
MANAGERIAL PREPAREDNESS IN PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL: Key stakeholders' perspective.

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AIM OF ABSTRACT

This abstract aims to investigate perspectives held by key stakeholders (i.e., CEO's, Chairmen, LMA's) in the recruitment, selection, training, development and support of professional Football League Managers in England and Norway. It is expected that the research will provide rich qualitative data that can be used by organisations to better train and develop managers/head coaches for such roles within professional football.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A handful of studies have explored different aspects of role related challenges faced by the professional football manager (Carter, 2006; Gilmore, 2009; Isberg, 2001; Kelly, 2008; Morrow, 2014). Due to limitations in how we should understand the role, further explorations have been called for by researchers to offer a more accurate description of what the present football management landscape actually entails (Morrow, 2014) and which skills are needed to operate effectively (Chadwick, 2013). Although the role related research focusing on managers' perceptions has recently increased, the experiences of stakeholders on the topic seems relatively untouched (Noblet & Gifford, 2002). Yet, a few studies indicate that managerial perceptions are not always in line with the key stakeholders' involved (Kelly & Harris, 2010; Kristiansen, Murphy, & Roberts, 2012), and that relationships might change over time (Konter, 2012; Nesti, 2010).

METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA ANALYSIS

The current study was based on the main findings from a preliminary study

conducted by the current authors, of managers' perceptions of their role and function in English and Norwegian professional leagues (N=13). A qualitative position was adopted, aiming to explore experiences that embody meanings and cultural understandings that operate in "the real world" from a stakeholder perspective (Hoepfl, 1997) related to the role of a professional Football Manager. A series of deductively developed individual semi-structured interviews was conducted with a sample of internal (i.e., within a professional football club structure) and external (i.e., to the club) stakeholders, regarding employment, training, support and dismissals of managers from the English and Norwegian professional leagues. Data was recorded, transcribed verbatim and exposed to notions of content analysis. Results from the initial study and existing research were used to compare findings and identify possible synergies.

RESULTS, PRELIMINARY RESULTS, DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The reader should be aware that in the time of writing, additional key stakeholder interviews are still to be carried out. As such, the initial results are based on the data obtained so far, and will most likely change and become more detailed throughout the next few months.

Main (preliminary) findings - internal stakeholders:

- Notions of managerial profile and conformity seemed more important for clubs when signing a new Manager than the content of the contract in general (Kelly & Harris, 2010).
- Self-directed learning was preferred as the main strategy for managerial development by Norwegian CEO's (Nelson, Cushion, & Potrac, 2006).
- Leadership skills were perceived as needed to deal with both the first team, the support team and to understand and involve in the overall club context (Freeman, 1995).
- A basic economical understanding seems beneficial in terms of understand and involve in strategies regarding player development, budgets, wage structures and player sales (Morrow, 2014).
- CEO's and Chairmen viewed managers as "traveling CV-riders".
- Pressure from media and fans did in some cases put influence on decisions that indirectly affect the conditions for the Manager.

Main (preliminary) findings - external stakeholders:

- A more thorough pedagogical training of head coaches was perceived as needed to improve the quality of coaching and decision making (Kuper & Szymanski, 2014).
- Managerial experience and cultural knowledge was perceived crucial for effective top management (Isberg, 2001).
- Leadership skills among managers was perceived as successively more important along with increasing personnel (support staff) responsibilities.

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