

Initiative	Track Academy by Connie Henry
Description	<p>In disadvantaged neighbourhoods in London young people are at risk for delinquency gang crime, drugs, and school-drop out. Track Academy (TA) uses athletics as a hook for young people at risk from age 8 – 21. TA is more than an ordinary athletics club. Through athletics, education and mentoring, TA provides an environment in which young people from all walks of life can find direction and purpose for their future. Connie Henry, founder coach and director of the academy wants to give youngster more chances than the ones they were born in. TA has been life-changing for some athletes as a couple were on the verge of going to prison or getting kicked out of school.</p>
Implementation	<p>TA is a 360-degree youth development program mainly divided in three sections. The key elements are setting up study support, mentoring program, and a track program. The vision of TA is providing inspiration, role model and a structured pathway for the youngsters to gain qualifications and achieve realistic goals.</p> <p>TA recognises that all young people need to be educated to the highest possible level, regardless of their home situation or education and income level of the parents. By offering Maths and English tuition on Saturday morning in a supplementary school before training, student-athletes who need study support can receive the right support. Additionally, the academy provides monthly educational workshop to broaden student-athletes' horizons and boost their self-esteem, by giving them experiences in, around and outside of sport with motivational speakers, employability workshop, college and university visits and works experience opportunities. Alumni and Student-athletes have the chance to take on youth leadership roles and peer role models roles by speaking to the next generation about their experiences and career paths. The 16+ student athletes have the chance to take on leadership roles within the Academy by assisting coaching, engaging with your people at open days and helping out with running the training sessions and registration desk before training.</p> <p>TA offers athletes one-to-one weekly mentoring sessions to create a support system adapt to individual needs. Group mentoring sessions include informal dinners and activities with professionals and inspirational athletes allowing student athletes more methods or support. E.g. TA holds employability workshops for senior student athletes with interview techniques, CV writing, career talks and goal setting activities. Finally, the track program delivers quality and affordable training session to the student athletes. The student athletes train with (ex)-elite international athletes and Olympic coaches as role models who keep in close contact and maintaining a close relationship with the student-athletes to inspire them and motivate them to train.</p>
Impact	<p>The program outcomes are such as increasing in academic performance, reduction in anti-social behaviour, increased confidence and self-esteem,</p>

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	<p>community involvement, progression from county to international athletics.</p> <p>Based on a 2019 participant survey carried out in TA it is clear that student-athletes benefit from the 360degree programme. There is an increase in confidence, school performances, higher aspirations, sporting achievements and firm friendships.</p> <p>The practise is sustainable due to the positive life-changing effects in lives of the young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods in a country's capital. The alumni athletes still help out and volunteer at the academy as a thank you. They recognise the importance and positive influence the programme has had on their lives. The Alumni and senior student-athletes become role models for the next generation.</p>
<p><b>Lessons learnt</b></p>	<p>The combination of sport, mentoring and education had a positive impact on the lives of the youngsters. The sport is being used as a hook to get youngster engaged in mentoring and education programs.</p> <p>The difficulty lies in keeping the youngsters enrolled in the academy and avoiding sport drop out at key changing moments in lives such as change from primary school to secondary to high school to university. These significant moments come with developmental, social and physical changes with potential impact on the desire and ability to play or train for a sport.</p> <p>TA solves this by putting the right programmes in places such as delivering employability etc. allowing them to find everything they are looking for at TA.</p>
<p><b>Conclusion</b></p>	<p>The youngsters showed an increase in academic performance, reduction in anti-social behaviour, increased confidence and self-esteem, community involvement and progression from county to international athletics.</p> <p>An all-round programme including athletics, mentoring and education is rare. Similar programmes have been done in other sports but rarely to the extent of TA. The mentoring and educational programme is more important to the TA than producing high-level athletes.</p> <p>Using role models and mentors is what allows the students to flourish and motivated.</p>

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