

TALENT IDENTIFICATION AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT IN SWEDISH SPORTS

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the talents.

Further more they describe the talents as unique, they state that the talents develop differently and have different strengths and weaknesses. Despite this they try to create general talent models, talent stairs. The risk is that they find the athletes that fit in to the model instead of the athletes who are potential winners.

The discussion also focuses on the 10.000 hours principle (Ericsson 1993) and stresses that more and developed research is needed to establish a better understanding of the significant factors of the talent development process.

Abstract

Talent identification and talent development strategies are frequently discussed especially during the period after the closing of each Olympic event. One very frequently used definition of talent states that talent is an unusually high level of demonstrated ability, achievement or skill in some special field of study or interest (Bloom 1985). This definition indicates that the inborn skills and abilities are not enough. It has been argued that regardless of the talent ten years – or 10.000 hours - of intensive training is needed to win international competitions (Ericsson et al. 1993). Talent is in fact often regarded as less important than rational, goal-oriented long-term training (Ericsson, Prietula & Cokely 2007). Still in the pursuit of success and medals the Sport Federations and scouts are intensively searching "high and low" for the ultimate talents.

This project focused on the Talent Programs within the Swedish Sport Federations and had three main research questions:

- How do the Federations define the concept talent?
- How do they organize the talent identification?
- How are their talent development programs organized?

Interviews were conducted with National Team Executives from a sample of Swedish Sport Federations, selected in collaboration with the Swedish Sports Confederation.

The results show that the federations believe that the innate talent is not so important. The talent is developed through long-term exercise that requires great desire and ambition. This is strengthened and preserved better if you are in a stimulating and ambitious environment. They also believe that early competition results don't guarantee for later success.

The results point to some paradoxes. Although the federations believe that talent is not so important, and although they say the early results do not guarantee later success they put a lot of effort and resources on finding

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