only very good skaters, but they’re very, very good athletes. They’re very complete on a physical side (SSCCoach3).

Implementing the coaching practices around the LTAD were proving difficult for SSCCoach1 – “It’s a daily battle trying to fight your impulses of going with what you’re used to...but wanting to implement what’s in the LTAD”. The interaction and the utilisation of local athletics coach and yoga activities has been a direct result of attempting to implement the LTAD principles in his program.

The process of implementation became a key issue with the Board representative and one that gave an insight into ensuring a level of commitment to the policy. Outlining the process that was used in ensuring that the Speed Skating members were supportive of the policy, SSC4 identified that there were nine key principles that the Board were required to endorse before further development of the process could occur. At the same time they had meetings and discussions with the presidents of each of the territories and provincial organisations to gain endorsement from them. He identified that the process of consultation was as important as the agreement that they were seeking.
When seeking ways in which one could measure the effectiveness of the LTAD policy, the speed skating sub-group suggested a series of wide-ranging measures and included:

- Determining whether people (broader population) were still active in any form of sport
- Seeing whether clubs emerged that offered a multitude of sports
- A measure of success based upon their skills and not upon their speed on the ice
- Monitoring whether a parent is more concerned about their child’s skill development rather than their results
- Total numbers in the sport
- Retention levels at each stage of the LTAD model
- National and international success at the high performance end

Again this sub-group presented some interesting concepts when asked what they thought an ideal athlete development policy should look like. It included

- Creating more multi-sport opportunities...hockey, figure skating and speed skating combined in one universal “Learn to Skate” programme, and identify athletes’ strengths or have a try of all three sports. This concept of a broader sports club was reinforced by a number of coaches.
- Do away with the membership criteria (that government bodies use for funding purposes) that limits participants from trying different sports
- Education for parents around what to look for in development programs
- A program that enabled them to have a good social skills around skating
- A high level of support staff around the athlete
- Funding to enable the skaters to better prepare themselves and purchase ice time
- A female mentor program to promote female coach involvement in the sport.

The multi-sport club was well supported and best articulated with the following comment:

if you had kind of sports club, which is not... identified as being a hockey club or a figure skating club - it's a sports club. Where families,
athletes and participants go, and they get good instruction from coaches, and they can literally try out a whole bunch of sports, or we can lead them to a sports programme where some of it’s gymnastics, and some of it’s swimming, and some of it’s running, and some of it’s throwing, and it’s in this sports club environment as opposed to you have to go to different places to get the different things that you need (SSCCoach1).

4.9 Australian Sports Commission

ASC1 provided some reinforcement of the motives for developing the Junior Sport Framework and a more informed outline as to the process that led to its development. The development of the ASC Junior Sport Framework emerged out of the shortcomings of an original single policy document of 1994. The ASC felt that “one policy document doesn’t do justice to all of the intricacies of those sports” (ASC1). An approach that led to providing “… sports with an evidence-base. So – research, case studies, best practice – that they could then use to inform the development of any new programmes, policies and initiatives” (ASC1). A series of forums with NSOs and other stakeholders (School Sport) were held. The forums were both rural and metropolitan based in an effort to cater for all groups. The forums sought input to determine the areas of focus for the research, prior to its commissioning.

The University of Queensland was engaged to identify appropriate experts in the fields identified by the forums and develop a series of research papers. From the research, guidelines documents were produced to interpret the findings and a policy template document was produced to allow the NSOs to readily use the information in a framework, finalising the documentation in November 2003.

In outlining the expectations of the Junior Sport Framework, it was identified that the process of implementation was seen as important. By the NSO incorporating good consultation it yielded better results because it throws up a number of issues that are not just about junior sport, but are structural, that are organisational, that are efficiency-driven ... if a sport wants to develop a Junior Sport Policy and have it embedded and implemented properly, that they may have to change some of their structure in order to do that … (and has led to) a better relationship between the national and state bodies (ASC1).

This reinforces the findings of the SBS review of 2006, identified in the literature review.
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The ASC’s primary purpose or intent attached to a junior sport policy was “about the opportunities and experiences that it then affords the young people that it is supposed to be targeting” (ASC1). ASC1’s reflection of the intent incorporated their rights and closely tied the coach’s role to the outcomes -

a recognition that young people have a right to participate in whatever means they like, or whatever level they would like, … I think it has impact upon their coaching philosophies … making sure the coaches are able to coach at the right level for the athletes that they’re dealing with (ASC1).

The intent of the JSF seemed to cover the many areas of athlete development pathways, the coach education that is provided, the connection between development and high performance sport, competition structure, early specialisation and transferability between sports.

… long term athlete or development pathways, we look at the age of the young person, what motivates them, making sure … that motivation is reflected in the experience that’s offered! But one of the things that we do challenge sports on is (that) your high performing athletes and your development can’t be disconnected, there has to be some opportunity for them to move through a pathway, if that’s what they want to do… so they can’t be two disparate things, they need to work together to do that (via) age competencies I suppose, to be reflected within pedagogy, … and that’s reflected in the type of competitions that is offered. … at least make coaches aware of what is appropriate … that early specialisation and over-training leads to burnout, injury, drop-out in sport… So … what we want to enable is that young people can transfer in and out of sports. Not just in and out of high performance pathway, but in between sports, because we think the transfer of skills enables better opportunities for young people (ASC1).

Providing an opportunity for young people to enjoy sport for its own sake and not “just trying to get young people into high performance pathway” was seen as another primary motivator of the framework. This provides a clear point of difference between the JSF and the LTAD. This link between athlete development and the high performance outcome can cause some confusion in analysts and practitioners, and does need to be explored further. The LTAD model and subsequent policy action is predicated on the development of a high performance outcome. The JSF does not shy away from the necessity to link to a high performance
program, but identified that the focus for such programs should not solely be based upon the
development of a high performance outcome.

There was a clear expectation that NSOs would look at modifying their competition structure
below 13 years of age and not have state, national or international competition. The focus for
such an age group should be about skills development and fun.

ASC1 did provide some clarity around the development of policy attached to the JSF –
recognising that it was more about actioning what the sports need to do in order to develop a
modified program. The emphasis was not necessarily about the development of a policy
document.

And that’s one of the criticisms that we have, … that sports think we
have to develop a policy, and it doesn’t necessarily have to be that.
Some sports may want a guideline … a toolbox for clubs that
addresses really practical junior sport issues. So that’s what needs to
be articulated and almost distilled in those initial conversations
between the steering committee meeting - what do we want to do?
And that’s why board involvement is important … (ASC1).

The measure of the effectiveness of the JSF was identified in a few areas of the interview
with the prime measure being identified as -

that the elements attached to the junior sport framework were so
embedded into the normal policy and operation of the sport that they
were seamless and there would be no need to refer to a Junior Sport
Policy because it was just the way things occur! (ASC1).

Other suggestions of appropriate ways in which one could measure the effectiveness
included

- The capacity to have an engaged steering committee (a process of implementation);

- a measure around the quality of the experience;

- A measure against the original motivational factors (whatever they are) for the NSO
to initially choose to be involved;

- Ongoing participation in the sport and reduced drop-out rates;

- An integrated means of identifying measurable objectives throughout the
  implementation of the policy;
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- Coach-based reflection;
- The amount of education (and subsequent awareness) that has surrounded the policy implementation;
- Monitoring behavioural change.

The interview did highlight a level of frustration around the incapacity to measure the objectives of the policy. The frustrations centred around;

- Limited human capacity within the ASC to follow up on the implementation - in being able to determine what has occurred after the initial documentation has been produced;
- No link to the Funding and Service Level Agreements (FSLA) of the NSOs;
- Limited capacity to educate people of the policies;
- No inclusion of measurable outcomes with the NSOs initial plans;
- The diversity and complexity associated with measuring such objectives.

If the level of importance is reflected by the funding allocated to assisting NSOs in this area then the support would appear to be limited. Like Sport Canada, there was comparatively minimal funding allocated to NSOs for development purposes. Unlike that of Sport Canada, NSOs are required to undertake a review of junior sport from the development funding allocated to them through the normal process (not through any separate allocation) but they do have access to the additional support of the personnel from the Junior Sport Unit.

The interview reflected the notion of physical literacy that the LTAD model has championed, suggesting a better system than all NSOs “competing” for the athlete in the younger age group and seeking to allow sports to work closer with each other – particularly team sports.

It was made apparent that the voluntary nature of NSOs choosing to undertake a junior sport initiative was to allow them to embrace the changes that they would make and engage with a higher level of ownership than having to compulsorily undertake it. This was also reflected in the 2006 review of the JSF spoken about in the literature review. However ASC1 mentioned a number of times the thought that the Junior Sport Policy should be a compulsory element of the strategic plans of the NSO. Recognising the dilemma that mandatory policy implementation brings with it ASC1 suggests
what it enables is the standard of quality and risk management component to that. That all sports are doing things correctly based upon the most contemporary research, ...the ...difficulty with mandatory is that if we say to every NSO “okay, it's a mandatory requirement now” that it becomes a ticked box.

The interview reinforced the philosophy that the JSF brings to sport. It placed in question the mechanisms that are currently available for the implementation of the policy and looked for mechanisms to monitor the development of the NSOs' policies. It questioned the non-compulsory nature of the policy implementation and clearly placed itself as a model for the development of the athlete that was not specifically designed for a high performance outcome.

The use of the research provided a strong foundation stone for the JSF to propose to NSOs and provides some strength to the validity of policies based upon such. The provision of opportunity for children at all ages and the focus of attention on the safe, healthy and rewarding environment that required a high standard from coach and others is a centre-pin of the philosophy.

The JSF was very flexible in the outcomes that it was after from the NSOs in allowing the NSOs to completely drive the shape of their policy. This could be perceived as its strength and its weakness.

It can be seen that there is a great deal of common ground between the LTAD and the JSF with an interesting contrast of stated objectives (high performance v broader development) and implementation methods.

4.10 Cricket Australia

Both the Game Development Manager and the Education and Training Manager were participants in this interview process.

The federated structure of Australia and Australian sport was a key factor in the formation, motivation and intention behind the development of the Cricket Australia Junior Sport Policy document Well Played. The national body recognised that it should provide some leadership to the states and associations that were seeking some guidance on elements surrounding the structure of junior sport primarily around safety (weight of the ball, heat rules, and size of the ground) and organisational issues. There appeared to be no uniformity across the
associations attached to the junior game and Cricket Australia recognised this as a motivation to develop the document with the intention to standardise the junior game.

The NSO relied heavily on the work that a senior sport scientist attached to the Centre of Excellence program could provide in relation to the function of junior sport. The sport scientist undertook some research (undisclosed) to assist in the formation of the policy guidelines document. Cricket Australia recognised that the recommendations "stood still" once it was published in August 2006, but have continued to seek research in areas such as the material that should be applied to helmet manufacture and the recommended use of helmets in different age groups to add to the document.

The formation of the policy involved bringing a “cross-section of development officers and those people looking after community participation, or community cricket” together to establish the basis for the policy. Indicative of the turnover of staff attached to sporting organisations, the Cricket Australia representatives were not in those positions when the policy was being formulated, and therefore could not provide an accurate picture as to whether the ASC and the JSF had been involved in the formation of the policy.

The intent of the policy was made clear in the following quote:

Safety is big, and risk management, so safety, and a lot of the things are about minimum standards of safety. The next one is maximum participation and involvement, and that’s strongly aligned to our vision of being Australia’s favourite sport. So everything in that policy is about making cricket accessible and available to all (CA1).

Similar to many other sports the intent was to ensure a greater level of enjoyment from the game “it was to give a better outcome for the participants, so they've got a better game, it's more fun, it's more enjoyable ...". However CA recognised that this could not be a policy document that sought increased participation alone. They believed that the policy underpinned the emerging talented player pathway and “… therefore it also fits into our other pillar, as a foundation to thriving at the elite level, which is to be number (one) ranked in the world in (the) men’s and women’s team.”

Both CA1 and CA2 were very careful to ensure that the policy was seen as a recommendation and not a compulsory level of reinforcement across the country, however this appeared to be a two-edged sword. They also recognised that the association presidents and executive were an important key to its implementation.
Cricket Australia and our state associations, developed this policy to influence change. Saying that, the association executives may well have the keys to the gates of change, and we need to be able to influence those people to then embrace it and take it on (CA2).

Cricket Australia were in no doubt that the implementation of this policy was as effective a policy as they had produced –

I think that since August 2006, this has been our most important document in influencing change, whether it be formats, or bowling workloads and a whole range of things, but I think that there’s also been different levels of take-up with it (CA2).

Such a statement gives high worth to the importance of an athlete development policy in sport. Yet CA had no idea as to how effective the policy really was – there was no mechanism in place to monitor or determine whether the associations had actually adopted the policy or not.

One of the factors that they were considering in order to increase the level of uptake by the associations, was linking the policy adoption to the insurance offered to the clubs and associations. Such an action, whilst not necessarily mandating that associations put the policy into effect, could apply significant pressure on them to do so.

Cricket Australia believed that the Well Played policy does influence the athlete development pathway, but they also recognised that the game of cricket – and with that the player pathway – was emerging and changing. They saw that the policies in the Well Played document reflected the move from the more traditional style of cricket to that of the modern game. When seeking clarity as to the intended impact – was it to increase recreation cricket activities or structured cricket – there was agreement that it was directed towards structured cricket activities.

The changes and modifications recommended in this document centred around the modification to the competition structure “I’ll … say that’s what the document’s all about”. Through that competition structure other elements such as coach education are developed.

The integration of the policy into coach education and accreditation was seen as important suggesting that, effective practices by the coaches “sets the athlete up to succeed”. At the Introductory level of the coach accreditation, the Well Played element was a module in its own right. At the next level of accreditation, Level 1 it was integrated into the game.
modification to ensure maximum participation. Each level of education required knowledge of and an analysis as to its effectiveness at that level of coaching.

You get into Level 2, look at if it is actually making change, and maybe what could be done to improve that … And then at Level 3, it purely becomes a critical analysis of it, that actually looks at what’s the future of the game, and how can a policy like this actually shift where we need to (be) … they’re looking more at the progressing athlete.

Once again, the role that the coach plays in the developing athlete has been highlighted.

the coach is the first point of contact, with the participant/athlete, about the moment of truth, … where they say “I love cricket, that’s going to be my favourite sport”… That coach and how they set up the environment is critical in the making of that choice and … the Spirit of Cricket is an over-arching umbrella.

The participants from Cricket Australia suggested that some ways in which one could best measure the effectiveness of the policy could be in the following measures;

- A target of 750,000 participants by 2012-13;
- Identifying the numbers in each of the age groups and determining if there is a significant drop in numbers at any given point;
- percentage of uptake of cultural and linguistically diverse people, females and other target groups;
- numbers of modified competitions being conducted by the associations.

Cricket Australia thought that the changes required to ensure a comprehensive athlete development policy could include the following;

- compulsory coach accreditation at all levels;
- ongoing professional development and support services to the coaches;
- all clubs have an in2cricket introductory program with accredited coaches attached to the program;
- minimise the impediments that the federated structure imposes.
4.11 Cricket Coaches and SSO

All coaches interviewed were aware of the policy document. The motives for the Junior Development Policy as perceived by the Cricket coaches and SSO representative were diverse. CACoach1 saw it as a deliberate and strategic move by Cricket Australia to establish a strong athlete development pathway one that would

get the most talented, then we need to have an appropriate model and system and framework that drives them through. And larger numbers at the base means more chance of getting the best athletes to the top (CACoach1).

The same coach also suggested that there was likely to be funding pressure on Cricket Australia to take up the policy, as well as a perception that CA recognised that they were not doing enough in this area so it “were time for a review”. CACoach3 reinforced this, believing that it came about as a result of “not just a change in cricket, but a change in society” where it is seen to be important to incorporate scientific research as a support to policy in order to minimise litigation. CACoach3 felt that the Well Played document was part of Cricket Australia’s core ethos. Addressing the litigation concerns was reinforced by CAState1 as a major driver in the development of the policy. Unifying the disparate policies was perceived as another motive for the policy – “… bring everything under one umbrella in a catch-all reference for clubs and associations” (CAState1). This perception was reflective of the motives expressed by Cricket Australia as the basis for developing of the policy.

When asked of the intent of the document, CACoach3 suggested that it was all about the spirit of cricket “I think it focuses on the spirit of cricket and how cricket itself can embrace a wide range of people in a lot of different communities”. CACoach1 saw it as the tool to assist coaches apply a game-sense approach

making sure then your activities are planned for the session, in terms of being relevant to those participants … we’ve got to keep it moving, … keep them in the small groups, … keep it fun. If it doesn’t work it’s more likely your fault as a coach, not their fault as a kid (CACoach1).

A similar sentiment was expressed by CACoach2 with the addition of a social and skill-sets focus for the participants – “stuff that resonated for me was getting the kids involved, it’s fun, it’s only a game … and ensuring player well-being and safety and player development”.

In line with the perceived motivation, CAState1 saw the intent as something that would create greater consistency with a focus on the provision of a safe environment, suggesting
that CA wanted better educated clubs and associations and to provide a tool for people to use that’s useful “… so that the quality of the experience is better for everyone who’s participating – scorer, player, parent, coach, umpire”.

The cricket sub-group indicated that the policy has already had an impact upon the coach education as well as the competition structure, suggesting that the competition structure has had a greater level of influence on those under 12 years of age. One coach saw a discernable improvement in the skills and knowledge at this age in the last two years. Although, CACoach1 cited examples of competition being different in different associations and coaches having different approaches to the number of balls bowled or overs faced as a batter. This would seem counter to the intent of Cricket Australia and the Well Played policy document. Reflecting the comments made by Cricket Australia surrounding the influence that the associations can have, CACoach1 suggested “… and it is actually clubs, community clubs in particular, defining the coach’s role, and making sure that those roles align with the policy” that dictated the level of adoption that the policy would have. CACoach3 identified that it is used by the clubs – “I know from my personal experience yes I do use it, most clubs and administrators are quite satisfied with the document, it tends to answer a lot of their questions” and suggest that it gives the coaches and associations a document to refer back to. The state representative affirmed that most – not all – associations saw the recommendations of the policy as being positive.

It was strongly reinforced that the primary elements that the policy has had an effect upon are the introductory games and the skill level at that age. CACoach1 recognised the effort that had gone into implementation of the policy by development officers and suggested that tied funding to the states from Cricket Australia had an impact in ensuring that it was promoted.

The implementation of the policy into the coach education was recognised by all. Such integration appears to have led to an increased recognition of the policy. Interestingly, it was the state representative that suggested that it was not core to the coach education but an element that was “referred to”.

Few believed that the policy catered for the athlete development pathway well. If there were opportunities to progress, no participants suggested that it was the policy that catered for it. CACoach1 called it managing the transition points and was critical of Cricket Australia in their recognition and management in this area.

I think cricket manages transition points horribly ... Cricket should recognise them to start with, ... I can’t see a consistent talent
development policy or approach. (They are) caught up on identification rather than development ... our development system does not account for outliers - leg-spinners and technically gifted batsmen and late-maturing bowlers ... can be elite athletes, but the system burns them along the way (CACoach1).

When asked how one could best measure the success of an athlete development policy the cricket coaches / SSO sub-group provided a fairly limited response, but did identify the following elements;

- the number of children who tell their mates how much fun it was;
- Monitoring the numbers being lost from Cricket and where that is occurring;
- The attraction of others - number of parents that you have watching;
- Survey of clubs and associations on its use.

When asked to determine an ideal athlete development policy, however, they were effusive. Suggestions included;

- A modified culture that was not as elitist and not as focussed upon technical development
- Improved communication strategy
- Capacity to have multi-skilled level competition at different age groups
- Good quality grounds with shade
- Use cricket as the vehicle to bring people together and make cricket as accessible for anyone to be able to play. Enable cricket to be a vehicle for some better social gains.
- tracking of athletes after they leave the sport
- ensure that that knowledge is filtered through the system, so it reaches the lower levels much quicker
- Identify the priority areas in each aspect of bowling, batting, fielding and mental skills and ensure that is provided to all coaches.
4.12 Netball Australia

The interview with Netball Australia involved the CEO (NA1) and the General Manager – Sports Development (NA2). Whilst the Netball Australia Junior Sport policy was the only policy document that they used, NA2 identified another resource document that was called the LTAD resource. The resource, developed in 2005-6, was seen as one that looked at “…the holistic athlete development programme that should be provided to those type (SIS/SAS) of players”. It was provided to the State Institute and Academy programs but had not been implemented or followed through by either Netball Australia or some of those in the State Institute of Sport / State Academy of Sport (SIS/SAS) network. Follow-up discussions indicate that the resource was produced by one coach and was not widely used, circulated or referred to by Netball Australia or its state affiliates. However it remains a document with Netball Australia.

The Netball Australia Junior Sport Policy was based on the framework that the JSF provided but developed to meet the needs of Netball. The motivation behind incorporating the document appeared to be around catering to the 70% of netball membership that is under the age of 17 “…actually being able to introduce young people into our game and provide them with age-appropriate activities, but also to actually try and educate our people around the principles…” (NA2). It was recognised as a strategic priority for Netball in 2007 to support the development of the policy and meeting the needs of the participants in that age category.

There was strong support from the states and territories in its implementation and something that the sport did not rush into, but piloted and planned all elements around it. All the same, each state was expected to adopt the policy – “they’re required constitutionally to adopt them” (NA1).

Another motive appeared to be in gaining a competitive advantage over other sports. This indicates a level of confidence in the policy and acknowledged that this was aimed at the future development of the sport. The concept that had been alluded to earlier with Sport Canada, Speed Skating and others in the adoption of the LTAD was evident here with Netball – that of unifying the sport with a set of national behaviours and programs.

In seeking the central elements to the policy, it was suggest that it was about providing the early level skills so that they could progress as they chose. It was also about increasing participation levels. Whilst there was recognition that the development of skills could lead to high performance outcomes the interviewees did not confuse the motivation for the policy
with that aim. They recognised it as an important aspect of it but reinforced the focus upon participation. NA2 saw their LTAD guidelines as the element that provided the focus upon a high performance outcome.

When identifying the effectiveness of the policy Netball Australia suggested that it was very closely linked to the coach education program and the revised structure that was occurring with the coach accreditation. The tie to other elements of netball’s promotion was seen as essential. Netball felt that they could not implement a national junior program (NetSetGO!!) for the beginning netballers without the Junior Sport Policy.

I think it’s really important that you have the framework of a policy, so that you know what you’re trying to achieve, but then the policy on its own will never live if you don’t have some type of programme (NetSetGO!!) that builds the capacity of your people to be able to do what you want them to do (NA2).

NA1 believed that the associations have used the policy to assist in their direction – “it actually empowers them to feel like they’ve got control of their own destiny... When you don’t have a framework, you don’t know what you can and can’t do.” There was also a strong expectation that both the state bodies and the coaches would accept and readily adopt most of the elements identified within the policy.

I think (the coaches) support it, and generally the coaches more than anyone in our game … they eat up anything new” (NA1) and “I think from a state perspective, …I don’t know if a lot of them see a lot of relevance to the policy, but I think they see a lot of relevance in the implementation of the policy” (NA2).

The success of the NetSetGO! program was seen as a measure of the effectiveness of the policy. NA2 suggested that acceptance by the member organisations was itself a performance indicator of its effectiveness. Like Cricket Australia, Netball had no mechanism for the monitoring of the acceptance of the program at this level.

When asked to dream of an ideal athlete development policy, like cricket both participants suggested a removal of the federated structure that would enable them to provide programs through to the grassroots level. Already experimenting with this structure now, Netball suggested the appointment of development officers within the state offices would allow a stronger level of direction and monitoring in getting the key messages through. They believed that a higher level of consistency of the development structure would lead to a higher consistency within the SIS/SAS network.
Once again a strong message around the importance of coaches in the development of the athlete came through with a reinforcement of the current practices and coach development structure into the future. Like Cricket, they proposed that a mandatory minimum accreditation for coaches would markedly enhance the athlete development of their sport. One area that they did identify that required significant improvements – and one that would enhance the quality of athlete development – was that of officiating.

The ideal athlete development model proposed by Netball was not a significant departure to the current structure, but one that required more resources – an area in which Netball were acutely aware of their limitations.

In two different sports - the results of the interview with Cricket and Netball - provided some similar thinking and a strong level of support for their current athlete development policies that they had each implemented. Both recognised the unifying role that the policy played and both recognised it as an important policy within their framework.

4.13 Netball Coaches and SSO

Part of the perceived motivation for developing the junior sport policy in Netball, as identified by the Netball coaches, was to limit the amount of competition that some of their participants were playing in both junior and senior competition. It was suggested that such a restriction would provide a stronger sense as to where the athletes fit within the development pathway of the sport. Others perceived that the threat of litigation – brought about by some gender participation issues, was a motivator for the development of the policy. The same coach (NACoach3) did also suggest that addressing the developmental needs of the children was equally a driver for the development of the policy “we must have pathways and we must have policies in place that looks after all avenues of our development” (NACoach3). Similar to Cricket, there was a perception by one coach that compliance with the ASC for funding purposes was a motivator for Netball Australia’s policy implementation.

There was a strong and shared sense as to the intent of the policy amongst the coaches and NSO. Reflected by NACoach1’s view –

that the sport is available for all, that all young people have the opportunity and ability to participate openly and freely within the sport, that they are in an environment that’s safe, that they have equal opportunity to develop the skills of the game and the enjoyment of the game.
Others further defined their perception of the intent of the document by suggesting it sought to address overtraining of younger athletes and recommendations as to the intensity and duration of training as athletes progressed (NACoach2; NAState1). Others highlighted the document as an educational tool to inform associations and coaches of the needs of juniors.

All the coaches interviewed believed that the policy had made an impact on the development of skills for the introductory netballer with a heavier emphasis upon fundamental skills and participant enjoyment.

Each of the coaches recognised that there was a better development pathway for the players, but were unsure as to whether that was the outcome of the Junior Sports Policy or as a result of other factors. The recently introduced National Netball League provided a stronger competition structure that in turn provided more development opportunities for the athletes. NACoach3 articulated it well in their response -

...so has the junior policy changed the perspective of pathways from grass roots, under 5s, through to national level? No, I don't think so, but I believe it would have created a better awareness of what players should be able to learn when they come out to your sport.

NACoach1 certainly felt that the athlete pathway that was offered in Netball was healthy whilst not attributing that health particularly to the Junior Sport Policy.

All of the coaches recognised a change in competition structure at the introductory level however when the NAState1 was asked as to whether there was any change in the competitions that they ran as a result of the policy, the response was simply “No.” They noted that because they offer an under 12 competition at the state age championships, some district associations have started to conduct under 11 talent squads. This appears contrary to the intent of the Junior Sport Policy.

All Netball participants in this sub-group saw the strong link between the Junior Sport Policy and the revised coach accreditation structure that occurred within Netball – particularly at the Foundation and Development levels (the first two introductory levels of accreditation). Whilst all coaches felt that the policy had not affected their own coaching, some did acknowledge that their coach education or mentor work with other coaches may have been impacted upon by the policy. All suggested a higher level of impact on the introductory level coaches (11 to 14 years). NACoach1 suggested

it has probably emphasised that I am very attentive to skill sets and progressing skill sets from stage to stage, and progressing their
physical development relevant to their age and physical parameters…I don’t know that it’s necessarily changed, maybe I’m a little more aware of what I’m doing in coaching.

Perhaps it is in the conduct of the coaches that are not even aware of the policy that indicates its effectiveness, best addressed by NACoach3 –

I can honestly say that there are coaches around us who don’t have any idea about the policy, but I’d like to say that the coaches I see around us adapt to a lot of the parts of the policy. Have they changed because of the policy? No.

The measure of a successful Junior Sport Policy was suggested to be in the following parameters;

- Participation numbers and sustainability of participation numbers (retention rates)
- Measuring how a person values their involvement in the game
- Success at a high performance level.

When asked to identify the elements that they thought should be in an ideal athlete development policy they suggested;

- Each athlete had the opportunity to work with a qualified and knowledgeable coach;
- Greater opportunity for athletes to enjoy international competition;
- greater access to competitive domestic competition at all levels;
- Participants experience a local and accessible comprehensive training environment;
- Greater access to indoor venues;
- Change the rules to allow coaches to coach more during the games;
- Modify the structure to allow 4v4 and substitutions to enhance the involvement and engagement of all;
- Increased coordination and communication to coaches;
- Improved opportunity for game and performance analysis.
4.14 Basketball Australia

Prior to the development of the Junior Sport Policy for Basketball Australia, there was no coherent policy from the national body that addressed junior development in the sport. Seen as two elements – the Aussie Hoops program and the Junior Sport Policy document – it’s prime motive was to develop an awareness for the associations attached to Basketball Australia.

The focus for the Aussie Hoops program was to provide a unified brand and product for junior competitors in Basketball across Australia. “It quite explicitly adopts a game sense approach, which good coaches have been doing for 20 years anyway … experiential learning, having fun being the emphasis…”(BA1). The stated intent was to have something that was seen as “best practice”.

Like most other sports interviewed in this research, Basketball could not mandate the policy to its states and associates. Produced in conjunction with the ASC the junior sport policy was intended to assist clubs and associations in having a “better shopfront”. Clearly established to provide some prompts to the associations to respond in the four key areas (fun-based activities, safe environment, personnel and pathway), Basketball saw their role to simply prompt the organisations to self analyse.

it wasn’t a policy in the sense of our tribunal guidelines and our member protection and that, which is “adopt it and follow it”, this is more a tool (to) assess how you’re going. Because some associations might have been good in what they were delivering on court, modifying rules and making it accessible, but were really hopeless in the volunteer management, for instance. And so it enables them to work through it (BA1).

Basketball described the role of the ASC and the JSF as being the “conscience” and asking the necessary questions of Basketball. BA1 did recognise a shift in the development of the policy to get to its current form. Initially they were to produce “something that very much looked like the Junior Sport Framework. It was big, it was unwieldy, and … it would have sat on a shelf and not been used”. Whilst different to what they had seen before, the change was supported by the Junior Sport Unit. Aware of the LTAD, BA1 suggested that it had no real influence in the formation of either Aussie Hoops or the Junior Sport Policy.

In seeking BA1’s perception of how effective the policy was, BA1 was asked about the buy-in by the Board and the states. BA1 thought the (new) Board “… they’d know nothing about it
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– At the time, yes, the Board did sign off on the policy. But if you had asked them a month later…they’d know Aussie Hoops, absolutely …”. A similar response was gained around what BA1 thought the States’ awareness would be – they would know Aussie Hoops but he suggested that they would have limited or no knowledge of the Junior Sport Policy.

There appeared to be no expectations that the policy would impact upon the athlete’s development, yet there was a strong recognition that the sport was not getting the athletes that they once had.

From an elite point of view, our national head coaches are saying, and our AIS is saying, we’re not getting as good an athlete any more. Our pendulum has swung too far, in that the kids going to the AIS, their basketball skills are well advanced over what they were 10 years ago. But their ability to sprint, change direction, run, the real athletic stuff, is worse (BA1).

When pressed as to how one might address it BA1 recognised the “…need to actually raise the importance of doing the athletic development at lower levels” but appeared not to link an athlete development model or the function of the Junior Sport Policy to such an outcome.

BA1 appeared to recognise that the awareness of the Junior Sport Policy is likely to be minimal amongst the coaches and associations, however they would be highly mindful of the Aussie Hoops program. Alluding to the athlete development pathway that should exist for Basketball, there was recognition that the policy document itself looked at the pathway for the athlete.

In a similar way, BA1 spoke of the potential link that the new (yet to be implemented) coach accreditation structure would have with the Aussie Hoops program, however at present they were separate. BA1 stated that the Aussie Hoops program or the Junior Sport Policy would have no impact upon the coaches and what they do. He did suggest that the game sense philosophy is carried through to the current coach education curriculum.

The policy’s impact upon competition structure was also seen as having some effect at the introductory level but was left to the associations to determine how to best modify their competitions based upon the philosophy that they would extract from the policy. BA1 did not suggest any changes at national level in any of their competition structure, age group representation or selection policies at local, state or national level.

When asked how Basketball might measure the effect of such a policy BA1 suggested;
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- the number of schools visited;

- a pre and post assessment of the association after they had undertook the checklist self-assessment of the Junior Sport Policy.

The areas that Basketball felt would change if they were able to implement a best-practice athlete development policy were very similar to the other Australian sports. It included

- capacity to mandate any changes;

- change the federated structure “Our delivery chain is completely and utterly broken” (BA1);

- improved coach competence in their capacity to cater to all physical elements of the sport;

- a return to a National Coaching Development Officer.

4.15 Basketball Coaches and SSO

There was a very poor awareness of the Junior Sports Policy of Basketball Australia by anyone within the Basketball coaches / SSO sub-group. One coach suggested that he had heard of it bit could not provide any idea as to what was in it. BACoach1 was aware of it as a policy but thought that it had not changed for some years. BAState1 had recollected seeing the document but had no real ideal as to the contents of it and certainly did not allude to the checklists that were the central focus of the document.

As suggested by Basketball Australia, all coaches and SSO representative were very aware of the Aussie Hoops program. BACoach1 thought that the Aussie Hoops program was initially a program called Hoopster that was conducted differently in each state. The Aussie Hoops program sought to give a common branding to it and was seen as trying to unify the sport. BACoach1 perceived that Basketball had “made a number of cosmetic changes and called it Aussie Hoops, still, in a functional sense it’s left each of the states to manage their own development pathway “.

Both other coaches were short, sharp and direct in identifying that that did not know of the policy document or its intent. The best articulation from the one coach that thought that he had come across it suggested that the intent was to increase “the bottom line (finance) and numbers” (BACoach3).
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There was a clear call from the coaches for some leadership from the national body – “… and I’d like to see a clear articulation of what are we trying to do” (BACoach1) and from BACoach2 “Honestly, I’ve got no idea because I’ve never seen anything … (emanate) from it. …I don’t think they’re (Basketball Australia) showing a lot of leadership at the moment, quite frankly.” This was supported by BAState1 - “At the end of the day, one of the greatest things that I always get feedback from associations in my state about, is about having clear direction”.

BAState1 suggested that the main intent of the policy was to bring people together, to target basketball as the sport of choice and to seek

- good links both internally … clubs, volunteers, coaches … at the grassroots level, and also externally … such as schools, other sporting organisations, and developing strong links with state bodies, so for instance … Sport and Recreation … and so forth.

He further proceeds to suggest that the main reason for producing the policy was “defining pathways, and defining what the business of basketball is”.

As only two of the four people interviewed suggested that they had knowledge of the policy, the research could gain limited information as to their perceived intent of the policy. It would be difficult to determine the effect of a policy if the interviewee was unaware of the policy. Of the two that had seen the policy, their articulation of the intent was different from each other. As a result, the researcher sought to engage the interviewees around what they saw occurring in Basketball that could be related to a Junior Sport Policy.

There was a sense that Basketball Australia was focussing a great deal of their attention on the high performance end in a hope to see a better level of engagement from the developing structures. “… the new regime now is starting from the top-down, they’ve gone back to NBL, this is the mother lode, from that everything else will flow. I’m not necessarily convinced of that” (BACoach1). It appeared that there was no development or link between the program of Aussie Hoops and any other level of development. When asked of the existence of a development link between the 12 year olds through to the 17 year olds BACoach1 suggested that “No transfiguration (sic) was provided with Aussie Hoops, whether it should have been I guess is arguable”. He further suggested that the articulation of the policy from Basketball Australia was poor and that the policy has had no impact upon him.

- I don’t think there is a concerted thought being given to how do we engage the community, … continue that engagement once we’ve got
their attention, and … best assist the people (in) facilitating their venues, their competitions, their activities…(BACoach1).

BACoach2, when discussing the progression of skills or a competition pathway suggested “we do a really crappy job of transferring from exposing kids to the game to getting them permanently involved in the game and competition”. He did provide an unkindly thought as to why that was the case – sighting administrators seeking kudos for participation numbers.

The group did identify some developmental components of Basketball that are currently occurring and do cater to that age group. Whilst not coming from Basketball Australia, BACoach3 did speak of a practice that was being used in his area -

We try to get the under 14s, 16s, 18s, all doing the same system (and had developed a) curriculum that we’ve given all the state coaches ... this gives them a guide (regarding patterns of play and structure from 14s through to 18s) The only difference is a lot more fundamental work with the 14s ... We’re just trying to develop a culture so when they get to the under 18s they know what’s going on. The 14s look up to the under 18s.

The curriculum appeared to involve three components “offensive section – offences. Defences system, and what I call the communication system as well” (BACoach3). Reinforcing that it was only a guide and wanted the state coaches to use it, BACoach3 recognised that it was “not the be all and end all. Coaches will bring their own stuff, and tweaks”.

BACoach3 recognised the skills development area as that of primary concern for the athletes that he directly works with – “most genuinely they want to get better”. This was countered a little by BACoach2 who suggested of the developing youth that “… their attitudes reflect the way society is today, and I don’t think some of them are all that conducive to being successful …they want to be spoon-fed and hand-fed everything they get”. Whilst not exuding a highly positive attitude himself, BACoach2 did recognise the necessity of gaining a good skills base that then requires strength development when asked of the developmental needs of the athlete. BACoach2 added that the other important elements are “… teamwork, leadership, getting on with other people…and it really helps I think in the long term if they can see the game beyond just their involvement in it”.

When asked how one might measure the effectiveness of a junior sport policy the Basketball sub-group suggested;
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- Numbers of participants
- A proliferation of the sport on television and in the schools
- A better integration of the sport between schools / universities and clubs
- A subjective measure of the standard of the athletes
- Establish benchmark skills and results for players
- Feedback from participants (as to whether they are enjoying the game).

In identifying the elements that were important for such an age group BACoach1 suggested well organised, well officiated competitions in clean modern facilities; that was “up to date - technological(ly), internet, results, consumer-friendly”; that it was social and appropriately competitive. This then provided the athletes a good experience.

When seeking an ideal athlete development model the group suggested the following:

- Provide good quality facilities
- Improve the quality of referees to provide a better experience for the players
- Smaller groups for Aussie Hoops style activities
- More training opportunities for the advanced level athletes
- A higher level competition for isolated areas
- More stadiums in indigenous communities
- Full time development officers in the indigenous communities
- A new office in their city.

The interviews with this sub-group indicated that the Junior Sport Policy, beyond that of Aussie Hoops, was either unknown or interpreted differently to the intent of Basketball Australia. There was clearly some athlete development that was occurring but not coordinated nationally. Each of the coaches that were interviewed placed a great deal of focus on developing the skills of their athletes. The state representative that was interviewed worked with associations in assisting in the skill development of their athletes – it simply was not done under any given national policy and no one recognised it as important.
under the national agenda of Basketball Australia. The call for leadership, the differing opinions as to what the policy was, its intent and expected outcomes, may be a reflection of the implementation process – or lack of an implementation process - of the policy.

4.16 Summary

The results chapter has articulated the motivation and intent of Sport Canada in applying the LTAD model as an athlete development policy to be utilised by all sports within Canada and the same of the ASC in assisting NSOs in their Junior Sport Policies. It recognised some of the important actors / agents within the development of the policy. It provided a clearer understanding as to how each of the policy platforms emerged and the expectations of NSOs in the implementation of the policy.

Three Canadian sports and three Australian sports provided their interpretation as to the intent of the model or framework and its central motivation. All were asked as to the intent of their policy and the effect that such a policy has had or is expected to have. The same was asked of a selection of significant coaches or state / provincial representatives in their sport – in particular their perception of the motives and intent of the athlete development policy and its effect or expected effect on their current practices. This provides the opportunity to review the coach and state representatives’ perception and see if it reflected the intent of the policy makers - the NSO and the national government body.

Recognition of the different manner in which the JSF was designed to assist sports to that of the LTAD was gained and provides the opportunity for discussion in the following chapters.
5.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the data extracted from the interview process and seeks to interpret whether the perceptions of the practitioners accurately reflects the intention of the policy – as stated by the policy makers and what the practitioners perceptions were in relation to the effectiveness of the policy. The chapter will discuss how such information enhances or contests information already identified within the literature review. The data will consolidate or contest the perception of those entrusted to implement the athlete development policy. The means by which one might measure athlete development policy as expressed by those interviewed, is identified. The participants in this research provided a rich source in determining the effectiveness of athlete development policy. As a complete group, their collective opinion on the essential elements to an athlete development policy should be
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recognised and forms the basis for the conclusions and recommendations. The opinions expressed by the interviewees were collated and commented upon.

The capacity to gain the perceptions of the sport practitioners was fairly straight forward. Determining the intent of the policy makers was the area that had proven to be difficult – particularly in relation to the LTAD.

5.2 Sport Canada / NSO Perceptions and Expectations of LTAD Policy

The literature review has already recognised a differentiation between the LTAD model and the LTAD policy. Further discussion around this issue occurs later in this chapter. However for the practitioners, it is seen as one and the same. The researcher did not ask practitioners to separate the model from the policy. If one is to accurately determine the efficacy of the policy in relation to the intent of the policy makers, then one needs to determine the intent of the policy makers.

In seeking clarity, the researcher used the LTAD model literature, the Canadian Sport Policy literature, the supporting documentation for the LTAD implementation and additional level of clarity from the Sport Canada interview to discern the intent of the policy. One needs to analyse the data from the Sport Canada interview to attain a higher level of clarity upon which we can then ascertain whether the NSOs, SSOs and coaches perceptions are accurately reflected. The intent of the LTAD model and policy, as determined by the literature review are;

- it was formed to meet a high performance outcome;
- there are critical or sensitive periods of training during childhood and adolescence where the incorporation of specific elements of training (speed, strength, skill, endurance) are required;
- The peak height velocity is critical to determining these specific elements of training;
- It has evolved into a policy platform that espouses a staged progression of skill development where one must attain competence in one level before progressing;
- The policy seeks to attain increased participation. Such policy supports;
  - an increased emphasis on physical literacy and lifelong participation;
  - an emphasis upon continual improvement;
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- a reliance on good coaching practice; and

- utilisation of the “windows of trainability” to optimise potential

According to the Sport Canada representative, the motivation behind the LTAD being incorporated into policy was to

- provide a unifying force for Canadian sport;

- address the poor results of high performance sport at the Olympic level;

- identifying some basic athletic competencies that should be part of all high performance athletes; and

- to ultimately attain better high performance outcomes for Canada.

The broader philosophy of the LTAD was espoused as one that encompassed athlete-centred sport that is developmentally appropriate - where people receive the best training and have the best opportunity to compete. It allows them to stay in the sport, seek improvement and to attain excellence if possible. The interview did suggest that the LTAD policy was primarily addressed to meet the physical literacy needs of the nation, at least at this stage of its development. SC1 at various times referred to the LTAD as a high-performance model, the need to address physical literacy and a philosophy. At other times, SC1 suggested that they were realising that it was about development and were "not yet geared to the high-performance athlete".

The interview with SC1 failed to further enhance an understanding of the link between the stated scientific LTAD model and the policy documents as espoused by Sport Canada. Further, the interview failed to provide a tangible link in the process that either the NSO or Sport Canada could undertake in bridging the need to address physical literacy in the sporting population of Canada and producing the high performance athlete – in either practice or planning. This is not to suggest that the development of the strategies within the LTAD policy could not sufficiently address it – it simply appeared that SC1 could not clearly articulate it. This further enhances the idea that, whilst called the same thing, there is a tangible difference between the policy that is being implemented within Canada – the LTAD policy, and that of the model that informs the policy – the LTAD model. The emergence of this differentiation assisted this researcher in providing clarity around the LTAD.

The strategic direction and intent from Sport Canada was limited, expressing surprise that a competition review yielded significant work and that the production of a policy document was
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not sufficient in itself – two examples of the need for a stronger level of strategic intent. A more coherent policy should resonate with other policy and administrative sectors within Sport Canada to allow for the principles espoused within the LTAD policy to be reflected in such areas. The reference to the *hosting* branch and the reduction of funding attached to an NSO that incorporated LTAD principles are two examples of how a more coherent policy will assist NSOs in their development.

There are strong links between the implementation of the LTAD and the generic coach education elements attached to the NCCP. The information gained within the interviews in Canada revealed a strong and nearly wholehearted acceptance of the incorporation of the LTAD terminology and principles into the coach education framework.

SC1 did provide some means by which one might be able to measure the effect of the LTAD policy, each of which were process oriented. Important as they may be, evidence of a process – as against an outcome, provides only indicative measures as to its effect. Important nonetheless, the process measures could be combined with the outcome measures that the NSOs and coaches have provided to formulate a comprehensive series of measures that future policy analysts may choose to utilise.

Whilst a stated motive of the LTAD policy is to seek a high performance outcome, at the time of interview there was no process that NSOs could look to that would link their LTAD policy to meet some form of high performance outcome.

The requirements that Sport Canada has placed upon the NSO in relation to the LTAD policy are to;

- produce an LTAD policy document
- identify a series of initiatives
- undertake a competition review

If NSOs are to attain the funding from Sport Canada, they need to at least undertake the first of these elements. As indicated in the Research Methodology (Chapter 3, Table1) as at September 2008, there were only 50% of the NSOs that were funded by Sport Canada that had completed the production of an LTAD Policy document.

Whilst the above elements were those that were required by Sport Canada for funding, if one reviews the aims of the LTAD model and the stated aims of the LTAD policy in concert with the information provided by SC1, the requirements of the NSOs in relation to the LTAD
becomes quite profound. If an NSO were to fully implement the LTAD to reflect the aims of those stated the NSO would be required to also consider the following items:

- Address the poor results of high performance sport at the Olympic level
- Apply critical or sensitive periods of training during childhood and adolescence. The peak height velocity is critical to determining these specific elements of training
- Implement a staged progression of skill development
- Attain increased participation
- Attain an increase in physical literacy in order to meet the physical literacy needs of the nation
- Attain an increase in lifelong participation
- Provide an emphasis upon continual improvement
- Rely upon good coaching practice
- Enact the LTAD policy as part of a unifying force for Canadian sport
- Identify some basic athletic competencies that should be part of all high performance athletes
- Ensure the provision of athlete-centred sport
- Provide an environment that is developmentally appropriate where people receive the best training and have the best opportunity to compete
- Allow participants to stay in the sport, seek improvement and to attain excellence if possible
- Ensure that there was a link between the LTAD model and the coach education and accreditation framework

It was evident that there was a hope and perhaps an expectation that the NSOs would adopt the philosophy of the LTAD. Primarily, in this sample group, that appeared to be the case. There was not a requirement by Sport Canada that the NSOs adopt the philosophy in order to attain funding – yet one might question the worth of promoting a policy where the central philosophy of that policy was not accepted.
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One must remember that the selection of the sports for this research was identified out of those NSOs that had shown some indication that they had adopted the LTAD already. It is quite feasible that the acceptance of the philosophy by NSOs more broadly throughout Canada would be less than the level of adoption identified in this research.

Canada has done an excellent job in ensuring that the key messages of the LTAD have been provided to the national sporting organisations and those key messages are relayed into their policy.

In line with the philosophy espoused by Sport Canada, Athletics Canada also believed that it was a model that would seek to attain a high performance outcome as well as a model that provided the fundamental skills for their use. To this end, both athletics and speed skating, reflected well the intent of the LTAD being a high performance policy. Whilst there was some reflection by Athletics Canada that the policy was having its strongest impact at the early developmental years and less upon the high performance development of the sport, Speed Skating were quite certain that any initiatives were established to ultimately attain a high performance outcome. This appeared to be not as clear by Canadian Cycling, nor in fact, the coaches and provincial administrators within cycling.

The physical literacy element of the policy appears to have very strong resonance across all three sports interviewed – both at the national level and at the practitioner’s level. The excellent examples that were provided by Speed Skating in relation to their program in Quebec, where the modification of both competition and training structure led to higher outcomes both in performance and satisfaction of athletes, gives confidence to those administrators that seek to apply the LTAD to their sport. So too the examples of some of the cycling coaches.

It is interesting to note that the Quebec example was provided before the introduction of an LTAD policy. Attributed to the LTAD model, the modifications that the Quebec speed skating association undertook were reflective of a good-quality athlete development practice and an excellent model to showcase the benefits of such. In a similar vein, Athletics Canada had already established a junior development program – the Run, Jump, Throw program that reflected some of the core principles identified in the LTAD model.

Canadian Cycling was simply unsure as to how to “…integrate a different model, which is more of an emphasis on training, which is more of an emphasis on multi-sport development” (CCA1). This places the perception of the LTAD by the Cycling representative as a model that meets the broader development needs of the sport and certainly not in the specialist
high performance area. The imposition of a social agenda on to the NSOs within Canada, appear to be one of the elements that Canadian Cycling saw as part of the intent of Sport Canada.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6: NSO perceptions of the LTAD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intent of LTAD Policy (literature and interview)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved High Performance outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing Physical Literacy needs of Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address Physical competence of HP athletes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish an Athlete Development Pathway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staged skill Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good coaching practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to Coach Education – NCCP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce an LTAD Policy document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete a Competition review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unifying force (cross-sport integration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure lifelong involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply critical training around PVH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional perceptions of the LTAD policy by the NSOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education of parents re the LTAD principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced burnout / injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a social policy agenda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This has not been reflected by any of the literature (nor the interview with SC1) but may be seen as an outcome of the pursuit of physical literacy. The difficulty that Canadian Cycling had in determining how the LTAD fit within its sport was exemplified by their inability to develop a competition structure that catered for the LTAD philosophy. Table 6 provides a summary of each NSO’s perception of the stated intentions of the LTAD policy.

5.3 Coach / PSO Perceptions of NSO Policy

There was diversity in the responses from the practitioners in relation to their perception of the LTAD, however the broader philosophy of the LTAD policy appears to have been recognised by most coaches and provincial representatives.

Whilst some coaches chose to reject the policy as they perceived it (cycling coaches) a large majority of the coaches saw the implementation of it in a positive light. Athletics coaches and Speed Skating coaches and some of the Cycling coaches were advocates of the program as they saw it. All recognised the policy as one that sought to address the physical literacy of those within their sport with some fine examples of cross-sport utilisation and modification of training and competition structure. These examples resonated with the broader athletic development that the policy was promoting.

Whilst all NSO representatives saw the policy as one that was established to address high performance needs, this was not the case with all of the coaches. Many recognised that the intent was for ultimately producing a high performance outcome, however all reflected upon the better developmental practices that they had seen or were undertaking at the introductory level of the sport. Few coaches recognised that the LTAD policy would have an impact upon the practices of high performance coaches and none could cite a case whereby that was occurring. This is not to suggest that such practice could not lead to a high performance outcome.

The intrinsic worth of some of the broader cross-sport linkages that were associated with the LTAD policy were primarily supported by those that are working with youth in these sports. The push to ensure a better system within Canada that allows for more diversified opportunity for participants was primarily supported.

It appeared as though the introduction of the policy within their sport had reinforced a lot of the principles and concepts that the coaches had inherently felt was appropriate for the development of athletes. Many of these principles are reflected in the responses to seeking an ideal athlete development policy or structure. Further discussion in this chapter begins to make clear the essential elements that would constitute a good athlete development policy.
The administrators within Speed Skating and Athletics will need to be highly supportive of the proposed changes that will reflect the athlete development policy of the NSO. Competition structure and equipment changes are quantum leaps for sporting organisations to embark upon and will have a large impact upon the sport and the manner in which it is administered.

Interestingly, no Speed Skating coaches alluded to the mandatory requirement of Sport Canada as a motivation behind the policy implementation. SSC4 did recognise the necessity to comply with the national government but felt the compliance was to ensure a “sport for all” approach. This indicates that Speed Skating coaches accept the inherent worth of the policy, determining that the motivation for such a policy is beyond a compliance issue.

Whilst there were no concrete examples of competition structure changes within Cycling, both the coaches and the NSO were mindful and nervous of some of the potential changes that could occur within the sport – “...even science ... isn’t always factual” (CCA1). Some coaches expressed strong opposition to the policy reflecting a mixed level of feeling within the cycling community as to the worth of the policy. Each sport provided a different perspective and for cycling, there were markedly contrasting views attached to the implementation of the LTAD. Some coaches saw a strong connection between the LTAD policy and the competition structure within the province as well as the training regimes in particular for introductory cyclists.

So it would appear that the LTAD policy has gained traction with the coaches for the broader development of competitors and an increased focus on progressing the physical literacy of the nation yet it has gained traction with the Board members and Executive of Sport Canada because of its prospects of improving high performance outcomes.

Of the coaches and administrators that had been interviewed, there was reference to the policy having effect upon competition structure, athlete development or coaching practice in the some instances. This included:

- The Quebec Speed Skating Association modification of competition structure and training;
- The cycling coaches that had referred to the LTAD in the development of their provincial competition structure;
- The reinforcement of current practices for athletics coaches and Speed Skating coaches.
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In each of these instances one could correctly suggest that the implementation of the LTAD principles was applied but it was not necessarily as a result of the LTAD policy of the sport. All sports were about to embark upon the changes in the coach education to reflect the NCCP changes but few had implemented them. In Athletics, the coach education was referred to and ready to be integrated but not yet implemented; the competition structure was in development but not yet implemented and with that, the athlete development pathway.

In Speed Skating the Quebec Association modified their practice some years ago, before the implementation of the policy. So too the reference by the Cycling coaches to their practices. The interviewees reinforced that the national policy had not yet impacted. The Board member of Speed Skating Canada was in the process of discussions with each of the provinces at the time of interview (November 2008) and had not finalised the process of policy development. Canadian Cycling could not articulate the policy changes in competition structure or athlete development pathway – “…it’s hard for … cycling to probably tell you what that is until we get there” (CCA1).

The effect of the policy was, at the time of interview, minimal. However the potential for the policy to have an effect on the development of the sport should not be lost. Whilst the LTAD model had been promoted for some time – and adopted by the likes of Quebec Speed Skating – the introduction of the policy appeared to be slow in causing an effect.

It appears that the policy was adopted by Sport Canada in 2004-05. This has given a three – four year period in which the NSOs have been developing their structure to meet the needs of Sport Canada. Many policy analysts recognise the timeframe attached to the development of policy is not fast (Houlihan B., Public Sector Sports Policy: Developing a Framework for Analysis, 2005) and propose a period of ten years before one can sufficiently review the effect of policy. The evidence provided through this research would support that claim.

Given that each sport policy differs in implementation and effect, it is appropriate to look at each NSO policy in its own context to determine the coach/PSO sub-group’s perception of their own sport’s LTAD policy.

**Athletics**

The athletics practitioners were very aware of the motivation for the development of the LTAD policy citing compliance with Sport Canada funding requirements, the provision of a unifying direction for Canada sport, the link to the NCCP and the primary outcome of attaining improved high performance for Canadian sport. So too their recognition of the
intent attached to the policy. The intent matched that stated by AC1 in that it was a high performance model, it was aimed at reducing injury, it sought lifelong participation, it provided an opportunity for increased physical competence and an improved athlete development pathway, it informed coaching practices and it was also seen as intended to improve participation numbers.

Table 7: Perceptions of effectiveness of the Athletics Canada LTAD policy as determined by athletics practitioners, matched against the intent of the policy makers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intent of LTAD Policy (literature and interview) Sport Canada</th>
<th>Compatibility of NSO intent with Sport Canada – Athletics Canada</th>
<th>Effect of the policy (or model) – Athletics practitioners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved High Performance outcomes</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation numbers</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing Physical Literacy needs of Canada</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address Physical competence of HP athletes</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish an Athlete Development Pathway (developmentally appropriate; opportunity to compete; continual improvement)</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staged skill Development</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good coaching practice</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to Coach Education – NCCP</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce an LTAD Policy document</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>No reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete a Competition review</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unifying force (cross-sport integration)</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure lifelong involvement</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply critical training around PVH</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education of parents re the LTAD principles (Athletics only)</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced burnout / injury (Athletics only)</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, when asked to comment upon the effect of the policy the responses indicated a minimal effect on current coaching practices or any of the identified parameters around its stated intent. It should be reinforced that this is not to suggest that they did not believe that it
would not have an effect into the future – it simply had not impacted upon them currently. It could be stated that the impact of the LTAD policy upon the practitioners in athletics was minimal, however the potential impact upon practitioners in a number of identified areas was expected to be quite significant. Table 7 provides a snapshot of the perception of the athletics practitioners in relation to the effectiveness of the Athletics Canada LTAD policy, matched against the intentions of the policy, as stated by the LTAD and Sport Canada literature.

**Cycling**

A summary of Cycling practitioners perceptions provides an excellent sample of the current state of the LTAD as a model and a policy across Canada. Some practitioners saw it as a road-map that provided some mechanism for unity within the sport and between sports – others had never been consulted and were not in agreement with the philosophy. Some recognised it as a philosophy for all coaches and administrators to adopt – yet others saw it as the government’s agenda that did not necessarily match that of their sport. Most practitioners saw it as a development model and not one that would be applied to a high performance athlete or environment – yet one saw it as an important part of his professional coaching since 2000. All recognised that it was being applied in a spasmodic and piecemeal fashion across Canada with some provinces incorporating it into their funding streams and others not. Some suggested it had assisted them in shaping their athlete’s development and was a strong influence in their coaching, programming and pathway development for their athletes – and of course others that have never really used it!

Most recognised that the Canadian Cycling’s revised coach education framework was about to be introduced and it would reflect the LTAD philosophy and terminology. This had not yet occurred. As a result, this research would suggests that the effect of the LTAD policy from Canadian Cycling was minimal but there was some strong evidence to suggest that the effect of the LTAD model was moderately effective. Table 8 provides a summary of the perceptions of the cycling coaches and provincial representatives against the recognised intentions of the LTAD policy.
Table 8: Perceptions of effectiveness of the Canadian Cycling Association LTAD policy as determined by cycling practitioners, matched against the intent of the policy makers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intent of LTAD Policy (literature and interview)</th>
<th>Sport Canada</th>
<th>Compatibility of NSO intent with Sport Canada – Canadian Cycling Assn</th>
<th>Effect of the policy (or model) – Cycling practitioners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved High Performance outcomes</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation numbers</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing Physical Literacy needs of Canada</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address Physical competence of HP athletes</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish an Athlete Development Pathway</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(developmentally appropriate; opportunity to compete; continual improvement)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staged skill Development</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good coaching practice</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to Coach Education – NCCP</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce an LTAD Policy document</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>No reference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete a Competition review</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unifying force (cross-sport integration)</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure lifelong involvement</td>
<td>No reference</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply critical training around PVH</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Speed Skating**

A high level of awareness of the motivation for the LTAD policy was apparent within the Speed Skating practitioners. Recognising the governmental agreement between the provinces, the need to address the high performance outcomes of Canadian athletes, the prospect of unifying the nation and an aim of increased participation and lifelong involvement were all motives recognised by this group.

Whilst recognising the motives, the perceived intent was slightly different. The group identified the intent of the policy was to increase the physical literacy of the nation and
recognise the training requirements around the Peak Height Velocity when coaching adolescents. Some did suggest that it was a developmental policy and not a high performance policy.

Table 9: Perceptions of effectiveness of the Speed Skating Canada LTAD policy as determined by speed skating practitioners, matched against the intent of the policy makers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intent of LTAD Policy (literature and interview)</th>
<th>Sport Canada</th>
<th>Compatibility of NSO intent with Sport Canada – Speed Skating Canada</th>
<th>Effect of the policy (or model) – Speed Skating practitioners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved High Performance outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation numbers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing Physical Literacy needs of Canada</td>
<td></td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address Physical competence of HP athletes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish an Athlete Development Pathway</td>
<td></td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staged skill Development</td>
<td></td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good coaching practice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to Coach Education – NCCP</td>
<td></td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce an LTAD Policy document</td>
<td></td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>No reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete a Competition review</td>
<td></td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unifying force (cross-sport integration)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure lifelong involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply critical training around PVH</td>
<td></td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The perceptions of the effect of the policy differed between one of the coaches that was attached to the Quebec Association and those that were not. Some suggested that there had been no implementation and had seen no effect of the policy at the time of interview. Yet the Quebec based coach witnessed a complete change in coaching practice, a marked improvement in physical literacy and better high performance outcomes. Like the Cycling
coaches, the responses indicated that the effect of the policy had been minimal, but the effect of the model, for those that had used it, had been marked (see Table 9).

Thus the effect of the policy, as determined by the practitioners of the sport, is different for each sport, but a general sense can be gained from the analysis.

Table 10: Comparison of each of the sports practitioners perceived effectiveness against the stated intent of the LTAD policy provides a comparison of all of the sports against the intent of the LTAD policy (as determined by the literature and the interview). One can see that there has been minimal effect of the policy to date. This is likely to change into the future as the NSOs continue to pursue competition change and the coach education elements are more comprehensively engaged. These responses can be matched against Table 11 identifying the elements that each of the NSOs recognised within their LTAD policies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intent of LTAD Policy (literature and interview)</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Intent of the LTAD policy – Athletics Canada</th>
<th>Intent of the LTAD policy – Canadian Cycling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved High Performance outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation numbers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing Physical Literacy needs of Canada</td>
<td></td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address Physical competence of HP athletes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish an Athlete Development Pathway</td>
<td></td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staged skill Development</td>
<td></td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good coaching practice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to Coach Education – NCCP</td>
<td></td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce an LTAD Policy document</td>
<td></td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete a Competition review</td>
<td></td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unifying force (cross-sport integration)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Possibly</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure lifelong involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>No reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply critical training around PVH</td>
<td></td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10: Comparison of each of the sports practitioners perceived effectiveness against the stated intent of the LTAD policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intent of LTAD Policy (literature and interview)</th>
<th>Sport Canada</th>
<th>Effect of the policy (or model) – Athletics practitioners</th>
<th>Effect of the policy (or model) – Cycling practitioners</th>
<th>Effect of the policy (or model) – Speed Skating practitioners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved High Performance outcomes</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Remotey</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation numbers</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Remotey</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing Physical Literacy needs of Canada</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address Physical competence of HP athletes</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
<td>Remotey</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish an Athlete Development Pathway</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staged skill Development</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good coaching practice</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to Coach Education – NCCP</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce an LTAD Policy document</td>
<td>No reference</td>
<td>No reference</td>
<td>No reference</td>
<td>No reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete a Competition review</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unifying force (cross-sport integration)</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure lifelong involvement</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply critical training around PVH</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Comparison of each of the NSOs perceived intent against the stated intent of the LTAD policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intent of LTAD Policy (literature and interview)</th>
<th>Sport Canada</th>
<th>Intent of the LTAD policy – Athletics Canada</th>
<th>Intent of the LTAD policy – Canadian Cycling</th>
<th>Intent of the LTAD policy – Speed Skating Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved High Performance outcomes</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation numbers</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing Physical Literacy needs of Canada</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address Physical competence of HP athletes</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish an Athlete Development Pathway</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
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<td>Staged skill Development</td>
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<td>Good coaching practice</td>
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<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to Coach Education – NCCP</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce an LTAD Policy document</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete a Competition review</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Partly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unifying force (cross-sport integration)</td>
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<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 Perceptions of Junior Sport Framework

A review of the literature surrounding the Junior Sport Framework and attaining further clarity from the Australian Sports Commission interview allowed the research to discern the intent of the JSF policy. A reflection of the literature will identify that the primary elements of the Junior Sport Framework are;

- It is a resource to assist NSOs and others in building a quality environment for junior sport;
- The resources include briefing papers, guideline documents and policy templates for organisations;
- It provides options for NSOs and others to consider in the athlete's development – including the LTAD model and the Developmental Model of Sport Participation (DMSP);
- It reinforce the role of the coach in the development of the athlete;
- It allows NSOs to determine the primary content of their Junior Sport Policies;
- It promotes reduced competition and increased sampling for juniors up to 12 years old;
- It is not focused upon a high performance outcome;
- It provides a research / evidence-base for NSOs to use.

The interview with the ASC representative reinforced the principles established in the literature review, in particular that it was evidence-based and provided the structure for NSOs to choose to adopt if they saw fit.

There were, however some strong insights that were able to be provided by ASC1. The expressed intent was clearly about the “rights” of young people to be engaged in appropriate activities for their own purpose – not necessary for a high performance outcome.

The role that the coach plays is seen as vital to the experience that the participant gains from sport, however there is no requirement of the policy that the NSO engage the coach education sector.

ASC1 noted that there needed to be a link between the development needs of the athlete and the opportunity for high performance outcomes and that they “can't be two disparate things”. Yet the interviewee reinforced that it was necessary for the sport to provide the
opportunity for participants to enjoy sport for its own sake and not just to get young people into the high performance pathway. Again there was no requirement for the sport to establish an effective athlete development pathway as part of the framework.

Whilst not inherent in the adoption of the Framework it was clear that there was an expectation that there would not be national titles for juniors under 13 years of age for those sports that chose to adopt the JSF as the basis for their junior sport policy.

As an athlete development policy the Junior Sport Framework appeared to provide a higher emphasis upon the process of implementation rather than the content that lied within the policy. Whilst providing some guidelines and documentation that allowed the NSOs to make choices around their policies, there was no evidence that the JSF was firm about the commitment to a set of principles that should be evident in any junior policy.

The expectations that the ASC placed upon NSOs appeared to be around the process that was used to put in place the policy or agenda. The style of the Basketball policy reinforces the fact that the NSO are seen as the drivers of their own policy and that the ASC’s Junior Sport Framework was simply a resource to utilise.

There appeared to be a requirement that NSOs engage a steering committee to assist in shaping their policy. There was also an expectation that the final product would provide opportunity for children of all ages in a safe and rewarding environment. What that looks like is open to the interpretation of the NSO and its steering committee. The limitations of this approach are that the Framework itself does not represent or stand for any particular philosophy or content. The expectations of the NSOs as outlined by the ASC through the Junior Sport Framework were markedly different to that of Sport Canada’s expectation of the NSOs through the LTAD policy.

In summary, the expectations that the Junior Sport Framework places upon the NSO are;

- Ensure the “rights” of young people to be engaged in appropriate activities for their own purpose – not necessary for a high performance outcome
- No national titles for junior participants up to the age of 13 years
- Engage a steering committee to shape the policy
- provide opportunity for children of all ages in a safe and rewarding environment.

In the development of each of the policies of the sports that were involved in this research, all recognised that there was some contribution by the Junior Sport Framework. Whilst there was some evidence that the JSF had influenced the NSO whilst reviewing the policy
Chapter 5

documents of each sport, there was less evidence of the influence of the JSF during the interviews.

This could reflect the high level of ownership that both the NSOs demonstrated and the ASC were seeking. Netball certainly recognised the background that the JSF provided for the formation of their policy and would refer to the research in justifying their policy – "… one of the most important things about an athlete development is a good quality coach, which the research says anyway" (NA2).

Having some understanding of the work that had been undertaken prior to the Cricket Australia representatives taking their positions with the NSO, the representatives only suggested a small level of influence that the JSF had on the Well Played document. The interviewees appeared to indicate that the ASC have tended to look at the "professional sports" and have in fact gleaned some direction and shape to the JSF because of the involvement and input that Cricket Australia have provided to the ASC.

A lot of information I've handed back to the Australian Sports Commission for them to continue to add on and develop their policies even wider, … so they've seen us in being terrific in assisting them to give …in shaping what… (is) their broader policy (CA1).

Basketball Australia certainly reflected upon the JSF and its role in the development of its policy. In reference to the Junior Sport Unit and the implementation of the policy, BA1 referred to them as -

... the main role they serve was as a conscience... So they were the conscience of 'Do you need more than just Aussie Hoops?' and yes we did need more. We had...the big workshop, we had the steering committee which they were a part of.

BA1 reflected upon the “checklist” style that they sought to develop and recognised the "approval" that the Junior Sport Unit provided in noting it as different to what they’d seen in the past. Basketball went away from a document that was “like the Junior Sports Framework” because they did not want it to sit on the shelf and not be used. The indications from this research suggest that Basketball’s current document is not used and, perhaps, simply sits on the shelf. It is not the document itself that would appear to affect the usefulness of it, but the means by which it is communicated and implemented.

Thus the interview process indicates that the NSOs viewed the Junior Sport Framework and the assistance provided by the Junior Sport Unit in developing the policy as being of the one entity and recognised the role that was played in the formation of the policy. There was no
reflection by any of the NSOs that the JSF or the Junior Sport Unit played any role in the actual implementation of the policy – not that there was there a call for this to occur. However this is one aspect that ASC1 suggested should occur – seeking a higher level of engagement to assist in ensuring the implementation of the policy into practice.

The role of the ASC and the JSF was generally seen as a guiding light that enabled some assistance to the NSO when required. The JSF provided a mechanism by which the formation of the policy could occur and some resources to refer to, if the NSO felt the need. As a result, a determination as to the intent of the policy makers places a much higher emphasis upon the NSO articulating the intent through their processes.

The expectations of either awareness and/or effect of the policies differed markedly between the NSOs. Basketball suggested that all state coach representatives would acknowledge the Aussie Hoops program but expected little recognition or awareness of the junior sport policy. This proved to be an accurate reflection. Cricket and Netball each expected much more of those within their ranks – with each recognising the impediment that the federated administrative structure could impose.

Cricket Australia clearly identified that the association-level presidents and committee were the ones that “had the key” to effective implementation of the policy, but still recognised the Well Played document as being the “most important document in influencing change” (CA2). Netball Australia recognised the same impediment, but placed a higher level of influence that the policy may play, suggesting that “… we had to have that (junior sport policy) first before we went to a programme (NetSetGO!) that supported the policy” (NA2).

The Netball policy appeared to be just as important as that identified by Cricket. NA1 placed the policy at the highest level –

... at a governance level, at the highest level in the sport, we had to agree on a direction … because two years ago as a sport nationally we agreed that (the NetSetGO! program and Junior Sport Policy) was the top of the list, and so we said “It was a priority”, so we’re going to all invest in it, and … every time we see (the SSOs) we talk about the priorities …and it’s on the front end, start of our documents …I think that governance buy-in, and the leadership issues around application of policies and belief is really important.

Both of these sports place a strong level of expectation in the policy being implemented. This does contrast to that of Basketball. The responses from Cricket and Netball highlights the importance of a commitment at NSO level to any athlete development policy.
Chapter 5

All NSOs recognised the importance of the coach – and subsequently the coach education requirements of the NSO – in ensuring that coaches were sufficiently educated around the principles that were inherent in the policy. Both Cricket Australia and Netball Australia had already implemented the coach education - and were expecting the newly accredited coaches to be able to apply the principles in their coaching. Basketball Australia suggested that the Aussie Hoops program and the NCAS were currently separated, although the revised coach accreditation programs (about to be implemented) ensured that there was a much closer alignment.

Unlike the expectation of Netball and Cricket, Basketball did not expect coaches to have been influenced in any way as a result of the policy –

Aussie Hoops has had no impact … It will have had no influence on the change … It has had no impact at all. The other tool, the self-audit tool…definitely there have been some associations that have looked at it and have made some changes, … but …it’s more an organisational useful (tool) rather than … the coach looking at the audit, …so not a lot, really, in the coach development (BA1).

All organisations expected that there was an impact upon the competition structure within their sport. Netball made specific reference to other sports that provide representative level competition for 8 year olds and the pressure that places back onto Netball as a sport. There was a real expectation that there would not be representative level netball offered until aged thirteen.

Cricket recognised that the associations could choose the competition structure that best meet their needs, but were quite mindful that their network was exerting pressure upon the associations to adopt the recommendations attached to the Well Played document.

Basketball Australia placed any competition changes squarely back upon the associations, suggesting that the questions posed in the documentation might lead to some changes in the length of the competitions for the younger age groups. There was no changes of age groups at association, state or national representation level – an area that Basketball could expect to have some influence – “That sort of stuff has remained the same”.

Cricket Australia saw the role of the policy as having a strong influence on the athlete development pathway for those within their sport -

But this policy also has a role in the foundation of underpinning our National Championships, our Under 17 National Championships, our Australian Under 19 team, our…respective state emerging players’
programmes and academies, feeding to our Centre of Excellence, our first class Cricket, this has the pathway as part of it. … but this is still encompassing the talented cricketer and the athlete that’s moving through, and therefore it also fits into our other pillar, as a foundation to thriving at the elite level, which is to be number (one) ranked in the world in men’s and women’s team. But we understand that the strength of Australian Cricket… is the quality of our first class cricket, the quality of our first class cricket is by the facilities, the coaching and the programmes we have at grade and (state) cricket level, and (they) are strong because of the structure and the administration at our associations and school level, which are based upon and influenced and continuing to progress forward by this policy (CA1).

Basketball Australia identified that each of the states, in accord with the agreement that they have with the State ITC (Intensive Training Centre) programs, should “have underpinning programmes that complement and lead into” the ITC program. The influence that Basketball Australia has on the athlete development pathway through this Junior Sport policy would appear to be through the information provided in the documentation and the expectations are that states would have a program that fit such a structure.

Netball Australia recognised that the policy would have minimal effect on the athlete development pathway, expressing some frustration at their ability to shape it even at the high performance end –

… moving into that more player development end, the whole academy SIS/SAS structure is so inconsistent from a national perspective that it’s very difficult to work within. So how that can be more consistent for us is (pause) and I don’t have the answer to it (NA1).

Netball did raise within their interview another resource that was not expanded upon - their LTAD resource. Identified as being a resource that was developed for their academy programs (SIA/SAS network and feeder programs), neither interviewee expanded on the use or effectiveness of the resource. Nearly dismissive of it, NA2 seemed to indicate that it was developed some time in the past by some coaches in the high performance stream. Her manner indicated that she did not see any relevance within the context of this interview. A subsequent review of the document and follow up questions of the interviewee has outlined a resource that utilises the staged progression and terminology of the LTAD model (FUNdamentals, Learning to Train, Training to Train, Training to Compete, Training to Win, Retainment) and is designed to assist the coaches “… through the application of age appropriate development programs” (Netball Australia, 2007, p. 1). Linked to the athlete
development pathway, the resource provides sample programs for the coaches to consider along with guidelines as to the type of training that should occur at each stage. Netball Australia, whilst providing the document to the researcher, placed no expectation on the coaches or state representatives to adopt it and allowed the SIS/SAS coaches to use it if they saw fit. It was not available on the Netball Australia website and was not fully supported by Netball Australia. It appeared to provide information that was counter to the philosophies proposed by their Junior Sport Policy, yet it remains a document and resource available for coaches of emerging talent.

Table 12: Areas of focus that each NSO identified as part of the intent of the Junior Sport Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intent of Junior Sport Framework NSO Policy (literature &amp; interview)</th>
<th>Intention of Policy</th>
<th>Intention of Policy</th>
<th>Intention of Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Netball</td>
<td>Cricket</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation numbers</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address social &amp; emotional development</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address Physical competence of HP athletes</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish an Athlete Development Pathway</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staged skill Development</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good coaching practice</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to Coach Education – NCAS</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect Junior Competitions structure</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource for Clubs &amp; Associations</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure rights to be engaged in appropriate activity (JSF)</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No national title up to Under 13 years (JSF)</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a safe environment (JSF)</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steering committee engaged (JSF)</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Completely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 provides a brief snapshot of the expectations that each NSO placed upon the development of their policies. This table includes the expectations that the Junior Sport Framework (through the interview and the literature) places upon the NSO. Each NSO expressed differing levels of expectation of the policy being put into effect. All recognised the essential link that should occur between the athlete development policy and the coach...
education framework of the NSO.

5.5 Coach / SSO Perception of NSO Policy

Few of the coaches or the state representatives were familiar with the Junior Sport Framework, although some of the Netball coaches suggested that they had an awareness of it but primarily referred to the principles that were part of the original ASC policy of 1994. They did not provide any suggestion that the framework referred to the research papers spoken of in the literature review. This appears to be as much a reflection of the exposure of the Junior Sports Framework beyond the walls of the ASC as anything else.

All coaches of both Netball and Cricket recognised the link between the coach education and the junior development policy. The same link was not as strong in the Basketball coaches. Few coaches and state representatives recognised the role of the junior sport policy on the athlete development pathway of their sport. All coaches recognised that the policy’s intent was to have some influence on the competition structure – with the In2Cricket program, the Aussie Hoops program and the NetSetGO! program all seen as appropriate competitions for the juniors within their sport.

Basketball

The awareness by coaches of the Basketball Junior Sport policy (excluding the Aussie Hoops program) was nearly non-existent. All of the coaches knew of and were familiar with the Aussie Hoops program and had a good concept as to what it was and how it should be applied. Basketball coaches were quite clear that the policy did not affect their practice or the practices around them. Even the Aussie Hoops program was seen by BACoach1 as simply a rebranding exercise with little modification to the practices that some associations had chosen to operate under. Certainly none of the coaches had heard of the Junior Sport Framework but importantly, none of the coaches had any concept as to what the junior sport policy of their own sport was or was intended to address.

Without the awareness it was difficult to ascertain a perception of the policy. When asked to comment on what they saw that could be related to a junior sport policy, there were very few elements that they could suggest were effective and none as a result of Basketball Australia’s initiatives. It was evident that some development practice occurred – as outlined by BACoach3 with the curriculum that was provided to his state coaches – however it was not attributed to the policy or the direction offered by Basketball Australia.

If the NSO believed in the development of a Junior Sport Policy one would expect that the communication of the core elements of that policy to the key individuals within the sport was
important. Basketball had already identified that the coaches were key to the development of the athlete, yet the coaches that Basketball had identified should be involved in this research could not provide any notion as to what the policy was or should be. The NSO had developed a policy that some associations were aware of and able to utilise as they saw fit, and the coaches in key positions within Basketball could not articulate it. Unfortunately, this was no different to that suggested by BA1. So it could be accurately stated that the perception of the coach practitioners’ knowledge and effectiveness of the Junior Sport Policy of Basketball Australia reflected exactly the expectation of the NSO.

The state association Basketball representative did have a stronger level of knowledge of the junior sport policy. Part of the job for this officer was to assist the associations within his state in the establishment and development of junior sport. This has led to a stronger understanding than the coach practitioners. Table 13 provides a synopsis of the practitioners perceived intent against that of the intentions of the JSF (as outlined in the literature and the interview with ASC1) and that of the NSO.

Table 13: The perception of Basketball practitioners in each of the intended areas of the JSF matched against that of the NSO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athlete Development Policy area of Australian NSOs (literature &amp; interview)</th>
<th>Intention of Policy - Basketball</th>
<th>Practitioner Perception of Effect of the Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation numbers</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address social &amp; emotional development</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
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<td>Address Physical competence of HP athletes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish an Athlete Development Pathway</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No national title up to Under 13 years (JSF)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a safe environment (JSF)</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steering committee engaged (JSF)</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Netball

The Netball coaches all knew of their respective junior sport policy and its expectations. Importantly, the philosophy behind the policy appeared to be just as well recognised.

The effectiveness of the policy in Netball appeared to strongly reflect the principles and intent of the national body. The understanding of the coach education by the coaches was as strong as one could expect within the cross-section of coaches involved. It was in the area of athlete development pathways that the perceived intent was not specifically matched by the perceived effectiveness of the coaches or state representatives. The Netball coaches perceived that there was an athlete development pathway that surrounded the competition pathway, and some indicated that there was some opportunity for improvement in some area within their state. Importantly they collectively did not see that the junior sport policy was the appropriate tool to shape the athlete pathway. This may reflect the nomenclature associated with the terminology of the junior sport policy as against an athlete development policy.

Netball Australia identified a resource that they referred to as the LTAD policy. Again the terminology attached to the LTAD policy is important as none of the coaches referred to this in their understanding of an athlete development policy. They recognised the junior sport policy as being primarily for the introductory level of the sport, whereas the policy itself – reflective of the Junior Sport Framework – caters for the development of the athlete into the senior years. This is a classic case of the name of the policy restricting the thinking around the policy and gives rise to the prospect of a renaming of the Junior Sport Policy to the Athlete Development Policy. This shall be discussed further in this chapter.

NAState1’s identification of some associations selecting development squads at 11 years of age to perform well at the under 12 state championships provides a real example of the limitations of the policy in the area of competition structure and is an example of the unintended consequences that can arise from such a competition structure. It was quite apparent that Netball Australia were not supportive of a representative level of competition until 13 years of age. Other Netball coaches felt that the age policy was in order.

The Netball State representative (NAState1) reflected the Netball Australia stated intent, suggesting that it was –

To provide a framework for us to...filter down to the grass roots
...about when players should be playing, under what sort of
conditions, how much is too much, and just simply setting up a
framework that protects the players and provides the best opportunities to them.

Similar statements were made by the coaches, indicating a strong level of understanding and knowledge of the junior sport policy. Table 14 provides a synopsis of the practitioners perceived intent against that of the intentions of the JSF (as outlined in the literature and the interview with ASC1) and that of the NSO.

Table 14: The perception of Netball practitioners in each of the intended areas of the JSF matched against that of the NSO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athlete Development Policy area of Australian NSOs (literature &amp; interview)</th>
<th>Intention of Policy Netball</th>
<th>Practitioner Perception of Effect of the Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation numbers</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address social &amp; emotional development</td>
<td>Completely</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Staged skill Development</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resource for Clubs &amp; Associations</td>
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<td>Ensure rights to be engaged in appropriate activity (JSF)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No national title up to Under 13 years (JSF)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide a safe environment (JSF)</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steering committee engaged (JSF)</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cricket**

The Cricket coaches all knew of their junior sport policy and its expectations. Importantly, the philosophy behind the policy appeared also to be well recognised.

Integration of the *Well Played* document and the ethos attached to Crick Australia’s Junior Sport Policy into the coach education structure was a smart move. Such an integration and
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staged level of analysis by each accreditation level reinforces the intrinsic nature of the policy and utilises the practitioners to make comment upon the relevance and pertinence of the policy - as is required by the Level 3 Coach Accreditation candidates.

Table 15: The perception of Cricket practitioners in each of the intended areas of the JSF matched against that of the NSO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athlete Development Policy area of Australian NSOs (literature &amp; interview)</th>
<th>Intention of Policy Cricket</th>
<th>Practitioner Perception of Effect of the Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation numbers</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address social &amp; emotional development</td>
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</table>

The philosophy of the *Spirit of Cricket* was referred to specifically by one coach throughout his responses and the essence of it was reflected by the responses of other coaches. Similar to the Netball coaches, each coach recognised the essential elements of providing opportunity for children in a fair and safe environment. Like Netball, the effectiveness of the policy in Cricket appeared to strongly reflect the principles and intent of the national body. The understanding of the coach education by the coaches was just as strong as Netball.

Few of the cricket coaches recognised the policy as having any level of impact upon the athlete development pathway within their own state or association. As outlined in the results, CACoach1 did perceive that the intent was for Cricket Australia to develop a better pathway,
however he later suggested that they were not effective in this area despite the state association undertaking a strong review of player development pathway recently. CACoach1 did not attribute this to the policy but to the role of the state association.

The influence of the policy document on the competition structure was perceived by the coach / SSO sub-group in Cricket as being very high – reflecting the intent of Cricket Australia, although ACCoach3 indicated a slightly different over rate in the state that he operated, compared to that proposed in the *Well Played* document. Table 15 provides a synopsis of the practitioners’ perceived intent against that of the intentions of the JSF (as outlined in the literature and the interview with ASC1) and that of the NSO. A comparison of all three of the Australian NSOs is provided in Table 16.

### Table 16: Comparison of three NSO practitioner perceptions against the areas of intent of the JSF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athlete Development Policy area of Australian NSOs (literature &amp; interview)</th>
<th>Netball Practitioner Perception of Effectiveness of Policy</th>
<th>Cricket Practitioner Perception of Effectiveness of Policy</th>
<th>Basketball Practitioner Perception of Effectiveness of Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation numbers</td>
<td>Primarily</td>
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</table>
Chapter 5

5.6 The LTAD Model and Policy

The contribution that the LTAD model has made to establishing Athlete Development Policy - with the promotion and entrepreneurial activity that has been associated with it – is substantial. Its acceptance as a model and inclusion into policy in the UK, Canada and Ireland identify it as a pre-eminent model of athlete development. The intrinsic worth of it as a model that informs athlete development policy is substantial, however no model should proceed without scrutiny from those informed to provide it.

This research challenges the present formation of the model in two specific areas – each worthy of further exploration -

- The research questions the logic and the emphasis attached to the periodisation of training around the peak height velocity, the focus upon the biological parameters in this phase of an athlete’s development and its intrinsic link to high performance outcomes.

- The research challenges the wide-ranging and diverse claims that the implementation of the model are irrevocably linked to the proposed outcomes of the athlete development policy of Canada.

The literature review has already placed in question one of the central themes of the model – the suggestion that one should apply periodised training programs that emphasise the capacity to build on some of the basic physical motor abilities of speed, strength, endurance and skills development for children. The model suggests the consideration of the peak height velocity allows one to better undertake specific periodisation of these elements in the training prescription to yield better results.

Other literature has suggested that the capacity to identify the PHV is well neigh impossible. Bailey (2007) reminds us that the onset, duration and magnitude of the adolescent growth spurt are highly variable, that the tempo and timing of each stage is highly variable and that there is no relationship between the onset of puberty and the length of time from beginning to the end of puberty. This must place a central theme of the policy in question and prompts one to ask what should be expected of the practitioner in a practical sense when considering the PHV? In the early literature, Balyi and Hamilton themselves recognised that there were limitations to applying the generalisation that there were “critical” or “sensitive” periods of trainability (Balyi & Hamilton, 2000, p. 12).
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The current research provides some evidence that some NSOs and some coaches support some elements of the LTAD model. The present research would not suggest that it was “fully supported” by the coaching community. Yet, depending upon what the practitioners perceived the model to be, it could be suggested that there was some strong support for the model. The only way that the claim that “the LTAD model was fully supported by the exercise science community” could be tested is to expose the model (not the policy) to peer reviewed journals in the exercise sciences. This has not yet been done.

The interview with SC1 failed to provide sufficient light to enhance an understanding of the link between the stated scientific LTAD model and the policy documents as espoused by Sport Canada. SC1 did not profess a strong knowledge of physical conditioning and periodisation of programs but provided a generic reference to when one should teach each of the motor abilities referred to in the model. Only one coach referred to the specific training requirements around the PVH and that was to question the application of a second strength phase in female athletes (ACCoach1).

There is sufficient evidence in the literature (Armstrong, 1999; Bailey, 2007; Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007; Côté, 2007; Côté & Hay, 2002; Kirk, Brettschneider, & Auld, 2007; Sanderson, 2003) to suggest that there are other important parameters besides the development of physical motor skills that should have an emphasis in an athlete’s development. The LTAD model has never been exposed to peer review and is contestable in its content and its application. Exposure of the logic attached to the periodisation of motor abilities around the PHV in a peer reviewed journal will allow the necessary debate around this component of the model to occur.

Identifying the intent of the policy was not an easy task. This research has provided some evidence as to the stated intent of the policy through both the literature and the interview process with Sport Canada. The researcher suggests that the articulation of the policy is simply a starting point and should be validated by those empowered to develop and enact such policy. It could well be that different sections of Sport Canada believe the policy to be different things. So too with the NSOs. If one is to expect NSOs to implement an athlete development policy such as the LTAD there needs to be greater clarity surrounding its intent, the means by which one could implement it and the specific areas of focus for such a policy. The articulation of the measurable outcomes that one could look for in an athlete development policy provided by the participants within this research, can act as a starting point for those that are asked to implement such policy.
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One should reflect upon the youthfulness that this area of policy is exhibiting. The LTAD policy is the first of its kind in the Western world. It was only 2002 when the UK referred to the LTAD in its draft National Sports Policy draft *Game Plan*. It was as recent as 2005 when the Canadian government referred to the LTAD in its Federal-Provincial / Territorial Ministers conference.

It was Stafford (2005) that first placed the emphasis upon physical literacy and lifelong involvement as intrinsic elements upon which the LTAD stood. Stafford incorporated some essential components of athlete development principles into his interpretation of the LTAD – rightly so – and they have stayed. This was the first important stage in removing or softening the adherence to the model's biological roots. The context within which the LTAD model is applied in Canada reflects a recent push to incorporate the LTAD as a strong element of the policy platform by which the Canadian government ascribe. The Canadian government has adopted the LTAD as a platform that espouses the development of physical literacy, linking communities across sectors (school and health) and a model that compulsorily requires all NSOs to establish a policy around. This emergence of the LTAD policy is referred to in the same manner as the original model but has developed into an all-encompassing athlete development plan. The policy itself is emerging from its youthful state – and indeed approaching a “window of opportunity” to reflect and refine itself as a quality athlete development policy platform.

There is so much to the development of a high performance outcome. To suggest that the introduction of a model that focuses primarily upon the development of the physiological parameters can be the solution to the high performance woes of a nation is both naïve and brave. By linking the athlete development structure so blatantly to high performance outcomes discredits the model. Until the model can clearly articulate the mechanisms that will develop an athlete (with all the complexity associated with such) it will attract its critics.

If the LTAD entrepreneurs were to clearly state that the LTAD was a policy that sought increased level of participation and a higher level of physical literacy and improved developmental structures that informed competition for developing athletes then it would likely to be accepted by the critics.

The emergence of the policy appears to be spasmodic and distinctly lacking direction. Not being aware of how one might measure the effectiveness of a policy, being surprised that it lasted longer than 18 months and being unaware of the importance of a competition review and its implication, suggest a higher level of strategic intent is required.
There was no indication that a measure would be that of a high performance outcome or indeed a specific physical literacy outcome. All measures of success proposed by SC1 were geared towards the actions to be determined by the NSO.

CCA1 alluded to the “consensus” model where there was a need for all to agree before things got implemented in Canada and felt that Canada was still working out what the LTAD would be “we’re building the consensus around what the model should be, … there’s so many different opinions” (CCA1). Such a statement questions the conviction of the governing body (Sport Canada) in its application of the LTAD. This was further reinforced when identifying the disparity in funding that was allocated to cycling for the implementation of the LTAD.

As identified in the analysis of the research, the differentiation of the LTAD model to that of the LTAD policy allows for a discussion that can address the differing elements of the LTAD and enables the further promotion and growth of the policy to sufficiently reflect athlete development needs.

The analysis of the interviewee responses reinforces the confusion that surrounds the LTAD policy. The statement of the policy aims and the matching of those aims with the model that informs the policy does not give it a coherent fit. As a result there is a level of confusion and incapacity to readily articulate the different interpretations of the policy.

The primary actor associated with the development of the model (Balyi) has been closely associated with the integration of the model to policy. It is highly probable that Balyi would seek to have the model completely integrated into the policy. There would no doubt be a high level of kudos attached to such an influential policy. Whilst the LTAD model and the LTAD policy are called the same thing, they are in fact a separate entity.

Once there is a distinction between the policy and the model, the policy will be able to develop as it needs and to encompass the necessary principles that should be attached to a quality athlete development model. If, however the policy remains embedded to the model there will be little opportunity to engage in dialogue around the psychological and social factors that enhance the involvement and experience of youth in sport, as these are too remote from the model.

The model bears little resemblance to the noble and appropriate discussion that surrounds the physical literacy development. It is important to engage more participants into an active and healthy lifestyle. It is equally important to provide quality opportunities for youth to engage, develop and enjoy an active sporting experience. It is important to develop a broad
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range of physical, social and psychological needs for young people engaged in sport. The model has provided some structure to that development debate and has brought the debate to the forefront – but there are some substantial discussions to be had around the model.

In a similar fashion the dialogue around the development of a high performance outcome should not be restricted to the biological factors and physiological demands that the model prescribes. The model should be an important element in the debate around the issues that NSOs and governing bodies need to address in the pursuit of high performance outcomes. It would be simplistic to suggest that it is the only element that might be attached to such development.

The differentiation of the LTAD model to that of the LTAD policy allows for a discussion that can address the differing elements of the LTAD and enables the further promotion and growth of the policy to sufficiently reflect athlete development needs. If the model is intrinsically tied to the policy, the policy will fall short of meeting the needs of the NSOs and the populace of Canada.

**Linking the LTAD to high performance outcomes**

If one were to seek acceptance of the model into Sport Canada – an organisation that has had the development of high performance outcomes as a key part of their structure and ethos, then it was clearly a smart political move to encourage the LTAD as a policy that seeks to attain high performance outcomes.

Recognised by Athletics Canada and Speed Skating Canada as the basis for the policy, the high performance agenda was not as readily accepted by Canadian Cycling Association. Accepted as it was by Athletics and Speed Skating, only Speed Skating have been able to link the development model to an indication of high performance outcomes through the Quebec Association’s actions. Athletics are yet to establish a link to high performance outcomes.

No coach could cite an example of the high performance practices of a coach or coaches being impacted upon by the introduction of the LTAD policy or application of the model. A number of coaches recognised the rhetoric that proposes the LTAD model as a model for the development of high performance outcomes and provided some examples by which one could measure the success of the policy if it sought high performance outcomes. Alas, there are none of those measures in place. And rightly so - the LTAD policy and the model that supports it is not one that should seek to yield high performance outcomes as a *direct* outcome of its implementation.
5.7 JSF Structure and Practice

Basketball clearly recognised the need for an athlete development policy that impacted upon the athleticism of their members. BA1 simply could not see that the development of such a policy – and perhaps linking that policy to their current Junior Sport Policy – could in any way address this. This is a symptom of calling the current athlete development policy of Basketball Australia a Junior Sport policy. The nomenclature becomes important.

The JSF is based upon a series of briefing papers that have been used to inform guidelines documents. These documents are made available to NSOs in Australia on a voluntary basis and are used to assist NSOs in their policy formation. The JSF is not just a junior development model but a framework that incorporates athlete development as well as other elements that would inform sports policy. The JSF does provide an alternative model for sports to consider – the Developmental Model of Sports Participation (DMSP) that is informed by the sports psychology literature.

The ASC’s Junior Sport Framework is more than a junior sport resource. It is the basis of a national athlete development framework that encompasses more than the current level of thinking around junior sport. It is an athlete development framework that, if sufficiently strengthened and supported by government, could emerge as the “Athlete Development Policy” that is encouraged to be implemented and integrated into current sport policy.

The discussion generated around the role that Basketball Australia placed upon their Junior Sport policy, and its omission of an athlete development focus, questions the strength of such a policy. A stronger level of commitment to the essential areas of athlete development may be required in order to effectively position the policy. Both Netball and Cricket inherently included this element within their policy, however the fact that athlete development was not as strong as was needed (by Basketball Australia’s own account) indicates a potential dilemma for the current Junior Sport Framework.

Whilst the Junior Sport Framework remains named as such it weakens the possibility of it being included in NSO development plans. The name itself restricts the function of the policy to whatever the sport deems as “juniors”. A change of name and a small shift in focus allows the high quality components attached to the framework to take on a new lease of life. The Junior Sport Framework is about more than juniors – it is about the complete development pathway of its athletes.

The Australian government has provided no policy direction or emphasis in athlete development. A recent report provided to government (Australian Government, 2009) may
provide the opportunity for government to rethink this into the future. Australian government policy has focussed upon the development of sport primarily for high performance outcomes.

Cricket Australia believed that it could not be a participation document alone and did allow it to underpin their stated objective of number one team in the world. This was similar to that stated by Speed Skating Australia.

The fact that the final product of the JSF was open to the interpretation of the NSO and its steering committee, highlights a limitations of JSF – suggesting that the Framework itself does not represent or stand for any particular philosophy or content. As noted earlier in this chapter - It could be that the NSOs within Australia could have no athlete development policy and the ASC would not have an issue with that sport. It provides an interesting contrast between the commitment that is required through a mandatory implementation process (as per the Canadian Sport policy) and the completely voluntary nature that is applied in the Australian environment. One must question the conviction of belief of the governing body if there is no form of obligation applied to its implementation.

5.8 Policy in Practice – Implementation Issues

The process by which the NSO chooses to engage the JSF and seek to implement the policy appeared to be important. The establishment of a steering committee and through that, the engagement of the board and significant others was seen as vital to its viability and adoption within the sport. Reinforcing the findings of the review of 2006 (Sport Business Solutions, 2006), the junior sport policy implementation crosses many policy areas of sport. A steering committee is seen as a means of engaging those players.

Coaching

Reinforcement in every aspect of the literature and the cross-section of people involved in the present research reinforced the pivotal role that coaches and coaching plays in the development of the athlete and the ultimate success of the policy or program. The JSF and the LTAD were combined in their agreement. Every member of the athletics sub-group suggested a higher standard of coaches and the essence of a fun-based enjoyable experience were at the heart of good quality athlete development. The importance of the role of the coach was highlighted through every aspect of Speed Skating Canada’s responses and when asked of the ideal development model, it involved the support of clubs being able to provide a professional structure for coaches.

The Canadian policy required a link to the accreditation process – and all coaches and NSOs agreed to its potential impact because of it. The JSF did not require a link. This was
Chapte

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however provided by all three Australian sports interviewed. Unlike the other Australian

sports involved in the research, Basketball had not yet implemented their revised coach

accreditation structure. Perhaps this also adds to the limited depth of awareness that the

Junior Sport Policy evoked in the coaches. The utilisation of the Level 3 coaches by Cricket

Australia to critique the policy is worthy of note and of praise. One would find it hard to come

across a better process to allow the policy to remain vibrant and relevant.

Establishing a strong link between the athlete development program and the coach

accreditation structure would appear to be paramount in effecting the outcomes proposed by

such a policy. Sport Canada have established such a link.

Funding

The frustration that appeared to be present around the limited human resources and lack of

strategic link to the funding requirements by ASC1 reflect the level of commitment the ASC

afford this area. If the level of importance is reflected by the funding allocated to assisting

NSOs in this area then the support would appear to be limited. Like Sport Canada, there was

comparatively minimal funding allocated to NSOs for development purposes. Unlike that of

Sport Canada, NSOs are required to undertake a review of junior sport from the

development funding allocated to them through the normal process (not through any

separate allocation) but they do have access to the additional support of the personnel from

the Junior Sport Unit.

CCA1 highlighted the disparity in funding provided by Sport Canada between the high

performance allocation and the LTAD allocation. Sport Canada has provided some funding

to the NSOs but this still does not provide a level of commitment to the philosophy or the

policy. The funding allocation from either government does not match the level of

responsibility placed upon sporting organisations to ensure the effective practice in this

important area of policy.

Buy-In

The buy-in at Board level was evident across all three Canadian sports, however all three

suggested that it was on the basis of it being a model that would lead to high performance

outcomes; with Canadian Cycling being less confident of the Boards level of knowledge and

commitment to it than that of Athletics or Speed Skating. This philosophy has been reflected

throughout all the interviews, giving high credence to the proposition that the LTAD policy,

both within Sport Canada and each of the NSOs, could not have gained the level of support

that it has, without it being linked to a high performance outcome.
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Speed Skating Canada placed high emphasis upon this element. The Speed Skating Board member developed a major strategy around ensuring that the buy-in by Board and provinces was attained in order to ensure the adoption of the LTAD policy. SSC4 identified that the process of consultation was as important as the agreement that they were seeking.

When both ASC1 and SC1 were asked about the ASC & SC board’s involvement – an indicator of the “buy-in” by those charged with national policy development – both indicated a minimal level of knowledge or engagement in this area. This again may reflect the level of importance that athlete development policy may be seen in their light. There is no doubt that the international exposure of the LTAD has heightened people’s exposure to this area of policy development. Yet the ASC identified that the involvement of the Board at NSO level was seen as an important element.

Buy-in is important, but both the governing bodies of Sport Canada and the ASC could heed their own advice and seek support and endorsement for such policy at board level.

Federation

The influence that the state / territorial / provincial organisations have on the implementation and effectiveness of policy was reinforced through this research. Every NSO recognised it in their comments and one saw it as a battle “.. it’s one v eleven” (CCA1). This reinforced the research methodology applied to the present research by ensuring that the SSO was considered an important player in the outcome of policy. Any athlete development policy in a federated structure will need to be mindful of the issues that federation poses. Government will need to further pursue how best to effect policy in such an environment.

Mandatory v Voluntary Compliance

Both netball and cricket displayed a high level of ownership and subsequent awareness by the practitioners and could well reflect the benefits of having a policy that was voluntary in its adoption. Basketball, too was voluntary and it showed a very poor level of awareness by practitioners.

The non-mandatory element appeared to cause some angst for ASC1. There was sufficient reason not to mandate the policy in order to ensure a higher level of engagement, however there was an underlying need to provide a quality environment for all participants. Allowing NSOs to choose to undertake a junior sport initiative was to allow them to engage with a higher level of ownership than having to compulsorily undertake it. This was also reflected in the 2006 review of the JSF spoken about in the literature review. However ASC1 mentioned a number of times, the thought that the Junior Sport Policy should be a compulsory element.
Chapter 5

of the strategic plans of the NSO. Recognising the dilemma that mandatory policy implementation brings with it ASC1 suggests

what it enables is the standard of quality and risk management component to that. That all sports are doing things correctly based upon the most contemporary research, ...the ...difficulty with mandatory is that if we say to every NSO “okay, it's a mandatory requirement now” that it becomes a ticked box.

The Canadians have shown great foresight in mandating an athlete development policy for their NSOs. The Canadian Government, through their government instrumentality Sport Canada, have recognised the widespread nature that the LTAD policy – in particular, the physical literacy element of the policy – can have on the health of the nation. But it comes at a cost. The requirement for the NSOs within Canada to compulsorily have an athlete development policy that meets certain needs could be seen as appropriate. To mandate that such an athlete development policy must be the LTAD policy appears flawed.

In the analysis of the results, it was identified that a separation of the model from the policy allows the NSOs and Sport Canada to develop as they see fit without being obligated to a model that may be flawed. Mandating an Athlete Development Policy that encompasses the elements listed below, allows a policy that is worthy of adoption by the sports. Such a policy allows the sports to choose what theoretical models they see as important and which elements they choose to adopt.

An appropriate athlete development policy should;
- reflect the needs of the sport and the community;
- provide for the opportunity to have shared sporting experiences;
- allow for the growth and development of the child;
- provide quality coaching experience attached to it;
- encourage cross-sport integration,
- have a focus upon the development of the athletes needs for their own sake;
- engender stronger community ties and allows access for all;
- recognise the importance of the competitions structure in the development of skills and the focus for coaches;
- provide a pathway for the athlete so that they can continue their pursuit of excellence;
- cater to the progressive skill development of the athlete;
- recognise and nurtures the emotional, psychological, cognitive and social development of the person as being just as important as the physical needs.
Facilities

The link between the athlete development policy and facilities was less evident through the interview process but worthy of note. The basketball coaches recognised the access to facilities, condition of those facilities and management practices that the facilities operate under all led to the participation, inclusion and enjoyment by the participant. Basketball Australia’s checklist dedicates a significant component of its checklist to facility development and management. Speed skating coaches noted the purchasing of ice time. Athletics recognised the imposition of revised equipment on the clubs and schools as a burden. Cycling coaches noted the capacity to promote the sport depended upon their location. Cricket Australia and the coaches noted the venue as an issue to deal with. The reference to a multi-club necessitates the use of common facilities to allow the ease of access spoken of. Access and capacity of facilities will be a factor in the effective implementation of any athlete development policy.

Actors / Agents and Entrepreneurs

The interview with SC1 provided both insight and clarity on the role that the policy entrepreneurs played in the adoption of the LTAD. The emergence of an expert panel, an identification of those within the panel and some indications of their role in the promotion of the model to attain policy status was enlightening. It would appear that, without the promotion of the model to the executive of Sport Canada by Richard Way and Istvan Balyi, the adoption of the model into policy is unlikely to have occurred. The significant role that Balyi has played in influencing the direction that the LTAD model has made in its development is worthy of note.

- Balyi and Hamilton first proposed the model in 1995. Balyi was the associate editor of the first journal that the LTAD gained exposure – the Australian Strength and Conditioning Coach.
- Balyi was an international advisor to the National Coaching and Training Centre of Ireland when the centre produced its report in 2003.
- Balyi spent a great deal of time with Sports Coach UK in the formation of their position (2004-05).
- Balyi gained the support of the Executive of Sport Canada in them adopting the model to form the policy (2004).
Balyi was on the “expert panel” that oversees the implementation of the policy in Canada and the development of the resources Canadian Sport for Life and LTAD website (2005-10).

There are no such entrepreneurs of the JSF in Australia. This may be a part of the reason that few people within Australia and no one outside of Australia are aware of the Framework.

**Competition Structure**

Cricket Australia along with Athletics Canada and Speed Skating Canada have identified that a modification to the competition structure will lead to changes in the behaviour of participants, coaches or administrators. Speed Skating Canada recognised that they needed to modify the competition structure before they could ask the coaches to modify the manner in which they coached. This was also reflected by AC1 in Athletics Canada.

The present research reinforces the strong link between the philosophies of an athlete development policy and the enacting of those policies through its competition structure. It is through the competition structure that change has been able to be attained.

### 5.9 Measuring the Effectiveness of Athlete Development Policy

All interviewees were asked how they think one could monitor the success or otherwise of the athlete development policy. Table 17 provides a précis of the means by which one could measure the effectiveness of either their own sports athlete development policy or generically the athlete development policy that was being assessed – the LTAD or the JSF.

Asking such a question engendered a similar response in most participants – they would pause and reflect upon their response longer than any other question. Some found it very difficult to answer and nearly all policy makers – the ASC, Sport Canada and all NSOs, recognised that they did not do it, or were wrestling with the manner in which they should do it in relation to their policy, framework or model. The question – and their subsequent responses – sharpened the focus upon which they felt the direction of the policy should go.

Table 17 further highlights the necessity to determine exactly what outcome the proposed policy is designed to undertake. The diversity of means by which one could measure the effectiveness of the policy is marked. Each response was important in its own right and further reinforces the complexity and inter-policy dependence that athlete development policy covers. Table 17 categorised the responses into six different areas – participant numbers, qualitative measures, performance, NSO processes, policy measures and system changes.
The importance of acknowledging what the key features that the policy makers are seeking of any athlete development policy is highlighted below. Using the responses of the participants of this research only, one could seek different outcomes depending upon the central focus of the policy.

If one were implementing a policy to engender higher participation rates and a higher level of participant satisfaction the following suggestions proposed by the interviewees could be appropriate:

- Broader population participation numbers active in any form of sport
- Ongoing participation in the sport
- Increased participation numbers in identified sport
- Percentage of uptake of target groups (Women, Indigenous, etc)
- Tracking and exit surveys of current athletes
- Monitor behavioural change within the sport
- Measure the qualitative engagement of introductory participants to the sport
- Parents educated around child development rather than result
- The emergence of clubs that offer a multitude of sports
- Increased retention after 17 years of age
- Numbers introduced through a ADP program
- Number of participants throughout each stage;
- identify retention rates;
- identify drop-out points
- Monitor the culture of the sport
- A "pre and post" participant measurement of
  - fundamental motor skills;
  - attitude to physical activity;
  - basic physical abilities; and
  - a measure of enjoyment
- Measuring how a person values their involvement in the game
- The number of coaches that have undertaken revised coach education
- Coach-based reflection on the athlete development policy implementation
- Long-term comparison of (attitude; physical skills; ability; fitness level; enjoyment) for those involved in a given athlete development policy structured sport v those involved in a traditional structure sport at each of the stages of development

If one were implementing a policy to engender improved population health rates, using sport as a vehicle, one could utilise the following suggestions proposed by the interviewees;
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- Change in the incidence of obesity in the pre-pubescent children over 5 year intervals
- Broader population participation numbers active in any form of sport
- Ongoing participation in the sport
- Increased participation numbers in identified sport
- Percentage of uptake of target groups
- Tracking and exit surveys of current athletes
- Monitor behavioural change within the sport
- Measure the qualitative engagement of introductory participants to the sport
- Parents educated around child development rather than result
- The emergence of clubs that offer a multitude of sports
- A higher level of integration of sport between schools / universities and clubs is attained

If one were implementing a policy to attain high performance outcomes one could utilise the following suggestions proposed by the interviewees;

- High performance success at Olympic, International and National level
- Improvements in physical and skills based tests
- Higher standard of technical skills at national training centres
- Reduced injuries in those that attain national training centre status
- Better performance across all levels via
  - athletes are attaining personal best performances;
  - the depth of quality in racing context;
  - more athletes achieving the same standard;
  - higher standard in each event, category and division; and
  - an improvement of competitions standard from states / provinces
- Higher level of integration with other sports to attain better high performance outcomes
- Goals established (benchmark skills) and measured at each level
- Reduction of chronic injuries in youth
- Tracking and exit surveys of current athletes
- Increased retention after 17 years of age
- The number of coaches that have undertaken revised coach education
- Coach-based reflection on the athlete development policy implementation

As is clearly outlined above, clarity around the philosophy, intent and proposed outcomes attached to any policy are determinants as to how one might measure the effectiveness of
such a policy. A different philosophy should lead to a different outcome and should be measured by a different set of criteria.

Collectively, this list of measures identified by practitioners that are asked to implement policy, provides a solid platform upon which policy makers and policy analysts can utilise. It provides the first level of evidence in the literature that has the support of a collect group of practitioners as to how one could effectively monitor the success or otherwise of athlete development policy.
## PARTICIPANTS PROPOSAL FOR MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AN ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Table 17: Participant responses on the means by which the LTAD or the JSF could be measured

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DETAIL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| PARTICIPANT NUMBERS / RETENTION | Change in the incidence of obesity in the pre-pubescent children over 5 year intervals  
Broader population participation numbers active in any form of sport  
Ongoing participation in the sport  
Increased retention after 17 years of age  
Increased participation numbers in identified sport  
Numbers introduced through an athlete development program (Aussie Hoops; Net, Set GO!)  
Number of participants throughout each stage  
identify retention rates  
identify drop-out points  
The number of coaches that have undertaken revised coach education  
Percentage of uptake of target groups (women, Indigenous, aged) |
| QUALITATIVE MEASURES            | Monitor the culture of the sport  
A “pre and post” participant measurement of  
   i) fundamental motor skills;  
   ii) attitude to physical activity;  
   iii) basic physical abilities; and  
   iv) a measure of enjoyment  
Measuring how a person values their involvement in the game  
Tracking and exit surveys of current athletes  
Coach-based reflection on the athlete development policy implementation  
Monitor behavioural change within the sport  
Measure the qualitative engagement of introductory participants to the sport  
Parents educated around child development rather than results |
PARTICIPANTS PROPOSAL FOR MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AN ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT POLICY (cont)

Table 17 (cont): Participant responses on the means by which the LTAD or the JSF could be measured

| PERFORMANCE | High performance success at Olympic, International and National level  
|            | Improvements in physical and skills based tests  
|            | Higher standard of technical skills at national training centres  
|            | Reduced injuries in those that attain national training centre status  
|            | Better performance across all levels via  
|            | i) athletes are attaining personal best performances;  
|            | ii) the depth of quality in racing context;  
|            | iii) more athletes achieving the same standard;  
|            | iv) higher standard in each event, category and division; and  
|            | v) an improvement of competitions standard from states / provinces  
|            | Higher level of integration with other sports to attain better high performance outcomes  
|            | Goals established (benchmark skills) and measured at each level  
|            | Success based upon the skills and not upon result  
|            | Reduction of chronic injuries in youth  
| NSO PROCESSES | Quality and diversity of the steering committee  
|              | Position statements are created that reflect the philosophy of the athlete development policy  
|              | The athlete development policy is identified as a specific component within the funding agreement with the government body  
|              | The athlete development policy direction is incorporated in the strategic plan  
|              | The athlete development policy ethos was embedded into the normal policy and operation of the sport  
|              | Associations assessed after implementing the athlete development policy – measuring the numbers of modified competitions  
| POLICY MEASURES | Determining if the outcome and effectiveness of the policy match the intent of the policy  
|                | Long-term comparison of (attitude; physical skills; ability; fitness level; enjoyment) for those involved in a given athlete development policy structured sport v those involved in a traditional structure sport at each of the stages of development  
| SYSTEM CHANGES | The emergence of clubs that offer a multitude of sports  
|                | A higher level of integration of sport between schools / universities and clubs is attained  

Analysis and Discussion
5.10 Athlete Development Policy Essentials

All those interviewed were provided the opportunity to identify what they thought were essential in any athlete development policy and provided the opportunity to change any element of their sport in order to ensure a better outcome for the development of the participants in their sport.

The resulting list was comprehensive. Like Table 17, each independent suggestion is worthy in its own right of consideration when seeking to develop an athlete development policy. Whilst some suggestions were specific to their own sport, the application could be carried across to all sports.

A large volume of the responses identified the development of coaching or coaching related matters as important elements in the shaping of a quality athlete development model or policy. This reflects the importance of the coach as identified in the literature review. However the scope of the responses was interesting. The responses did not solely look at the issues that directly affected the practitioner, but looked to ideals that genuinely provided increased opportunity for the athlete.

Table 18 to Table 23 provide a comparison of the ideals that each separate NSO and their coaches thought were important in any athlete development policy.

The participants provided some significant responses that are worthy of consideration in the formation of any future development policy. The primary features identified by this group were;

- Allowing athletes to develop across a cross-section of sports with minimal administrative barriers to their participation;
- Improved and increased competition opportunities that allowed for depth and appropriate progress in skills and expertise and an increase in the number of coaches;
- Improved administrative structures that minimised the issues associated with federation and provided enhanced communication and club capacity to assist coaches;
- Providing sport as a vehicle for the improvement of social and societal development; and
- The provision of a fun-based, social environment, led by skilled and qualified coaches that allowed for the progression of an athlete according to their abilities.
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It was the competitors experience and the coach support that the interviewees identified as the primary elements that were important for the development of the athlete. Many of the coaches reinforced the fun-based aspect and the necessity for a strong social environment as important elements to the ideal athlete development program. If policy makers are to listen to the perceptions of the coaches, it would appear that such elements should be included in all athlete development policies.

Based upon the perceptions provided by sport practitioners the essential elements that policy makers should seek to incorporate into a quality athlete development policy should be:

- An enjoyable experience by participants
- Incorporate a good quality social environment
- Competitive opportunity for athletic advancement
- A unified philosophy across the sport
- Capacity for multi-sport membership and opportunity
- Enable each athlete to work with a qualified and knowledgeable coach
- A highly skilled progressive coaching structure that caters to the needs of the athlete
- A high quality and well supported coach education structure linked to the athlete development pathway
- A vehicle to ensure better social structures for disadvantaged elements of society
- Allow for progressive competition to cater to the developing needs and lead into the high performance environment
- Ensure equipment and facilities are sufficient to meet the needs of participants
- Provide for Talent Identification across sports
Table 18: Identification of NSO and Coach Athlete Development Policy ideals – Speed Skating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSO Ideal</th>
<th>Coach Ideal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional coaches in Community clubs</td>
<td>Increased multi-sport opportunities through a universal “Learn to Skate” programme – try all three ice sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business model to support LTAD principles</td>
<td>Sport club with a variety of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior coaches to be part of development structure</td>
<td>Removal of “membership” criteria of sports that limits participants from trying different sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education for parents around what to look for in development programs</td>
<td>A program that enabled them to have a good social skills around skating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A program that enabled them to have a good social skills around skating</td>
<td>Having fun!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good welfare structure outside of skating</td>
<td>Good support staff structure inside sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding to enable the skaters to better prepare themselves and purchase ice time</td>
<td>A female mentor program to promote female coach involvement in the sport</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19: Identification of NSO and Coach Athlete Development Policy ideals – Athletics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSO Ideal</th>
<th>Coach Ideal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide equipment to schools &amp; clubs to match modified rules</td>
<td>Fun-based enjoyable experience - can come from a combination of the social or tied in with success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility modification to match modified rules</td>
<td>Competitive opportunity to see athletes through a logical set of steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased funding</td>
<td>Enhanced use of role models, heroes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club structure that supported a continuum of coaches</td>
<td>Quality programming (so that) everyone knows what the skill sets required to be successful in track are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All coaches educated with the necessary tools to coach</td>
<td>Provide a social atmosphere with good group dynamics, lead by energetic, full of life coaches that can instil confidence - social contact is a major issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research team to review items identified in measures</td>
<td>A better club structure in all of the provinces, and in all of those clubs would have well-trained coaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity to have objective testing - a pre and post</td>
<td>Ensure the provision of high performance coaches at youth development - understand exercise, physiology, growth and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a national database with norms for all sports</td>
<td>Talent identification - potential to get earmarked to maybe a different sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have a coach that could take 30 kids, and all of them would improve</td>
<td>bring athletics competition into Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased number of volunteers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Basketball

**Table 20: Identification of NSO and Coach Athlete Development Policy ideals – Basketball**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSO Ideal</th>
<th>Coach Ideal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capacity to mandate any changes</td>
<td>Provide good quality facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change the federated structure</td>
<td>Improve the quality of referees to provide a better experience for the players</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved coach competence in their capacity to cater to all physical elements of the sport</td>
<td>Smaller groups for Aussie Hoops style activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A return to a National Coaching Development Officer</td>
<td>More training opportunities for the advanced level athletes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A higher level competition for isolated areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More stadiums in indigenous communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time development officers in the indigenous communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cycling

**Table 21: Identification of NSO and Coach Athlete Development Policy ideals – Cycling**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSO Ideal</th>
<th>Coach Ideal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linking to other engine sports (Rowing, Speed Skating, Skiing)</td>
<td>Unified philosophy by coaches, associations and clubs – single direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broader club structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More accessible competitions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased retention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building sustainable programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well trained and educated coaches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear athlete development pathway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cricket

**Table 22: Identification of NSO and Coach Athlete Development Policy ideals – Cricket**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSO Ideal</th>
<th>Coach Ideal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>compulsory coach accreditation at all levels</td>
<td>Tracking athletes after they leave the sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outgoing professional development and support services to the coaches</td>
<td>Ensure that that knowledge is filtered through the system - reaches lower levels quicker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all clubs have an in2cricket introductory program with accredited coaches attached</td>
<td>A modified culture that was not as elitist and not as focussed upon technical development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minimise the impediments that the federated structure imposes</td>
<td>Capacity to have multi-skilled level competition at different age groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use cricket as the vehicle to bring people together and make cricket as accessible for anyone to be able to play.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved communication strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good quality grounds with shade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify the priority areas in each aspect of bowling, batting, fielding and mental skills and ensure that is provided to all coaches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 23: Identification of NSO and Coach Athlete Development Policy ideals – Netball

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSO Ideal</th>
<th>Coach Ideal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>removal of the federated structure to enable the delivery of programs through to the grassroots level</td>
<td>Improved opportunity for game and performance analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appointment of development officers within the state offices</td>
<td>Each athlete had the opportunity to work with a qualified and knowledgeable coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher level of consistency of the development structure that would lead to a higher consistency of the SIS/SAS network</td>
<td>Participants experience a local and accessible comprehensive training environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reinforcement of the current coach development structure</td>
<td>greater access to competitive domestic competition at all levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandatory minimum accreditation for coaches</td>
<td>Greater opportunity for athletes to enjoy international competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A higher standard in the development of officiating</td>
<td>Change the rules to allow coaches to coach more during the games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased resources to attain the above</td>
<td>Modify the structure to allow 4v4 and substitutions to enhance the involvement and engagement of all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased coordination and communication to coaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greater access to indoor venues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.11 The Review and Analysis of Policy in Sport - Analysing Athlete Development Policy

The literature review identified a number of methodologies by which the researchers and academics have chosen in the past to review sport policy. Whilst the nuances of athlete development policy have been identified and highlighted within this research, the manner by which athlete development policy could be reviewed into the future does need to be explored.

This section will explore three elements in relation to the analysis and review of sport policy and specifically athlete development policy;

1. Whether the methodology used in this research in seeking the views, thoughts and opinions of practitioners and significant players in the formation and implementation of policy is a valid means of analysis;

2. What are the specific areas of athlete development policy that have been identified within this research as being essential in the formation of effective athlete development policy? and

3. Of the methodologies used by other policy analysts, what might such an analysis of athlete development policy yield and how could such analytical frameworks be used if applied to this research?

Seeking Practitioner Views as a Method of Policy Analysis

Each participant within this research provided essential information around the context of the policy and even the manner in which athlete development policy had been formed. Both ASC1 and SC1 provided valuable information surrounding the background to the formation of the policy; the role the actors / agents / entrepreneurs played in shaping the policy conditions that established the implementation of policy; the beliefs and values that were associated with the implementation of the policy; and the role that the ASC and Sport Canada play in influencing or determining the shape of the policy. All of this added up to be a rich source of data for policy analysis.

Green, (2004a; 2004b; 2005), Green & Oakley (2001), Henry, Amara, Al-Tauqi, & Lee (2005), Houlihan (2005), Henry, Amara, Al-Tauqi, & Lee (2005), Hoye (2003), Hoye & Cuskelley (2007) have all relied upon the available literature in providing analysis and public discourse on sport policy. Sotiriadou (2005) used the Annual Reports of NSOs as the primary source of data to make her determination as to the manner in which sports policies
shape sport development processes in Australia. Using the literature has been the primary source of information for most analysts of public policy and no one disputes the necessity to refer to the written material available for such analysis. As identified by Stewart, Nicholson, Smith, & Westerbeck (2004) when seeking ways in which policy outcomes could be measured or monitored “Clearly the process must start with the policy detail itself. In should be unambiguous and succinct, and should clearly specify the outcomes required” (Stewart, Nicholson, Smith, & Westerbeek, 2004, p. 182).

Academic research has not established the method by which one should apply an analysis of athlete development policy, let alone sport development policy or high performance sport policy. The research does identify some models by which an analysis could be applied, but recognises the immense diversity that can be associated with policy analysis. It is proposed that the use of interview should be regarded as no less significant as a methodology to be utilised in the public policy debate. Interview within this research was able to provide stronger insight into the motivation, intent and philosophies behind the frameworks of the athlete development policy (LTAD or JSF) as well as the implementation of the policy itself from each of the NSOs.

The literature surrounding the analysis of sport policy highlighted how sport policy can cross many aspects of broader policy platforms. The SBS review of the JSF highlighted that “the JSF has …evolved as a vehicle that can stimulate real and positive change that improves the delivery of sport across a far broader spectrum than the junior sport domain” (Sport Business Solutions, 2006, p. 6). Through the processes used in this research we were able to ascertain that participants reinforced the diversity that athlete development policy covers. This was reinforced by both Netball and Cricket and further recognised by those seeking to undertake competition review.

The processes used in this research, in seeking the views of identified practitioners as to the effectiveness of the policies, are effective as an indicator of the validity of the policy in question. When specifically looking at athlete development policy, it is contested that the interview process and seeking the opinions of those charged with the responsibility of enacting the policy, is a valid method to be used to determine the effectiveness and integrity of the policy.

The formation of Effective Athlete Development Policy

The policy makers and the policy implementers were provided the opportunity to express their view as to the essential elements that should be a part of an effective athlete development policy. Great insight was provided by those that work with the athletes as to the
elements that they believe are important in the development of athletes within their sport. Building upon the structures that are presently in place and recognising that there is some diversity attached to establishing structures that truly influence the development of the athlete, one is able to establish some criteria by which quality athlete development policies should be based upon. The essential elements of an athlete development policy appear to be;

1. Clarity around the intent of the policy. This can be provided through;
   a. Coherent documentation to inform stakeholders
   b. Endorsement by all stakeholders (boards; government; affiliate organisations)
   c. A heightened awareness of the existence of the policy and the principles that surround it (a communications strategy that is associated with the policy)

2. The athlete development policy is evidence-based

3. There is articulation with other NSO policies (high performance; facility development; introductory programs; etc)

4. A strategic process of implementation is applied. This should be reflected by
   a. Alignment with the coach education and accreditation framework of the NSO to ensure that coaches entrusted to enact the policy are well informed
   b. The club structure and competition structure supports and informs the policy
   c. There is the capacity for transfer of members and talent across disciplines and sports at all level in order to enhance the experience of the athlete

5. The policy caters to the physical, social, emotional, skill and cognitive development of the athlete. As a result it should;
   a. be based upon the athlete’s developmental needs for their own sake
   b. aim to provide a safe, enjoyable environment that is social in nature and is performance oriented
   c. have measurable outcomes attached to each level of development.
Whilst others may contest the central elements attached to a quality athlete development policy, the criteria identified above provides a strong basis upon which one might initiate the discussion.

**How might we critique athlete development policy?**

Most analysis of policy has been focused upon a given country’s high performance outcomes. Upon review of the elements that De Bosscher et al. (2008) identified as important for determining the success of sporting nations at the high performance level, one is struck by how relevant each of the components could be to analysing athlete development policy.

De Bosscher identified the nine pillars as

- Financial Support
- Integrated Approach to policy development
- Participation in Sport
- Talent Identification and development system
- Athletic and post career support
- Training Facilities
- Coaching Provision and Coach Development
- International and National Competition
- Scientific Research

Certainly, each of the pillars referred to by De Bosscher were identified as a parameter that was important in the successful implementation of athlete development policy by the interviewees in this research. De Bosscher proposed that international success is dependent upon the investment by government in each of these areas. One needs to reflect as to whether the same pillars are appropriate for the successful implementation of an athlete development policy.

Determining a measure of success might prove to be easier in the high performance environment. Seeking a means by which one might be able to measure the successful – or effective – implementation of athlete development policy has proven problematic in this research and requires some deliberation before a recommendation can be provided. If the link between athlete development policy and the high performance policy of an NSO is deemed to be important, then the elements that inform athlete development policy should well inform high performance policy.
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Utilising the information provided within this research, it would be fair to propose that the following areas identified by De Bosscher for high performance success are critically important to the effective implementation of an athlete development policy. They are:

- Integrated Approach to policy development;
- Participation in Sport;
- Training Facilities;
- Competition structure; and
- Coaching Provision and Coach Development.

The pillar of *International and National Competition* was seen as important in the international and high performance context, however it would be just as important to ensure that the appropriate level and type of competition would be applied when reviewing athlete development policy. Thus the notion of *competition structure* was identified to replace *international competition* as an essential element. In the same manner, it is not to suggest that remaining pillars of *financial support; talent identification and development system; athletic support; and scientific research* are not important – indeed each of these aspects was referred to by the participants in this research – however they are not seen as critical to the success of an athlete development policy at this stage of analysis.

Chalip’s framework, when used to critique sport policy, used the five areas of *legitimisation, a focussing event, definition of the problem, problem attribution* and *decision frames* as the five key areas to focus upon when reviewing sport policy (and in particular government’s application of sport policy). Using the five elements that Chalip (1995) proposed, the research suggests that;

i) The Canadian governmental *legitimisation* for being involved in the role of the LTAD appeared to be the perception of poor performances at Olympic and international events and that the “high level athletes were missing basic skills” (SC1). Yet the LTAD was not just a policy to meet high performance outcomes. The conference of federal and provincial / territorial ministers in 2005 referred to the LTAD directly as the approach that the governmental goodies sought to address physical literacy and lifelong involvement in sport. Thus government could legitimise their involvement across two sectors of sport – high performance and physical literacy.

The Australian government’s only involvement was through the provision of the support and assistance to the funded NSOs by the ASC. As such their involvement
(and legitimisation) was seen as minimal. The prospects for such involvement in the future could change – subject to the government’s response to the Crawford review.

ii) There was no specific focussing event that appeared to lead to the Canadian government’s involvement. However SC1 did refer to the Olympic decline and to the Canadian Games as events that were important to the public.

There was no identified focussing event for the Australian government.

iii) There are two sources where the definition of the problem that may have led the Canadian government to their involvement was stated – a) possibly through the article referred to by Balyi (2001) that identified the “problem and the solution” (p 25); and b) through the Canadian government identifying the LTAD as “fundamental to the realization of the Vision and Goals of the Canadian Sport Policy” (Canadian Government, 2008, p. 3).

There was no definition of the problem by the Australian government.

iv) The problem attribution for the Canadian government appeared to be around the physical competence of their high performance athletes and the perceived lack of unity that a number of interviewees identified (and was referred to by SC1).

v) The decision frames attached to the Canadian government’s LTAD policy are not clearly defined. This research highlighted that there was a distinct lack of decision frames upon which Sport Canada or the expert panel could work toward.

Chalip primarily used the government intent for analysis and pre-supposes that government policy in this area was quite deliberate and well considered. A more in-depth review of government actions that led to the formation of the policy may be required to further inform the analysis of the LTAD if one chose to use Chalip’s framework as the basis for review. At this stage of the development of the LTAD policy within Canada, one would suggest that the use of Chalip’s framework was not appropriate.

It is Houlihan (2005) who provide a strong argument that the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) be the mechanism for policy analysis based upon the factors that influence sports policy. Being quite mindful that both policy platforms (LTAD and JSF) are young and thereby the capacity to see significant change is limited, one could still identify some important elements that the ACF propose and could be utilised to critique each policy. The ACF proposes an understanding of the core beliefs and looks at the actors or agents that support or develop such policies.
This research was able to more closely identify the core beliefs of the policy based upon the information from ASC1 and SC1 as well as from each of the NSOs and practitioners. Whist there may have been some differentiation as to the core beliefs of the policy in Canada (and less so in Australia) the research was able to better discern it through the interview process. Identifying the core beliefs, recognising the role of the actors / agents and identifying the role of government departments and agencies are all areas that the advocacy coalition framework proposes is important if one is to dissect and compare policy. Without question, this research is able to inform and assist those policy analysts that would choose this framework as a means of critiquing athlete development policy.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework appears a suitable methodology to be utilised in the analysis of athlete development policy, however the youthfulness of this area of policy implementation may restrict the analysis using this framework.

Henry et al. (2005) does provide a framework for comparison of sports policy that can equally be applied to athlete development policy. In the context of comparing the principles and merits of the LTAD to that of the JSF, the model that Henry places forward is attractive in its simplicity and in its capacity to be quite comprehensive. Henry proposes to seek similarities; describe differences; theorise the transnational; and defining discourse when comparing policies. Certainly the information within this research allows one to do as proposed by Henry, however the current research does not seek to make direct comparison of the two platforms within this research. Future policy analysts could well utilise this framework should they seek to compare athlete development policies.

Across each of these means that one may choose to employ in the critiquing of athlete development policy discussed in this section, the literature continually recognise that there is no one way in which policy analysis should occur.
CHAPTER 6  CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Answering the Primary Research Question

What are the perceptions of sport practitioners in relation to the effectiveness of the athlete development policy of their sport and do these reflect the intent of the policy makers?

The question was asked of the practitioners as to whether they perceived that the athlete development policy for their sport was effective, and the answer must be determined differently for each sport.

In reviewing the effectiveness of the athlete development policy for their sport, it was necessary to review the athlete development policies to determine what it was that their policy was seeking. The LTAD model informed the policy for Sport Canada. This, in turn, informed the policy for each of the Canadian sports. The thread between each was noticeable. The words that were used in the Balyi articles proposing the LTAD model were the same words used in the supporting documentation by Sport Canada and the same words used for the policy documents of each sport. The LTAD model was more recognisable by the sports practitioners than their own policy. They saw it as one and the same. The policy documents for the sports were young and the policy implementation process was even younger. Although Sport Canada commenced its process of informing sports of the
model in November 2004 (first meeting of the LTAD expert group), the capacity for the sports to develop policy and the tie to funding came much later. Some sports were more advanced than others in the development of the documentation, but nearly all were in the early stages of policy development and policy implementation.

Reviewing the athlete development policies of those influenced by the Junior Sport Framework required a different level of determination. The influence of the JSF upon the development of the policy by the NSOs was not the same as the level of influence by Sport Canada. The JSF provided information and guidelines, and offered a process by which the NSOs could utilise. There was evidence of the influence of the JSF within the policy documents of the sports but this differed considerably between the sports. The JSF provided some models (including the LTAD and the DMSP) for sports to consider. There was no governmental policy that required or informed the NSOs of the shape that the athlete development policy should adhere to. As a result the policy was determined by the sports. The JSF began working with NSOs in the development of their policies from November 2003. Some of those first sports included Netball and Basketball.

The effectiveness was measured against each of the components of the policy that the NSO and Sport Canada or the ASC had identified in their document or interview. Those components of policy are listed in Chapter 5. In order to answer the primary research question, it will be applied to each of the NSOs policies.

**What were the perceptions of athletics practitioners in relation to the effectiveness of the athlete development policy of Athletics Canada?**

Most practitioners attributed some changes – or proposed changes – in the competition structure of Canadian Athletics to the implementation of the LTAD policy. The recognition of the proposed changes and the attribution of the outcomes related to the *Run, Jump, Throw* program were given to the implementation of the LTAD policy and most recognised the potential impact that such a change would impose. The sport’s competition review had not been put into effect, however most practitioners were aware of the competition review and had recognised that the review had been undertaken.

There was some evidence that the athletics practitioners perceived that the policy has had some effect upon practices in the areas of

- an athlete development pathway;
- staged skill development of the athletes;
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- an improvement in coaching practice (of either their own coaching practice or that of others);

- a level of cross-sport integration;

- a link to the coach education within athletics; and

- some application of the critical training elements around the Peak Height Velocity.

It would however be unfair to leave such an evaluation at that point. The emergence of an athlete development pathway is likely to occur after the implementation of a modified competition structure that allows for better progression of the athlete. Only one coach identified that the impact of the LTAD policy had already made an effect upon the coach education, yet all of the practitioners recognised that the coach education content had changed and that it was about to be delivered in Athletics – they simply had not seen any affect of that change at the time of interview. The changes had already been made and all new coach education would reflect these changes.

No athletics practitioners perceived there to be any material effect of the policy in relation to;

- an improved high performance outcome;

- an increase in participation numbers;

- in it addressing the physical literacy needs of the nation;

- in seeing a link to lifelong participation;

- in seeing a level of education to the parents around the LTAD principles, or

- in a reduction in injury or burn-out.

Many of these elements that one might expect to see in an athlete development policy identified above would not be evident for some time. It would be appropriate and expected that the effect of the policy in relation to most of these areas would not necessarily be evident to practitioners at this stage of the policy’s life.

It is in the specific coach development areas listed below that one would hope to see some effect of the policy and its influence on coaching practice. There was some reference to each of these areas by different stakeholders, but there was not a suggestion that any of these elements had been put into common practice across all those interviewed. The areas are

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- cross-sport activities;
- the development of staged skill progression;
- the application of critical training surrounding the PHV; and
- the emergence of good (or better) coaching practices.

One would expect that the coaches would apply a staged level of skills progression and apply good coaching practices already within their current environment and would have done so for some time. This research did not seek to validate that element through the questioning applied to the coaches. The research did seek to gain an insight as to whether the application of good coaching practice or a staged development of skills or if the application of critical training around the PHV had occurred as a result of the implementation of the policy. There was some limited evidence to suggest that this had occurred. Again, the reality is that good coaching practice may well occur, however one experienced coach certainly thought that athletics coaches across Canada treated their developing athletes like “little adults” (ACCoach1) and looked forward to the impact that the policy could have on their fellow coaches.

**Did the perceptions of the Athletics practitioners reflect the intent of Athletics Canada and Sport Canada LTAD policy?**

Athletics Canada intended that the policy would have an impact upon each of the areas identified in table 6. This included improved high performance outcomes; increased participation numbers; addressing the physical literacy needs of the nation; a clear athlete development pathway; staged skill progression; good coaching practice; a link to the NCCP accreditation; the production of a policy document; the completion of a competition review; lifelong involvement in sport; education of parents on the principles of the LTAD; and a reduction in injury and burnout.

At this stage in the development and emergence of the policy, the perception of athletics practitioners did not reflect the outcomes expected of the policy makers – Athletics Canada and Sport Canada. The policy makers did not apply a timeframe to the implementation of the policy in this research but it would not necessarily be the expectation of Athletics Canada or perhaps Sport Canada that the intentions would be realised at this stage of the policy’s life.

No timeframe was applied, proposed or offered by Athletics Canada. Athletics Canada would expect to see a significant effect upon the coach education in the very near future and is likely to have seen and experienced that since the time of interview. In a similar vein, the
agreement that Athletics Canada have attained with the provincial and territorial organisations in the competition review – attained after the interview process – is likely to see a major change to the coach development pathway. It is the coaching practice areas that will be of most interest in determining whether there is change to the practice of coaches into the future. The emergence of the effect of the policy, and the degree to which it was effective, would be worthy of future note.

**What were the perceptions of speed skating practitioners in relation to the effectiveness of the athlete development policy of Speed Skating Canada?**

Nearly all practitioners recognised an improvement in their own coaching practices or that of their companions through the introduction of the LTAD principles to the Speed Skating environment. The degree to which it had impacted upon them varied – from the reinforcement of current beliefs and the potential impact that it had upon introductory coaches, through to an affirmation by a senior coach that it had “… as a course conductor, as a phys-ed (sic) teacher, as a coach…it changed everything” (SSCCoach3). There was some indication of improved high performance outcomes, improved participation numbers and importantly the addressing of the physical competence of the athlete because of the implementation of the policy.

Speed Skating Canada practitioners had seen some changes in some areas of the sport (Quebec). One coach had suggested that they had utilised the principles of the LTAD and that “… it’s the biggest change that we’ve made in the past few years” (SSCCoach3) and further suggested that it has provided the impetus to produce stronger athletes. “…These are the basics of our LTAD, and this is what has made a huge difference in our work, daily, I would say as a coach” (SSCCoach3). Others understood the broader concepts but the policy had not made as significant a difference to their current coaching practices.

There was evidence that some practitioners identified an improved athlete development pathway in the sport, and the integration of some like-sports (ice skating and ice hockey) in some cross-sport activities, showed some evidence of addressing the broader physical literacy needs of the nation. Some speed skating coaches also recognised a difference in the manner in which they approached the application and development of skills, as well as the training that they applied around the peak height velocity of the individuals that they had coached. There was some evidence of changes to the competition in one province, but this was not evident across other provinces.

Whilst the specific LTAD Speed Skating policy was still in the process of implementation, there had been some provinces that had applied the principles of the model to their structure
and coaching. The research did not ask the practitioners to discern the difference between the LTAD model and the LTAD policy. As such they saw it as one and the same.

No speed skating practitioners perceived there to be any effect of the policy in relation to ensuring a lifelong involvement of participants in the sport. There would be no means available to the coaches to determine the lifelong involvement, and such a response would be expected.

The perception of speed skating practitioners was that the LTAD model was primarily effective across a number of areas of coaching, athlete development and competition structure. There was an expectation that there would be further significant changes in this area and that the implementation of the proposed competition structure would be significant in this regard.

**Did the perceptions of the speed skating practitioners reflect the intent of Speed Skating Canada and Sport Canada’s LTAD policy?**

The implementation of the policy by Speed Skating Canada was intended to impact upon most of the areas previously identified by the practitioners. Ultimately, they were seeking improvements in the high performance outcomes of the sport and the LTAD policy was an important component towards that aim. The perceptions identified by the speed skating practitioners reflected a substantial part of the intent that Speed Skating Canada were seeking through the implementation of this policy. As policy roll-out further impacts upon the rest of the nation, it is expected that Speed Skating Canada would be looking for their coaches to reflect the perceptions that have been identified by those involved in this research.

**What were the perceptions of cycling practitioners in relation to the effectiveness of the athlete development policy of the Canadian Cycling Association?**

The diversity of opinion was quite profound in the Canadian Cycling practitioners’ response. Some had used the model substantively in their coaching practice and competition structure. Others had rejected the model and all that it stood for.

There were only remote indications that the policy or the model had any impact upon improved high performance outcomes, with only one coach identifying that it was used by that coach throughout their professional coaching career. Others rejected the model as a high performance model. Some coaches identified the use of the LTAD in their introductory programs, indicating some response in terms of participation numbers. Only one coach recognised the link between the policy and the coach accreditation of the sport.
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The feature to their response was the dichotomy of views provided in relation to the effectiveness of the model. Few referred to the Canadian Cycling Association policy and many of the responses referred to the model and not to the policy of the sport. Again, the perceptions of the practitioners and the treatment by the research to their responses were that the model and the policy were one and the same.

There was definitely no unifying view across the representation of provinces. There was evidence that the model was being applied wholeheartedly in some areas and not at all in others.

The cycling practitioners perceived that the model was partially effective in most areas of the policy with an indication that it was primarily effective in the application of good coaching practice amongst the interviewees. The Canadian Cycling Association’s specific sport policy however was very new and there were strong indications that the application of that policy was not being pursued vigorously by the national body.

**Did the perceptions of the cycling practitioners reflect the intent of Canadian Cycling and Sport Canada’s LTAD policy?**

The perception that there was a lack of unity of purpose or direction that surrounded the policy implementation by the coach & provincial representatives may have reflected the NSO’s policy intent quite accurately. There was little strength of conviction that the policy could be applied across all of the disciplines in Cycling.

The intentions of the policy makers may well be different in the case of the Sport Canada’s policy intent and that of the Canadian Cycling Association. Whilst Canadian Cycling identified the policy as one that looked to meet the physical literacy needs of the nation, they appeared to be less comfortable with their role in pursuing that agenda. There were only a few areas where the NSO intent was compatible with the stated intent of Sport Canada – this was in the areas of physical literacy; the link to the NCCP; and the production of a policy document. To that end the research can identify that the perception of the practitioners partially reflects the intent of some of the policy makers.

**What were the perceptions of basketball practitioners in relation to the effectiveness of the athlete development policy of Basketball Australia?**

The perception of the basketball practitioners was that the athlete development policy of Basketball Australia was relatively ineffective. Basketball identified that their junior sport policy covered *Aussie Hoops* (the national junior sport program) and the junior sport policy
document. All practitioners recognised *Aussie Hoops* but there was minimal recognition that the junior sport policy existed. The only practitioner that did recognise it was the state-based officer.

There was a perception that the *Aussie Hoops* program provided an increase in participation numbers and the program itself affected the competition structure for the introductory elements of the sport. There was little recognition that the junior sport policy provided any level of impact upon the competition structure in Basketball. There were some indications, primarily gauged from the response of the state representative, that the policy was effective in the following areas

- the determination of good coaching practice;
- as a resource for clubs and associations; and
- the provision of a safe environment.

There was no recognition that the *Aussie Hoops* program or the junior sport policy was effective in impacting upon

- the athlete development pathway;
- the staged skill progression of the athlete; or
- the coach education.

Most coaches were either critical or non-committal about the level of athlete development information that was provided by Basketball Australia.

**Did the perceptions of the basketball practitioners reflect the intent of Basketball Australia’s Junior Sport policy?**

The response of the coaches matched the perception of BA1 in that they would be likely to be unaware of anything but the *Aussie Hoops* program. This was accurate. As a result they could not determine its effectiveness. It could be surmised that the intent of the policy makers would be to attain a higher level of awareness. It was apparent that the revised coach accreditation structure that Basketball were about to embark upon would reflect the policies of the junior sport document, however that had not been implemented at the time of interview (April 2009).
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The intent of the policy according to both the interview and the correspondence attached to the policy, is that it would be effective in the following areas –

- increased participation numbers;
- establish an athlete development pathway;
- ensure a staged skill development of the athlete;
- provide good coaching practice;
- link to coach education;
- a resource for clubs & associations;
- ensure the rights of juniors to be engaged in appropriate activity; and
- ensure the provision of a safe environment.

The practitioners’ perceptions did not reflect the intent of Basketball Australia in this regard.

What were the perceptions of netball practitioners in relation to the effectiveness of the athlete development policy of Netball Australia?

Netball Australia's practitioners were very aware of the policy, very aware of its effectiveness and very supportive of the intent as proposed by Netball Australia. The responses from the identified practitioners indicated a high level of knowledge about the policy content and the implications attached to its implementation.

The practitioners perceptions in regard to the effectiveness of the specific policy areas identified below by Netball Australia were deemed to be high, very high or complete. The specific policy areas were;

- increased participation numbers;
- ensure a staged skill development of the athlete;
- provide good coaching practice;
- link to coach education, be a resource for clubs & associations;
- ensure the rights of juniors to be engaged in appropriate activity;
- ensure the provision of a safe environment;
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- addressing the social & emotional development of the athlete;
- affecting the junior competitions structure; and
- ensuring no national title up to under 13 years

The only area that the practitioners did not perceive that the policy was effective at a high level, was in establishing an athlete development pathway. Whilst there was some recognition that the pathway existed for athletes, there was consideration that the policy was not as effective as it could be in addressing this area.

**Did the perceptions of the netball practitioners reflect the intent of Netball Australia’s Junior Sport policy?**

Netball Australia’s intention was to provide a high quality environment in the areas identified above. This was matched by the perceptions of the practitioners. The high level of priority that Netball applied in ensuring that the policy was effectively implemented was reflected in the affirmation by the practitioners’ responses. The perceptions of the practitioners primarily matched the intentions of Netball Australia.

**What were the perceptions of cricket practitioners in relation to the effectiveness of the athlete development policy of Cricket Australia?**

The effectiveness of the Cricket Australia junior sport policy specifically in the area of coach education was seen as being completely effective. The integration of the *Well Played* document into the coach education was recognised by all practitioners. The fact that it is covered across all areas of the coach accreditation levels reinforces the commitment that Cricket Australia has shown to the policy.

The practitioners further identified that Cricket Australia were highly effective in;

- engendering good coaching practice;
- ensuring the provision of a junior competition structure;
- the provision of a resource to clubs and associations; and
- ensuring the rights to be engaged in appropriate activities in a safe environment.

The policy was also perceived to be primarily effective in increasing the participation numbers and providing a staged level of progression of skills for the athlete.
Whilst it was clearly stated by Cricket Australia as a prime outcome of the policy, the addressing the physical competence of high performance athletes and the development of an athlete development pathway were collectively not perceived by all practitioners to be highly effective. Like Netball, there was a high level of awareness and acceptance of the principles associated with the policy and the practitioners within this group perceived the policy to be very effective.

Did the perceptions of the cricket practitioners reflect the intent of Cricket Australia’s Junior Sport policy?

Cricket Australia placed the emphasis on the policy quite high when they suggest it as the most important document to elicit change that they had recently produced. It was quite apparent that the intent was to ensure the policy be as effective as possible across all the areas identified. The perceptions of the cricket practitioners primarily reflected the intent of the policy makers in this regard.

The intention was that the policy would support the pursuit of Cricket Australia to be placed as the number one team in the world in both the men’s and women’s game. The areas that the practitioners perceived the policy to be weakest were in the establishment of an athlete development pathway and addressing the physical competence of the high performance athlete. A more comprehensive athlete development policy – as against a junior sport policy – should allow Cricket to address this.

6.2 The Role of Athlete Development Policy

Neither NSO nor government bodies have been sufficiently informed to make quality decisions around the shape that athlete development policy should take – until now. The criteria that is used to establish a high quality, high performance policy and program are well established. There are some common elements attached to the policy of different countries, and has been referred to as “… the putative emergence of a uniform (global) model of elite sport development” (Green & Oakley, 2001, p. 247). De Bosscher et al. (2008) established some common criteria by which high performance policy could be analysed, in order to determine the success of such policy on the international stage. No such criteria exists for athlete development policy.

A number of NSOs placed their athlete development policy at the highest level. Cricket Australia placed high worth on the importance of their athlete development policy. The effect that a well implemented policy can have upon the ethos of the sport is reflected by the comments of Cricket Australia. “I think that since August 2006, this has been our most
important document in influencing change” (CA2). Netball had placed the development of their junior sport program as “the highest priority” on the agenda when they meet with their state counterparts.

The articulation of an athlete development policy may well have been the glue that the Crawford review (Australian Government, 2009) were seeking in trying to bring together the broader policy areas of the school, health and sport in their 2009 review presented to the Australian Government. Such a policy has the potential to impact upon no less than six of the eight fundamental issues identified by the review. Those six fundamental issues were identified in the report as:

- Defining the National Sports Vision
- Reforming the Australian Sports Commission to Lead the Sports System
- Building the Capacity of Our National Sporting Organisations
- Putting Sport and Physical Activity Back into Education
- Building Community Sport with People and Places
- Ensuring Australia’s Sport System is Open to All

The complexity of achieving any proposed policy outcomes must again be reinforced and not undersold. If one were seeking better health outcomes or larger participation numbers then the capacity to engage the health or school sector is of paramount importance. In seeking a higher level of engagement of sport within the school sector, the recent review into Australian sport stated “Physical education in schools is central to breaking down barriers to participation in sport as well as contributing to health and social inclusion” (Australian Government, 2009, p. 120). That one statement has engaged school, health, social and sport policy and formed part of the discussion that led to a recommendation for the Australian Government to make sport in schools an ongoing priority. The Crawford review was a much broader review than a single athlete development policy could pretend to address, however should the Australian government choose to respond to the Crawford review with the pursuit of an athlete development policy, it will go some way to recognising the impact that such a policy can have on the well-being of a nation.

The emergence of the LTAD in recent years as the platform to establish athlete development policy has rightly raised the profile of such a policy. Whilst this paper has questioned the motives, veracity and implementation process used to bring such a policy platform to sports

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in Canada, the Canadian government have pioneered the importance of such a policy. The Canadian government only ever had the LTAD model to call upon in the development of their policy. It was certainly the most publicised and had the strongest advocates for its adoption. Sport Canada’s reliance upon the model to inform the policy has allowed it to emerge to its current state. A revised athlete development policy gives Canada a massive head-start over other countries in their pursuit to provide a quality environment for their athletes.

It is too easy for government to maintain the current funding paradigm and provide rhetoric towards the necessity to develop the infrastructure of sport without matching it with the impetus required to make the changes. Not all sports in this research felt that funding was the essential criteria. One Australian sport suggested that they did not need the funding to ensure the progress of the policy – they suggested that the most important element that would enable them to effect the changes would be through reducing the limitations of the federated structure and allowing them to have direct access to the clubs and associations.

If the federated structure is a major impediment to the future development of sport, the national governments of both Canada and Australia become important players in enabling and supporting sports to overcome such barriers. The federal government has a duty to act as a catalyst in the collaboration of NSOs, SSOs/PSOs and associations.

It is quite conceivable that different sports could implement different policies and seek different outcomes under the same banner of an athlete development policy. Government should be very clear as to the intent that they seek in the promotion of a given policy.

The Australian government, through the ASC, have chosen to seek no specific policy outcome in relation to the Junior Sport Framework. They have allowed NSOs to choose the manner in which they might adopt some elements of the framework. They have equally chosen to allow an NSO to not have an athlete development policy or junior sport policy if they see fit.

The Canadian government, through Sport Canada, have made a clear statement that they require all NSOs to have an athlete development policy. They specifically stipulate that the athlete development policy to be adopted by the NSO is the Long Term Athlete Development Policy. Unfortunately, the articulation of the philosophy of the LTAD differs between that stated by the conference of Federal-Provincial / Territorial Ministers at Regina in 2005 and that stated by the supporting documents to the policy. As a result the measures that one
might choose to utilise in ascertaining the effectiveness of the policy could differ between sports, between government and even between sectors of Sport Canada.

Athlete development policy is an essential component of NSO policy if it is to provide support for the development of its athletes. Athlete development policy informs and provides the basis for a high performance policy. NSOs (or indeed government) are more than able to develop a quality high performance program that is independent of the rest of the sport. Archery, Tae Kwon Do and Skeleton are excellent examples in Australia where this has occurred. With the maturing of sport policy comes the emergence of athlete development policy. As sport matures, the need to provide guidelines on the development of the youth and the principles that need to be applied in that development becomes more apparent.

Athlete development policy should have a primary role in government and National Sporting Organisations policy development.

6.3 Athlete Development Policy – a Template for the Future

The NSOs and governmental bodies have highlighted the philosophy and intent that was applied in the development of their policies. Through that process, the research has been able to identify some essential elements that appear to be important in the development of such policies.

Chapter 5 identified those components that this research has identified as the basis for future analysis. They form the basis for the future template upon which athlete development policy can be based. They should be;

1. Clarity around the intent of the policy
2. The athlete development policy is evidence-based
3. There is articulation with other NSO policies
4. A strategic process of implementation is applied
5. The policy caters to the physical, social, emotional, skill and cognitive development of the athlete.

Further, those involved in this research have provided a vision for an athlete development model that meets a number of needs, suggesting a model that caters to the participant, club and the coach.
Conclusion and Recommendations

**Club structure needs to be broader, which in turn means more coaches.** Examples of actionable items that could support this include increased multi-sport opportunities through a universal sports program; eliminating the membership criteria that limits participants from trying different sports; clubs to have a continuum of coaches that were skilled in the delivery of the sport in line with the athlete development policy principles.

The strong sense of catering to the introductory participant was reflected through the reference of the physical literacy needs of the nation in the LTAD policy. The multi-sport club concept that was proposed by a number of practitioners that allowed the participant to play multiple sports at minimal inconvenience was well supported and best articulated with the following comment:

> if you had kind of sports club, which is not... identified as being a hockey club or a figure skating club - it's a sports club. Where families, athletes and participants go, and they get good instruction from coaches, and they can literally try out a whole bunch of sports, or we can lead them to a sports programme where some of it's gymnastics, and some of it's swimming, and some of it's running, and some of it's throwing, and it's in this sports club environment as opposed to you have to go to different places to get the different things that you need (SSCCoach2).

This model is reinforced by the reference to the sampling years and promoted in the Côté and Hay model of the Development Model of Sport Participation (Côté & Hay, 2002; Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007). It is further supported by Kirk et al. (Kirk, Brettschneider, & Auld, 2007) in their review of the junior development system that is applied in Germany. Strong consideration should be given to the application of this model into the future and encouragement for like sports to seek shared introductory programs.

The practitioners supported the perception that the coach plays a crucial role in the development of the athlete. Such support for the coach could include the provision of well educated / trained coaches and support; ensuring the provision of high performance coaches at youth development; and the provision of ongoing professional development and support services to the coaches.

There were three essential elements that were raised through this research that require further exploration to effect good policy – the introductory programs, the competition structure and catering to the high performance needs.
Chapter 6

**Introductory Programs:** Many NSOs had introductory programs (*Aussie Hoops; In2Cricket; NetSetGO!; Run Jump Throw*) and recognised the importance of common branding (Basketball) and the capacity to set the framework upon which the rest of the sport could build (Cricket). Netball’s insistence that the program could not be effectively introduced without the support of the policy provides a strong template for other NSOs to follow. The identification of an introductory program, possibly shared with other like sports, appears important in shaping the type of competition and the environment that the sports seeks to offer its participants.

**Competition Structure:** Cricket Australia along with Athletics Canada and Speed Skating Canada have each identified that competition structure are the essential elements to lead any change in the behaviour and acceptance of the philosophies associated with the athlete development models. Speed Skate Canada initially sought to get the coaches to adopt the principles that they were seeking ―Our initial hope … was well if we tackle the coaches first, then they’ll drive the change to competition – that didn’t happen‖ (SSC1). After witnessing changes in another sport’s competition structure (swimming) and the subsequent changes in coach’s behaviour, SSC1 recognised the need to address competition structure first – “Let’s stop making the coach’s life difficult by telling them to do one thing and reinforcing the other. Let’s give the right message and have the competition structure that will let them do their job properly”.

Sports that had not changed their competition structure - Basketball and Cycling - were finding it difficult to get any level of buy-in from the coaches. Even Canadian Cycling Association recognised the need for the national body to make appropriate changes in order for their constituents to be able to follow – “We the national body needs to take the pain first if we are looking for successful implementation of the system” (CCA1). If a sport was prepared to make the competition changes required to meet the policy aims, it would effect change.

Reinforcement of the role that the change in competition structure had – and linking such changes to the physical literacy of the athlete at not just the junior level – was provided with the introduction of the LTAD model by SSCCoach3 -

… (we) saw that it was making a huge difference. Just that easily…and we have lots of skaters that are very, very strong in roller skate, and in cycling, … our skaters are not only very good skaters, but they’re very, very good athletes. They’re very complete on a physical side (SSCCoach3).
Chapter 6

There is strong evidence that the competition structure needs to become an important element to the implementation of an effective athlete development policy.

**Linking High Performance Programs:** Whilst only alluded to in the responses from the practitioners, there is a real dilemma as to whether an athlete development policy should cater to the development of high performance outcomes. ASC1 suggested that the athlete development policy and the high performance pathway “can’t be disconnected, there has to be some opportunity for them to move through a pathway, …the role of a high performing athlete is a huge motivator potentially for a young person who wants to get involved in the sport, so they can’t be two disparate things, they need to work together to do that” (ASC1). This was reinforced by ACCoach1 -

I don’t think there’s any difference between a high performance policy and a sport development policy. If you don’t have a sport development policy, you’re not going to have a high performance development policy. You’re not going to have high performance! - ACCoach1.

It is important to ensure that an athlete’s development can readily lead into the high performance programs of the sport and that the policy that is in place supports that. Thus the spectrum that an athlete development policy covers – from grass-roots through to high performance – must demand the attention of government and administrators. An ideal athlete development model should allow for the easy transition and progression through to elite performances if that is the desire and capacity of the individual. The sport should establish the structures that best allow this to occur. You must have a good quality development policy to enable a good quality high performance policy – “Otherwise the high performance athletes that you get, you’re going to get them by luck” (ACCoach1).

This research has highlighted the diversity of policy areas that an effective athlete development policy can impact upon. An effective athlete development policy;

- provides direction to state / provincial associations
- establishes the ethos by which the sport seeks to be guided
- provides introductory programs that enable a diversity of skills in a fun and safe environment
- sets the competition structure for the sport
- establishes the athlete development pathway for the sport
Chapter 6

- informs and links the coach education and development to the athlete development pathway
- provides progressive development of skills for the athlete
- links to the high performance requirements of the sport

Athlete development policy is one of the most neglected area of policy development in sport yet has the potential to impact in one of the largest ways – the development of the athlete and the health of the sporting environment.

6.4 Answering the Secondary Research Question

How do the perceptions of stakeholders inform the essential elements that one should address when critiquing athlete development policy?

Chapter 5 provided some discussion around what the essential elements of high performance policy and more generic sport policy analysis were. It was determined that the perceptions of stakeholders is an important means by which researchers are able to ascertain the information required to critique policy, based upon the present literature.

Analysis of the literature and responses from the stakeholders led to the determination of the list of essential elements attached to an athlete development policy in the Analysis and Discussion chapter.

The stakeholder perceptions provided clarity around the policy detail and the outcomes sought by the policy – elements that Stewart et al. saw as essential in policy analysis (Stewart, Nicholson, Smith, & Westerbeek, 2004).

The stakeholders’ perceptions specifically informed the effectiveness and through this, recognised those elements that the policy specifically catered to – as identified in each of the practitioners’ responses. The perceptions of the stakeholders informed, to varying degrees, each of the pillars that de Bosscher et al. (2008) identified in their analysis of high performance policy. They informed most of the areas that Chalip (1995) was seeking (legitimisation, a focussing event, definition of the problem, problem attribution and decision frames). The perceptions certainly informed the core beliefs of the policy and role of the actors or agents as well as that of the government agencies – all identified as important when utilising the advocacy coalition framework as a mechanism for policy review.

Conclusion and Recommendations
Chapter 6

Stakeholder perceptions play an essential role in determining the elements that one should address when critiquing athlete development policy. The critiquing of athlete development policy should be based upon the essential elements identified in the Analysis and Discussion chapter. The analysis of any athlete development policy must be mindful of the perceptions of those charged to implement the policy.

6.5 Recommendations to Government

Recommendations to Canadian Government

This paper has cast sufficient doubt over the capacity of the LTAD policy in Canada to be effective in meeting the stated intention of the policy at this stage. It is highly likely that the policy will show signs of a higher level of effectiveness in some aspects of the policy into the future. There needs to be a higher level of clarity as to the intent of the LTAD policy and whether that matches the intent of the LTAD model.

1. The LTAD model should be separated from the LTAD policy to enable the policy to grow and the vagaries surrounding the model to be discussed and developed.

2. The Canadian government should reaffirm its commitment to an athlete development policy such as the LTAD policy currently in place, but not stipulate the implementation of the LTAD policy as the compulsory model. The Canadian government should undertake a strategic review of the LTAD policy to determine whether it still meets the needs of the Canadian sports community.

3. Sport Canada should attain greater clarity as to what it is seeking in the implementation of the athlete development policy of Canada. Such clarity should begin to identify some measures by which the success or otherwise of the policy can be measured.

4. Sport Canada should establish clear parameters by which they seek NSOs to develop their LTAD policy and ensure a higher level of integration of the policy across other areas of jurisdiction of Sport Canada.

Recommendation to Australian Government

1. The Junior Sport Framework is a misnomer. The framework provides the basis for so much more than simply a junior policy for the sport. The framework should be renamed and modified to reflect the philosophy identified by those in this research and be identified as an athlete development policy.
2. The core elements of an athlete development policy as identified in this research should be discussed, verified, modified and endorsed by the ASC board as the appropriate aspects of athlete develop policy for adoption by all NSOs. The ASC should review the value of the current resource and establish it as an “Athlete Development Policy” whereby core elements should be integrated and adopted by NSOs as part of the funding and service level agreement.

**Recommendation to both Canadian and Australian Government**

1. The government of both Canada and Australia should play an active role in minimising the barriers that the federated system imposes to the effective implementation of such policies.

2. If government and NSOs believed that the development of physical literacy was important, then there is very strong evidence to suggest that a broader multi-sport environment that focused upon broad-based skill development would enhance the capacity to meet the physical literacy needs. Government should trial the super-club concept, so that the benefits and shortcomings attached to the development and emergence of such models is monitored. Membership, insurance, facilities and management practices will need to be pursued if such a model were to be realised.

3. Assistance in the provision of background information, and financial and human resources should be provided to NSOs to assist in them forming an effective athlete development policy that meets the needs of their sport.

**6.6 Recommendations to NSOs**

1. NSOs should establish an athlete development policy if they have not already done so. The formation of the policy should consider the essential elements raised by the participants of this research.

2. The link between coach education and athlete development is inseparable. NSOs should be encouraged to strengthen the link between the development and education of their coaches to that of their athlete development structure. Such a link provides a common philosophical approach to the development needs of the athlete.

3. Ensure clarity around the current athlete development policies and ensure an articulation of those policies with all other facets of the sport. In particular, there should be a clear athlete development pathway that enables athletes to recognise
the skills and attributes required to progress in their development and is reflected in an appropriate competition structure.

4. The athlete development policy should have an introductory program attached to it, shape the competition structure of the sport to ensure that it meets the developmental requirements of the athlete and articulate with the high performance policy and programs of the NSO.

6.7 Recommendations to Policy Analysts

This research was the first step to seek a stronger understanding of the effectiveness of athlete development policies.

1. It is recommended that future researchers apply a common set of measurable outcomes in the determination of the effect of policy. The outcomes identified within this research provide a platform by which future researchers can choose to base such analysis upon.

2. This research has provided policy analysts some important criteria upon which an athlete development policy should encompass – as perceived by the practitioners as well as determined by the author. Policy analysts should utilise the essential elements of athlete development policy – as outlined in this research – as a platform by which they can compare and contrast policy in this genre.

6.8 Recommendations for Future Research

Each of the Australian NSOs identified the influential role that each of the associations have in effecting policy. This was a shortcoming of this research, in not initially recognising and through the research design, accessing the association administrators to gauge their perceptions of the policy. It may have been that each of the Australian sports utilised in this research are significantly large enough to have associations that are influential, whereas other sports may not recognise this level of administration within their structure.

1. Future research could engage the association level of sport administration when seeking the perception of practitioners.

The LTAD model proposes that generic physical competencies should be the focus at certain stages of an athlete’s development. The literature and the resources are there for all to see and interpret, however the proponents of the model have not allowed themselves to
be sufficiently questioned by researchers as to the specific elements that they would modify within their training of youth.

2. Further research into the practices of developing youth coaches needs to be explored and the influences / changes that the introduction of the LTAD model to their program has meant.

3. Future research should seek to gain a more in-depth understanding of the specific training regimes that coaches are undertaking and seek to ascertain if those same training regimes are in line with the philosophies of the LTAD, the DMSP or any future model.

4. It is recommended that a similar study of the perceived effect of practitioners on the impact of an athlete development policy is conducted at 5 year interval. Such a study will inform the literature and policy makers of the rate of progression and up-take in specific policy areas over the life-time of an athlete development policy. Having some indication as to the rate of uptake of the policy and the factors that influence that uptake will further inform government and NSOs as to the length of time before some measurable outcomes can be identified.

5. The coaches are a key driver to the provision of a quality athlete environment. Future research should provide further insight as to the qualities required of a coach to establish the environment for athletes at different levels of development, and the best means by which a coach can develop each of the areas of social, physical, psychological and cognitive development of the athlete.
References


Appendix 1

Invitation to Australian Sports Commission

Judy Flanagan
Director, Community Sport
Australian Sports Commission

CC: [Redacted]

Dear Judy / [Redacted],

This letter is to confirm the discussions surrounding the research that I am currently undertaking as part of a Masters Degree by Research attached to the University of Canberra.

As a person that has a strong understanding of sports coaching, administration and development I have recently engaged in undertaking some research in sports development policies through a postgraduate program.

The postgraduate research program involves a comparison of the Sports Development policies of Canada and Australia through an analysis of the intent and effect of the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model that Canada has adopted, and the Junior Sports Framework (JSF) that some National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) in Australia have adopted.

The research proposes to conduct a face to face interview with:

- the governing body for Sport within each country (Sports Canada and the Australian Sports Commission)
- the CEO (or their nominated representative) of 3 Australian NSOs that have adopted the Junior Sport Framework;
- a CEO (or their nominated representative) of one of the State Sporting Organisations of each identified sport; and
- 3 identified coaches within the sport that work with developing athletes.

The same process will occur with three sporting organisations in Canada that have adopted the Long Term Athlete Development Model.

Sports Development policies (as against High Performance sport policies) are an emerging component of national policy development. Canada has lead the way in the specific support offered to NSOs in their implementation of the LTAD within their structure.

As a result, I would like the opportunity to interview you and/or your identified representative at a convenient time (you have nominated [Redacted] as that representative);

It is anticipated that interviews will take approximately 45 - 60 minutes each and will be recorded. A transcript of the record will be sent to each interviewee for verification and confidentiality will be maintained.
This provides an excellent opportunity to determine whether the intent attached to the introduction of such a policy is matched by the perceived outcome of those sports administrators at the national and provincial/state level as well as the practitioners at the “grass-roots” level.

It should be made clear that, whilst I am an employee of the Australian Sports Commission in the Coaching and Officiating area, the research that I am undertaking is not that of the ASC but separate to my paid role.

I can be contacted via phone at work on +61 2 6214 1552 or (m) +61 412 257 990 or via email at john.armstrong@ausport.gov.au or armstrong@iinet.net.au.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

John Armstrong
Postgraduate scholar
University of Canberra

Mr J Armstrong
B App SC - Coaching
Postgraduate Scholar
School of Health, Division of Health Design & Science, Department of Sports Studies
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E armstron@iinet.net.au
Appendix 2

Invitation to Sport Canada

(via email 11 October 2008)

Dear Sir / Madam,

Could you please pass this message through to the most appropriate person in the Sports Programs area.

As a person that has a strong understanding of sports coaching, administration and development within Australia I have recently engaged in undertaking some research in sports development policies through a postgraduate program. The research involves a comparison of the Sports Development policies of Canada and Australia through an analysis of the intent and effect of the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model that Canada has adopted, and the Junior Sports Framework (JSF) that some National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) in Australia have adopted.

Such a comparison has particular relevance in Australia with the newly elected Australian Government recently establishing a review panel that will make recommendation to the government on the future direction for Australian sport with the prospect of further policy development occurring soon. I understand that Canada is about to go through an election in the coming week.

The research proposes to conduct a face to face interview with;

- the CEO (or their nominated representative) of 3 Canadian NSOs;
- a CEO (or their nominated representative) of one of the Provincial Sporting Organisations of each sport; and
- 3 identified coaches within the organisation that work with developing athletes.

The same process will occur with 3 sporting organisations in Australia that have adopted the Junior Sport Framework. It is anticipated that the outcomes of such research will assist in informing policy makers on both the effect of their policies and the processes that have been used to attain such policies.
Sports Development policies (as against High Performance sport policies) are an emerging component of national policy development. Canada has lead the way in the specific support offered to NSOs in their implementation of a LTAD within their structure. This provides an excellent opportunity to determine whether the intent attached to the introduction of such a policy is matched by the perceived outcome of those sports administrators at the national and provincial level as well as the practitioners at the "grass-roots" level.

I will be in Canada to present at a Coaching Association and Sport Leadership conference in Calgary from 6 – 9 November 2008. I will be involved in a forum that will be looking at the different models – please go to the following site for further information http://coach.ca/sportleadershipsportif/2008/e/schedule/documents/2008_Symposium_program_080624_en.pdf

As the pre-eminent body that provides the policy direction for sporting organisations in Canada, I would be very interested in the opportunity to meet the most appropriate representative of Sport Canada. The intention is to undertake a recorded interview to gain a heightened understanding of the philosophy behind the LTAD and proposed outcomes as a result of the implementation of such a policy in Canadian Sporting Associations. I anticipate the meeting to last approximately 30 – 45 minutes.

I also require some assistance in identifying organisations that have had some time to implement the LTAD within their Sports Development framework. In my limited analysis, it would appear that some sports came on board earlier than others. Am I right to think that there was a staged approach to the implementation with “x” number of sports in the first year and others in the following years, etc? If this is the case, who are some of the “early adopters” that have tried to implement the LTAD within the structure?

I am unaware of any team based sports that have incorporated the LTAD into their structure – at least not until recently. Are there any team based sports that have adopted the LTAD for some time?

It is my intention, whilst in Canada to interview a number of people in relation to the study. I will be in Canada from 2 November to 14 November, during which time I hope to interview the nominated CEOs and the identified coaches. I will be located at Calgary till 9 November (at the conference from 6 – 9 November) and will then travel to the east coast to interview those located in Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec from 10 November to 14 November.
I did place a call through to the office on Friday afternoon (your time) and left a message on the voice mail. I would like the opportunity to talk to someone within the office if possible, so that I can begin to make the necessary travel arrangements to interview the necessary people.

I can be contacted via phone at work on +61 2 6214 1552 or (m) +61 412 257 990 or via email at john.armstrong@ausport.gov.au or armstron@iinet.net.au.

I look forward to your response.

John Armstrong
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w) +61 2 6214 1552
m) +61 412 257 990
e) armstron@iinet.net.au
skype) cyclejohn
Appendix 3

Sample Invitation to NSOs

Athletics Canada
Suite B1-110 2445 St-Laurent Blvd.
Ottawa, Ontario
K1G 6C3

c/-

Dear 

As a person that has a strong understanding of sports coaching, administration and development within Australia I have recently engaged in undertaking some research in sports development policies through a postgraduate program.

The postgraduate research program involves a comparison of the Sports Development policies of Canada and Australia through an analysis of the intent and effect of the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model that Canada has adopted, and the Junior Sports Framework (JSF) that some National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) in Australia have adopted.

The research proposes to conduct a face to face interview with:

- the CEO (or their nominated representative) of 3 Canadian NSOs;
- a CEO (or their nominated representative) of one of the Provincial Sporting Organisations of each sport; and
- 3 identified coaches within the organisation that work with developing athletes.

The same process will occur with 3 sporting organisations in Australia that have adopted the Junior Sport Framework.

It is anticipated that the outcomes of such research will assist in informing policy makers on both the effect of their policies and the processes that have been used to attain such policies.

Athletics is one such sport that I would be interested in pursuing as part of the research.

What do I Want from Athletics Canada?

I will be in Canada from 2 November to 14 November, during which time I hope to interview the nominated CEOs and the identified coaches. I will be located at Calgary till 9 November (at the conference from 6 – 9 November) and will then travel to the east coast to interview those located elsewhere throughout Canada from 10 November to 14 November.

1. I would like the opportunity to interview you at a convenient time;
2. I would like you to nominate up to 3 Provincial CEOs that would be appropriate to interview regarding the practical implementation of the LTAD at provincial level. I will then choose one of those nominated to seek an interview with them.

3. I would like you (or your organisation) to nominate between 5 and 10 coaches that work with developing athletes so that I may select 3 to approach for interview. It is anticipated that all interviews will take approximately 45 minutes each and will be recorded. A transcript of the record will be sent to each interviewee for verification and confidentiality will be maintained.

A list of proposed questions can be forwarded prior to meeting, however other questions may come about as a result of the interview.

I can be contacted via phone at work on +61 2 6214 1552 or (m) +61 412 257 990 or via email at john.armstrong@ausport.gov.au or armstron@iinet.net.au.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

John Armstrong
Postgraduate scholar
University of Canberra
Appendix 4

Sample Coach Invitation letter

Dear coach,

I have recently invited Netball Australia to partake in some research into Sports Development Policies that I am undertaking through the University of Canberra.

As a person that has a strong understanding of sports coaching, administration and development within Australia I have recently engaged in undertaking some research in sports development policies through a postgraduate program.

The postgraduate research program involves a comparison of the Sports Development policies of Canada and Australia through an analysis of the intent and effect of the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model that Canada has adopted, and the Junior Sports Framework (JSF) that some National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) in Australia have adopted.

The research proposes to conduct an interview with:

- the CEO (or their nominated representative) of 3 Australian NSOs that have adopted the Junior Sport Framework;
- a CEO (or their nominated representative) of one of the State Sporting Organisations of each identified sport; and
- 3 identified coaches within the sport that work with developing athletes.

The same process will occur with 3 sporting organisations in Canada that have adopted the Long Term Athlete Development Model.

It is anticipated that the outcomes of such research will assist in informing policy makers on both the effect of their policies and the processes that have been used to attain such policies.

Netball Australia has agreed to be a part of the research.

What do I want from the identified coaches of Netball Australia?

I have asked Netball Australia to nominate a number of coaches that would be appropriate to interview regarding the practical implementation of the JSF at state level – in Netball terms, the implementation of the Netball Junior Sports Policy.

It is my intent to interview three of those coaches nominated by Netball Australia.

You have been identified as one of those coaches nominated by Netball Australia.

It is anticipated that the interview will take approximately 45 minutes and will be recorded. A transcript of the record will be sent to each interviewee for verification and confidentiality will be maintained.
A list of proposed questions can be forwarded prior to meeting, however other questions may come about as a result of the interview.

I thank you in anticipation of your positive response.

Yours sincerely

John Armstrong
Postgraduate scholar
University of Canberra
Appendix 5

Questionnaire to NSO re impact of JSF / LTAD

DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND ITS FORMATION

Does your organisation have a development policy (or a series of policies) that looks at “Development” or “Junior Development” in your sport?

If so, what do you call this policy?

What was the basis for the development of this policy? (eg. Was it based upon the Junior Sport Framework? Was it based upon the Long Term Athlete Development Model? Other?)

How and why was the policy formed? Was there a perception that the current way in which athletes were being developed within your sport needed to be addressed? What were the shortcomings of the system prior to the implementation of the revised policy?

Is this policy supported by the current Board?

IMPLEMENTATION OF A DEVELOPMENT POLICY - ORGANISATIONALLY

How do you anticipate this policy impacting upon the organisations affiliated to you? (eg. State / Province branches)

How do you anticipate this policy impacting upon the coaches within your organisation?

How will the impact of this policy be different for the different level of coach at different level of competition?

How do you anticipate this policy impacting upon the competitors / participants within your organisation?

Specifically, will this policy have an impact upon;

a) Competition structure? If so, what?

b) Coach Education? If so, what?

c) Pathway opportunities for participants? If so, what?

How do you determine the success or otherwise of such a policy?

Do you take any measures to determine whether the proposed impact has occurred?
If so, please explain how this would be measured / monitored?

What should constitute an ideal athlete development policy?

Mr J Armstrong
B App SC - Coaching
Postgraduate Scholar
School of Health, Division of Health Design & Science, Department of Sports Studies
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E armstron@iinet.net.au
Appendix 6

Questionnaire to SSO / Province re impact of JSF / LTAD

DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND ITS FORMATION

Your parent body and peak organisation for your sport has implemented a development policy (or a series of policies) that looks at “Development” or “Junior Development” in your sport. What has been the impact of this (these) policy (ies) within your sport at the state / province level?

What do you believe was the basis for the development of this policy? (eg. Was it based upon the Junior Sport Framework? Was it based upon the Long Term Athlete Development Model? Was it based around the compliance of the organisation with government policy? Other?)

Are you aware of why the policy was formed? Was there a perception that the current manner in which athletes were being developed within your sport needed to be addressed? What were the perceived shortcomings of the system prior to the implementation of the revised policy? Do you agree with the change in policy?

IMPLEMENTATION OF A DEVELOPMENT POLICY - ORGANISATIONALLY

How has this policy impacted upon your organisation?

How do you anticipate this policy impacting upon the coaches within your organisation?

How will the impact of this policy be different for the different level of coach or competition?

How do you anticipate this policy impacting upon the competitors / participants within your organisation?

Specifically, will this policy have an impact upon;

a) Competition structure? If so, what?

b) Coach Education? If so, what?
c) Pathway opportunities for participants? If so, what?

How do you determine the success or otherwise of such a policy?

Do you take any measures to determine whether the proposed impact has occurred?

If so, please explain how this would be measured / monitored?

What should constitute an ideal athlete development policy

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**Mr J Armstrong**

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Postgraduate Scholar
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E armstron@iinet.net.au
Appendix 7

Questionnaire to Coaches re impact of JSF / LTAD

DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND ITS FORMATION

Were you aware that your organisation has a development policy (or a series of policies) that looks at “Development” or “Junior Development” in your sport?

If so, please provide an outline in as much detail as you are able, of what you believe the policy is about?

Are you aware of whether this was based upon the Junior Sport Framework or the Long Term Athlete Development Model?

How and why was the policy formed? Was there a perception that the current way in which athletes were being developed within your sport needed to be addressed? What were the shortcomings of the system prior to the implementation of the revised policy?

IMPLEMENTATION OF A DEVELOPMENT POLICY - FUNCTIONALLY

How has this policy impacted upon the organisation of your sport?

How has the implementation of this policy impacted upon the way in which you coach?

Do you think the impact of this policy is different for the different level of coach at different level of competition? If so, how?

How has this policy impacted upon the competitors / participants within your organisation?

Specifically, how has this policy had an impact upon;

a) Competition structure? If so, what?

b) Coach Education? If so, what?

c) Pathway opportunities for participants? If so, what?
How do you think you should determine the success or otherwise of such a policy?

**QUESTIONS FOR COACHES ONLY**

What do you believe are the key elements attached to the development of athletes within your sport? (eg. What are the motivations for continued participation;

- Success?
- Social interaction?
- Fame & glory?
- Intrinsic benefit of the sport?
- Health?
- Other?