

## Developing Sport Psychology in a girls' sport academy curriculum

**Andrew Lewis**

Centre for Human Performance Sciences and Department of Educational Psychology,  
Stellenbosch University, South Africa  
[lewisandrew@mweb.co.za](mailto:lewisandrew@mweb.co.za)

This article explores the initial steps in developing and presenting Sport Psychology in a leadership and sport curriculum at Stellenbosch University's (SU) Centre for Human Performance Sciences' (CHPS) Academy for Girls' Leadership and Sport Development. Sport Psychology does not feature within the South African school curriculum specifically, yet the CHPS recognises the importance of exposing girls to the principles and skills of Sport Psychology and has a leadership curriculum for girls participating in sport to this end. This paper reports on a qualitative and exploratory reflective inquiry by the author who presented this theme. What was gained during this process, as well as the associated challenges encountered, suggest possible areas for research as well as changes and adjustments which could be made in similar Sport Psychology curricula.

**Keywords:** adolescent girls; curriculum; Life Orientation; life skills; sport; sport academy; sport psychology

### Introduction

The Academy for Girls' Leadership and Sport Development (*hereafter* Academy) is a project of the CHPS at SU. Sport, exercise and physical activity are individual and social development objectives in achieving the Academy's vision of girls as active agents for transformation at several systemic levels (Bressan, 2010; Centre for Human Performance Sciences, n.d.). The Academy provides girls with experiences that strengthen their self-respect and social interaction skills in preparation for leadership. The context of 'service to the community' also offers girls the opportunity to reflect on how to improve the world around them by learning how to support sport or educational programmes as volunteers (The Academy for Girls' Leadership and Sport Development, n.d.). Sport and Physical Activity (PA) contribute to an overall healthy human being (Holt, Tink, Mandigo & Fox, 2008) and this project is aimed at developing girls, through sport and PA, to become leaders at all levels – individual, community and societal (Bressan, 2010).

As an international phenomenon, sport academies enhance the sporting performance of athletes (Anderson, Hodge, Lavalley & Martin, 2004; Kortjaas, 2013). Sport and PA also inculcate life skills, that is, essential skills needed by humans in order to navigate challenges at all levels of development (Botterill, 2005; Holt et al., 2008). Debate, Pettee Gabriel, Zwald, Huberty and Zhang (2009:475) also stress the link

between sport and life skills, stating “Sport programmes provide the opportunity for life skills instruction because of parallels that exist between life and sport, which include problem solving, goal setting, teamwork, communication, the management of success and failure, and receiving and applying constructive feedback”. Zaichkowsky (2007:1-2) broadly defines Sport Psychology as “a science-based specialisation with a body of knowledge that provides professional services to children, adolescents, and adults interested in improving their quality of life through exercise and sport.” Given this definition, Sport Psychology is considered a suitable and effective vehicle for imparting essential life skills (Zaichkowsky, 2007; Holt et al., 2008) and thus forms part of the proposed curriculum policy document offered by the Academy (Bressan, 2010; The Academy for Girls’ Leadership and Sport Development, n.d.). However, this policy document lacks a more detailed exposition of Sport Psychology as component of the Academy curriculum, which is based on sound theory, best practices and an application to the target audience, that is, adolescent girls attending the Academy to enhance their competitive sport careers.

In light of the above, this article describes the engagement, process and facilitation of the steps undertaken by the author, a teacher and registered educational psychologist who holds a qualification in Sport Psychology, in presenting themes in Sport Psychology at the Academy. This qualitative study was exploratory in its positioning and its aim was to support similar projects in the current context and other settings in future. As few evidence-based youth sports programmes designed exclusively for girls exist (cf. Debate et al., 2009), this preliminary study intends filling the identified gap in the body of knowledge.

### Context and conceptual analysis

The CHPS and the Academy were established in 2007 with the mandate to optimise the sport, physical activity and exercise contact between the academic resources of Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch University Sport (known as Maties Sport) and the Stellenbosch University Sport Performance Institute (SUSPI). In addition, its objective is to stimulate the development of partnerships with other African universities (Stellenbosch University, 2008; The Academy for Girls’ Leadership and Sport Development, n.d.). The administration of CHPS is housed in Stellenbosch University’s Faculty of Science and its focus is the design and delivery of interdisciplinary programmes, research projects and community activities in the human performance field (The Academy for Girls’ Leadership and Sport Development, n.d.).

The Academy for Girls’ Leadership and Sport Development is a joint partnership between CHPS, SUSPI and Maties Sport aimed at developing girls and women to their full potential as individuals and in their communities and broader South African society. Academy programme presentations consist of after-school modules, weekend and holiday workshops and sport training camps where secondary school girls can develop holistically. It aims to help: “girls (ages 12-19) develop an active lifestyle and

their abilities in sport as they discover their potential to become leaders in their families, their communities and in Africa” (Centre for Human Performance Sciences, n.d.:1). The Academy presents two different programme streams to accommodate the interests of girls who would like to combine their Leadership Education with (1) improving their performance in a *competitive sport* or (2) acquiring the knowledge, skills and dedication to follow a *physically active way of life*. Sport Psychology as well as topics such as nutrition and tactical coaching in competitive situations features within the Competitive Sport Option curriculum offering of the Academy. The Competitive Sport Option also combines sport skill development and fitness training sessions with Sport Leadership Education and takes girls progressively through the four stages of the development of their sporting talent in one sport (e.g. hockey) offered by Maties Sport (The Academy for Girls’ Leadership and Sport Development, n.d.).

Community engagement is crucial to CHPS’s vision; the Academy realises this objective by means of sport and PA. The vision of the Academy is to be actively involved in the transformation of business and community sectors through capacity building and the empowerment of girls and women. This is achieved, *inter alia*, by means of a mentoring system whereby female university students support Academy girls in the practice of their emerging leadership skills in programmes in their specific school and community contexts (Centre for Human Performance Sciences, n.d.).

### Sport Psychology and practice context

Sport Psychology is an interdisciplinary science that draws on knowledge from several fields and focuses on how psychological factors impact sports performance and how participation in sport and exercise influences psychological and physical factors (Wikipedia, 2012). Traditionally Sport Psychology focused on performance enhancement and mental skills and has recently explored and engaged with several other epistemologies and research methods (Ryba, 2005). Ryba (2005:15-16) advocates that Sport Psychology be viewed as a “cultural praxis” that recognises an inter- and multi-disciplinary approach, looking at its sociocultural and social justice landscape from a research-practice paradigm, “favour[ing] forms of progressive qualitative research.” In essence, this advocates moving from an individualistic and rigid view of the field to the recognition of multiple realities and lived experiences notable within a post-modern, interpretive paradigm (cf. Lewis & Steyn, 2003).

In South Africa, Sport Psychology is generally housed in sport and exercise departments at higher education institutions and not within psychology or education related departments partly due its historical development. Moreover, it is not a category of psychology registration with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) (cf. Republic of South Africa (RSA), 2011). According to Du Toit, Möller and Potgieter (1993:13), “historically, sport psychology developed from the fields of physical education and sport science and was followed by an increased involvement by psychologists”. This has in part led to its location in the sport sciences.

Generally Sport Psychology is not presented in teacher education faculties (Le Roux, 2010), but there are instances where it features as part of a module.

### Life Skills

Life Skills (LS) aims to equip learners to cope holistically for significant living in a transforming society (Department of Education (DoE), 2002; DoE, 2003a). Van Deventer (2009:129) regards LS as assisting learners in addressing needs and challenges prevalent in the 21st century. Furthermore, it guides and prepares “learners for meaningful and successful living in a rapidly changing and transforming society.” According to Muthukrishna (2002:86), “In life situations, we will draw on a range of life skills because these are interrelated. Therefore, we need repertoires of life skills in a number of different areas. These skills need to be appropriate both to the developmental tasks and activities at particular stages of our lifespans, and to any challenges or transitions we face”.

LS, applicable to the adolescent girls in this research, feature within the school curriculum and form part of the umbrella term, Life Orientation (LO) in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) and current National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grades R–12 documents (RSA, 2011) which provide a sound theoretical underpinning in presenting life skills to children (cf. Prinsloo, 2007). The RNCS includes the aspects of LS that feature under the LO learning area: guidance, vocational and career education, health education, physical education, environmental education, religious instruction, and citizen education (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2007). Sport and PA also feature within these themes. Recently, the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) were developed for each school subject to replace the previous RCNS curriculum. The National Department of Basic Education introduced CAPS into Grade 10 in 2012 and Grade 11 in 2013 and will introduce CAPS in Grade 12 in 2014 (Western Cape Education Department (WCED), 2010). At the time of this project, the RCNS was still in use; thus, CAPS was not part of the development of this specific Sport Psychology curriculum.

Five areas were identified in the RCNS in South African schools as core Learning Outcomes (LOs) for the promotion of LO in the senior phase (Grades 7-9) and four in Grades 10-12 (Further Education and Training (FET) phase) (DoE, 2003a:20-23; DoE, 2003b:12-13). As the Academy girls were in the secondary school, the senior and FET curricula were used as follows:

#### *Grades 7-9*

- LOs 1 – Health promotion: The learner is able to construct informed decisions concerning personal, community and environmental health.
- LOs 2 – Social development: The learner is able to demonstrate an understanding of and dedication to constitutional rights and responsibilities and shows an understanding of varied cultures and religions.
- LOs 3 – Personal development: The learner is able to use acquired life skills to

attain and broaden personal potential to respond in effect to challenges in his/her world.

- LOs 4 – Physical development and movement: The learner is able to demonstrate an understanding of, and take part in activities that support movement and physical development.
- LOs 5 – Orientation to the world of work: The learner will be able to make informed decisions about further study and career choices.

#### *Grades 10-12*

- LOs 1 – Personal well-being: The learner is able to achieve and maintain personal well-being.
- LOs 2 – Citizenship Education: The learner is able to demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the values and rights that underpin the constitution in order to practice responsible citizenship, and enhance social justice and sustainable living.
- LOs 3 – Recreation and Physical well-being: The learner is able to explore and engage responsibly in recreation and physical activities, to promote well-being.
- LOs 4 – Careers and Career Choices: The learner is able to demonstrate self-knowledge and the ability to make informed decisions regarding further study, career fields and career pathing.

LS, as an integral part of sport and PA, are reflected in the LOs above. LOs 4, for example, relates specifically to physical development and movement, aspects particularly linked to sport and PA. As the Academy focus is on Grade 7-12 female adolescents, LS should cater for these learners while linked to and forming part of the broad education received through the LO Learning Area. It is thus argued that LS for girls doing sport should reflect skills specific to sport and yet not be detached from the education system (cf. Le Roux, 2010).

#### **Research design and method**

In agreement with Ryba's (2005:17) thinking about Sport Psychology as a "cultural praxis" recognising multiple ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies, and moving beyond "essential subjectivity", this study is qualitative and exploratory in nature and views Sport Psychology as an "embodied subject of multiple discourses" within a specific context.

This is an exploratory study framed within an interpretive paradigm. Reber, Allen and Reber (2009:280) view an exploratory study as "[a] preliminary study designed to provide some feeling for, or general understanding of the phenomenon to be studied". To Henning (2004:20), an interpretive paradigm is when "phenomena and events are understood through mental processes of interpretation which are influenced by and interact with social contexts".

Regarding the involvement of youth in after-school (sport) activities, Larson, Jarrett, Hansen, Pearce, Sullivan, Walker & Watkins (in Holt et al., 2008:284) re-

commend that researchers consider “what goes on within programmes; what youth experience, how development occurs, or what effective youth practitioners do to support development”. A similar contextual approach as this has been taken in this exploratory research, hence the suitability of a qualitative study, framed within an interpretive paradigm which recognises multiple interpretations and discourses. This study therefore explores the initial engagement, development process and facilitation of Sport Psychology modules as part of the leadership curriculum for the Academy in order to inform similar existing and future projects launched by CHPS and other sport organisations.

The Sport Psychology themes were presented over several weeks to a combination of sport disciplines; thus the groups ranged in size and sport-discipline composition from smaller groups of approximately 10 to larger groups of 20 participants. At times, sole sport disciplines and at other times combined disciplines were present at the workshops and presentations. The girls represented various sports disciplines: hockey, netball, soccer, swimming, golf and athletics and participated in workshops held at different times according to the delivery format (i.e. after-school sessions, weekend workshops or residential camps during school holidays) (Bressan, 2010).

As the author was continually involved in the development and presentation of the Sport Psychology modules, reflective notes were made by him during and after the curriculum development process and of his own process of presentation of the modules. These reflections are discussed and related to relevant literature (cf. Henning, 2004).

The author is an HPCSA-registered educational psychologist who obtained a Sport Psychology qualification from a South African university and is involved in research and practice in both the educational psychology and sports psychology fields. As a psychologist he adheres to the HPCSA scope of practice (RSA, 2011) and ethical principles (HPCSA, 2007) contained within the field. These ethical principles were also adhered to in this process of engagement and research.

### **Findings: Engagement, process and development**

During mid-2010, the Director of CHPS engaged in discussions with the author regarding the presentation of Sport Psychology modules to the girls who were engaged in the Competitive Sport Option of the Academy programme. Within this option, Sport Psychology is captured under *mental preparation* in the programme’s curriculum where girls first learn to cope with the mental challenges of competition and also develop short and medium-term goal-setting skills for sport. The emphasis then shifts to developing the mental skills to compete at competition level with the emphasis on the development of persistence, self-confidence and a desire to win (Bressan, 2010).

Taking mental preparation for sport challenges and goal setting as a point of departure, an understanding thereof was necessary for both the presenter and the girls. Mental preparation is referred to in the literature under assorted names: mental train-

ing, mental skills training, mind/body skills. Mental skills are applicable in varied life contexts, school and sport alike and the applications for mental training reach far beyond Sport Psychology. Mental skills include aspects such as relaxation, imagery, focusing and refocusing, goal setting and stress management. This ranges from the use of developing mental skills in negotiating sport challenges and the setting of goals in sport to that of developing intra-psychic skills in the individual (namely, perseverance, self-assurance and striving to triumph in sport) (Orlick & McCaffrey, 2007).

Developing a theoretical link between Sport Psychology theory and LS curriculum theory was the next step in establishing an educational framework to ensure the sound presentation of this module. By framing the Sport Psychology module within a Learning Area contained in the RNCS, namely LO meant that the curriculum proposal was given a theoretical and educational platform for subsequent development.

Curriculum development is a continuous practice characterised by order and methodical expansion. Four phases characterised this curriculum development process as identified by Carl (2002:23), namely design, dissemination, execution and appraisal. It was recognised that this process did not evolve in a linear fashion, but interactively and dynamically (Du Toit, 2011). Based on the educational philosophy of LO, as well as the uniqueness of a sport environment, in general and this sport environment in particular, several prevalent Sport Psychology themes (cf. Potgieter, 2003; Murphy, 2005; Le Roux, 2010) were proposed for the Academy as part of the Sport Psychology curriculum content:

- Stress and burnout in sport
- Mental skills in sport
- Setting goals in sport
- Time management in sport
- Problem solving, decision making and conflict management in sport
- Living a healthy sport life
- Intrapersonal skills and sport
- Interpersonal skills and sport
- Sport as a career
- Professional behaviour on the sports field

This proposal was accepted by the Director of CHPS in principle. However, the fluid nature of the curriculum content and design was acknowledged (cf. Du Toit, 2011) when shaping the various formats (workshops, presentations and holiday camps) that made up the Academy's offerings.

After the acceptance of this proposal, discussions and the presentation format development moved from engagement with the Director of CHPS to the Academy Leadership Programme Manager (ALPM) to operationalisation and the subsequent individualised tailoring of specific courses as part of the dissemination and execution of the curriculum. A weekend hockey workshop programme, for example, incorporated the following specific aspects:

- Stress and Burnout in Sport: Causes and Symptoms Identification, Prevention and Treatment
- Mental Skills in Sport: What and Why? This theme also included goal setting and mental imagery.

As the participants were in the adolescence phase which coincides with Piaget's formal operational stage of cognitive development (Woolfolk, 2010), characterized by abstract thinking; a higher-order and interactive, yet practical-experiential engagement approach was followed suitable to this level of development. Furthermore, the educational principle of moving from the concrete to the abstract was also adhered to (Woolfolk, 2010). As constructivism is an underpinning philosophy of the South African macro education system (Du Toit, 2011), where "learners actively build systems of meaning and understanding of reality through their individual experiences and interactions" (Du Plessis, Conley & Du Plessis, 2007:4), this philosophy was the point of departure in both the design and implementation of the micro-curriculum.

For example, the module on imagery, as part of "Mental Skills in Sport: What and Why?" of the above-mentioned weekend hockey programme, stipulated the following outcomes and also advanced the learning philosophy and principles mentioned in the previous paragraph:

- Understanding *what* imagery is
- *Why* we use imagery
- *How* we use imagery, and
- *When* we use imagery.

Understanding what imagery is and why we use it in sport is just as important as its actual application. According to Orlick and McCaffrey (2007:243), "the ideal (sport-A.L.) situation is to incorporate mental skills into the execution of every maneuver during practice sessions". Hall, Munroe-Chandler, Fishburne and Hall (2009:93) view imagery as "...a volitional experience that involves the use of one or more of the senses to create, or re-create, a particular sporting skill or situation". Imagery is thus the process of creating or recreating a scenario in the mind's eye and can be used in several different ways: during injury, practising physical skills when physical practice is not possible, to reduce stress and anxiety, managing sports injuries and for motivation. As self-evaluation is a characteristic of adolescence (hence influencing their sport performance) (Strydom & Le Roux, 2004), imagery was used to explore the participants' specific sport performance motivation. The girls were guided to a general understanding of mental imagery, how they understood it and where and when they would make use of such a technique, given their own specific contexts. The interaction also included experiential demonstrations and exercises on how to use imagery in sport in general and to apply and practise it in a specific sport context. To Du Plessis et al., (2007:3), "experiential learning is the result of experience and practice".

Imagery resonates in several LOs of the RNCS and is featured in this process. For example, imagery assists with personal well-being (LOs 1, Grade 11) (DoE, 2003b:28) where sports girls are able to use life skills (in this instance, mental imagery) to "plan



and achieve life goals” in their chosen competitive sport and other life situations. Imagery is also used mentally to plan and prioritise competitive sports goals and motivation (cf. DoE, 2003b). The development of mental imagery skills was used to promote the girls’ well-being in developing their goals for their competitive sport and their lives. To Orlick and McCaffrey (2007:242), “Children who learn these mental skills early have more time to apply them to living their lives and pursuing their goals”.

Varied learning approaches were applied during the process and engagement. This included the use of bibliotherapy. Bibliotherapy makes use of the content of books to solve varied human challenges (Ilogho, 2011). To Geldard and Geldard (2008:213), “...as a story unfolds (through bibliotherapy–A.L.), themes develop, issues emerge, and the characters and objects in the story respond with particular thoughts, emotions and behaviours”. As stories are interpretive and dialogical, they encourage recipients see things in a different or a new way. “When children listen to a story, they may identify with a character, or a theme or an event within the story” (Geldard & Geldard, 2008: 213). The presenter used this method in the programme to approach sport and other life challenges (cf. Ilogho, 2011), thereby giving the girls an opportunity to construct their own knowledge and learning experience and to apply it to their own specific sport context by means of age-appropriate stories and metaphors according to the Sport Psychology principle of visualisation (cf. Thomson, 2005). As the author is a registered educational psychologist, the relevant ethical principles of the profession (HPCSA, 2007) were kept in mind.

### **Critical discussion of the curriculum process**

The following critical aspects flowed from the whole engagement, development and facilitation process of the Sport Psychology curriculum presented at the Academy.

#### **Consultation**

Consultation is an essential part of any initial process of engagement where the involved parties deliberate, seek information or advice and take into consideration feelings and interests of each other and what each one has to offer (Sykes, 1976). Perna, Neyer, Murphy, Ogilvie and Murphy (1995:235-236) observe that “...a critical aspect of sport consultation is the process of clarifying expectations on the part of clients, so that consultation can proceed with both parties agreeing on the criteria by which the efficacy of consultation will be evaluated”. Determining who the client is and the services to be provided are therefore critical in this process.

Within this context, consultation only took place at management level and did not take place with the participants prior to the commencement of the module presentation. While this process of engagement was necessary at management level to ensure the process taking place, better practice would have included engagement with the participants prior to the sessions to gauge their specific needs. A discussion around the facilitator’s identity and what he would be doing in the Sport Psychology module

would have contributed to a better understanding of the process. Orlick and McCaffrey (2007) emphasise the importance of this kind of engagement and suggest possible ways of involving the participants, which includes making a prior need analysis and the setting of appropriate aims and objectives, as is good practice with any individual or community engagement (cf. Wilson, 2013). This serves to pay attention to the participants' voices, yet also allows them to experience the presenter's point of departure so that all can reach common ground and an understanding of who they are and in what direction the curriculum process will lead them. Debate et al. (2009) note that girls' interests and perceptions of physical activity differ from that of boys, and consulting with girl participants initially would have ensured the presentation of specific, tailored life skills and Sport Psychology themes. Gill (1995:228) cautions that "gender is so ingrained in our sport structure and practice that we cannot simply treat all athletes the same. But, neither can we assume that male and female athletes are dichotomous opposites and treat all males one way and all females another". Thus, the author as presenter constantly adopted a sensitive, yet inclusive approach to the diversity of the sports girls as participants bearing these aspects in mind.

#### Curriculum content and delivery

Sport is an appropriate context for teaching secondary school girls a LS curriculum (Danish, Forneris & Wallace in Holt et al., 2008). The curriculum content contained in the Academy Sport Psychology presentations generally reflected that of other well-known international Sport Psychology themes (cf. Le Roux, 2010). However, the unique context of South Africa in particular and Africa in general was generally not recognised. A wider search of the literature to identify similar programmes implemented in Africa and beyond would have shed more light on the relevance of the current programme to its specific context and may have suggested other possible curriculum content. While acknowledging the value of western, Eurocentric curriculum content, content relevant to a South African context was also deemed important by the author. In this respect, Daniels' (2011) observations regarding the influence of western ontology, epistemology and methodology on research are salient. Thus, the need was recognised to become "southern researchers" who are "critical consumers of global scholarship and engage with research in ways that make them the epistemological owners of such research" (Daniels, 2011:13).

Furthermore, addressing the previously mentioned lack of a thorough consultation process could have contributed to the inclusion of more contextually relevant and specifically-directed curriculum content in the course, leading to a deepening of the engagement and construction of the girls' own knowledge. Knowledge construction as a human activity empowers learners to become life-long learners thereby contributing to a curriculum that goes beyond sheer disciplinary knowledge (Du Toit, 2011). Problem solving, verbalisation, teamwork, experimentation and critical thinking are skills required in order to create new knowledge in the process of developing a curriculum (Woolfolk, 2010). The influence of the South African and African Indi-

genous knowledges were recognized and implemented during this process, but not always at a critical and deep level.

Content was imparted to the girls by means of various recognized and appropriate didactical formats aimed at creating a more diverse learning atmosphere, and aligning and scaffolding the cognitive and metacognitive developmental phases that characterise adolescence. These changes include: increasing physical changes, abstract cognitive development and increased social awareness (Newman & Newman, 2006; Kaplan, 2000; Papalia, Olds & Feldman, 2006). The content of the presentation was placed on slides and the module outcomes preceded the module content to orientate the girls to the module topic, content and expected outcomes. The amount of content per slide was according to standard guidelines for presentations and several non-culturally specific caricatures were inserted to elicit discussion on a particular topic. Individual as well as group activities were conducted to allow participants greater opportunity to construct meaning. The girls' capacity to construct meaning through experience and interpretation was considered throughout; thus, an interpretive, constructivist paradigm (cf. Henning, 2004) guided the entire process. By way of illustration, a collaborative worksheet on "Sport Stress and Burnout" required participants to answer the following: "When you hear the word 'stress' and 'burnout', what do you think of? Take a few minutes and discuss what you think stress and burnout are". Participants were asked to discuss stress and burnout as it occurred in their personal and sport lives and answer the question in light of "In my personal experience stress and burnout are ..."

As competitive sport also involves working in groups and teamwork (Veach & May, 2005), this programme also advanced social and interpersonal skills training aimed at enhancing cooperative learning through meaning making (cf. Goudas & Magotsiou, 2009). This life skill development had value, as adolescence is a phase characterised by the importance of and acceptance by peers. Within these relationships the adolescent girls developed social skills, their emotions were explored within a safe space, their identity discovered and new roles learnt (Papalia et al., 2006; Meece & Daniels, 2008). Meaning making is a dynamic process subject to constant change and development (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2007). These aspects were recognised during this process as was each girl's uniqueness and the uniqueness attributed to adolescence. In recognition of children's uniqueness, Orlick and McCaffrey (2007: 241) state, "It is important to recognise and respect their unique qualities and to be sensitive to their vulnerabilities". The specific developmental phase, adolescence, not only contributed to having a more developmentally 'uniform' audience which meant that mode of delivery and content were specifically tailored and targeted, but it also implied that the author as presenter could better understand the uniqueness of the particular developmental phase: related emotional, cognitive and social changes specific to this phase (cf. DoE, 2003:b). Content and presentation style were therefore aimed at this specific developmental phase (cf. Orlick and McCaffrey, 2007).

Furthermore, while acknowledging individual difference, the girls shared many

commonalities; all were high-performing athletes at school and on a national level. This was considered during the presentation of content and style of delivery. In all, Orlick and McCaffrey's (2007) principles of delivery were promoted: keeping the presentations enjoyable; advancing the tangible, physical component; exploring the girls' individuality; multiple delivery approaches; being positive and making use of role models.

Role modeling took place during a session where an international hockey player addressed the participants on her psychological approach to sport. The author as presenter initially facilitated questions followed by a discussion with the athlete based on the topics that the girls had dealt with during the previous sessions in order to contextualise and deepen their knowledge. Thereafter, the girls posed questions to the speaker and engaged in discussion with her. According to Orlick and McCaffrey (2007:246), "If chosen well, a role model can set a positive example to emulate with respect to mental skills, physical skills, a healthy perspective, persistence, or anything else one might want to pursue".

Cognisance was taken of the gender of the author as presenter which could have influenced the process with regard to gender differences in discourses of power and gender relations. To Daniels (2011:8): "Discourses are means by which power is exerted" and an awareness and reflection on the role and gender formed part of the presenter's own reflective practice. Gill (1995:207) adds, "Sport psychologists should be aware of the many overt and subtle ways that gender affects athletes, the sport setting, and sport psychologists themselves and attempt to turn that awareness into action in their practice". Power imbalances may be also observable in that athletes' status or prestige related to their sporting prowess, giving rise, at times, to insecurities, power struggles and relationship challenges (Coppel, 1995). In both instances, cognisance was taken thereof.

### Assessment of curriculum

An evaluation of and feedback from the participants of the programme is an integral part of curriculum development. Curriculum content and delivery assessment serve several purposes, including the improvement of the existing curriculum for future groups (Wilson, 2013).

No assessment of the Academy's Sport Psychology modules took place by the author due to time and logistical constraints. Future programme sessions would therefore benefit from this as little research has been conducted of evaluations of adolescents' learning experiences through similar programmes (Holt et al., 2008). Based on this, the necessity in future of assessing the module content and presentation style is emphasised; this may lead to improved curriculum practice: development, engagement and delivery.

### Broader contribution

LO imparted through this Sport Psychology module at the Academy aimed at deve-

loping skills in the individual sports girl. However, through the individual the wider systems where athletes function at community, societal, national and international level may also be affected positively. This is in line with a systems perspective (cf. Bronfenbrenner, 1995, 2005) that argues that people interact with a number of different levels of human ecological systems, ranging from more proximal microsystems (e.g. the individual) to more distal macrosystems (e.g. government policies) (cf. Lewis, 2009). Interestingly, at a meso- and macro-level, an African university has already expressed an interest in this programme of the Academy, including Sport Psychology.

### **Concluding remarks**

Sport is a means for crossing personal, social, community and societal boundaries. In this particular instance, the Leadership Programme at the Academy of the CHPS aims at empowering adolescent girls to become active agents of change within the community of Stellenbosch and the broader South African and African contexts with a focus on girls' holistic development.

This exploratory study has highlighted certain conceptual terms and various strengths and challenges faced in presenting this programme, specifically the Sport Psychology module, through this curriculum process. The design dimensions that were considered and emerged (yet did not always realise) in this curriculum process included balance, articulation, scope, integration, progression, continuity, purposefulness, consultation, sound curriculum theory, relevance, social justice and continuous evaluation – essential aspects in further developing and enhancing a similar curriculum in future.

What was gained during this reflective process, as well as the associated challenges encountered, suggest areas for research as well as changes and adjustments which could be made in similar Sport Psychology curricula.

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