# Assessing Institutional Practices and Conditions in the Development of Students in Ethiopian Sports Academies – Insiders' Perspectives

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## ABSTRACT

*The objective of this study was to assess the prevailing institutional practices and conditions in the overall development of students in Ethiopian Sports academies considering the insiders' perspectives. To this end, the study used a qualitative case study design included two purposfully selected sports academies (Ethiopian Youth Sports Academy and Tirunesh Dibaba Sports Academy). In this two sports academies, the researchers conducted focus-group discussions with randomly selected sport academy students (n = 20), and interviewed two coaches and two directors (one from each academy). The findings of the study revealed that, most of the study participants believed that motivation, positive learning environment, adequecy of requiered resources and proper usie of time, effort, and peer support are found to be essential conditions that foster success and enhance performance in sports academy education. Furthermore, many of them explained some best institutional practices. For example, positive relationship with coaches, proper management of sporting events with the specified schedules, and conducting friendly games with various clubs. Apart from these, study participants identified some challenges that detter implementation of sports education in the academies. There are an exclusive focus on the practical skills without supporting that by theoretical and other related psychological components. Also, the coaches arrange friendly matches with more advanced clubs that have senior players that did not match with the age cohorts of sports academy students. Moreover coaches trainings focus on team trainings than individual works, and there are scarce sports equipment and facilities, and lack of recreation centers in the immediate vicinity . It is obvious that these impendements have had negative influences on students physical , psychological enhancement and in the overall learnings and performances. Therefore, participants suggested several recommendations to allivate these and enhance the performance of sports acadmy students*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Student learning, development and satisfaction are the core businesses of the sports academy (Darby, Akindes, & Kirwin, 2007; Nasey & Massey, 2004). This is so because such institutions are considered as sites for learning and personal development in the chosen sports (Rynne, Mall 2006; Williams & Drust, 2012). In Africa, the establishment of sports academies has been considered as a viable option to prepare African youths in sports so that they become more competent to gain greater success through their involvement as professional players (Paul, 2012). Regardless of this, such institutions positive contributions for the development of in Africa is constrained due to a continual migration of talented African youths to Europe and other places around the globe (Darby et al., 2007; Paul, 2012) Also, the time required for athletic participation limits the time that students can devote to academic activities (Gayles & Hu, 2009) associated with a sports academy diploma, it is critical that students achieve the desired educational outcomes. perspective of young people, sport is a highly valued activity and plays an important role in their lives may be because winning in sports brings status and monetary rewards that millions of youngsters follow the achievements of professional athletes like Usen Bolts, Michael Phelps, and Tiger Woods. Further, it has been argued that young people have quite strong perspective on how their involvement in sport could be enhanced (Gayles & Hu, 2009)

# 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Over the years, we have witnessed that a shift has been occurred in sports coaching literature from an instruction paradigm to a learning paradigm. A central element in this new paradigm is authentic and multidimensional assessment of performance in sports. While a growing body of literature suggests that this approach to assessment of sports performance is a best practice in sports coaching, it is still unclear whether sports academy coaches have embraced it fully. Moreover, elite sport athletes have underscored the importance of experience in developing their sporting skill (Phillips, Davids, Renshaw, & Portus, 2010). Also, pertaining sport coaches learning, research reported that most of the learning for high performing coaches drew from their informal learning experiences (Nelson, Cushion, & Potrac, 2006). Pertaining to sports academies context, fewer studies attempted to address issues of student experience in sports academies curriculum (Nasey & Massey, 2004). However, students face numerous obstacles throughout their experiences in sports academy. Most notably, they tend to feel disengaged in- and-out of classes and more dependent on their teachers and on inefficient approaches to learning and development in sports, consequently resulting in failure to achieve desired outcomes (Sluder, Buchanan, & Sinelnikov, 2009).

Despite wide acceptance of the view that learning occurs everywhere but to different extents and with different efficiency, no sport research has

focused specifically on sport academies as sites for learning. This study fills this gap via reporting on the nature and use of sports academy programs in Ethiopia presenting cases that demonstrate the existing inputs, processes and outcomes of sports academies in Ethiopia. By doing so, the nature of student learning and development with the academies of sports becomes apparent with a view to examining the interaction between what the institute/academy affords to the student and the personal characteristics of the sports academy student.

The purpose of this study is to assess the sports academy programs in Ethiopian through exploring the prevailing institutional environment, educational processes and student outcomes. Also, the study examines the major factors associated with the implementation of the sport academy program. Moreover, the study provides a holistic view of the key students' behaviors, and institutional practices and conditions leading to students' growth and development in sports academies programs, searching for patterns, and developing assertions that might be used to capture an in-depth understanding of the status quo.

## 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

### 3.1 General Objectives

The objective of this qualitative study is primarily to assess the existing institutional practices and conditions surrounding the learning and development of students in Ethiopian Sports Academies based on the responses obtained from some insiders working within two sports academies in Ethiopia. To this end, the study particularly focused on the entire program, coaches and coaching, institutional environment, the students, existing opportunities and challenges, and some recommendations.

### 3.2 Specific Objectives

To explore the practices and conditions within the contextual realities of sports academies in Ethiopia.

To identify the factors surrounding the implementations of sports academy program in Ethiopia.

To examine the opportunities and challenges surrounding the implementations of sports academy in Ethiopia.

To look for and suggest ways to improve existing practices and conditions.

## 4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this study, we delimited the scope of our research to the institutional practices and conditions within the sports academies in Ethiopia because the study intended to cover vast areas of investigations, including an examination of internal and external environments where the sampled sports academies are currently operating. This study tried to give answers to the following questions.

1. How do the different stakeholders perceive the quality of sports academy programs in the Ethiopian contexts?
2. What do coaches regularly do and how do students' experience learning in the Ethiopian sport academy contexts?
3. What are the key student behaviors and institutional practices and conditions that influence Ethiopian sports academy?
4. How can Ethiopian sport academy students and their coaches improve the nature and quality of program in Ethiopia?

## 5. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The study used context-input-process-product (CIPP) perspective as a guiding framework to develop a conceptual scheme that entails important ingredients of a sports academy program. Guided by this framework, the study focused on the contextual realities of the two studied sports academies. The input factors include the coaches' characteristics and students' selection, recruitment, and enrolment in the Ethiopian sports academies. In terms of process, the coaching practices and students' participation in the program have been considered. The final component of the framework is product, which was represented in terms of the students' performance assessment results, retention, selection and participation in the national and local sports clubs' competitions.

## 6. METHODOLOGY

## 6.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study takes a deeper view, adopting a qualitative case study design in order to highlight the realities of sport academy programs in Ethiopia. This qualitative case study design was chosen since it helps to facilitate exploration of a phenomenon of institutional practice and condition within its context using a variety of data sources (Creswell, 1998). This ensures that the Massey, 2004). The individual and focus group interview data would provide more complete pictures of the institutional practices and conditions in the sports academies and minimize bias (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). A qualitative analysis framework was prepared by consulting literature on this field. By assessing both educational outcomes as well as the processes involved in sport academies, we can develop a more complex picture of the phenomena under study (Caracelli & Greene, 1993).

## 6.2 PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted in two purposefully selected sports academies in Ethiopia. The participants of this study include: 2 senior managers, 4 coaches (2 from each sport academy), and 20 students of sports academies. In general, about 20 students (9 from each sport academy and 1 from each sporting event) did participate in this study. These institutions were targeted due to their capacity to enroll large number of sports academy students across a range

of sporting events. Moreover, these institutions have unique educational experiences that are apparent in these institutions as a result of having sports-related programs, the unique nature of the students (adolescents between the age of 15 to 17), and their motivations to enroll in these institutions. It was also chosen due to the unique population served - majority of students are talented enough at least in one sport event. It is argued that, "on the topic of student experience, students themselves are the ultimate insiders and experts" (Erickson & Schultz, 1992). To capture the students' personal experience requires rich and detailed enquiry and reporting (Nasey & Massey, 2004), thus the utilization of an interpretive case study (Creswell, 1998). It is through such a qualitative method that we attempted to paint a coherent picture of the nature and variety of student experiences of the sports academy programs.

## 6.3 INSTRUMENTS OF DATA COLLECTION

The instruments used for data collection include: interview and focus-group discussion. **Interview:** An individual and group interview formats will be prepared. The interview questions focused on the practices and processes of participants' engagement. Thus, the qualitative interviews were designed to capture the real-life experiences and perceptions of the participants about the obstacles and enablers that students face while enrolling in Ethiopian sports academies. **Focus Group Discussion**: Parallel with the individual interview, similar focus group points will be prepared to elicit responses from some selected teachers/coaches and students' participants. The center piece of the focus group discussion emphasizes on the experience of the students while attending the sports academies in terms of their engagement in sports and education, the level of self-determination as perceived by the participants, and their self- regulation strategies and practices.

## 6.4 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

This study used thematic analysis, incorporating a description of the context, the processes observed, and an explanation of elements explored in-depth (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data analysis was ongoing during the research process and allowed researchers to condense an excessive amount of information into a more manageable format (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Analysis involved organizing data, breaking them in to more manageable parts, developing codes, and searching for possible patterns. In order to organize the data, we read through the data line-by-line and thought about the meaning of each word, sentence, and idea (Creswell, 2012). Applying an interpretive perspective in the qualitative analysis could mean that primary consideration was given for the qualitative data followed by a framework of analysis generated from literature review (Guba & Lincoln, 1983). The individual and focus-group interviews were transcribed verbatim, data-coding and analyzing with the help of the comparative procedure of

open coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), where every sentence in the transcripts was labeled with terms that best capture what the main idea and concept was about (Creswell, 1998). An initial set of codes was developed and then applied to the remaining data.

**Ethical Issues:** Before the data collection, the purposes of the study were explained to the participants and they have been asked their consent to participate in the interview and focus group discussion. The participants were also informed that the information they have provided would only be used for the study purpose and that it could not be given to a third party. In addition, the researchers ensured confidentiality by making the participants anonymous.

## 7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through a repeated process of summarizing and re-reading interview and focus group data, the findings were analyzed to discern overarching themes that characterized the studied institutions, at the same time, testing the constructions and interpretations of tentative claims against the collected evidence (Merriam, 2002). In the final analysis, six working themes generated. These themes include:

1. Sports academy program,

2. Coaches and coaching,

3. Working environment,

4. Sports academy students,

5. Opportunities and challenges, and

6. Recommendations. Below the main findings of the study regarding these emerging themes will be presented.

## 8. THE SPORTS ACADEMY PROGRAM

As per the interviewed administrative personnel, the two sports academies entire operation was going well with a fair allocation of budget and resources. These sports academies are guided by proper planning at different levels of management and they had several sporting materials, equipment, and facilities that are important to run the theoretical and practical aspects of the programs. In this connection, both S3 and S6 pointed that the academy regularly gave the training program for all sporting events properly managed with the given time frame, plan and schedules. Particularly, (S11) also explained that mainly the games conducted and field activities are well done and practiced in the center. As one of the interviewed coaches says,

> "I often use more active learning methods engaging my students in a range of practical activities relatedto the specific sport the students specialized in the sport academy".

Also, many of students' participants of the focus group discussions reported that high rates of directions and praise from their coaches prompted their practice in specific sports skills.

These students also revealed that coaches' effort to engage students in sports-related discussion was a very positive experience they have had with the sports academy programs. In addition, they preferred teachers' questions instead of teachers' criticisms. In the studied two sports academies, the prevailing dominant instructional interaction pattern of the coaches included extensive explanations and demonstrations followed by directions. As the student participants of this study reported, they quite often followed the directions by practicing skills and received praise, from these respective coaches, for their achievements, in the end. To this regard, in one of the youth academia center as a whole students and coaches in varied situations have similarly emphasized and explained that as all they have good and positive relationship and interaction with each other and further indicated that always they well communicate and plan together with coaches to do more in their own sporting activities.

Besides, as one of the interviewed administrative personnel (AP2) indicated that the students and coaches interaction is really interesting and there is quite positive relationship among the students, coaches and the community as a whole in the center.

## 9. Sports Coaches and Coaching

The two sports academies assigned different coaches for the number of disciplines they had in the sports academy programs. In general, a total of 28 coaches (2 Females and 26 Males) were assigned in the two studied sports academies. Of them, 46% of them were par timer coaches assigned at Ethiopian sports academy. As one of the administrative personal reported, the two sports academies coaches are with good quality. In terms of qualification, these coaches have a range of status from Diploma up to Master's Degree levels. Also, these coaches had a professional coaching level between "C" to "A" levels. Moreover, these coaches had between 5 to 30 years of experience as coaches. Some of these coaches also had the experience of coaching big clubs and National Sports Team. Regardless of this, the hiring of coaches was not found simple as these coaches are not readily available for permanent hiring. Coaching Experience in the Sports Academies in Ethiopia the program entails several components, including theories and practical trainings in the gymnasium and sports fields. Working Environment although there are enough learning resources available, there peculiarity to fit with the existing programs within the sports academies and the nature of the contents did not seem very well recognized. The existing learning resources that are relevant to conduct the regular sports education programs were not well clarified.

a) **The campus environment (climate)**

In the studied two sports academies, the students had catering services thus education, health and catering services were delivered at the same time. In these academies, female students and male

students had separate dormitories. Female students live together with 6-8 students in one dormitory. Similarly, male students live together in a dormitory sharing common life for 6-8 students. In this connection, specifically in one of the training center as (S3 and S10) stated that the training is quite interesting, active, and the training center is absolutely established in a very conducive environment and the overall environment for the training is very suitable and conducive and the culture also seems suitable and attractive to us. But, we have not got any academic education in the theoretical aspect of the sporting events.

## b) Coaching approach and coaches regular presence

The assigned coaches as a permanent staff get access to a complete accommodation service within the academy. Thus, the coaches did live closer to the students and had more time to spend within the academy than the par time coaches because the latter categories did not get the housing services within the academy. Thus assigning permanent staff has considerable advantages.

## c) Administration and management support Selection and recruitment

Although, the program was not as such organized, there are some supports given by the administrative personnel of the academy. Also, few induction and short-term training opportunities were prepared, along with the

opportunity to get involved in an annual research conference. In the Ethiopian sports academy, coaches involve in the selection and recruitment of students. For this, the coaches used to select students based on their sports quality as measured by comprehensive selection criteria. In general, the selection criteria consists of: anthropometric tests, physical fitness batteries related to specific sports events, technical skills, and a general observation (subjective) about their playing approaches, overall competitive sports performance, and general health status. The recruitment process includes: identification of the potential students and then provision of opportunity for them to enroll based on cumulative scores produced against the various assessment measures. In general, the scores are calculated out of a total of 100 score points. In this regard, the overall score points of the different screened candidates are normatively compared and those who had relatively highest scores would be selected across the different sports events. Upon recruitment, the selected students will set a performance goal to be reached at the end of the training year. The performance goals are usually pre-determined twice over the students' enrolment years in the sports academy.

This selection and recruitment procedure did not differ across the sports academy as well as gender. Also, what is more important here in the selection and recruitment procedure is the presence of similar types of selection criteria and screening processes? Thus, there was no special

consideration that favors girls than boys. In the final selection, it is possible to find almost proportional number of boys and girls across the two sports academies.

## 10. STUDENTS' MOTIVATION, PARTICIPATION AND SUCCESS IN SPORTS

### 10.1 Students' Motivation to Learn In Sports Academy

According to the interview reports with administrative personnel and coaches, it was clear that students in the studied two sports academies were found more interested with the sports education they have been through in the academies of sports. One of the interviewed coaches (C2) clarifies the students' motivation in this way:    To be honest, the students are very much interested to accomplish every activity you gave them. In my view, they have high level of determination even to continue their practice while facing some challenges like feeling of pain as a result of previous happening. They are always punctual and you can find them whenever you need them.   The different groups participated in this study commonly agreed that the sports academies programs are meaningful and relevant for the learning and development of sports-related talent.

### 10.2 Students' Participation in Sports Academy

Also, the interviewed participants believed that the students of the two sports academies were so active throughout the sports academy years. These students were found active both in the curricular and co-curricular activities. Thus, every sports academy student, regardless of the types of sport event he/she has joined, get involved in a formal 9 to 12 hours of sports education program. Apart from the participation in a regular sports education program, every student was expected to participate a 2 to 3 and half hours of voluntary engagement in physical exercise and sports of their own choosing for about 6 days per week. Thus, every student had the opportunity to get involved in a physical activity or as a competitive athlete with the goal of involvement in competition. One of the interviewed administrative personnel (AP1) says: When I see the students in my sports academy, it becomes clear that they are very interested with the program and participate in the various activities with full interest. Also, students had a voluntary extra engagement in physical activity or sports preparation. I was able to attend competitions that our sports academy students were involved, and there, I was able to watch them being good to demonstrate what they have learnt. Thus the competitive arenas were meant to showcase the learned substances in practice.

Also, one of the interviewed coaches' (C3) comments: "The sports academy students did attend the regular training program with enthusiasm. Students also spent extra time

studying the specific sports skills". What did students achieve as a result of their participation in sports academies?

Somewhat differently, S7 and other administrative personnel (AP2) explained that both academies had very well-organized training programs in various sporting events. Particularly, the training program given in relation to football is really very good. We have got 90% of the training as suitable and very comfortable to the students. However, the respondents are feeling that the training is not well diversified and it was not well integrated with the theoretical lessons or classes. The centers mostly focus and provide training only on the practical and skill training aspects. In addition, S1 and S2 explained that the training provided in athletics were quite well-organized and integrated and the training actually given for six days and they have got the training as active and sufficient really, but lacks theoretical academic lessons.

## 10.3 Students' Success in Sports Academy

Success in sport depends upon the athlete's ability to develop and perfect a specific set of perceptual, cognitive and motor skills (Hodges and Williams, 2012). Skill Acquisition in Sport examines how we learn such skills and, in particular, considers the crucial role of practice and instruction in the skill acquisition process (Lewis, 2014).

One of the interviewed administrative personnel (AP1)reports. Students in sports academy did take the program very well. They are regularly attending classes. These students had demonstrated performance changes over the months. If you see them in competition with other teams, they are more interested and more physically fit over their competitors, particularly; they had the competitive spirit and physical fitness. A cursory look in to the students' final year result of the 2007 academic year indicates that the large majority of students (86%) had above pass mark to transfer to the next year or to complete their education and be graduated. One of the interviewed coaches says: When I saw my students, I taught in the academy of sport, I felt that they were so good in terms of their performance. Although, they did not get the opportunity participate, I would say, 2-3 of them had high caliber to change the Ethiopian National team under 15 Football results, if you will. Over the coaching season, I was able to see that my students had a considerable amount of improvement in terms of their technical competence, their playing skills with ball, and their team coordination. In fact, the students in sports academies had several opportunities to get involved both in local and international competitions. Regarding the later, one of the administrative personnel, reported that there are some opportunities to get involved in Ethiopian National Sports Teams. For example, in the 2007 E.C. (2014/15) sports competition season, a total of 30 students (boys and girls) from Ethiopian Youth Sports Academy were selected for the Ethiopian National Sports Team from. These

student-athletes did participate in the National Sports Team across six sports events. These events include: Football (Soccer), Athletics, Basketball, Boxing, World Taekwondo, and Swimming. Similarly, a total of 17 students (boys and girls) of Tirunesh Dibaba sports academy were selected for the Ethiopian National Sports Teams. All these participants did participate in the National Athletics Sports Team. Also, the students from the two sports academies had the experience in international competitions, including African Youth Sports Competition and All African Games. Participating in such programs, students of academies of sports had won medals, particularly the Gold medal won in World Taekwondo was the highest result earned. A sports academy is a learning institution that provides significant opportunities for the students to become better educated in a particular sport type (Nasey & Massey, 2004). In this regard, we did not get a well- organized and systematic performance indicator from the two sports academies, particularly scarce was a disaggregated evidence of students' performance in sports and objective measure of their performance during the sport academy years.

## 11. STUDENTS ENROLLMENT, ATTRITION AND DROPOUT

As far as the entire sports academy population is concerned, in the 2007 academic year, a total of 174 students were enrolled in Ethiopian sports academy while a proportional??? Students were enrolled in Tirunesh Dibaba Sports Academy.

Regarding new enrolment for the year 2007the studied academies of sports did plan to enroll 125 students for the 2007 academic year, but finally they were able to enroll a total of 117 students. This actual enrolment is pretty close to the planned target indicating the realistic nature of accepting students in the program. While the overall girls and boys attending the two academies of sports were proportional, there was 14% attrition and a couple of students drop out cases. The very reason for attrition was exclusively a failure in the final performance assessment taken at the end of the academic year both for the first year and second year students. Besides this, the two drop out cases, as reported by one of the interviewed senior administrators (SA1), were predominantly due to personal reason like switching interest amidst the academy years and disciplinary reason. Despite this, the very factor accounted for the students' attrition, as reported by top administrative personnel, was a mere focus on performance assessment with an underestimation of the power of sports potential visa-a-vise sports performance. Also important was the multidimensional and developmental nature of sports performance thus the potential of masking other relevant entities. This implies that students' success in the studied academies of sports was considered as a single element subsuming all the necessary ingredients of learning assessment. With this conception in mind, the entire effort in sports academy seems more inclined to the preparation of students to be competitive and be able to perform higher and

greater during the sports academy years. While this may not be a problem for those who reached early maturity, probably it will be a serious problem for those who have reached late maturity in terms of learning and development in sports-related competences.

## 12. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN SPORTS ACADEMIES

### 12.1 Opportunities

Interview participants identified various institutional practices and conditions that facilitate the implementation of sports education within sports academy. As they said, there are considerable amounts of annual budget allocated by the government to run the entire institutional operations, and some additional budgets for the purposes of increasing institutional capacity in terms of better learning resources, sporting materials, equipment, and facilities. One of the interviewed coaches says: "The academy where I had coaching program with students was better in its institutional capacity compared with high schools and Sub-City Administrations found in the immediate vicinity. Also, it sounds that the academies had reasonable amount of financial allocations for research, education, and other experience sharing visits even abroad. Moreover, there are still few possibilities of getting high performance coaches who have the highest level of experience in coaching players at the national, super league levels and National Sports Team

levels. The institutions were able to assign coaches with the highest coaching certificate level. The other positive experience the academies have had was the catering services. For example, getting food service, health and accommodation, at the same time brings in several advantages like getting adequate time to rest, and easy re-arrangement of missed programs.

### 12.2 Challenges

### 1) Institution-related Challenges

There are some institutional challenges in terms of availing materials, equipment, and facilities for coaching purposes. The challenges are both quantitative and qualitative in nature as most of the study participants commonly agree. The interviewed coaches and their students share in common that the gymnasium did not seem suitable for coaching. In terms of institutional condition, it was found out that sports suits arrive to students lately. Sometimes, the sports equipment and materials, for example gymnasium for fitness training with machines and outdoor fields were inadequate compared with the standard gym and the number of students practicing in those facilities. For example, one of the interview coaches said that the floor and the roof high were not suitable for proper coaching, especially when you did work with too many students. Also, the academy did not have a firm guide how the learning and development of the students should be managed. Even there are

inconsistencies of program components across the different events of sports.

## 2) Coaches-related Challenges

The assignment of quality coaches is one of the most important variables affecting the quality of sports academy programs (Gilbert, Lichtenwaldt, Gilbert, Zelezny, & Côté, 2009). In relation to this, the two sports academies had quality coaches, but these were not readily available across the different sporting events and gender. In terms of the assignment of coaches for the two sports academies, there were 13 male coaches assigned at Ethiopian Youth Sports Academy were hired on contractual basis, thus these coaches were par timers who usually found within the academy for limited time of the day as these coaches quite often spend time within the academy only for the purpose of conducting their regular classes. Regardless of this, only two female coaches (7%) were assigned at Tirunesh Dibaba sports academy as a permeate staff member. The rest of the coaches were all males. Thus, the assigned coaches were predominantly males with small proportion of the female coaches. Particularly, the absence of female coaches in Ethiopian Youth Sports Academy needs a serious attention. Sometimes, coaches and students faced difficulty to organize field training off academy. This was mainly due to the shortage of budget and transportation services for such activities. As one of the interviewed coaches pointed, he used to conduct performance assessment at three phases: at the beginning, in

the middle and then in the very end of the coaching season. However, the same coach expressed his dissatisfaction with the limited theoretical instruction he gave and the limited psychological instruction offered by a part time instructor. In the view of the interviewed coach, lack stability and they used to spend few ours in the academy were some of the reasons for not providing instructions as expected.

## 3) Student-related Challenges

Students enrolled in the studied academies of sports were not problem free either. For example, one of the interviewed coaches (C2) commented that, the students enrolled in the academy with a higher age than expected. Also, they had fear of failing performance tests, thus they disliked to take performance tests regularly. As he said, issues related to performance assessment (sport-skills and fitness) resulted in anxiety and pressure on the part of the students in the academy of sport. The other senior manager (SM3) added, age reduction during enrolment was a serious and continual problem in our sports academies. Apart from this, one of the interviewed coaches reported his negative feelings about the discipline penalty and student selection issues. He says: The institutions disciplinary punishment needs to be more meaningful because simply staying for a year does not necessarily mean students have come back with positive experiences. The sport academies need to improve the scientific nature of the selection instruments, particularly including psychological measures is most

important. The interviewed sports administrator and the sports coaches pointed out several recommendations for the better future. These recommendations include both intervention measures to overcome the identified challenges and measures to be taken to promote sports academy programs. Participants' Recommendations Intervention (Remedial) Measures the sports academies need to strengthen the annual budget and increase the allocated resources. Also, they should change the existing student selection process so that it demonstrates substantial contents of sports science and more diversified components that are crucial for success in sports education (For example, Sports Psychology). Moreover, empowering the people working within sports academies, particularly sports coaches are very important. For this, the sports academy administrators, education program directors and departments must strive collaboratively towards preparing more quality in-service training opportunities. This could help to cope with the limited coaching knowledge and skills shared among most of the coaches working in the sports academies in Ethiopia. The interviewed sports coaches have underscored the importance of experience in developing their coaching knowledge and skill and this is also true in the literature on this field (Gilbert, Côté, & Mallett, 2006).

## 13. PROMOTION (SCALING UP) MEASURES EMPOWERMENT

Most of the study participants stated that an additional training opportunity for coaches and students is very important. It is advisable for the studied two sports academies to provide opportunities for their students to learn other relevant skills like the higher-order thinking skills, language skills, and independent learning skills (Nasey and Massey, 2004; Tadesse, Mengistu and Gorfu, 2016). An intervention study, conducted among the third year Sports Science students and second year Psychology students of Jimma University, researchers used cooperative learning (CL) pedagogies, along with, peer- assessment strategies. The findings of this study show that the practices of CL Pedagogies represented by four constructs including, teaching effectiveness, academic challenge, task- orientation, and cooperative interaction were found the most significant influence on student learning outcomes as measured by what the students gained and their overall satisfaction (Tadesse and Gillies, 2015).

## 14. IMPROVEMENT

The study participants of this study suggested that the academies of sports need to improve the allocation of budget, the capacity of existing sports materials, equipment, and facilities, and research undertakings. Particularly in the latter case, the participants suggested that making use of research outcomes should be considered as well. Future researches should focus specifically on sport academies as sites for learning and development of students in academies of sports in

Ethiopia (Phillips et al., 2010).The sports academy needs to be a supportive and healthy environment with activities designed for and adapted to the specific age-group or stage of development of the student (Geidne, Quennerstedt, & Eriksson, 2013).

## 15. DISCUSSION

The findings reported in this study revealed that the interview participants acknowledged the insufficiency of current sports education programs in the studied two sports academies. On the literature in the field of talent identification and development in sports, it was clear that sports education is not only about sports performance development, though sport performance development is part of that (Martindale, Collins, & Daubney, 2005; Williams & Drust, 2012; Williams & Reilly, 2000). Various scholars indicated that it is in situations such as sport academy learning that sports psychology becomes so important. Champion athletes commonly exhibit a high degree of: motivation, commitment, positive thinking, focus, and mental toughness, among other factors (Gould, 2001). While the argument which says sport promotes character development was questionable due to the possibility of falling into the unintended negative consequences of sport the knowledge and skills in sports psychology are important components to keep working in sports in a healthier way. Experts on goal setting talk of three types of goals: outcome goals, performance goals, and process goals. Outcome goals are the

most popular and usually are concerned with winning and losing. There is nothing wrong with setting an outcome goal. The problem is that too many performers focus too much on this outcome and thus put pressure on themselves. In addition, outcome goals are not under a person's control and thus one might, for example, swim a personal best, but still come in fourth place because the other swimmers were better and also swam extremely well. Outcome goals appear to be of lesser importance to youth athletes. Contrary to this, performance goals focus on the actual performance such as scoring 80% of the shoot out of the penalty box in football. There is no mention of the outcome and thus the performance is solely or predominantly under one's own control. Similarly, the process goals focus mostly on the process of reaching one's performance goals. Research and practice have revealed that performance and process goals should be emphasized and outcome goals minimized. In essence, reaching one's process and performance goals increase the likelihood of achieving one's outcome goals. It is important to enrich the existing learning resources with the intention to maximize the institutions capacity to provide high quality education across a range of sports education programs, for example, theoretical aspects of sports education, practical aspects of sports education (for example, swimming), and physical fitness, nutrition, and other allied disciplines. In terms of enriching, what was found very important from the administrators and coaches' perspectives was providing further

learning and development opportunities for language skills, sports specific knowledge and skill, and higher-order thinking skills. In this twenty-first century, the learning and development of higher order thinking skills are highly valued (Sutherland, 2006).

It is important to shift away from a focus on a norm-referenced student performance assessment towards a criterion-referenced multidimensional student's assessment. Also, the studied institutions should pay attention on the allocation of transports services for out of campus training programs. Moreover, it was suggested that emphasis should be placed on "sports potential" than a predominant emphasis on "sports performance" (Vaeyens, Lenoir, Williams, & Philippaerts, 2008). This potential should be considered as a multidimensional entity comprising several ingredients both from the objective and subjective performance assessment. For example, progressive sports-related assessment score, sports knowledge and skills test scores, students' self-efficacy, motivation, gains in personal and social development, as well as overall satisfaction (Tadesse et al., 2016). The Indian Cricket Team Captain says: For me, as a cricket captain, to get better in the sport is a far greater target than breaking records. I never imagined me breaking others' records, instead I would imagine how I could play better and become stronger in the sport. The very thing that keeps me in the sports is my self-confidence. The only thing that drove

me to the cricket sports was the sports culture in the schools. (CNN Interview, Mallika Capur, Talk Asia, April 25/2016) What the Indian captain says, was in line with what the sport psychologists continually advising for sports development in institutions like sports academies (Parker, 2000). As a learning site, sports academies need to focus on process and performance goals instead of outcome or product goals. The local setting of the academy and its community are factors conditioned both by policy and practice. The academy context has a direct impact on coaches training practices and thus impacts on student outcomes. Also, the leadership and governance of academies of sports has a crucial impact on coaches' training practices. Whether coaches attend the sport academy regularly, whether they spent time in coaching, whether they have access to ongoing professional development, all rely on effective and visionary leadership, management and governance of sports academy. This study finding has demonstrated that coaches have not been treated as the main change agents as they did not participate in the decision process in many aspects of the institutional practices. Moreover, implementation in relation to selection, recruitment, and talent development has been found difficult and inconsistent for many coaches by a lack of clarity and coherence in the documents that have guided implementation, and the lack of systematic processes for closing the implementation gap. The existing coaching practice was also failed to redress the prestige

balance between competitiveness and developmental approaches, a disparity that has been further impaired by a lack of successive and effectiveness-focused performance assessment exercises. Putting all together, the findings suggest five key areas of concern for the management of sports academies in Ethiopia. The forces triggering sports academy are mostly external providing little room for internal contextual factors and the development of programs from within the institution. We need to redress the current circumstances by counterbalancing with attentiveness to the context in which they are applied. This may lead to their modification in ways that are congruent with the existing sport academy culture. Along with this, consideration needs to be given to raise the awareness of the front line implementers so there can be an ongoing process of development (Jimma, 2014). For this process to occur, it is suggested that in the place of practice-oriented coaching approach into a more multidimensional approach for coaching so that there will be a possibility to balance or harmonize the theories and practices of sports academy programs. It is argued that mandating a sport academy program via "one-size-fits all" approach does not work. Rather other mechanisms that may provide a qualitative different approach to support program needs to be identified and priorities must be set. Clearly, this needs to incorporate an evidence-based component where comprehensive data are accumulated tracking satisfaction and impact. What is critical here is to achieve consensus supported by empirical evidence that provides direction for betterment. There is a growing agreement that traditional cross-sectional talent identification models are likely to exclude many, especially late maturing, `promising' children from development programs due to the dynamic and multidimensional nature of sport talent (Hodges & Williams, 2012; Vaeyens et al., 2008). Recent conceptual models acknowledge both genetic and environmental influences and consider the dynamic and multidimensional nature of sport talent (Hugo, 2004; Jenkins, 2012). It is advocated that talent identification and development programs should be dynamic and interconnected taking into consideration maturity status and the potential to develop rather than to exclude children at an early age (Phillips et al., 2010). Finally, more representative real-world tasks and personal behaviors should be developed and employed in a multidimensional design to increase the efficacy of talent identification and development programs (John & Michael, 2007).

## 16. SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

As per the findings of this study, the sports academy had a number of behavioral, psychological, and social benefits for the participating youths. However, the developmental benefits of youth sports are not guaranteed through mere participation. Instead, the quality of youth participation in sports, institutional support in relation to availing resources for learning, and positive relationship

with coaches and peers are key factors in maximizing positive effects. The sport experience is significantly dependent upon the context that it is experienced. The studied sports academies had some implementation constraints arising from different factors related to the institution, the coach, and the students. The sport academies need to look for possible intervention measures that improve the situation in the sport academies. In this study, an evaluation framework is presented that could be of use to other sports academies seeking to generate institution-based data regarding the nature and use of sports academy program.

## 17. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In sum participants suggested that trainings should be well integrated and supported by sports sciences and psychological trainings, facilities should be provided properly on time, in the training center recreational and entertainment places and materials should be fulfilled, and plan for conducting friendly matches with participants same age categories. In turn these conditions have had negative influences on students 'physical, psychological enhancement and in the overall learning and performances. All these achievements, together with the Academy's pursuit for excellence and expertise, demonstrated that the studied academies have the ability to promote sporting excellence across the nation. The only way forward for nurturing healthy sport academy program appears to reside

in adopting a "developmental" approach, where re-culturing, contextualizing, and learning and re-designing are the most essential pillars. Our argument here is that nurturing sport academy to become more suitable learning place rests in the adoption of processes that develop and enforce standards and build local capacity for those who engage in administration and coaching. This implies that sports academy coaches and senior managers need to be more concerned with learning than compliance, promoting support rather than merely giving in to external pressures and demands. For coaches to be effective and efficient in the core of their practice, we suggest the centrality of learning and development. This can be achieving through in-service workshops and further education opportunities (Chisholm, Jimma, Tatsuya, & Manathunga, 2012).

The findings of this study provide important information to raise the profile of sports academy students in Ethiopia. Also, these help to promote the management of sports academy management and provide support for the regular works of sports academy, thus improving the selection, recruitment, retention, and training. Apart from this, the results serve as tools for intensifying recruitment, retention, and recognition of students in academies of sports and offer a more realistic program management plan to support institutions with preparation and development of students in sports academies.

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