

**(PP) IN SEARCH OF THE SCANDINAVIAN COACH
A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF COACHES IN FOUR SWEDISH SPORTS
USING A DEVELOPED LSS-QUESTIONNAIRE**

Per Göran Fahlström
Växjö University, SWEDEN

Introduction

Swedish and Scandinavian leaders and coaches are often described as modern, humanistic, and delegative. They are very often also assumed to be different from leaders and coaches from other parts of the world. Sometimes, the concept *Scandinavian Management* has been used. In Scandinavia as well as in the rest of the world, a consultant market is growing. These consultants are engaged as advisors and educators in the sport field as well as in business in general. But the research-based knowledge is very limited in the Swedish and Scandinavian context. With a few exceptions (for example Eriksson 1987, 1989 and Isberg, 1991, 1992), Swedish leadership and coach research in the field of sport is almost non-existing. Eriksson made quantitative studies describing the Swedish coaches as a group while Isberg studied coaches who got fired.

In an international context, the leadership/coach behaviour research is much more developed. Professor Chelladurai and his associates, have created the Leadership Scale of Sport, LSS, with the object to clarify different coach variables. (Chelladurai & Sale, 1980). The LSS Questionnaire consists of forty items that can be used for different purposes. It is possible to study coaches' actual behaviour described by coaches and athletes and it is also possible to study athletes' preferences concerning coaching behaviour. The items lead to five different variables: *Training and Instruction, Democratic Behaviour, Autocratic Behaviour, Social Support* and *Positive Feedback/Rewarding*. These variables are developed from the Path Goal Theory (House, 1971) and Porter and Lawler's Motivational Model (Porter and Lawler, 1968).

The Research Project *Swedish Coaches* (Svenska idrottsledare) started last year and consists of three different parts:

1. An descriptive study focusing on actual coach/leadership behaviour using the LSS – *Leadership Scale of Sports*.
2. A descriptive study focusing on athlete's preferences concerning coach/leadership behaviour using the LSS.
3. An qualitative study focusing on successful Swedish coaches on an international level.

The project is studying four sports with Swedish athletes on high international level: Athletics, Golf, Skiing, Tennis, Floorball, Football (Soccer), Handball and Ice Hockey.

The purpose of this abstract, a study included in the first part of the Research Project, is to study the actual behaviour of coaches in four Swedish team sports: Floorball, Football (Soccer), Handball and Ice Hockey. By using a well known questionnaire, it will be possible to compare Swedish coaches to international samples of coaches from many different sports. Furthermore, a long time purpose is to create a database with Swedish coaches that will make it possible both to make different long

time studies and correlations studies. The LSS-Questionnaire has been developed by adding a number of background questions.

Methods

In this study The LSS-Questionnaire including 40 items is extended with 22 background questions. These background questions, such as age, sex, educational background, sport experience, coaching background, coaching education, coaching experience etc, make it possible to make different kind of analysis. The extended LSS-Questionnaire was sent to 600 coaches from each sport using the web-based questionnaire Query & Report, in total 2.400 Questionnaires. The answering rate was 73%.

Results and Discussion

The results show similar coaching style among coaches from Football (Soccer), Floorball and Handball. They score high on *social support* and *positive feedback/reward* and show more *democratic* than *autocratic behaviour*. The Ice Hockey coaches, however, show different patterns. They score higher on *autocratic behaviour* and *training and instruction* than the rest of the coaches. The Swedish Ice Hockey culture is very traditional and almost all coaches are former successful players on high level. This could very well serve as one explanation to the different results. The results also indicate that the coaches, in all four sports, with their own athlete experiences from higher levels tend to show more autocratic and training/instruction behaviour. Once again their own playing background seem to influence the coaching style among the Swedish coaches.

At the presentation, cultural explanations will be discussed. The coaches own playing experience and similar educational background could lead to a common, certainly accepted but very traditional way of guiding the team and solving problems. It can easily lead to conformity and a unified view of coaching.

References

- Chelladurai, P, & Sale, S.D. (1980). Dimensions of leader behaviour in sports scale, *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 2 (1), 34-45.
- Eriksson, S. (1987). *Tränaren*. (The Coach) Idrottspedagogiska rapporter nr 25. Gothenburg: Göteborgs universitet.
- Eriksson, S. (1989). *Idrottsledarna: igår - idag - imorgon?* (Coaches: yesterday – today – tomorrow) Idrottspedagogiska rapporter nr 33. Gothenburg: Göteborgs universitet.
- House, R.J. (1971). A path-goal theory of leader effectiveness, *Administrative Science Quarterly* 16, 321-338.
- Isberg, L. (1991). *Framgångsrik eller misslyckad. En studie av en elittränares situation*. (Success or failure. A Study on the situation of top coaches) Uppsala: Uppsala universitet.
- Isberg, L. (1992). *Varför slutade det så illa. En analys av elittränares arbetsvillkor*. (Why did it end up so bad? An analysis of the situation of the coaches) Uppsala: Uppsala universitet.
- Porter, L.W., & Lawler, E. E. (1968). *Managerial Attitudes and Performance*. Homewood, IL: Irwin.

E- mail: pergoran.fahlstrom@vxu.se