

Faculté des Sciences du sport, Université de Poitiers France

MASTER EXECUTIF EN MANAGEMENT DES ORGANISATIONS SPORTIVES

EXECUTIVE MASTERS IN SPORTS ORGANISATION MANAGEMENT



Assessment of Factors Limiting Performance of Malawian Athletes

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MEMOS XV
September 2011-September 2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I take this opportunity to thank the Executive Board, Management Staff of the Malawi Olympic Committee for their support and role they played during my research work.

I also thank my lovely Husband Mr. Kelechi Kenneth Chinatu and my children for their inspiration and times they had to surface with very limited attention from me during the project work.

The support from friends and colleagues, especially My Tutor, Prof. Packianathan Chelladurai Ph.D, Mr. William Nyirenda, Mr. Oscar Kanjala, Mr. John Mwathiwa, Mr. Mathews Kambale and Dr. Mark Tembo I cannot go without mention them, they generously offered their expertise and taught me a great deal as I worked towards achieving my research findings.

Finally, I am grateful to all those who rendered me the opportunity to interview and those who were kind enough to respond to questionnaires.

I salute you All.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background information about Malawi

Malawi is a landlocked country located in southern Africa, with a current (2010) population of 15,447,500 and a land area of 11,848,000 ha (www.geohive.com). The nation is bordered by Zambia, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Lake Malawi. Lake Malawi (formerly referred to as Lake Nyasa) comprises about 20% of total area. Malawi is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa. With an average per capita income of just \$690, Malawi ranks among the world's poorest and least developed nations. The economy is mostly agricultural, driven by tobacco production. Malawi is mostly rural, with 85% of its people living outside of the two major cities, Lilongwe and Blantyre. The country faces many challenges, including massive debt, deep poverty, poor education, environmental problems, and the rapidly growing HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Malawi's climate is generally subtropical. A rainy season runs from November through April. There is little to no rainfall throughout most of the country from May to October. It is hot and humid from October to April along the lake and in the Lower Shire Valley with temperatures soaring up to 42 degrees Celsius. Lilongwe is also hot and humid during these months, albeit far less than in the south. The rest of the country is warm during those months. From June

through August, the lake areas and far south are comfortably warm, but the rest of Malawi can be chilly at night, with temperatures ranging from 5°-14°C (41°-57°F).

Malawi derives its name from the Maravi, a Bantu people who came from the southern Congo about 600 years ago. On reaching the area north of Lake Malawi, the Maravi divided. One branch, the ancestors of the present-day Chewas, moved south to the west bank of the lake. The other, the ancestors of the Nyanjas, moved down the east bank to the southern part of the country.

1.1.1 Industries and Business

The economy of Malawi is heavily dependent on agriculture, with tobacco, tea, and sugar as the most important export crops. Traditionally, Malawi has been self-sufficient in its staple food, maize (corn), and during the 1980s exported substantial quantities to its drought-stricken neighbours. Agriculture represents 36% of the GDP and represents about 80% of all exports. Nearly 90% of the population engages in subsistence farming. Smallholder farmers produce a variety of crops, including maize, beans, rice, cassava, tobacco, and groundnuts (peanuts). The agricultural sector contributes about 63.7% of total income for the rural population, 65% of manufacturing sector's raw materials, and approximately 87% of total employment. Financial wealth is generally concentrated in the hands of a small elite group. Malawi's manufacturing industries are situated around the city of Blantyre. Recent years have seen increased activity in Malawi's historically undeveloped minerals sector. A major uranium mine that opened in 2009 in the north of the country is contributing significantly to export earnings and overall GDP. A full

bankable feasibility study began in late 2009 on what is projected to be a similarly significant niobium deposit in central Malawi.

Malawi has continued the pro-Western foreign policy established by former President Banda. It maintains good diplomatic relations with principal Western countries. Malawi's close relations with South Africa throughout the apartheid era strained its relations with other African nations. Following the collapse of apartheid in 1994, Malawi developed, and currently maintains, diplomatic relations with all African countries.

1.2 Sports in Malawi

1.2.1 Traditional games played in Malawi

Traditional games in Malawi vary following a wide range of ethnic groups that are established in Malawi. The common games include Bawo, Fulaye, Phada, and Jingo. Bawo is mainly played by the adults especially men. The other three (Fulaye, Phada and Jingo) are commonly enjoyed by children mostly those under the age of fifteen (15). Young girls are the ones who are mostly interested with Fulaye and Jingo. Phada receives equal participation from both young boys and girls. Materials for all the above mentioned games are obtained locally, often at no cost at all.



Bawo: Bawo is a board game that is played between two people. It has four rows of eight (8) holes each and is played using 64 beads. At start each player gets 32 beads on their side of the



board. The player who manages to finish all the beads from the front row of the opponent's side wins the game.

Men playing the Bawo game using the Bawo board made from wood and marbles as beads, which is usually the case here in Malawi.

Young children playing Bawo using stones as beads and the holes dug on the ground instead of the wood boards that may be costly to them.

Fulaye: This game is mainly played using balls that are traditionally made from plastic papers. When playing this game, two players from one team stand on opposite sides (probably within a distance of 6 - 10 meters apart) with a member from the opponent team in the middle. The two players throw the ball at each other whilst targeting to hit the opponent player in the middle; who attempts to fill up the empty bottles, placed in the middle of the two throwers, with sand. The opponent player is also allowed to catch the ball for extra points. When hit the opponent player loses turn for another team member until all players from his / her team are finished; then they switch play with the throwing team. Scores are made by counting the number of catches or the number of bottles fully filled with sand.

Jingo: The game is played by a minimum of three people. Two people put on a rope that is tied end to end and the third jumps in and out at different heights; the lowest being halfway below the knees and the highest being just

below the arm pits. A turn is lost when a player fails to jump in and out of the ring-tied rope.

Phada: A minimum of two players can play Phada. The game is played by throwing a small piece of a flat block / stone (just like a broken piece of a tile) into a series / matrix of boxes drawn on the ground. The small piece of flat block is locally known as "PHALE". A player loses their turn when the thrown Phale fails to land on the targeted box or when one happens to step on the line of one of the drawn boxes on his / her way to collect the thrown Phale.

These games are however losing their popularity amongst the youth in the major cities because of technology advancement i.e. the coming in of video games, computer games, playing cards and a wide range of board games. The other setback is that there are no competitions for such games (traditional games), even at local level – hence no motivation.

1.2.2 Modern games popular in Malawi today

There is a wide range of modern games that are being played and enjoyed in Malawi both at professional level as well as for leisure purposes. The most popular ones are; netball, football, boxing, athletics, pool, lawn tennis, golf and table tennis. The most played games are football amongst men, netball amongst women and athletics. The dominance of these three games may be correlated to the availability of improvised materials and equipment for the games at very little or no cost at all. Such materials are like logs for making football and netball goal posts, plastic papers for making footballs and netballs (common with children) and the availability of land for practicing athletics.

Pool is one other game that is enjoying wide participation in Malawi. The only setback is that pool tables are usually placed at bars and other drinking places and as such there is limited access for under-18s, who are only able to enjoy the pool game from the pool tables placed at city markets.

Golf in Malawi is also very common, mainly in the cities (Lilongwe, Blantyre, Mzuzu and Zomba) and it is one sport that is enjoying sponsorship for competitions, usually on a weekly basis. Due to the high cost of Golf equipment and the actual training exercise, Golf in Malawi is mainly played by the rich. Much as Golf is an Olympic Sport, Golf in Malawi is not even affiliated to the Malawi Olympic Committee, for reasons best known to the Golf National federation.

1.2.3 The dominance of Netball in Malawi.

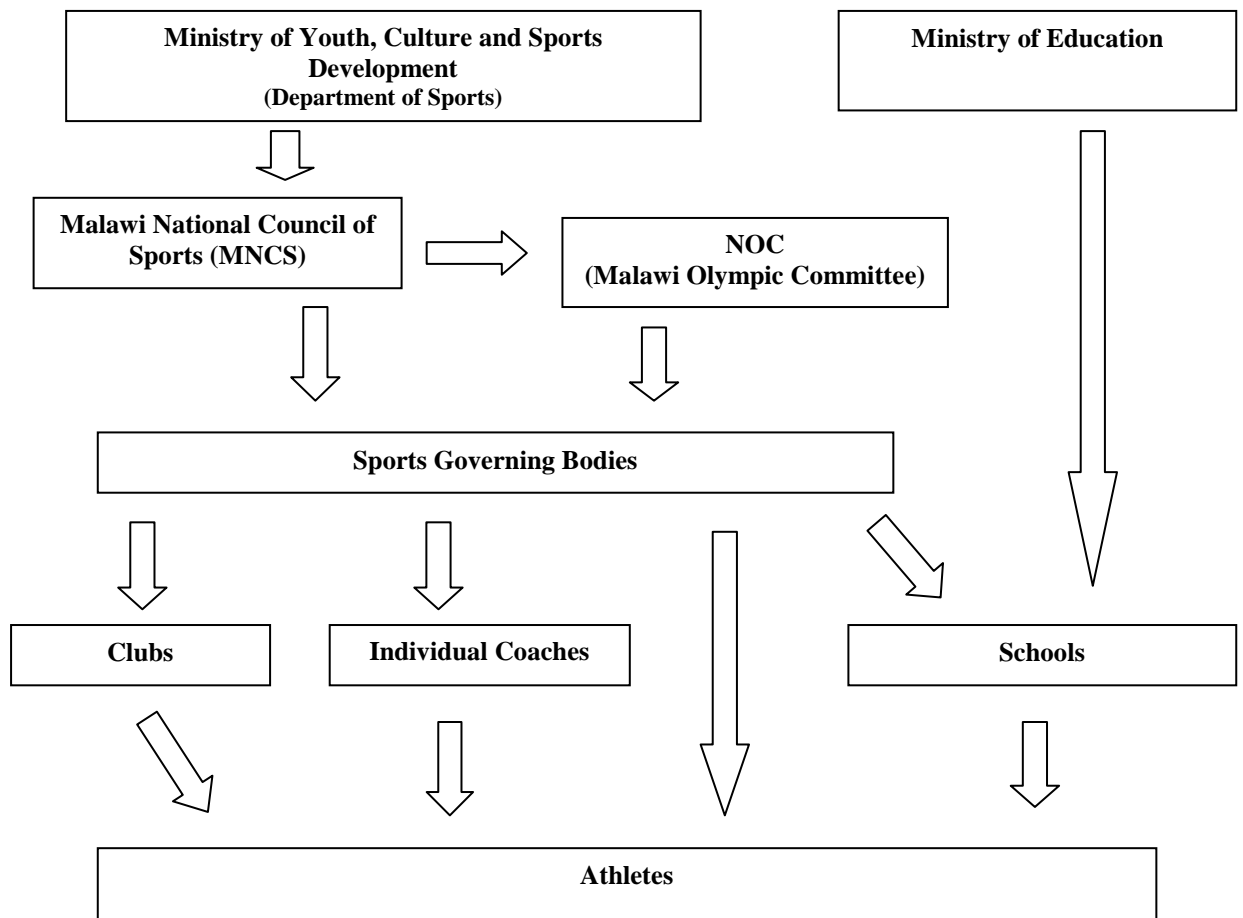
Netball is the only sport that has done well enough in terms of raising the Malawian flag high on the world map as far as sport is concerned. The success of the national netball team may be attributed to several factors. Perhaps under the influence of our former colonial masters, (Britain), the sport has been traditional to Malawi for over forty years. The sound youth development program laid down by the Netball association of Malawi (NAM) may be the back bone to the success of netball. Today, NAM has national teams starting from Under 12, under 18, under 21, under 23 and the main senior team, which is nicknamed the Queens.

The other reason is that Netball has well laid structures from grassroots level i.e. youngsters (girls) from primary school are seriously engaged in Netball and thus they grow up with the talent. One other very important factor behind

the success of Netball in Malawi is that children are able to play using traditionally improvised materials.

1.3 Governance of Sport in Malawi

1.3.1 Structure of Sports Governance in Malawi



1.3.2 The National Olympic Committee (NOC)

The NOC in Malawi is known as the Malawi Olympic Committee (MOC), which was formed in 1968 and it is an organization belonging to the Olympic Movement under the provisions of the Olympic Charter and World Anti-Doping Code. The current MOC President (2012), Mr. Oscar Kanjala, is the seventh

since establishment. The mandate of MOC is “to promote peace and sports for all and also to support and encourage the promotion of sport ethics, to fight against doping and to demonstrate responsible concern for environmental, cultural, gender, corruption and HIV/Aids issues”.

The objectives of MOC include:

- To ensure the observance of the Olympic Charter in Malawi
- To propagate the fundamental principles of Olympism at national level within the framework of sports activity in the teaching programmes of physical education and sport in schools and institutions of higher learning.
- To encourage the creation of institutions which devote themselves to Olympic education.
- To participate in and encourage the development of high performance sport as well as sport at grassroots level.
- To help develop among people, the culture of participating in sport for all
- To organize courses and workshops, local and international, for sports administrators, coaches and technical officials
- To commit itself to taking action against any form of discrimination and violence in sport
- To adopt and implement the World Anti-Doping Code.

1.3.3 The Sport Governing Bodies, their number, their prominence

Sport governing bodies affiliated to MOC are grouped into three categories:

- i. Olympic and Commonwealth Sports
- ii. Commonwealth sports
- iii. Recognized by MOC but not Olympic nor Commonwealth Sport

Olympic and Commonwealth Sports

1. Amateur Athletics Association of Malawi (AAM)
2. Badminton Association of Malawi (BAM)
3. Basketball Association of Malawi (BASMAL)
4. Canoeing Association of Malawi (CAM)
5. Cycling Association of Malawi (CAM)
6. Football Association of Malawi (FAM)
7. Judo Association of Malawi (JAMA)
8. Malawi Aquatic Union (MAU)
9. Malawi Boxing Association (MABA)
10. Malawi Handball Association (MAHA)
11. Hockey Association of Malawi (HAM)
12. Lawn Tennis Association of Malawi (LTAM)
13. Table Tennis Association of Malawi (TTAM)
14. Taekwondo Association of Malawi (TAM)
15. Weightlifting Association of Malawi (WAM)
16. Volleyball Association of Malawi (VAM)

Commonwealth Sports

1. Bowls Association of Malawi (BAM)
2. Netball Association of Malawi (NAM)
3. Squash Association of Malawi (SAM)

Recognized by MOC but not Olympic nor Commonwealth Sport

1. Chess Association of Malawi (CHESSAM)

2. Darts Association of Malawi (DAM)
3. Malawi Defence Force (MDF)
4. Malawi Police Service Sports Association (MAPOSA)
5. Malawi School Sport Association (MASSA)
6. Malawi Wushu Federation (MAWF)
7. Olympians Association of Malawi (OAM)
8. Tertiary Students Sports Association of Malawi (TESSAM)
9. University Sports Association of Malawi (USAM)

1.3.4 The Government and its role in sports

The government of Malawi makes its interventions towards sports development and administration mainly through the department of sports, which falls under the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports. After a recent cabinet reshuffle in August 2011, sports have found itself in a rather awkward situation in that it is now simply been recognized within the Ministry of Youth Development and Welfare. The Ministry of Education is also concerned with sports development through its structures; the primary schools, secondary schools and the tertiary education institutions.

The Department of Sports exists to promote the Malawian national identity and unity in diversity through youth empowerment, promotion and management of sports and recreational activities, for educational, posterity and poverty reduction (<http://www.malawi.gov.mw>). The department of sports works or rather reaches the grassroots through the Malawi National Council of Sports (MNCS). All the sporting bodies in Malawi including the Malawi Olympic Committee are affiliated to MNCS.

Furthermore, besides other sources, all the sport governing bodies access their funding from government through the MNCS. The MNCS' mission is to develop and promote sports in Malawi through a commercially vibrant and self-sustaining programme that will enhance national identity and the welfare of Malawians. Amongst others the strength of the MNCS lies within the following:

- The Council is well established within the country,
- There is a public acknowledgement of the need for the Council;
- Affiliation of the Council to Overseas Associations;
- The availability of funds for various sporting activities from the Government;
- Availability of a policy on sports;
- Network of Associations throughout the country;
- Full ministerial support.

However over dependence on Government Funding; and inadequate funding to support all sports are the major weaknesses for the MNCS. Other major factors that limit the level of excellence for the MNCS are: political interference i.e. interference from government particularly in the type of sport that the Council ought to support; poor current state of sports infrastructure in Malawi; structural/economic adjustments, i.e. low priority given to sports in government development programmes; inadequate support of sports in Schools; and that the culture does not promote the participation of women in sports.

1.3 Sport achievements on the International Scene

Besides having various sporting disciplines in Malawi showing very poor results at international level, there have been some tangible achievements from a few athletes and other distinctive national teams. Here are some of them.

Netball: According to the International Federation of Netball associations (IFNA), The Malawi netball team (the Queens) are ranked sixth (6th) in the world (<http://www.netball.org/IFNA>). The other remarkable achievement is that, the country (in the year 2011) has managed to send a netball player Mwawi Kumwenda, as professional player with a club in Australia. Today Mwawi plays for Peninsula Waves netball team in the Victorian Netball League (VNL) in Australia.

Football: The national team nicknamed the Flames managed to qualify for the Angola 2010 African Cup of Nations (AFCON) finals, for the first time after over 20 years. The team also nearly qualified for the 2012 AFCON finals i.e. the team only needed a win from their last encounter against Chad on 08/10/2011 but the result was a draw. To date, the Malawi football team has over 20 professional players playing their trade to as far as Europe.

Boxing: One of the country's finest boxers Isaac "golden Boy" Chilemba who competes in the light heavyweight and super middleweight divisions is the holder of the IBO Super Middleweight Title (2010); the WBC International Light Heavyweight Title (2009); the African Boxing Union Light Heavyweight Title (2009); WBO Africa Light Heavyweight Title (2009); and the African Boxing Union Super Middleweight Title (2008) (<http://boxrec.com>).

Athletics (marathon running): Malawi's very own, Henry Moyo managed to win a gold medal in Malaysia in 2005. He also obtained another gold medal in the Nelson Mandela Memorial Marathon held in SA in 2007. In April this year (2011) he won a Gold Medal in Nujoma Marathon in South Africa.

Table Tennis: The country's table tennis team has been winning the regional table tennis invitation tournaments for three consecutive times in Tanzania, Malawi, and Zambia respectively.

1.4 The reasons for failing in international competitions

There is quite a wide range of reasons that are believed to be behind the poor showing of Malawi sports at international competitions. The notable ones include the following: Poor preparations – not enough training due to inadequacy of funds; Poor funding (other sporting disciplines very little or no funding at all from Government); Very little athlete support from the corporate world; Inadequate exposure to international competitions; Poor infrastructure & other necessary equipment for sports development; Inadequate technical capacity for managers in various disciplines and very poor athlete motivation from coaches and managers; lack of database for athletes; absence of physical education in schools; absence of serious sports culture in all institutions; inadequate athlete support services and also that sports is not taken as a business.

2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND JUSTIFICATION

2.1 Problem Statement

For so many years, Malawian athletes have been participating in the major world competitions without winning any medals. Furthermore the athletes have been privileged to participate in the Olympic Games on Solidarity basis due to non-qualification.

2.2 Justification

The Malawian citizenry strongly believes that the solution does not only rest on the shoulders of the athletes but also with the Coaches and National Federations and government, hence this study. However this paper is set to investigate the root problems leading to the poor performance of Malawian athletes at major international competitions, so as to allow the sports authorities and stakeholders to make adjustments and improvements accordingly.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review has been conducted to answer the following questions:-

1. Who are the athletes in sports?
2. What is known about satisfaction and dissatisfaction?
3. What gaps exist amongst the stakeholders i.e. Administrators, Coaches and athletes?
4. What would be recommended to bridge these gaps?
5. What method could be used to produce, maintain and improve the athlete's performance?

This project intends to discover the reasons which contribute to the poor standard performance of Malawian athletes, represented in international competitions in terms of winning medals and breaking records. As such, we shall look at the planning strategies and the set up.

The choice of the target group has been made for such purpose as they appear to contribute more significant role in the factors limiting performance and satisfaction of athletes, either individually or collectively. These are: the National Sports Federation, Coaches and Athletes. We shall analyse each one of them to justify their individual or collective importance. We shall evaluate what literature says about each of the stakeholders, their importance and then to recognize what to anticipate from the functioning of each one of them.

According to Sports Administration Manual revised in 2000, 2001, 2005 and 2009 page 88 under Introduction:-Athletes are the heart and soul of the Olympic Movement, the focus of attention. They are universally seen as role models and heroes by the youth of the world. They have rights, which include the right to fairness and due process, good coaches, clear rules, fair competition, health, privacy, safety, confidentiality and education. Their ambition to contribute to sport development centres on a desire to be heard by the leaders of sport to make their suggestions count so as to orientate sport for the better.

The 2009 Olympic Congress included in its recommendations:

“As role models in society, athletes are able to make a major contribution to the Olympic Movement both by raising the profile of sport and recreation across communities and by becoming standard bearers for future generations. Athletes should be encouraged to play an integral part in the organization and development of sport throughout the twenty first century.”

An Athlete is a person who is trained or skilled in exercises, sports, or games requiring physical strength, agility, or stamina. (ref.<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/athlete>).

Coaches are the key stakeholders of the National Sport Federation, and therefore need to be provided with all the necessary requirements such as financial, standard infrastructure and sport equipment to achieve good standard performance of their athletes. Then they should be guided by targets against which their achievements should be measured. The example of what

happened at the 2011 Youth Commonwealth Games in Isle of Man, Malawian athlete competed without warm up because his coach was in town doing shopping while his athlete was competing on that day as a result athlete performance became poor to an extent of failing maintaining his personal best. As this research results indicate that there is no jobs and contracts well formalised, and that the majority of coaches work on voluntary basis. The contracts, for the coaches need to be offered with some attractive remuneration packages as a one way of motivation. At international level participation it can be practical to set the standards for the type and level of qualification of the coaches. The quality of the coach make difference on the performance of the athlete.

As defined by (Chelladurai and Riemer 1997). First, athletes are the prime beneficiaries of intercollegiate athletics; that is, intercollegiate athletics exist for the student athletes (Knight Foundation 1991). The second perspective is that when intercollegiate athletics are perceived as entertainment, the athletes become the prime producers of such entertainment (Chelladurai and Riemer 1997). Further, athletes spend an inordinate amount of time training relative to the time spent in a competition (i.e., the actual time of performance).

For example, a high school basketball team may spend two hours each day for four days for a game on Friday that lasts less than two hours. Therefore, the satisfaction of an athlete over what happens during the training sessions is equally as important for our purposes as what happens in the game situation. As mentioned in the NBA example given earlier, a related

uniqueness of athletics is that the contests are zero-sum games (i.e., for every winner, there is a loser).

Satisfaction according to Rice, McFarlin, and Bennett (1989) believed that satisfaction is determined, in part, by the discrepancies resulting from a psychological comparison process involving the appraisal of current job experiences against some personal *standards of comparison* (e.g., what workers want, feel entitled to, see others getting, have experienced in the past, etc.). (p. 591) Dissatisfaction according to (<http://www.audioenglish.net/dictionary/dissatisfaction.htm>) is the feeling of dissatisfaction that results when your expectations are not realized).

Chelladurai and Riemer (1997) have defined athlete satisfaction as “a positive affective state resulting from a complex evaluation of the structures, processes, and outcomes associated with the athletic experience.”

In their description, they noted that these evaluations could be a function of need satisfaction or the differences between a person’s wants or expectations and perception of what has been received. In essence, athlete satisfaction is the extent to which experiences meet one’s personal standards.

A priority source of information in order to judge the self is the comparison with other people (Festinger, 1954; Mussweiler, 2003). The judgement of an athlete’s performance is frequently based on the comparison with other athletes, or with prior judgement of other athletes’ performance. Accordingly, several studies show that social comparisons determine evaluative processes in judging athletes in various sports. For example, Ebbeck (1990) examined

the source of information used by exercises to judge performance, who were enrolled in a university weight-training programme. This is according to judgement, Decision Making and Success in Sport, First Edition. M. Bar-Eli, H. Plessner and M. Raab.

In a Malawian situation, there exists a wide gap amongst three major stakeholders namely; Administrators, coaches and athletes. These gaps come about because of a number of reasons one of which is educational background. Most Administrators are well educated and understand general issues but have little knowledge about sports while most coaches and athlete have little or no education background but have the understanding and knowledge of a particular sport and both of them come from the same background. This situation leads to various degrees of misunderstandings as one group feels superior to the other.

This has led to animosity among these crucial stakeholders. The result had been very pathetic performance at major events.

To bridge this gap, there is need to encourage both parties to interact, understand and embrace each other as all of them have got one common goal that is to ensure that their sport produces positive results.

In order to realise the above, there has to be unity of purpose where all stakeholders work in harmony.

National Sports Federation must be encouraged to come up with strategic plan which will provide guidance. This should give direction as to how to

produce, maintain and improve the athletes' welfare and performance. Once this is realised, it is with no doubt that results that have been very elusive will begin to come our way.

According to third edition of *Managing Organisations*: the first step in strategic is to determine the strategic intent which "captures the general identity, direction and level of aspirations of the organisation" (Hitt et al.,2007,p.192) suggest that strategic planning intent is the heart of strategic planning or management. Thus, strategic planning includes its objectives, and developing strategies to enable it to operate successfully in its environment (Megginson et al., 1992,p.197)

Since Sport in Malawi is a short term career and not well paying due to the economic situation, it is equally important to encourage athletes to further their education to levels where they can seek employment at the end of a sporting career. Administrators therefore have a duty to ensure that they perform this task.

It is viewed that when you have athletes that are well educated, they form a very good combination with other stakeholder such as administrators and coaches. It must also be taken into consideration that sports is very scientific and hence requires some technical knowhow. If an athlete is not conversant with such technical jargon, is likely for them to land in trouble with rules and regulation that govern most competitions such as Doping issues.

Coaches use technical languages which require athletes to grasp. Most of these terminologies are used in both training and game situation. If an athlete is unable to grasp the same due to low levels of education, chances of such athletes to excel at major international events are always very remote.

This is to emphasize on the need to have athletes that have some formal education to be able to adapt to ever changing sports philosophy. Administrators therefore have a duty to ensure that athletes meet certain education standard.

In a situation where the same is not available, efforts should be made to provide them with such tools as they pursue their sporting careers. An athlete who is well informed has more chances of performing well at competitions than those with little or no information at all due to low or no education at all. It must be noted that modern sport requires proper understanding of Nutritional needs, Sports Medicine and Injuries. All these have direct impact on an athlete performance during competitions.

According to Timothy G. Lohman, Scott B. Going and Bradley R. Herrin in their book "The Young Athlete" Regular body composition assessments are critical to detecting potentially harmful changes in body weight and composition as a result of inappropriate nutritional practices, excessive training, or illness, and to relate body composition status to performance. Body mass and body composition are surely factors in competitive success. However, the multitude of factors involved make it difficult to give precise recommendations, although descriptive studies provide ranges for various

components that are associated with success in different sports (Going & Mullins2000).

Body composition is also clearly associated with disease risks. There have been numerous reports of an association between excess fat and elevated risk factors for cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes in children and adolescent. Given that body fatness tends to track into adulthood (Srinivasan et al. 1996; Gordon-Larsen et al. 2004), adolescents with excess body fat are at increased risk for adult obesity and its attendant co morbidities. While active children are likely protected, and presumably few would be overweight or obese, there are some sports where higher mass in an advantage and it is important to monitor body fat to be sure children and adolescents stay within a healthy range.

You will therefore note from the foregoing that education plays very vital role for athletes to perform well at competitions since they are able to access very important information before during and after every event. The same applies to both coaches and administrators.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in three stages. In the first stage, former coaches and athletes were requested to provide their perceptions and attitudes towards the sports system they were exposed to. Their responses were expected to provide a list of strengths and weaknesses of the sport system in the country.

The former coaches were particularly requested to give their perceptions around the talent identification process as one key factor that has a direct influence on the performance of athletes at international competitions.

In the second stage, besides being asked to identify the current problems hampering the sports system in Malawi, the current coaches and athletes were also asked to indicate the ways in which the problems existing in the system can be eliminated and how the strengths of the system can further be improved.

In the third stage, current administrators were interviewed and asked how they would address the problems identified by former and current coaches and athletes.

3.1 Stage One

The main purpose of the first stage of the investigation was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the sport system, as experienced by the former coaches and former athletes. While I requested former coaches and athletes

to participate in the study, they were willing but only in the form of responding to a questionnaire. That is, they were unwilling to participate in focus group interviews.

Respondents

Accordingly, I managed to identify 15 former athletes and 8 former coaches - making a total of 23, to respond to the questionnaires at this stage. Most of the respondents were interviewed face to face, whilst a few of the respondents had to fill in their responses from the questionnaires that were sent to them. Of these I managed to interview all the 15 former athletes and only 6 former coaches.

The biggest challenge experienced here was that most of the former athletes and coaches are difficult to locate as most of them are completely detached from the sport industry and thus their whereabouts remains unknown, hence the small number that I managed to reach for interviews.

Instrument

The questionnaire contained open-ended questions.

3.2 Stage Two

As the purpose of the second stage of the investigation was designed to study the current problems hampering the sports system in Malawi and also to get the perceptions of the current coaches and athletes on the possible ways in which the problems existing in the system can be eliminated and how the strengths of the system can further be improved.

Respondents

Accordingly, I managed to identify thirty (30) current athletes and sixteen (16) current coaches making a total of 46, to respond to the questionnaires at this stage. This study involved about fifteen (15) associations; for Olympic sports federation and one (1) for Commonwealth sports federation - which was randomly selected. Currently there are sixteen (16) Olympic associations and three (3) Commonwealth associations that are registered with the Malawi Olympic Committee (MOC).

In terms of the age of the athletes which was interviewed, this study was however mainly target those that are 15 years and over as they are believed (in this case) to be mature enough to be able to fully understand the weaknesses and strengths of their respective sport systems.

Instrument

The questionnaire contained open –ended questions.

3.3 Stage Three

The main focus at this stage is to look into the plans (both future and current) towards addressing the problems and also to further build up on the strengths as identified by the coaches and athletes in stages one and two. The target group at this stage is the sports administrators at different levels starting from government down to the Malawi Council of Sports, the Malawi Olympic Committee and the national sports federation. In a way this stage will also

attempt to investigate the common and personal interests of sports administrators in Malawi as one factor that has a direct influence on the performance of Malawian athletes at international level.

Respondents

At this stage I intend to interview about 30 sports administrators using an open ended questionnaire that shall be sent to the identified respondents through e-mail. Given a chance, I would prefer to conduct a face to face interview with some of the administrators within my proximity, i.e. mainly those from the national federations from within Lilongwe. I'll also take a chance to interview those from the education system as well as they also play a major role in talent Identification and development young athletes.

Instrument

An open ended questionnaire, has been designed from the responses in stages one as in **Appendix**.

3.4 Challenges

During the course of the study, there were several challenges that were experienced. Listed below are the major challenges met:

- Athletes and coaches were not willing to be interviewed through a focus group discussion but rather through a questionnaire.

- Former coaches and athletes were difficult to locate as most of them are no longer in the limelight. This made the study to be a little more expensive.

Furthermore this resulted into the questionnaires being administered to only those athletes, coaches and administrators based in major cities, i.e. Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu.

5.0 RESULTS

The results of the study are presented stage by stage.

5.1 Stage One

The following is a summary of the responses of former athletes and former coaches. To each question asked of them. All the former athletes that were interviewed at this stage had either retired from competitive sport or had completely retired from the sport by the end of the year 2011.

5.1.1 Former Athletes

5.1.1.1 Age at which athletes start pursuing excellence in sport

The ages in which former athletes started to pursuing excellence in sport ranged from 13 years to 23 years of age with the average (mean) being 15 years. According to the findings of the study 57.1% start pursuing excellence when at 15 years or younger where as 28.6% start to excel between 16 years and 20 years of age. Only about 14.3% were found to have started pursuing excellence after the age of 20.

5.1.1.2 Circumstances that pushed the former athletes into high level sport

There are various reasons that push athletes into high level sport. Out of the reasons given, 40% were that the athletes were encouraged by their own love and great passion for the sport whilst hard working had a 20% outcome. One other factor as revealed in the study is that most athletes, mainly in football, athletics and Netball were encouraged by the high level of recognition

accorded to the top performers / idols at both national and international level and also the countless opportunities thereof. A former table tennis player commented that "besides my love for the sport, I was motivated by the top performers at school and at national level.

Listening and following coaches instructions; superior superior performances at the school level; encouragement and sponsorship from various sports organizations including the MOC and MNCS were some of the other common reasons that push athletes to high level sport.

5.1.1.3 Obstacles on the way to high level sportsmanship

The study revealed that there are two major obstacles that are commonly experienced by Malawian athletes on the way to high level performances. The first one is that Officials are fond of giving favours to other athletes based on relationships and other personal interests. The second one is that coaches /officials want to be praised for them to accord some kind of favours to an athlete. i.e. some undeserving athletes who are good at praising coaches tend to be favoured in so many ways at the expense other skilled, talented and well behaved athletes.

Inadequate sports equipments & facilities is the other main obstacle for athletes on the way to high level sports. The other hindrances include: lack of funding and inadequate exposure to international competitions.

5.1.1.4 Factors motivating athletes to overcome barriers on the way to High Level Sport

Athletes in Malawi, as revealed by the study are motivated by several factors in an effort to overcome obstacles on the way to high level sports. The biggest motivating factor, as indicated by 40% of the respondents is the encouragement and motivation from coaches and other sports administrators. Twenty percent of the former athletes were motivated by excellence at school level. By implication, amongst other factors, all students need to be actively engaged in sports for a country to produce competitive athletes at international level.

According to the results of the study, the other factors to overcome barriers were found to be: hard working in training; love of the sport; motivation from parents; ignoring the negative attitudes from coaches and officials and friendships with all other athletes.

5.1.1.5 Strengths within the system that propels athletes to keep going in high level sport

The results of the study indicated that good relations with the coach and the prizes athletes get after excelling in a competition are the two main factors that makes athletes to keep going in high level sport. The other factors were: the availability of training material, special and organised training sessions for good players; participation at the international games; good organisation and the ability for money to support athlete training and upkeep.

5.1.1.6 Weaknesses of the sporting system in Malawi as revealed by the former athletes.

Favouritism from coaches and administrators; Inadequate training materials; and poor funding / motivation came out as the biggest weaknesses within the sporting system in Malawi, with each of the weaknesses coming from 25% of all responses, which accumulates to 75%. "I dropped out from high level sports because I could not cope with the high degree of favouritism from both coaches and officials," complained one former athlete.

The other weaknesses included: poor preparation for the major games; no periodic medical check-ups for athletes; and poor / ineffective sports programs at school level.

5.1.1.7 Unique opportunities to those who want to excel in sport in Malawi

In Malawi there aren't many opportunities offered to those who want to excel in sports, as sports in Malawi is more regarded as leisure and not business as it is supposed to be. According to former athletes, scholarships to study and train abroad for a lucky few are one of the notable opportunities offered. Training and upkeep allowances for athletes and high performance trainings are also some of the notable opportunities offered.

Other opportunities as highlighted include: a conducive political environment for athletes created by authorities and also the prizes won from various competitions.

5.1.1.8 The dangers or drawbacks that block the progress of Malawians in high level sport

According to the retired athletes interviewed, there are many drawbacks that block the progress of Malawians in high level sport. 25% think that poor management and resistance to change is the biggest amongst all other drawbacks, seconded by poor funding towards sports (20%) then lack of proper infrastructure (16%). One other big drawback is that sport is not considered as a business but leisure and this has the bearing on the low levels of sponsorship awarded to the sporting industry.

The other drawbacks highlighted include: biases of coaches and administrators (10.5%); jealousy amongst athletes; poor treatment and support to injured athletes; high poverty levels; poor funding towards sports and Lack of qualified coaches and managers.

5.1.2 Former Coaches

5.1.2.1 What is Talent Identification?

The former coaches defined talent identification as the process of selecting potentially talented and skilled athletes for further technical training, with the aim of improving performance to a highest level. Almost all former coaches interviewed were able to define Talent Identification as such, and by implication this means that all coaches have a basic idea of what talent identification is all about.

According to www.thefreelibrary.com a basic definition of talent identification (TI) encompasses the recognition of a natural endowment or ability of superior

quality. But, identifying a talented athlete within sport is multifaceted and complex. Talent in sport is identified by characteristics that are at least partially genetically determined, affected by numerous environmental conditions and currently difficult to determine accurately.

5.1.2.2 Who identifies the athletes?

All the former coaches managed to recognize Coaches and the Technical Personnel as the people responsible for talent identification. Only about 10% went further to identify Teachers, Scouts and Agents as well. This only implies that teachers, scouts and agents are not primarily involved in issues to do with Talent identification.

5.1.2.3 Criteria for identifying athletes

The coaches managed to give the following as the criteria they used to employ when conducting talent identification exercises:

Physical appearance: physical appearance such as height, body structure, weight and strength are widely used attributes for identifying talent in young athletes in Malawi, depending on the nature and type of sport.

Physical ability: factors such as body movement, endurance and speed are key when trying to identify athletes.

Performance: good game performance is one other factor that is key to talent identification. One of the interviewed coaches boldly said that, "I always wanted athletes who are able to display basic and unique skills during matches."

Skill:The athlete's level of skill has to be competitive as a sign that the athlete will deliver at competitions.

Game Results: every coach always want to have athletes who will produce good results at competitions.

Intelligence: "The athlete has to be intelligent in applying the skills trained," said one of the coaches whilst stressing that intelligence is a very important attribute that determines the strength of an athlete.

5.1.2.4 What happens when an athlete is identified?

Through the findings, it was discovered that after talented athletes are identified, they are put on an organised training programme in order to further develop their talent. All the coaches were able to at least say this, however this indicates that the coaches had a clear understanding of what talent identification is all about. Only 34% of the coaches went on to single out that the identified athletes are also exposed to more competitions both at national and at international level.

5.1.2.5 Systems of Talent Identification employed

Competitions and Well Structured Training Sessions are the two main systems of identifying athletes that the former coaches had knowledge about. The most commonly used method is through regional and national competitions as 82% of coaches were able to identify this, whereas only 35%

mentioned about organised training sessions. However it was surprising that some of the coaches (about 14%) did not give clear responses regarding the systems of talent identification, i.e. they were giving answers like "there are many systems" without giving more clarity.//

Competitions

Advantage: the main advantage is that coaches are able to identify more athletes during Competitions as the patronage is high because of the incentives like trophies and the prize money.

Disadvantages: Disadvantage is difficult to manage them (identified athletes). If some of the identified athletes are from the rural areas, the problem of housing them in the towns where the training takes place becomes a problem. Even if the coaches are willing to host them, the parents often are reluctant to send their children away. The other disadvantage is that competitions are more expensive to organise as they require a lot of money, publicity and they need a lot of time.

Organised Training Sessions

Advantages: Training sessions are less expensive as compared to competitions in that less people are needed to run and organise a training session. The other thing is that only serious athletes and those with passion take part unlike in competitions where everyone wants to take part.

Disadvantages: The disadvantages of identifying talent through organised training sessions include the following: Few individuals benefit; there are no

incentive to woo in other potentially talented athletes; and that a coach is not able to see the performance of athletes in competitions.

5.2 Stage Two

5.2.1 Current Athletes

5.2.1.1 Average age of Athletes

Malawian athletes that are currently pursuing high level sports are distributed evenly from eleven (11) years and above. Athletics and Table Tennis registered more young athletes where as Body Building has older athletes i.e. over 25 years old.

5.2.1.2 Age at which athletes start pursuing excellence in sport

One major factor that determines the highest possible level an athlete can reach is the age at which that particular athlete started pursuing excellence in sports. The study revealed that most athletes (about 38%) in Malawi start pursuing excellence in sports at ages between 11 to 15 years old. Only about 12% of the athletes start pursuing excellence at over 20 years of age. However this shows a slight improvement from the 14.3% as revealed by the former athletes in the same study.

5.2.1.3 Participation in international Games

The current level of exposure for Malawian athletes to international games was found to be very low. Only about 29% of the current athletes indicated to have been exposed to international competitions, out of which 60% managed to win at least a match at this level. When probed further, it was found that 50% of the athletes do not go beyond the first round at international competitions and only about 8% were found to have gone as far as the bronze level and beyond.

5.2.1.4 Circumstances that push athletes to high level sports

A greater number of athletes (40%) said that the major factor that pushed them in to high level sports is to become role models. Other factors revealed by the study includes: desire to become a professional player and for personal body physique.

None of the athletes indicated to be interested in trying to earn a living from pursuing high level sports. This could possibly be one of the reasons why the performance of most Malawian athletes is not as competitive at the international level. This also confirms that sport in Malawi is regarded as leisure not as a business.

However, like in many other developing countries, in Malawi there are a limited number of athletes from selected sporting disciplines that are able to earn a living solely from doing sports. Football has the highest number of full time athletes in Malawi followed by netball. Other sporting disciplines with full time athletes, though very few, are Boxing and Athletics.

5.2.1.5 Favoritism from coaches and administrators

The retired athletes singled out favouritism from coaches and administrators as one of the major factors hampering the development of sports in the country. However this has proven to be a thing of the past as most of the athletes interviewed i.e. about 62% refused to have ever been favoured by their coaches and administrators, citing hard working as the factor that earns them selection in to senior teams.

Here, the results of the study were a bit surprising as even the few athletes that accepted to have been favoured by their coaches, also cited hard working

and exceptional skill as the reasons for being favoured. Furthermore 44% of the athletes interviewed confessed to have once been demotivated because continued favouritism of coaches and administrators to other undeserving athletes. All in all this simply implies that the level of favouritism based on relationships and other personal interests is low amongst the sporting circles in Malawi. This is very encouraging with regards to sports development in the country but there is still need for improvement in order to completely do away with such kind of obstacles.

5.2.1.6 Obstacles on the way to high level sports

There are several obstacles that Malawian athletes face on the way to high level sports. The major obstacle as revealed by the study is the lack of proper infrastructure and inadequacy of standard training materials. The second largest obstacle was found to be lack of sponsorship and competitions. The other obstacles mentioned were: favouritism of coaches on selection of athletes; injuries; and insufficient rewards from competitions.

Seventy percent of the athletes indicated that commitment and hard work are the main factors that motivate them to overcome such obstacles. Prizes and medals from competitions and encouragement from coaches are the other motivating factors as revealed by the study.

5.2.1.7 Encouragement from Parents

Motivation from parents and guardians plays a bigger role in promoting athletes to high level sports. The results of the study have revealed that currently in Malawi most parents and guardians encourage their wards to pursue excellence in sports. About 62% of the athletes accepted to have been

encouraged by their parents to work hard in sports in order to take it to greater heights.

However some athletes (38%) confessed to have been discouraged by their parents from taking sports seriously as the parents perceives sports as not important at all. The other reason as revealed from the study is that such parents prioritize school as the only thing that can make their wards survive in future.

5.2.1.8 Strengths and Weaknesses of the sporting system in Malawi.

The findings of the study revealed more weaknesses in the sporting system in Malawi than the strengths that are there.

Weaknesses (from the findings of the study) in the sporting system in Malawi in descending order from the major weakness to the most minor one:

- Poor funding from government towards sporting activities
- Lack of sponsorship from the corporate world
- Insufficient rewards from competitions, i.e. prizes are very low, hence not motivating
- Limited number of competitions available within a particular year

Strengths (from the findings of the study) within the sporting system in Malawi in descending order from the major to the most minor strength:

- Athletes have free access to training facilities
- Most coaches and officials are dedicated and inspiring
- Competitions are available (though few) for athletes to compete.

5.2.1.9 What athletes think the coach should do to improve the situation in Malawi

The athletes interviewed managed to outline several factors that they believe can turn things around for Malawi to start performing well at international level. Topping the list is the issue of favoritism - the athletes foresees a brighter future for Malawi sports should the coaches and administrators completely iron out this problem and always select athletes on merit. The other factors include: the need for coaches and other sports administrators to continue working hard; coaches and officials should be open to athletes; and that the sports administrators always prioritise development of sports other than other personal interests.

5.2.1.10 What athletes think the government should do to improve the situation in Malawi

Athletes currently pursuing high level sports in Malawi have mixed perceptions over what the government should do to in order to address the issue of poor performance in sports at international level. The athletes outlined the need to improve infrastructure and for the government to increase funding towards sports as the main measures to address the situation with 33% and 25% of the responses respectively. It was also noted that the government should (a) insure athletes in all national teams; (b) expose more athletes at international level; (c) provide jobs for opportunities to athletes; (d) give game bonuses to motivate athletes; and (e) put in place deliberate policies to promote young athletes.

5.2.2 Current Coaches

5.2.2.1 Current Coaches' perceptions on Talent Identification

Talent Identification is one other very important area that determines the future and skill level and performance of athletes at any level. In this regard it is however very crucial for coaches to have adequate knowledge on the best approaches to identifying athletes. This study attempted to investigate the extent to which current coaches understand the concept of talent identification.

The results of the study shows that about 90% of the coaches have a good understanding of what talent identification is all about, i.e. they were able to mention statements relating to selecting potentially talented and skilled athletes for further technical training. However, responses of about 10% of the coaches had explanations that indicated low level of understanding of talent identification. For example one of the coaches (with low understanding of talent identification) interviewed defined talent identification as a process of exposing athletes so that they identify a sporting discipline that suites them best.

On who identifies athletes, all the coaches were able to mention that coaches are the ones responsible. Only about 15% of the athletes went further to also mention sports teachers at primary and secondary schools.

5.2.2.2 Criteria for identifying athletes

The coaches managed to outline several factors that they employ when identifying athletes. Performance in competitions and discipline were found out to be the main factors, each getting 28% of the responses. The other

factors mentioned were skill, physical appearance, and game results. This also indicates a good understanding of the concept.

5.2.2.3 Systems of Talent Identification

All the coaches were able to mention that athletes are identified through competitions and during training. However the coaches differed when it came to choosing the best method of talent identification. Most coaches (62%) thinks the potential of an athlete is better seen during organised training sessions where as the rest (38%) are of the view that the best system of talent identification is through competitions.

Those of the view that training sessions are the best gave the following as advantages: that training sessions involves few participants and as such they require less people to manage; and that only those athletes with passion for the sport do take part. However those who think that athletes are better identified through competitions mainly considers the fact that athlete endurance is better judged during competitions than during training.

Furthermore the results of the study revealed another shocking fact that some of the coaches indeed have very low understanding of what talent identification is all about, i.e. 12% of the coaches were not even able to differentiate between talent identification and selection of athletes for international competitions.

5.2.2.4 Selection of athletes for international games

Most athletes interviewed in the study complained that there is too much favoritism amongst the coaches when it comes to selecting athletes for international competitions. The coaches' response contradicts this fact as all

the coaches indicated that they only select the best performers to represent the nation at international games. Possibly, this could be so because the coaches could have felt a bit too guilty to accept to practicing favouritism. The other possible reason could be that besides performance the coaches also indicated to have considered other factors such as physical fitness, ability to communicate in English and discipline.

5.2.2.5 The Coaches perceptions on why Malawian athletes perform poorly at international competitions

The coaches interviewed, who are also currently responsible for coaching various national teams in Malawi (for Olympic and Commonwealth Sports) perceive the following and the reasons behind the poor performance of Malawian athletes at international games:

NB: the factors have been listed starting with the one that was mentioned the most to the one that was least mentioned.

- Poor infrastructure and training facilities;
- Poor preparations i.e. athletes are not engaged on full time basis, they are only engaged in serious training a few days before international competitions;
- Poor planning i.e. there are no clear short term and long term plans amongst national federations in Malawi;
- Inadequate government funding towards sports and inadequate sponsorship from the corporate world;
- Poor nutrition of athletes; and
- Low levels of skill amongst athletes.

5.2.2.6 What needs to be done for Malawi to start producing world class athletes: the current Coaches' perspective

The results of the study revealed the following as measures that need to be followed in order to ensure improvement of Malawian athletes to match the world standards:

- There has to be adequate preparations for athletes;
- Government should allocate adequate funding towards sports;
- Coaches have to be trained well enough to allow them to effectively train athletes;
- There has to be a high level of accountability and transparency in sports programmes;
- The Government needs to provide good training facilities for athletes;
- There is a need to change peoples' perception so that sports should be taken as a business not leisure; and that
- There is need for international training camps in order to maximize the concentration of athletes;

5.2.2.7 The capacity of Coaches in Malawi

According to the findings of the study, the minimum qualification of coaches taking care of various national teams in Malawi is level 1 and the maximum being Diploma. However 50% of the coaches confessed that the training they received is not enough to effectively coach a national team where as 40% thinks they are well qualified. 10% of the coaches were not sure whether they are well qualified or not.

Furthermore, in terms of sports administration, the results of the study revealed that only about 37% of the coaches have taken sports administration

courses by the time of interview. This however is very worrisome mainly considering the fact that most (almost all) coaches in Malawi also assume various administrative roles as well.

When probed further, all the coaches complained that they don't get adequate financial and material support to enable them exhaust all their efforts towards athlete development and training.

5.3 Stage Three

5.3.1 Demographicsof Sports Administrators

5.3.1.1 Age

Eighty six percent of the respondents are above 35 years of age while 7% are between 26 and 30 years of age and the remaining 7% are between 30 and 35 years of age. This however indicates that most of the sports administrators in Malawi do have significant experience of working from within their sporting discipline.

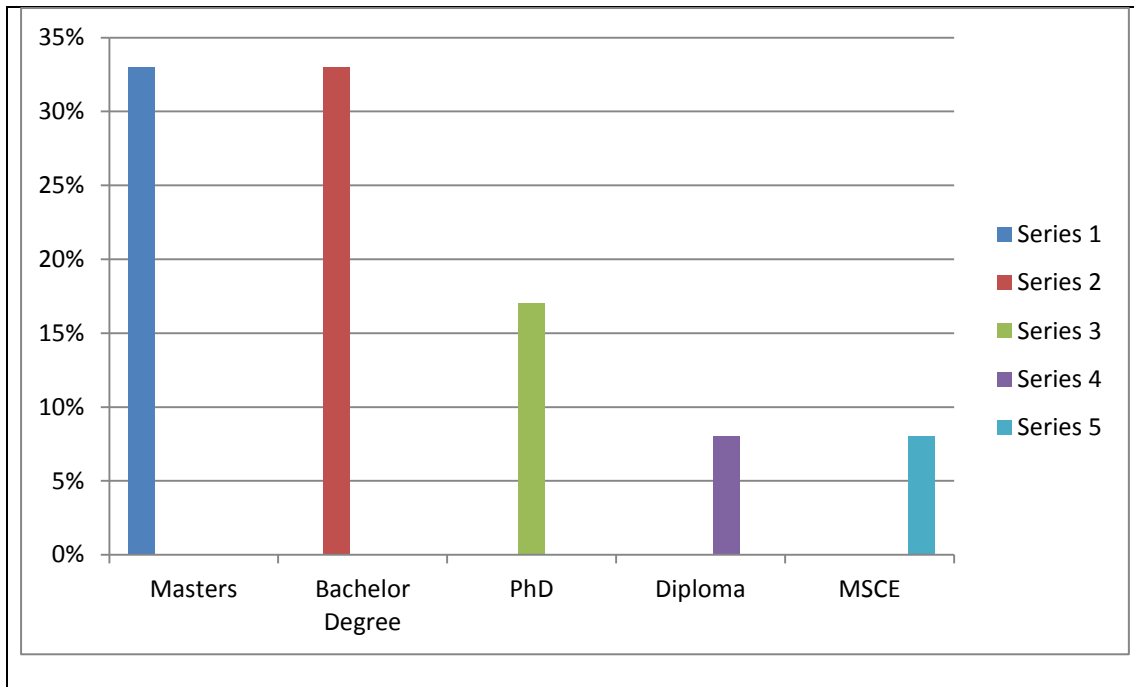
5.3.1.2 Sex

Females are underrepresented in the sports sector in Malawi. Only 7% of the administrators are female while the remaining 93% are male.

5.3.1.3 Academic Qualification

Seventeen percent of the administrators hold a PHD Degree as their highest academic qualification. Thirty three percent respectively hold masters and Bachelor degree level of qualification. The remaining 8% respectively have a MSCE (Malawi School Certificate of Education) and a diploma as their highest level of academic qualification. This is however very encouraging for the development of sports in Malawi.

Level of Academic Qualification



5.3.2 Respondents' Position in the Sports Industry

Twenty eight percent of the respondents indicated that they are sitting Presidents of different sports associations in Malawi. The positions as held by the respondents are as follows:

- Administrators
- Football Instructor and Assessor
- Chief Executive Officers
- Director of Sports (Ministry of Sports)
- Senior Sports Officers
- Presidents
- Secretary Generals
- Technical Directors
- Vice Chairmen

5.3.3 Courses in Coaching or Sports Administration

From the study, 86% of the administrators had attended courses in sports administration or coaching while the remaining 14% had not. The levels of the training varied amongst the administrators. The following are the levels:

- Advanced certificate in sports management
- Advanced diploma in sports management
- Advanced level
- C license coaching course and FIFA regional administration instructor
- Club, national and international
- Coaching instructor
- Diploma
- Grade A in netball coaching and umpiring; and advanced sports administration
- International Level
- Level two coaching certificate
- National sports level and international coaching and administration.

This is another promising indicator for sound sports development in Malawi, as the administrators and coaches seem to have some kind of notable qualifications to allow them produce competitive athletes.

5.3.3 Problems That Limit Performance

There are many problems that limit performance of Malawian athletes at international level. These problems range from administration to player related problems.

I. Administration Problems

Most of the sports administrators interviewed in the study indicated that poor preparation by sports organisations pose a great challenge to participation of Malawian athletes at international level. The other administrative challenges include:

- Poor athlete selection procedures
- Poor planning by various national sport governing bodies.
- Low level of accountability and transparency.

II. Athlete Related

- Inadequate exposure to international games
- Lack of proper skills and physical development
- Poor diet

III. General

- Inadequate funding towards sports, both from government and the private sector
- Poor standards of sports infrastructure and equipment
- Lack of grassroots policy to identify and nurture athletes
- The general perception of the general public of taking sports as leisure not business.

5.3.4 Efforts /Future Plans to Address the Problems as Identified

The sports administrators interviewed have the following efforts / future plans towards uplifting the standards of sports in Malawi:

- To convince Government to increase funding towards sports
- To lobby the private sector to seriously consider sponsoring sports

- To lobby Government and the private sector to construct sports facilities
- To continue with skills and game development initiatives
- Developing the capacity of sports associations in sports management, i.e. to ensure good planning and sound management in sports
- To lobby for the introduction of Sports Degree programmes in Malawian Universities
- To play more international friendly games
- Initiation of different sports activities and programmes to assist in the promotion and development of sports, and also to promote sports in schools.
- Establishment of networks and links with other co-operating countries and stakeholders for the development of sports.
- Introduction of sports practice as a business and a profession.
- To continue volunteering as sports administrators

6.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

- Coaches and administrators are qualified enough to take Malawi sports to competitive levels at international level. However most coaches need further technical training to further their capacity of shaping and handling top level athletes.
- There is low level of transparency and accountability within sporting bodies in Malawi
- Coaches and athletes in Malawi need serious / adequate material and financial support
- Funding towards sports is low in Malawi. This is one factor that is limiting the performance of athletes at international games

6.2 Recommendations

- Sports Development in school has to be seriously reviewed and improved
- There is need to convince the general public to take sports as a business not leisure.
- The Malawi Government should increase funding towards sports
- Sports governing bodies have to be well monitored to ensure transparency and accountability
- There is need to understand how each of the existing functions related to the other, and what impact these relationships generated.
- Team Preparation has to be seriously improved.
- There is need to have Talent Identification Programme

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8.0 APPENDIX

Appendix1: Interview Questions to former athletes about Talent Identification

1. At what age you start pursuing excellence in your sport?
2. Describe the circumstances, people, and other factors that pushed you into high level sport.
3. What are the obstacles you found in your efforts to become a high-level sportsperson?
4. What factors (people, circumstances, organizations, etc) that motivated you to overcome those barriers and continue in high level sport?
5. What were the strengths of the system that kept you going in high level sport?
6. What were the weaknesses of that system?
7. From you experiences, what unique opportunities Malawi as a whole and its sport system offers to those who want to excel in sport?
8. What do you think are the dangers or drawbacks in Malawi and its sport system that would block the progress of Malawians in high level sport?
9. Do you have any concluding remarks?

Appendix 2: Questions interview to former coaches about Talent Identification

1. What does Talent Identification mean?
2. Who identifies the athletes
3. What criteria do you employ to identify an athlete?

4. Can you explain each of the criteria you mentioned above in Q3
5. What happens when an athlete is identified?
6. How many systems of Talent Identification do you know?
7. Please explain each systems with its advantages and disadvantages
8. Do you have any concluding remarks?

Appendix 3: Stage 2 Questionnaire - Current Athletes

1. What kind of sport do you play professionally?

2. Age : a) <10 b)11 - 15 c) 16 - 20 d) 20 -25 e) >25

3. At what age did you start pursuing excellence in sports?

a) < 10 yrs b)11 - 15 yrs c) 16 - 20 yrs d) >20yrs

4. Have you ever participated in any international games?

a) Yes b) No

5. If yes, did you manage to win any games? a) Yes b)No

6. If yes, what is the highest level that you have ever reached at international games?

7. What are the circumstances that pushed you into high-level sports?

8. Have you ever been favoured by a Coach or an Administrator before?

a) yes b) No

9. If yes, why do you think you were favoured?

10. If the answer is no, why do you think you were not favoured?

11. Have you ever been de-motivated because the coach / administrators were favouring other athletes too much? a) Yes b) No

12. What are the other obstacles that you experienced on the way to high level sports?
13. What are the factors that motivated you to overcome the obstacles to high-level sport?
14. Were you encouraged in any way by your parents to make it into high-level sports?
a) Yes b) No
15. If not, what do you think were the reasons?
16. In your view, what do you think are the strengths within the sporting system that propels athletes to keep going in high level sport?
17. What are the major weaknesses within the sporting system in Malawi that threatens the future and performance of athletes?
18. As an athlete are you satisfied with the financial, moral, and material support you get from your coaches and administrators?
a) Yes b) No
19. If not, what do you think should be done?
20. What do you think are the unique opportunities to those who want to excel in sport in Malawi?
21. What are the dangers or drawbacks that block the progress Malawians in high level sport?
22. In general what is your advice to coaches and administrators towards improvement of sports in Malawi?
23. Finally, what do you think the Government should do / continue doing to ensure that the performance of athletes at international games is improved?
24. Are you satisfied with the support you are given by the authorities

within sports? Explain your answer.

Appendix 4: Stage 2 questionnaire - Current Coaches

1. What is Talent Identification?
2. Who identifies athletes?
3. What criteria / factors do you consider when identifying athletes?
4. What happens when an athlete is identified? What steps are taken to further develop the athletes so identified?
5. What are the systems of talent identification do you know?
6. Out of the systems mentioned, which one do you consider the best and why?
7. Do you think there is a difference between talent identification and athletes' selection for international games?
a) Yes B) No
8. If Yes, please explain the difference
9. Yourself as a coach, what factors do you employ when selecting athletes for international games?
10. In your opinion, what do you think are the reasons why most Malawian athletes do not perform well at international level?
11. In your own opinion, what do you think needs to be done for Malawi to produce world class athletes in the near future?
12. To what level have you been trained as a coach?
13. Honestly, do you think that is enough to coach a national team?
a) Yes b) No
14. In your sporting discipline, what is the highest level of training required for a coach?

15. Have you taken any course on Sports Administration?
a) Yes b) No
16. As a coach do you think you have enough expertise and experience to produce world class athletes?
17. What is your opinion on the capacity of your fellow coaches, both from within your sporting discipline and other sports in Malawi?
18. As a coach, do you think you receive enough material and financial support from your administrators in order for you to produce good results at international level?
a) Yes b) No

End of Questionnaire,

-----*Thank you for taking part, May God Bless you*-----

Appendix 5: Stage 3 Questionnaires - Administrators

1. Age? a) 15 - 20 b) 21 -25 c) 26 - 30 d) 30 - 35 e) Over 35
2. Sex? a) Male b) Female
3. Position in the sporting industry:

4. What do you think are the main problems that limit performance of athletes at international level?

5. What has the Government done so far in an effort to address these problems?

6. Yourself as a senior sports administrator, what measures do you currently implement in an attempt to address the problems you mentioned earlier?

7. What are your future plans for addressing the problems mentioned?

8. What do you think the Government should do in order to address the problems you mentioned earlier?

9. What is your highest academic qualification?

10. Have you participated in any coaching or sports administration courses?

a) Yes b) No

11. If Yes, to what level? _____

12. Have you ever been involved in the selection of athletes for international games?

If so, what was your role in the selection process?

13. What do you do to ensure that only the best athletes are selected for International games?

14. Do you think our coaches in Malawi have enough capacity to produce world class athletes in Malawi? a) yes b) No

15. Do you have any specific policy targeted at exposing young athletes to international competitions? a) yes b) No

16. Are your coaches engaged on full time or part time basis?

17. Are the coaches on a Monthly Salary or are only paid during preparations and participation in international competitions?

18. Do you have any contracts with coaches?

19. What kind of relationship do you have with schools in terms of athlete development?

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE

-----Thank you so much for taking part-----

Appendix 6: Questionnaire cover letter

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Mrs. Naomie Golden Mnenula Chinatu, Administration Manager of the Malawi Olympic Committee is conducting a research on Performance of Malawian Athletes.

You have been identified as one of the major stakeholders and you are kindly requested to take part in the exercise by answering the attached questionnaire. It is expected that the outcomes from the research could be of great use to you/your Sport Federation.

We would like to assure you that all information acquired from this questionnaire will be treated confidentiality.

We would appreciate if you could return this to us within seven (7) days.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Yours faithfully,

Helene Mpinganjira
Secretary General
Malawi Olympic Committee