

ABSTRACT

Sports talent isn't an aspect to be developed in a single day; it needs to be sustainable and starts from childhood throughout someone's life. Secondary schools are regarded as the vehicles for developing sports talent for students who excel in their lower levels of schooling. At this level, students need to surpass their sports talent. The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of secondary school administrators, teachers and students towards sports talent development in secondary schools in Dar es Salaam region. Specifically, the study was guided by five objectives: (1) to determine the sports activities that are found in secondary schools; (2) to identify the critical approaches to the successful conducting of sports talent activities in secondary schools; (3) to evaluate the perceptions of school administrators, teachers and students on the importance of approaches to a successful conducting of sports talent activities in secondary schools; (4) to determine the challenges that hinder the development of sports talent in secondary schools and (5) to determine the strategies to overcome the challenges towards sports talent development in secondary schools. The study employed a mixed-methods research approach with a concurred triangulation research design and guided by a pragmatism philosophical paradigm. The sample comprised 427 respondents, who were sampled through criterion purposive sampling, convenience sampling and stratified random sampling techniques. Data collection methods in this study were questionnaires, interviews, observation schedules and documentary reviews. Validity and reliability were ensured through pre-testing instruments. The trustworthiness of qualitative data was ensured through dependability, credibility, confirmability and transferability. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics whilst the qualitative part was subjected to a content analysis strategy. Findings indicated that several sports including football, netball, basketball, volleyball, handball, tennis, table tennis, badminton, gymnastics, athletics, aerobics, hockey and baseball were found in the surveyed secondary schools. To develop sports talent, secondary schools use approaches such as games and sports performance assessment tools, training and visits, student sports talent support, constructivist approach, appropriating resources, early investment in focused intensive training and examining the developmental trajectories of students. It was also found that the applied approaches influenced secondary schools to secure support for competitive sports activities from the population and media, enabled the designing of the programmes that reflect the needs of the sports talent, enabled collaborations with sports associations and federations, enabled school administrators and teachers to review sports talent progress, enabled the following of plans set as a basis for sports talent training and provided an opportunity to form strong and reflective school boards to ensure the running of sports activities. However, various barriers such as large class size, lack of consideration of diverse students, inappropriate sequencing and supervision of sports talent programmes, competitive atmosphere, inadequate resources and limited collaboration with the community members hindered the development of sports talent. It was suggested that secondary schools should highly organise school competitions, interclass competitions and sports festivals as well as sports talent training sessions, maintain and purchase supplies, equipment and facilities as well as deployment of time and human resources for sports talent. It was further recommended that the government should provide enough capitation grants to structure a sustainably funded atmosphere that enhances the identification and development of sports talents. It was additionally recommended that future studies should examine the effect of parental involvement on students' athletic achievement and examine the impact of sustained involvement in sports during secondary education on the development of athletic talent.