

# **Investigating the current and ideal situations of the talent identification process in Iranian football from the point of view of Iranian instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC)**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study was to investigate the current and ideal situations of the process of talent identification in Iranian football from the point of view of Iranian instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC). This research was a descriptive-analytical study; in data collection phase, Doostdari et al. (2012)'s questionnaire was used, whose face validity was confirmed by experts of Physical Education and Sports Science. The reliability of questionnaire was estimated through the use of Cronbach's alpha method (0.91). This study involved 122 participants of Iranian instructors of Asian Football Confederation who were selected based on stratified random sampling method. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the variables and inferential statistics (Chi-square) were used to test the hypotheses of the study at significant level ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). The results of Chi-square test related to the point of view of Iranian instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC) showed that the grass-roots scientific method was the best way to identify football players (0.001), less than 10 years old were the best ages for talent identification (0.001), Football Federation was revealed to be the most important organization in talent identification (0.002), clubs were shown to be the most important institution in developing talents (0.001), trained scouts of Football Federation were demonstrated to be the best and most appropriate group for talent identification (0.001), and being referred by the football academy coaches was shown to be the best way to attract talented football players in Iran (0.001). It was also found that there was a huge difference between the current and ideal situations of the process of talent identification in Iranian football from the point of view of Iranian instructors of Asian Football Confederation. Hence, it is recommended that the policy makers of talent identification for Iranian football provide a comprehensive, clear and systematic model of talent identification and development processes for the clubs and football teams, so that the talent identification process helps nurturing football talents more efficiently.

**Keywords:** current situation, talent finding, ideal situation, instructors (AFC)

## **Introduction**

In today's modern world, the success of sports fields and related federations depends on using the new scientific findings in the area of physical education and sports. The coaches try not to identify champions in each field randomly, or based on their own interest or relations. But, they try to do this by applying scientific methods and defining and prioritize different indices. Because in this way, in addition to saving time and money, more success in achieving peak athletic performance can be achieved (Imanzadeh, 2007). The process of finding talented athletes to participate in organized programs is one of the most important issues in contemporary sports (Brown, 2001). In fact, identification of talents, determining their amount, and recognition of individual differences in a variety of talents are the main tasks of coaches and consultants, and the difference in performance of athletes who acquire the same skill, but in practice, show different performances, is because of the difference in their talents (Bompa, 1999).

Regnier et al. (1993) argue that scouting process allows us to anticipate the performance by measuring physical, physiological, psychological and social characteristics as well as technical capabilities (cited in Williams and Reilly, 2000). Finding the most effective and widely used talent identification method is very complicated, and has long been a concern for researchers. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, many of the eastern European countries noticed the weakness of the traditional talent identification programs, and tried to develop methods which were supported by scientific theories and evidence. The result of this new approach was that 80 percent of Bulgaria's 1976 Olympic medalists were those who were chosen through the scientific method. Athletes of East Germany and Romania showed similar results in 1972 and 1976 Olympics. Therefore, everyone came to believe that these successes were due to their scientific selection processes in the late 1960s. Talent identification programs were also considered in western, North American and Commonwealth countries in the 1980s (Bompa, 1999). In fact, talent identification programs have long been existed in most countries and have been followed by different methods and patterns. The most complicated talent identification program was designed and followed in the East Bloc countries, especially the former East Germany and the former Soviet Union. The way, which they used for selecting athletes, was far from a perfect program, but their regular procedure of talent identification, which included a close coordination with schools and their physical education programs, was better than the other countries. Their talent identification programs were systematic. Provincial units actively looked for a talent in a regular basis and through methods based on measurement and evaluation and competition. While traditionally West Bloc countries relied on the person-centered models, in which there were some structures for talents to show themselves and be nurtured. These structure-centered models were based on the idea of sports for all, and normally discovered talents as a direct result of competitive performance. Specifically United States of America has offered a good example of this model. This country has so great power and depth in sprint and hurdling that competitive selection in these fields serves well and is effective. However, in less common fields, competitive selection shows poorer results (Gharakhanloo, 2002).

The tendency toward talent identification in sports has also increased in many countries in recent years (Abbott and Collins, 2002). For instance, in 1994, Australia launched a Talent Search Scheme for identifying and nurturing talented people in a specific time frame and for the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. 2000 Sydney Olympics was the most successful Olympic Games for Australia, and in these games Australia achieved great success in sports. However, it seems that many programs focus on early identification of talent, often in order to choose the best young players, who will likely become major players, while the process of training and nurturing is very important, and has somehow been neglected. Australia has a national scheme of talent identification, and this plan is implemented with the help of Australian Sports Institute, Academy of sports and sports organizations of different cities and regions of the country (Russell et al, 2005).

Investigation the records of talent identification show that, despite diversity, talent identification systems in the world have some commonalities as well. In talent identification, age is always an important factor with regard to the type of sport. Obviously, without paying attention to starting and doing sports ages, talent identification will not be complete, although all aspects are taken into consideration, and no good result will be gained. Paying attention to

the starting age, specialization and reaching the peak performance are crucial factors in a scientific and exact talent identification process. Knowing the starting age of general and specific training is of great importance in talent identification process. Surprisingly, the month of birth of different champions was studied, and the researchers noticed that more people who were born in the months before the beginning of the racing season had become champions, and some of them, in the year in which they were selected, had more opportunities of 8 to 12 months to gain experience and skills in comparison with others. For example, in Belgium, Football Federation has selected the first of January as the talent identification month (Helsen, 2000). Another common point is paying attention to education. Most of the researchers believe that, without cooperation of education system, the chance of success of talent identification systems would be minimized (Jaroor, 1982). Jaroor in 1982 in an article titled "Is talent identification essential?" stated that, at the moment, talent identification in many countries for the coaches meant using a simply applicable field test, and the main problem was that non-flexible system of education in most countries could not nurture the potential talents even if they were identified. While the success of the former Soviet Union in talent identification was due to the fact that the education system worked perfectly cooperatively through the special sports schools, and believed in a huge talent identification scheme for 8 to 10 year-olds, preliminary selection stage for 10 to 12 year-olds, and selection of the sport field for 13 to 14 year-olds based on tests, and appropriate skills models developed for each sports field (Jaroor, 1982). Thompson and Bevis also in a study in 1985, and Reverdon in 1988 confirmed the idea of Jaroor about talent identification, and state that the efficiency of the education system, its coordination with the Soviet sports system, along with the modern three-staged plan, the use of experienced coaches of physical education in private schools and implementing modern systematic models of performing skills of each sport field were the keys to success (Thompson and Bevis, 1985, Reverdon, 1988). Other commonalities are that most scholars believe that determination and identification of criteria for talent identification in sports is essential. Another common point in talent identification is the existence of a talent identification system for the success in sports (Alijani, 2001).

Iranian society is very rich in human talents, and there is an appropriate context in this regard. But, apparently, the root of the problem must be sought in the lack of proper planning and process that probably this problem has deeper roots in the lack of knowledge and ignorance about the real and main problems. In Iran, engaging young people in particular sports fields is mostly based on traditions, aspirations and individual interests, and depends on the popularity of the sport, parental pressure, specialty of school teachers and the availability of the intended sports facilities (National Sports Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran, 2005). By using scientific research to identify the criteria that elite athletes have at their disposal and a favorable environment for nurturing these criteria, it can be possible that a greater number of high-level athletes would be achieved. At the present time, in scientific and exact talent identification programs, in addition to considering numerous and important factors, field and laboratory tests are employed by experts (Bloomfield, 1995).

On the other hand, proper management of talent identification process in sports saves time, energy and costs and makes talented people want to do the intended sports field. Additionally, those who do not have enough talent do not do those sports, and will try other

fields in which they have more probability of success, so that in the future, they will not become frustrated because of the psychological causes of failure. Unfortunately, in our country, talent identification with new methods has received little attention in many different fields. Football is not an exception either, the sport which has a lot of fans all over the country these days. Meanwhile, the importance of football in the world is such that the number of FIFA member countries (207) is more than the number of states members of the United Nations (192). In most countries like Iran, Football Federation is the largest sports federation. This sport has allocated the most TV broadcast to itself and it has the highest paid players (Albert and Koning, 2008). In recent decades, Football has become a multibillion-dollar industry, and due to Football Federation statistics, there are more than 200 million active soccer players around the world (Halicioglu, 2006).

Unfortunately, in many Iranian clubs, it is observed that talented players are identified, and despite the huge costs of a club, recruited at basic levels. By passing the age limit for playing in basic level teams, they are put away, and the club does not have any plan to raise a player in whom it has invested for years. This leads to the waste of fund of the club. One of the reasons for the slow progress of the Iranian football and insufficient attention of clubs to the basic levels to invest in them, can be the issue of inattention to talent development, because they do not do talent identification and development processes completely, and this will result in the fact that paying attention to talent identification and development does not have economical justification for the clubs. According to the recent research, the minimum age at which a player can reach peak performance in football is age 22. However, in Iran, football players at the age of 21, at which they need attention and support to reach peak performance in football, are put away by the clubs, and many of them will get away from the football world. It means that, they set aside the players in the nearest time to their peak level of performance. This has led to a lot of damages to national football and the funds of the clubs. By understanding the talent identification and development processes, clubs can use them as an opportunity and improve their economic condition (Doostdari, 2012). In our country, based on the contents of Sports Comprehensive Plan, there is no integrated, comprehensive and operational plan for talent identification. In addition, regarding talent identification, coordination among institutions in charge of athletics is weak. Nurturing athletes in our country does not have a structured and unified system; different organizations deal with it separately and there is no specific organization which deals with identifying talents seriously. Clubs, Sports Bureau, Sports Federations and Associations, Ministry of Sports and Ministry of Education are organizations active in the field of talent identification in the country. But these activities, in each of the aforementioned organizations, have different procedures and there is not any comprehensive plan or system to be used as the basis for arrangements and actions of these organizations in regard to talent identification (Farahani and Abdovi Baftani, 2004). Failure of basic level teams in international competitions, instability in the structure of talent identification process of football, lack of proper and regular procedures to identifying and developing talents in football clubs, lack of nurturing basic players to make them professional athletes and factors such as these, are among the factors that form the necessity and importance of this research. Iranian Football Federation and the National Academy of Football, The provincial and local football bureau, clubs and academies all over the country, Physical Education bureau of Ministry of Education and other organizations related to talent

identification in football can benefit from the results of this study. Therefore, the researcher aimed at determining the current situation and ideal situation of talent identification in Iran from the point of view of Iranian instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC), and comparing them.

### **Research Methodology**

This research was a descriptive – analytical study, for which the survey and field data were gathered. The instrument was the questionnaire of the process of talent identification in football prepared by Doostdari et al. (2012). This questionnaire had two parts: the first part was the general questions part, which contained personal information of the instructors like their age, qualification and field of study, the age range of their activity, work experience, their highest level of coaching and talent identification experience. The second part was the specialized questions, which included the current and ideal situations of talent identification process in football, which was designed as a pack. To determine the face validity of the questionnaire, the opinions of 15 instructors and experts in the fields of Physical Education and Sport Science were asked, and they were finally confirmed it. Furthermore, the reliability of the questionnaire was measured through the use of Cronbach's alpha (0.91). Participants of this study were all the Iranian instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC), the number of who according to the report of Football Federation Education Committee was 144. Due to the limitedness and scattering of population, the sample, consisted of 136 Iranian instructors of Asian Football Confederation who had participated in a course of increasing knowledge held by Iranian national football academy, was selected randomly and answered the questionnaires. From the whole sample of 136, 122 questionnaires were collected and the data was analyzed by SPSS software version 19. In order to describe the gathered data, descriptive statistics was used, and to test the hypotheses of the study, chi-square test was applied.

### **Findings of the study**

Findings of descriptive statistics showed that the age range of the participants was between 32 and 71 with the mean of 47.36. From the total of 122 people who answered the questionnaire, 3 persons (2.5 %) had diploma, 3 persons (2.5%) had associate degree, 45 persons (36.9%) had bachelor's degree, 50 persons (41%) had master's degree, and 21 persons (17.2%) had P.H.D. 78 persons (63.9%) of the participants graduated in Physical Education field and 44 persons (36.1%) were graduated in a field other than Physical Education. 89 persons (73%) of the participants worked in adult age range, and the rest (33 persons, 27%) worked in the basic level age range. 15 of them (12.3%) had less than 5 years of coaching experience, 9 persons (7.4%) had 5 to 10 years, 37 of them (30.3%) had 10 to 15 years, 29 persons (23.8%) had 15 to 20 years and 32 persons (26.2%) had more than 20 years of coaching experience. The highest level of coaching experienced by the participants was the province level for 25 persons (20.5%), the third league for 13 persons (10.7%), the second league for 15 persons (12.3%), the first league for 30 persons (24.6%), the premier league for 21 persons (17.2%) and national team for only 18 persons (14.8%). Also, 107 of the participants had the experience of working as a scout in the process of talent identification, and just 15 persons did not have the experience of working as a scout in the process of talent

identification. Among these 107, who had the experience of being scout, 40 persons (32.8%) had less than 5 years of talent identification experience, 29 persons (23.8%) had 5 to 10 years, 21 persons (17.2%) had 10 to 15 years, 13 persons (10.66%) had 15 to 20 years and 10 persons (8.2%) had more than 20 years of talent identification experience in different ways.

From the total of 122 Asian Football Confederation instructors of this study, 30 persons (24.6%) said that in their club, there was a talent identification program, and in the club of the 92 (75.4%) of them there was no talent identification program. 116 of the participants (95.1%) stated that preparing a talent identification scheme for football was essential in Iran, and only 6 persons (4.9%) said it was not necessary. 24 persons (19.7%) said that there existed a talent identification scheme in Iran, and 98 persons (80.3%) claimed that there was a lack of talent identification scheme in Iranian football. 24 persons (19.7%) stated that talent identification process and talent development in Iran received enough attention, and 98 persons (80.3%) believed that talent identification process and talent development in Iran did not receive enough attention. 49 persons (40.2%) said that the process of talent identification and talent development in their club received necessary attention, and 73 persons (59.8%) believed that the process of talent identification and talent development in their club did not receive necessary attention. 116 persons (95.1%) knew the new and scientific methods of talent identification completely, and 6 persons (4.9%) did not know about the new and scientific talent identification methods. 60 persons (49.2%) used performance testing and 62 persons (50.8%) used holding competitions as the football talent identification methods in their clubs. And none of them utilized scientific and grass roots methods for talent identification in their clubs.

60 persons (49.2%) introduced grass roots method and 62 persons (50.8%) introduced scientific methods as the most appropriate methods of talent identification in football, and none of them believed that testing performance and holding competitions were the most appropriate method of talent identification. 62 persons (50.8%) chose scientific method, 54 persons (44.3%) chose grass roots method and 6 persons (4.9%) chose holding competitions as the most appropriate method of talent identification in football in Iranian clubs, and none of them chose testing performance as the most appropriate method of talent identification. About how to attract players in their club, 39 of them (31.96%) mentioned the players' own visit to the club, 3 persons (2.45%) mentioned being referred by selected individuals, 24 persons (19.67%) mentioned using players' recruitment call, 12 persons (9.83%) mentioned being referred by school teachers, football academy trainers and Youth and Sports Department teachers, and 44 persons (36%) mentioned a combination of all the above mentioned factors as the way of attracting and recruiting players. 6 of them (4.9%) chose the players' visit to the club, 15 persons (12.3%) chose being referred by selected individuals, 9 of them (7.37%) chose using players' recruitment call, and 92 persons (75.4%) chose being referred by school teachers, football academy trainers and Youth and Sports Department teachers as the most appropriate way of attracting football players. 74 persons (60.7%) said that they were satisfied with the way of attracting and recruiting players in their club, and 48 persons (39.3%) mentioned that they were not satisfied with the way of recruiting players in their club. 118 persons (60.7%) of them noted that there was a football academy in their club and 4 persons (3.3%) mentioned that there was not any football academy in their club. Among 118 instructors whose club had football academy, 8 persons (6.7%) mentioned that

the football academy was for the age range of under 12, 18 persons (15.2%) mentioned that the football academy was for the age range of under 13, and 92 persons (77.9%) said that there was a football academy for all age ranges in their club. Maximum frequency of 86 (70.5%) was for the beginning the talent identification process at the age of under 10. The maximum frequency of the responsible organization, which must play the most important role in football talent identification, belonged to Ministry of Education with 45.9% and the minimum frequency belonged to Ministry of Sport and Youth with 3.3%. About the most appropriate football talent identification group, Football Federation trained scout has the maximum frequency with the frequency of 86%, and the parents had the minimum frequency with the frequency of 0%. About the talent identification groups who played the main role in Iranian football, club coaches had the maximum frequency (90.2%), and parents and sports teachers had the minimum frequency (0%).

About the organization which must have the crucial role in talent nurturing, clubs had the maximum frequency with the frequency of 82.9% and the minimum frequency belonged to Ministry of Education with 2.4%. About the organization which had the crucial role in talent development in Iran, Football Federation had the maximum frequency (54%) and Ministry of Education had the minimum frequency (2.5%).

Table (1), frequencies of the best method to identify players

Potential player's identifying method	percentage	frequency	Expected frequency	The remaining difference
Competitions	4.91	6	40.7	-34.7
Scientific methods	50.81	62	40.7	21.3
Grass Roots	44.26	54	40.7	13.3
Total	100	122	122	-

Table (2), chi-square test of choosing the best method of identifying football players

$\chi^2$	df	sig
45.11	2	0.001

Tables (1) and (2) showed that according to the amount of  $\chi^2$  (45.11) and the obtained level of significance (0.001), from the point of view of Iranian Instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC), the best method to identify football players, was the scientific method. After that, Grass Roots method with little difference to the scientific method was in the second level.

Table (3), frequencies of identifying the best age to start talent identification in football

Age to start talent identification	percentage	frequency	Expected frequency	The remaining difference
Under 10	70.49	86	61	25
Under 12	29.51	36	61	-25
Total	100	122	122	-

Table (4), chi-square test of identifying the best age to start talent identification in football

$\chi^2$	df	sig
20.49	1	0.001

Tables (3) and (4) showed that according to the amount of  $\chi^2$  (20.49) and the obtained level of significance (0.001), from the point of view of Iranian Instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC), the best age to start talent identification in football was 10.

Table (5), frequencies of organizations that should have the most important role in talent identification

Organization	percentage	frequency	Expected frequency	The remaining difference
Football Federation	45.90	56	40.7	15.3
Ministry of Education	34.42	42	40.7	1.3
Ministry of Sports and Youth	19.67	24	40.7	-16.7
total	100	122	122	-

Table (6), chi-square test of the role of Ministry of Education in talent identification

$\chi^2$	df	sig
12.56	2	0.002

Tables (5) and (6) showed that according to the amount of  $\chi^2$  (12.56) and the obtained level of significance (0.002), from the point of view of Iranian Instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC), the most important organization that should have the main role in talent identification, was the Football Federation. After that, Ministry of Education with a slight difference to the Football Federation was in the second place.

Table (7), frequencies of the analysis of the best and most appropriate group for talent identification

Groups	percentage	frequency	Expected frequency	The remaining difference
Sports teachers	4.91	6	40.7	-34.7
Club coaches	4.91	6	40.7	-34.7
Trained scouts of Football Federation	90.16	110	40.7	69.3
Total	100	122	122	-

Table (8), chi-square test of the best and most appropriate group for talent identification

$\chi^2$	df	sig
177.31	2	0.001

Tables (7) and (8) showed that according to the amount of  $\chi^2$  (177.31) and the obtained level of significance (0.001), from the point of view of Iranian Instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC), the best and most appropriate group for talent identification, was the trained scouts of the Football Federation.

Table (9), frequencies of the organizations that should have the most important role in talents development

organization	percentage	frequency	Expected frequency	The remaining difference
Football Federation	9.83	12	61	-49
clubs	90.17	110	61	49
Total	100	122	122	-

Table (10), chi-square test of the most important organization in talents development

$\chi^2$	df	sig
78.72	1	0.001

Tables (9) and (10) showed that according to the amount of  $\chi^2$  (78.72) and the obtained level of significance (0.001), from the point of view of Iranian Instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC), the most important organization in football talents development was the clubs.

Table (11), frequencies of the best method of attracting talented football players

Recruiting method	percentage	frequency	Expected frequency	The remaining difference
Player's visit to the club	4.91	6	40.7	-34.7
Being referred by the Football Academy coaches	75.41	92	40.7	51.3
Being referred by selected individuals	19.28	24	40.7	-16.7
Total	100	122	122	-

Table (12), chi-square test of the best method of attracting talented football players

$\chi^2$	df	sig
101.18	2	0.001

Tables (11) and (12) showed that according to the amount of  $\chi^2$  (101.18) and the obtained level of significance (0.001), from the point of view of Iranian Instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC), best method of attracting talented football players was being referred by the Football Academy coaches.

## Discussion

The current situation of talent identification process in Iranian football from the point of view of Iranian Instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC) is displayed in table (13).

Table (13), the current situation of talent identification process in Iranian football from the point of view of Iranian Instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC)

The subject matter	The current situation in Iran
a regular program to identify talented players	Does not exist
talent identification scheme	Does not exist
Paying attention to talent identification process and nurturing football talents	Do not do
talent identification methods	Performance Testing and holding competitions are used
Football players' attracting methods	Paying a visit to the clubs, recruitment call, and being referred by school teachers and football academies trainers
The existence of football academy in their club	There is
The existence of different age ranges in their club's football academy	All the age ranges of under 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14
Playing a pivotal role in talent identification process	Club's coaches
Playing a pivotal role in talents development	Football federation, Ministry of Sports and Youth, clubs, Ministry of Education

Investigating the current situation of talent identification process in Iranian football from the point of view of Iranian Instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC) showed that:

- At the moment, there is no systematic program to identify talented players. The lack of a program to identify talented players in football will greatly harm talent identification process. The fact that sports organizations are program-centered, can prevent a waste of

time and energy and increase the probability of achieving organizational aims. Non-participation of many clubs in talent identification and development, not finding the maximum number of talented players from basic level teams to participate in the national team camps by Iranian Football Federation, performing based on their own tastes by coaches and football talent identification officials and lack of coordination among responsible organizations in talent identification can demonstrate and confirm that in Iranian football, there is no appropriate program or procedure of talent identification.

- Like many other sports, talent identification scheme does not exist in the Iranian football structure; this shows the weakness of scouting and identifying talented football players programs in the country. Models and schemes of talent identification specify the route for organizations and administrators at each and every level, and show that at each stage of talent identification process which organizations and individuals under which circumstances should act in which way. It is now common in many countries, and each relies on a certain model and their talent identification programs are built on the basis of these models. According to the theoretical background of this study, talent identification is not a fleeting matter; rather requires spending lots of time and energy. Therefore, for promoting the culture of talent identification and relying on its models and schemes, knowledge and awareness should be placed at the disposal of individuals and society.
- In addition, in Iran, talent identification process and developing football talents do not receive enough attention. This neglect was also observed in many clubs of the country. Due to the lack of a systematic program for identifying talented players and a scouting scheme in Iranian football structure, it is obvious that authorities just glance at the talent identification matter in Iran. One of the reasons why clubs pay less attention to talent identification and development can be the tendency toward gaining quick results, and satisfying the managers and officials of the team. This superficiality could have consequences for the country's football structure.
- Furthermore, at the moment in Iran, performance testing and holding competitions are used in order to identify talents in football. These methods may be appropriate procedures for national and club teams at the senior level, but at the basic levels consisting of players with a lower age, cannot be used solely as appropriate and effective methods; because they are not able to evaluate the features of basic level football players at low ages clearly and comprehensively and could not examine all the aspects of these players who haven't learned many of the football game's conditions.
- In Iran, players are attracted to the clubs through paying a visit to the club, recruitment call of the club, and being referred by school teachers and football academy trainers. The negative point of this finding is that, this issue shows the lack of a permanent and effective procedure for attracting and recruiting new players in clubs and football teams in the country. The positive side can be the cooperation of different sectors in order to attract new players to the clubs and football teams.
- In 96.7% of the clubs where the instructors work, there was a football academy, and 77.9% of these academies were working in all age ranges of under 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14. This represents desirable conditions of the clubs in paying attention to training football skills by keeping football academies active. Apart from paying attention to the growth of football

academies quantitatively and in numbers, clubs and officials should pay attention to the qualitative growth of these academies. Although the aim of Football Federation in basic level football (Grass Roots), to comply with International Football Federation (FIFA) and Asian Football Confederation (AFC), is the maximum presence of the players on the football fields, the content and quality of this process should get special attention.

- At the moment, in Iran, clubs' coaches play the main role (90.2%) in talent identification process. The coaches, who have technical and academic knowledge in the field of talent identification at various levels, certainly, cannot play an identical role based on a scientific program in talent identification. Although among the coaches, there are many individuals whose scientific and practical capabilities can be really precious and helpful.
- In addition, the results showed that from the point of view of Iranian instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC) of the study, right now, the Football Federation (54%), Ministry of Sports and Youth (28.6%), clubs (14.7%), and Ministry of Education (2.5%) play a role in talent identification process. Based on the theoretical background of this study, talent development in football means creating programs so that talented players could reach peak performance in football. In fact, no organization is responsible for nurturing the football talents solely, and the issue that various institutes do different parts of the talent identification process leads in the creation of separate routs that finally brings the lack of concentration and the lack of efficiency in the concept of talent development.

Due to all these issues, Iranian instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC) believed that establishing a talent identification scheme is necessary for Iranian football. In fact, if we want to follow the development and growth path in Iranian football faster and more systematically and with more favorable qualitative and quantitative results, we should conform to the plans and practical schemes. Achieving this goal can have positive results for Football Federation, National Academy, and National Olympic Committee at macro level, and for the provincial and each city's football bureau, and amateur and professional clubs at micro level, in the country. Not gaining results in national basic level teams, the absence of our national team in Olympics for decades, the lack of organized backup players for national and clubs' teams and many more reasons indicate the necessity of developing talent identification scheme for Iranian football. According to the results, 95.1% of Iranian instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC) acknowledged that they were completely familiar with the scientific and modern methods of talent identification. Based on this finding, it is clear that there are suitable grounds for scientific talent identification all over the country and the knowledge and experience of these people can be used for scientific talent identification. Also, as these instructor are responsible for training the coaches at different levels in our country, necessary training can be given to the coaches who are getting started their job, so that they will be able to use scientific and modern talent identification methods more and with more awareness.

The ideal condition of talent identification process in Iran from the point of view of Iranian Instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC) is presented in table (14).

Table (14), the ideal condition of talent identification process in Iran from the point of view of Iranian Instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC)

Examined process	Ideal conditions in Iranian football
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talent identification method in football	Scientific methods and the issue of basic level football (Grass Roots)
The players' attracting method	Being referred by school teachers and football academy trainers
The best age to begin talent identification process	Under 10 years old
The best and most appropriate group for talent identification	Trained scout of Football Federation
The organization which must play the main role in talent identification	Football Federation and Ministry of Education
The organization which must play the main role in talent development	clubs

Investigating the ideal condition of talent identification process in Iran from the point of view of Iranian Instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC) showed:

- Based on the point of view of Iranian Instructors of Asian Football Confederation scientific methods (50.8%) and Grass Roots method (49.2%) were the most appropriate methods of talent identification to identify talents in football. Although the investigation of the current situation showed that in Iran performance testing and holding competitions were used more than other methods. So, based on comparing the current situation and the ideal situation in Iran from the point of view of Iranian Instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC) there was a huge difference among the employed methods. Whereas in many developed countries including the countries surveyed in this study such as Germany, England, Australia, and the United States, mostly, scientific methods are employed to identify talented football players.
- Being referred by school teachers and football academy trainers were obtained as the best methods for attracting football players to clubs in ideal situation, from the point of view of Iranian Instructors of Asian Football Confederation (AFC). Investigation the current situation of the methods used in attracting players to the clubs showed that going directly to the club, recruiting players' announcement, and being referred by school teachers and football academy trainers were the different ways of attracting players to the clubs. Therefore, by comparing the current and ideal situations of the methods of attracting players to the clubs, and due to the huge differences between the current and ideal situation of talent identification process in Iranian football, the way of attracting football players to the clubs is closer to the ideal condition.
- In examining the best age to begin the process of talent identification in ideal conditions, under 10 years old was considered as the best age. In investigating the age ranges of football academies, it was found that in many clubs in Iran, at the moment, training football skills begins at the ages under 10. Therefore, the current and ideal situations are very close together. Although training football skills and the beginning age of training can be different from the principled talent identification starting age, if they exist, they can generally be considered as the basis for the scientific talent identification.
- As the best and most appropriate group for talent identification, in ideal situation, trained scouts of Football Federation were selected. Investigating the current conditions determined that club's coaches played the main role in football talent identification process. By

comparing the current and ideal situations, it was noticed that there was a great difference between current and ideal situations of the best and most appropriate talent identification group. Coaches, who have technical and academic knowledge in the field of talent identification at various levels, definitely cannot play a role in talent identification issues in the same way and based on a scientific and specific program. But when the Football Federation held courses for selected coaches to raise their awareness in terms of talent identification, this certainly could make greater contribution to the quality of talent identification, and eventually, the country would be placed in a better position in terms of discovered talents.

- The ideal situation of talent identification showed that the Football Federation and Ministry of Education were the organizations which should play the main role in talent identification, and the clubs were the organizations which should play the main role in talent development. Investigating the current situation showed that, at the moment, clubs played the main role in talent identification, and the Football Federation, Ministry of Sports and Youth, clubs, and Ministry of Education were the organizations that play the main role in nurturing talents. By comparing the current and the ideal situations, it became clear that there was a great difference between the current and the ideal situations of talent identification and development processes. In fact, talent identification is the process and procedures that are done in order to identify talents in football; but developing the talents happens after talent identification. In many Iranian clubs, it is observed, that they find talented players, and despite the great costs of a club, they recruit those players in the basic level teams. By the end of age range of the players for playing in the basic teams, they are put away, and the clubs do not have any plan for nurturing a player in whom they have invested for many years, this leads to the waste of funds in clubs. One of the reasons for the slow progress of the Iranian Football and the lack of sufficient attention to basic teams and investing in them by the clubs could be the lack of attention to talent identification, because they do not do the whole process of talent identification and development completely, and this leads to the fact that paying attention to talent identification and development do not have economic justification for clubs. According to theoretical background of the study, the minimum age at which a player can reach his peak performance is the age of 22, while in Iran football players are set aside by their clubs at the age of 21, an age at which they need attention and support to reach their peak performance, and many of them get away from the world of football. In other words, they set aside the players at the nearest moment to reach peak performance; this has damaged the national football and the fund of our country's clubs.

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