81 - DETECTION, SELECTION AND PROMOTION OF SPORTS TALENTS FOR ATHLETICS A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE BEST IBERIAN-AMERICAN COUNTRIES

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Introduction

A great number of Olympic champions of the past and the present are the result of organized and wide-ranging systems of recruitment of children and adolescents that passed through several systematic training tests with the objective of achieving high performance. The creation of a unified and efficient national system of detection, selection and promotion of sports talents (DSPTE), relying on technical and scientific criteria, is considered condition *sine qua non* in the process of discovery and promotion of future elite athletes in diverse sporting modalities.

Despite of its backwardness regarding the development of an efficient national system of DSPTE, Brazil, as well as Cuba, Spain and Portugal, are the Iberian-American countries that achieved the biggest successes in the three main international competitions in athletics (Olympic Games, World Championship of Athletics, Pan-American Games and European Championship of Athletics). Only recently Brazil and Portugal showed a greater interest concerning the development and the implementation of projects of DSPTE through initiatives of their sports institutions (highest institution and Olympic Comity) and their sports federations. In Brazil, this can be considered a difficult task, especially in athletics, since it is one of the modalities with less diffusion, practice and support. However, the issue of DSPTE is currently one of the priorities in terms of academic research for the development of national sports. In the last years the conscience of its importance has increased, especially by the Brazilian Sports Ministry (ME), the Brazilian Olympic Comity (COB) and the Brazilian Confederation of Athletics (CBAt).

To give continuity and extend the above mentioned successes in athletics, it is certainly necessary to establish measures to improve the diffusion of athletics in the entire national territory and develop an efficient, organized and unified system of DSPTE for the modality, with the participation of the several responsible institutions. Accordingly, the present study is going to analyze the systems of DSPTE of the four Iberian-American countries mentioned above (Brazil, Cuba, Spain and Portugal) with the purpose of supplying scientific subsidies for the development of a unified system for Brazilian athletics.

Objectives

With the purpose of clarifying the elements that compose our problem, that is to say, the comparative study of the systems of detection, selection and promotion of sports talents for athletics in four Iberian-American countries (Brazil, Cuba, Spain, Portugal), we have established the following objectives: (1) To describe the existing programs of DSPTE for athletics of each of the four selected Iberian-American countries; (2) To analyze them by means of the elements that compose them; (3) To compare the Brazilian program of DSPTE with the other Iberian-American programs; (4) To supply subsidies that can be helpful for the development of a unified national system of DSPTE for Brazilian athletics.

Methodology

The four Iberian-American countries - Brazil, Cuba, Spain and Portugal -were selected for this study, because they have presented the best results in the main international competitions of athletics (Olympic Games, World Championships, European Championships and Pan-American Games) in the last decades. This empirical study was carried out through face to face interviews with the representatives of the highest sports institutions, the Olympic Comities and the national federations of athletics from three of the four selected Iberian-American countries (Brazil, Spain and Portugal). Despite of our countless attempts to contact the highest sports institutions in Cuba (letters, e-mails, and phone calls) in order to schedule the interviews with its representatives, none of these attempts was successful. Our research regarding Cuba is therefore based on its publications on DSPTE.

Presentation of the Results

Because of the existence of a national unified system of DSPTE for a huge number of sports modalities in Cuba and Spain, in both countries athletics is also contemplated. In Cuba, due to its political system, the state participates more strongly by means of its highest sports institution, the National Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation (INDER), together with the Cuban Federation of Athletics (FAC) that is not independent. In Spain the responsible entity for the programs of DSPTE for athletics is the Royal Spanish Federation of Athletics (RFEA), and it counts on the support of the Superior Council of Sports (CSD). In Brazil and in Portugal there are still no unified programs of DSPTE specifically developed for the modality of athletics. However, the federations of both countries set up some projects and initiatives in this sense that are currently being implemented and have the support of the highest organs (Ministry of Sports in Brazil - ME - and National Institute of Sports in Portugal - IDP).

While Cuba applies a complex process of DSPTE in all schools, consisting of six procedures that include competitions in diverse modalities, Brazil and Portugal and, in smaller amount, Spain, use mainly competitions (school and federalist) for their detection process. Regarding the criteria of detection and selection of talents, Brazil and Portugal based themselves primarily on the results that the young athletes achieved in competitions. In Cuba and Spain, on the other hand, other mechanisms are applied additionally.

The process of detection and selection of talents is the most complete in Cuba. It is applied in three educational institutions where sport is central: in the Special Areas (primary school), in the schools of sporting initiation (EIDE) and in the colleges of sports improvement (ESPA). They consist of six procedures that include: the results of the competitions, batteries of technical and physical tests, observation during the process of training, psychological and medical exams, as well as a final appreciation by a commission that uses normative tables for each discipline, differentiated by sex.

In Spain, this process for the first phase (14-17 years) includes objective criteria (performance, biological type, motor development and abilities in the competitions, time of practice and level of training) but they are only applied in the centers of sporting promotion (CTD). During the training camps that are organized by the RFEA more physical, medical and psychological are used and, psychological, medical, and technical reports are produced. At that point, subjective criteria (rank of sexual ripening, sporting emotional intelligence, rank of competitiveness, facility in the technical execution and look of the coaches) are also assessed. All of these information are then evaluated by the Technical Comity of the Spanish federation.

In the following table it is possible to observe the characteristics of the process of detection and selection of sports talents for athletics in the four selected Iberian-American countries.

Table 1: Characteristics for the detection and selection of sports talents for athletics in the four selected Iberian-American countries.

Detection and Selection	Brazil	Cuba	Spain	Portugal
Unified system	No	Yes	Yes	No
Detection process	Competition	6 procedures	Competition	Competition
Selection criteria	Competition results	Results in test batteries, training observation, results in competitions, medical and psychological exams, final evaluation	Objective criteria: performance, biological type, motor development and abilities in the competitions, time of practice and level of training Training camps: Physical, medical and psychological tests, subjective criteria	Competition results
Normative table	No	Yes	No	No
Evaluation of biological maturity	No	Yes	Yes	No
Place and use of test batteries	No	Special Areas, EIDE, ESPA	CTD Training camps	Training camps
Evaluation of the results	Technical Comity (CBAt)	Comity for evaluation	Technical Comity (RFEA)	Technical Comity (FPA)

The promotion of the sports talents - the process that includes all the support, infra-structures and materials made available to the coaches and young athletes after the detection and selection process - differs greatly in the selected countries of our study. While in Brazil the young athletes are directed towards clubs and projects that are developed by the regional or municipal secretaries, as well as towards projects by private organizations (that exist in small numbers), in Cuba the young talents that have been detected and selected enter the sports schools (EIDE and ESPA) and remain there until they achieve high performance levels. In Spain the young athletes enter either the CTD or participate in training camps that are scheduled over the year, whereas in Portugal they are, at most, directed to clubs, sporting associations and schools of athletics, which are small in numbers and depend on sporadic and individual initiatives of sports teachers or coaches.

In fact, only Cuba possess a general program for the basic formation and specialization in athletics that establishes orientations and references in order to guide and assist the coaches in their training practice with the young athletes.

Spain, on the other hand, has a specialization program that has been developed and divulged by the responsible sector of the Technical Comity of the RFEA, equally establishing guidelines for the coaches of young sports talents. These guidelines are passed on during the training camps and annual conferences on sports promotion for the coaches.

The Portuguese Federation of Athletics divulges a specialization program that has been developed by the sector for the jumping disciplines through the manual "Cheer Athletics" and recommends its use for other disciplines of the modality.

The CBAt in Brazil does neither possess a specialization program nor does it establish guidelines to advise the different disciplines of athletics; they depend on the criteria of the clubs and their technical departments.

With regard to the competitive systems, it is possible to observe that Brazil, Spain and Portugal possess two different kinds of systems: one for the schools and one for the federations. As a result of the inexistence of a club system, Cuba has only one competition system for the schools. However, in comparison with the other countries, it is the most comprehensive system, since it is constituted of six levels (inter-school, inter-areas, inter-councils and districts, national, regional, and municipal competitions). Thus, it is equal to other countries with a strong tradition in sports (as much socialist countries such as China, Russia, etc. as democratic countries - especially the United States). Cuba is therefore an excellent example for the importance of school competitions as the first and main contact of young athletes with competitive events.

The following table presents the characteristics of the process of talent promotion for athletics in the four selected Iberian-American countries.

Table 2: Characteristics of the process of talent promotion for athletics in the four selected Iberian-American countries.

Talent promotion in athletics	Brazil	Cuba	Spain	Portugal
Places of promotion	Clubs, school for athletics, special projects	EIDE or ESPA	CTD, training camps	Clubs, associations, schools for athletics
Basic formation program	No	Yes	No	No
Specialization program	No	Yes	Yes	Yes, for one discipline
Competitive system	School and federation	School (6 levels)	School and federation	School and federation

It is possible to observe that Cuba detaches itself from the four selected countries, due to its complex unified system of DSPTE for athletics in five aspects: a) it has the most comprehensive national system for selection and detection; b) it uses normative tables for the selection process; c) it uses test batteries that are applied on a national level for detection and selection; d) it has specific formation programs (basic and specialization programs) during the promotion process; and e) it has the most comprehensive school competition system.

The Spanish system of DSPTE for athletics functions mainly through the CTD and training camps where test batteries are applied and the training process is supervised by coaches from the Technical Commission of the RFEA.

The inexistence of a unified national system of DSPTE for athletics in Brazil and Portugal can be considered a huge obstacle for the development of the modality in both countries. This reflects itself clearly in the limited number of athletes that achieve the high performance level, as well as in the quality of the marks and in the results that are achieved in international competitions.

The few strategies and isolated actions related to the detection, selection and promotion process in Brazil point out the urgent need of implementing a factual and broad system of DSPTE.

Discussion of the results

When compared with other more popular modalities with a longer tradition, such as soccer, volleyball, swimming and basketball, Brazilian athletics lacks still a greater divulgation on the national level. The more popular modalities do not depend so strongly on investments in infrastructures and resources, especially with regard to tracks, since the resources necessary for their practice are widespread, as much in sporting clubs as in governmental infrastructures.

According to our study, we can point out several gaps regarding the DSPTE for Brazilian athletics, such as:

▪Inexistence of a national unified system of DSPTE;

▪Detection and selection are exclusively based on the results obtained in school and federalist competitions;

▪Inexistence of test batteries that are applied nationwide and that include technical, as well as psycho-social and medical evaluations;

▪Biological maturation is not evaluated in the process of detection and selection;

▪Normative tables for the evaluation of the performance in the various disciplines of athletics are not used in the process of detection and selection of talents;

▪Inexistence of an evaluation comity that is responsible for the selection of the talents in the main (regional) and national competitions;

▪Inexistence of an organized process of indication of the possible talents to the clubs and the schools of athletics (which are mainly concentrated in the big capitals and cities);

▪Inexistence of a formation program that can be used as a nationwide guideline for the coaches by offering theoretical subsidies for the promotion of the talents;

▪Restricted competitive system on the school and federative level which does not reach all Brazilian states;

▪Limited participation of the clubs and respective athletes, in the regional competitive selections (municipal and state), federal and national;

▪Lack of training centers for the practice of athletics and the promotion of sports talents in most of the Brazilian main cities and states;

▪Limited number of monitors and coaches of athletics in relation to the quantity of practitioners;

▪Restricted practice of the modality in schools, especially in public schools.

Conclusion

As a form of conclusion, we will now present our recommendations for the development of a national and unified system of DSPTE for athletics. We would like to stress that it is also indispensable to increase generally the practice of the modality in the country, in the sense of turning it into a sport for the masses.

Our recommendations are grouped according to five main aspects: organization, DSPTE, infrastructure, human resources and financial or other aids:

1. Organization:

a. Improve the structure of the state federations in order to reduce the existing disparities in the different states in terms of economical, administrative and human resources and materials;

b. Create a department of DSPTE within the CBAt, with nuclei in the state federations in order to guarantee the implementation of the developed programs.

2. DSPTE:

a. Create specific mechanisms for the DSPTE that are developed by the Technical Comity of the CBAt and surpass the national detection project "Discovery of the Sporting Talent". For example:

i. Implement the project 'Pentathlon' (already existing project by the CBAt) for the detection of talents through school competitions on a national, state, and municipal level;

ii. Encourage the creation of school for athletics in elementary schools, secondary schools (federal, state, municipal and private) and in private, state, and federal universities, with the objective to serve the different communities:

- Establish protocols and partnerships between these schools of athletics, the secretaries for sport (municipal and state), the CBAt, the state federations, and private and public companies, in order to guarantee the adequate conditions for this operation. In the future, these schools should be able to associate themselves to already existing clubs that do not offer athletics;
- Attract children and adolescents between 8 to 13 years of age to the schools of athletics, without submitting them to any process of detection. The main objective of this initiative is to interest children in the modality and teach the basic technique of the different disciplines of athletics with a multilateral approach. Establish simultaneously a model in team competitions for children between 8 and 11 years of age that can be applied in schools (adapting the model of the IAAF Kid' s Athletics competition);
- Introduce a comprehensive process of talent selection with the following procedures: a battery of specific tests (physical and technical), competitions (utilizing normative tables), observation by the coaches and complementary psychological and medical exams. Subsequently, a final evaluation through a commission created for this effect should be made;
- Develop formation programs for the athletes of the modality in form of manuals for teachers, monitors and coaches, with the following levels:
  - Program of initiation (basic motor training);
  - Program of fundamental training;
  - Specialization training program (according to the different disciplines);
  - Transition training program (to reach high performance).

3. Infrastructures:

a. Increase the number of athletic tracks (natural and synthetic) in all Brazilian states in order to offer more possibilities for the practice of the modality;

b. Improve the already existing infrastructures;

c. Develop specific centers of talent promotion for the modality, preferably one in each state, summing a total of 27 centers or one in each public federal university that offers a course of physical education or sport science. These centers should be developed by taking advantage of the existing infrastructures, material and human resources. Organize periodical training camps in each state for the main categories (youth, sub-23 and adult) of each discipline as a complement.

4. Human resources:

a. Increase the number of coaches and monitors for athletics through the implementation of new courses, structured and organized by the CBAt, and divided in three levels:

i. Level 1 (monitor of athletics I, initiation in the modality, and monitor of athletics II, for children's categories);

ii. Level 2 (coaches of benjamins and youth);

iii. Level 3 (coaches, specializing in a discipline: jumps, running, race walking, launchings, throws, combined events).

5. Aids:

a. Offer support to underprivileged children and adolescents in schools of athletics (to be created), especially transport, food and training material;

b. Offer support to promising athletes to avoid drop out and the migration of the adolescents to the big training centers of the modality;

c. Guarantee multidisciplinary support through the creation of multidisciplinary centers or through partnerships with universities and public hospitals;

d. Improve the criteria for the attribution of financial grants to promising young athletes, depending on their technical improvement and evolution in terms of results in competitions.

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DETECTION, SELECTION AND PROMOTION OF SPORTS TALENTS FOR ATHLETICS - A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE BEST IBERIAN-AMERICAN COUNTRIES

ABSTRACT

Many of the successful athletes in the main international competitions are the result of systems of detection, selection and promotion of sports talents (DSPTE). The creation of unified and efficient systems of DSPTE based on technical and scientific criteria can be considered *sine qua non* in the process of long term formation of young athletes on their way to high performance in countries with excellence in sports.

Even though Brazil is part of the four best placed Iberian-American countries in the ranking of athletics, along with Cuba, Portugal and Spain, it has not yet developed a unified national system for the modality and is beginning to implant a system for the sport in general. For that reason, our objectives are: (1) To describe the existing national programs for athletics in each Iberian-American country; (2) To analyse these programs according to the elements that compose them; (3) To compare the Brazilian program with the other Iberian-American countries of our sample; and (4) To offer suggestions that could be useful for the development of a Brazilian system of DSPTE for athletics.

Our conclusions and recommendations for the implanting of a Brazilian system of DSPTE for athletics are: (1) To create a department for DSPTE within the CBAt and its state subdivisions; (2) To develop a program of DSPTE with its own mechanisms (creation of athletics schools, specific processes for talent selection and programs for the promotion of the athletes); (3) To improve and increase the infrastructures (tracks, training and promotion centres); (4) To captivate and instruct a greater

number of coaches and monitors; and (5) To offer more support to the athletes (financial, material and multidisciplinary).
KEY WORDS: sports talents, national systems, athletics

RESUMÉE

Beaucoup des athlètes avec sucés dans les compétitions internationaux principaux sont le résultat de l'implantation des systèmes de détection, sélection et promotion des talents sportifs (DSPTE). La création des systèmes unifiés et efficaces de DSPTE a basé des critères techniques et scientifiques peuvent être considérés le *sine qua non* de la formation du long duré des jeunes athlètes en route par l´haute compétition dans les pays avec l'excellence dans les sports.

Bien que le Brésil fait partie des quatre pays ibéroaméricains le mieux placés dans l' athlétisme, avec Cuba, Portugal et Espagne, il pas encore a développé un système national unifié pour la modalité et ha commencé de implanter un système par le sport en général. Pour cette raison, nos objectifs sont: (1) Décrire les programme nationaux pour chaque pays ibéroaméricain, dans les termes généraux et pour l' athlétisme; (2) Analyser ces programme selon les éléments qui les composent; (3) Comparer le programme brésilien avec les autres pays ibéroaméricains de notre études et avec les programme de DSPTE de pays de excellence sportif étudiés dans la révision bibliographique; (4) Offrir des suggestions qui pourraient être utiles pour le développement d'un système brésilien de DSPTE pour l'athlétisme.

Nos conclusions et nos recommandations pour l'implanter d'un système brésilien de DSPTE pour l'athlétisme sont: (1) Créer un département pour DSPTE dans le CBAt et ses subdivisions dans l'états; (2) Développer un programme de DSPTE avec ses propres mécanismes (la création d'écoles de l' athlétisme, les procédés spécifiques pour la sélection des talents et les programmes pour la promotion des athlètes; (3) Améliorer et augmenter les infrastructures (les pistes, les centres de entraînement et promotion); (4) Intéresser et instruire un plus grand numéro d'entraîneurs et moniteur; et (5) Offrir plus de soutenir aux athlètes (financier, matériel et pluridisciplinaire).
MOTS CLES: talents sportifs, les systèmes nationaux, athlétisme

RESUMEN

Muchos atletas con grande éxito en las principales competiciones internacionales son el producto de la implantación de sistemas nacionales de detección, selección y promoción de talentos deportivos (DSPTE). La creación de un sistema unificado y eficiente de DSPTE, apoyado en criterios técnicos y científicos, es considerada condición *sine qua non* en los países de excelencia deportiva en el proceso de formación a longo plazo de los jóvenes atletas hasta el alto rendimiento.

A pesar de hacer parte del ranking de los cuatro mejores países ibero-americanos en el atletismo, al lado de Cuba, España y Portugal, Brasil todavía no ha desarrollado un sistema nacional unificado de DSPTE para esta modalidad y está implementando un sistema para el deporte en general. Así, nuestros objetivos son: (1) Describir los programas existentes de DSPTE para el atletismo de cada uno de los cuatro países ibero-americanos seleccionados; (2) Analizar-los a través dos diferentes elementos que los componen; (3) Comparar el programa de DSPTE brasileño con los otros programas ibero-americanos pesquisados; (4) Fornecer subsidios que puedan ser útiles para el desarrollo de un sistema nacional unificado de DSPTE para el atletismo brasileño.

Nuestras conclusiones y recomendaciones relacionadas con la implantación de un sistema nacional de DSPTE para el atletismo brasileño son: (1) Criar un departamento de DSPTE en la CBAt y núcleos en las federaciones estaduales; (2) Desarrollar un programa con mecanismos propios de DSPTE (implantación de escuelas de atletismo, introducir procesos diferenciados de selección y programas de formación de los atletas); (3) Mejorar y aumentar las infraestructuras (pistas, centros de entrenamiento y centros específicos de promoción); (4) Captar y formar un número mayor de entrenadores y monitores para la modalidad; (5) Ofrecer más apoyos a los atletas (financieros, materiales y multidisciplinares).
PALABRAS CLAVE: talentos deportivos, sistemas nacionales, atletismo

DETECçãO, SELEçãO E PROMOçãO DE TALENTOS ESPORTIVOS PARA O ATLETISMO - ESTUDO COMPARATIVO DOS MELHORES PAíSES IBERO-AMERICANOS

RESUMO

Muitos atletas com grande êxito nas principais competições internacionais são produtos da implantação de sistemas nacionais de detecção, selecção e promoção de talentos esportivos (DSPTE). A criação de um sistema unificado e eficiente de DSPTE, apoiado em critérios técnicos e científicos, é considerada condição *sine qua non* nos países de excelência esportiva no processo de formação a longo prazo dos jovens atletas até o alto rendimento.

Mesmo fazendo parte do ranking dos quatro melhores países ibero-americanos no atletismo, ao lado de Cuba, Espanha e Portugal, o Brasil ainda não desenvolveu um sistema nacional unificado de DSPTE para esta modalidade e está implementando um sistema para o esporte em geral. Desta forma, os nossos objectivos são: (1) Descrever os programas existentes de DSPTE para o atletismo de cada um destes quatro países ibero-americanos seleccionados; (2) Analisá-los através dos diferentes elementos que os compõem; (3) Comparar o programa de DSPTE brasileiro com os outros programas ibero-americanos pesquisados; (4) Fornecer subsídios que possam ser úteis para o desenvolvimento de um sistema nacional unificado de DSPTE para o atletismo brasileiro.

As nossas conclusões e recomendações relacionadas à implantação de um sistema nacional de DSPTE para o atletismo brasileiro são: (1) Criar um departamento de DSPTE na CBAt e núcleos nas federações estaduais; (2) Desenvolver um programa com mecanismos próprios de DSPTE (implantação de escolas de atletismo, introduzir processos diferenciados de selecção e programas de formação dos atletas); (3) Melhorar e aumentar as infra-estruturas (pistas, centros de treino e centros específicos de promoção); (4) Captar e formar um número maior de treinadores e monitores; e (5) Oferecer maiores apoios aos atletas (financeiros, materiais e multidisciplinares).
PALAVRAS CHAVE: talentos esportivos, sistemas nacionais, atletismo.