

# Conditions For Effective Support Of Professional Football Managers: Support Staff's Perspective.

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## Aim of the research

This abstract aims to investigate perspectives held by members of support staff (e.g. assistant coach, head of performance, physiotherapist) in their 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 to improve the precision of managerial training and work regarding first team sporting operations.

## Theoretical background

Due to the rapid changing environment and the increasing size and professionalization of football clubs, further explorations have been called for by researchers to offer a more accurate description of what the present football management landscape actually entails and which skills are needed to operate effectively (Morrow, 2014). Although the general management literature has been concerned about the manager-follower relationship for decades (e.g. Mintzberg, 1973), the culture of mistrust towards academia embedded in the football culture (Kelly, 2008) and its rapidly changing nature (Lonsdale, 2004) argues that this industry is different to others. Therefore, an understanding based on its key individuals' experiences is needed to enable precise guidelines for effective management within this particular context (Gammelsæter, 2013).

## Methodology, research design and data analysis

The current authors conducted the study as a part of a more extensive exploration of the manager's role and working conditions in English and Norwegian professional leagues. A series of deductively developed individual semi-structured interviews of key support staff members (N = 10) was conducted in that respect. Data was recorded, transcribed verbatim and exposed to notions of content analysis.

## Results and discussions

Results seemed quite congruent with previous findings regarding the managers' own views on the importance of having a clear managerial philosophy. The support staff members argued that if the manager lack clarity or consistency, they would not be able to respond with precision. The managerial message, the ability to share it, and flexibility to discuss with everyone involved across professions and perspectives, seemed to constitute the cornerstones for wellbeing and sporting development. Given the rapid changing and fast developing nature of modern day professional football, the need for managers to facilitate learning environments and allow support staff to utilize their strengths should not be underestimated. Therefore, the capacity of the manager should ideally match the capacity of the support staff involved, and stay in tune with the contextual demands. Given that the participants in the current study were often highly educated and that the ability to for the manger keep track with developments seems important to stay consistent, a mistrust towards academia is likely to represent a disadvantage when it comes to inter-collegiate communication and personal updates. Ideally, the overall responsible for the formal managerial education should customize their requirements for newer generations of professional managers to better the meet the current and future needs. As such, an in depth examination of the UEFA Pro managerial training programme would be timely in order to target managerial basics that make journeymen suited for modern day football demands.

## References

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