

Research Essentials: Participant Development

- 1 Participant development needs to acknowledge not only biological and psychological factors, but also the social background of participants.

Development in sport cannot be reduced to a simple question of nature or nurture. It is the result of numerous interacting factors, which include: biological (eg innate speed, endurance, physique); psychological (eg attitude, motivation); and social factors (eg family, income, peer groups).

- 2 Fundamental movement skills should form a central part of all coaching programmes for young people.

Fundamental movement skills are the foundations for lifelong physical activity. They are characterised in terms of movement, object manipulation and stability, which account for the common actions of almost all later sports skills. Different sports could profitably come together and share movement ideas to offer a rich, varied and stimulating experience for young people.

- 3 Lifelong participation is dependent upon individuals being able to move back and forth between pathways as their circumstances change.

There are multiple pathways an individual can take in his or her sporting journey. These involve elite excellence (eg medals), personal excellence (eg sporting challenges, such as a marathon) or participation for personal well-being (eg staying in shape, sociability). These pathways are not distinct and there will be a degree of overlap at different stages.

- 4 The ability to move successfully between stages of development is vital if players are to remain within a sport.

Research suggests an individual will pass through several stages during his or her sporting life (eg childhood to young adult or participation to performance). The pressures associated with the transitions between stages of development can be reduced by considering the biological, psychological and social factors that may affect a participant.

Further Reading

Bailey, R. and Ross, G. (2010) *Participant Development – Key Research Themes*

An introductory guide to participant development.

Bailey, R. et al (2010) *Participant Development in Sport: An Academic Review*

A comprehensive review of research into participant development.

Apply the Theory

sports coach UK (2009) *The Participant Development Model User Guide*

A guide to help individual sports develop and refine their models.