

# The Significant Competence of Coaches and Managers in Developmental Environments in Sports

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## Aim

The overall aim of this ongoing project was to study how the pathways from early sport involvement to international elite level is described by Swedish national team athletes. This paper focuses on the sport club environment with the purpose to gain further understanding of (1) how successful environments empirically can be described from an ecological talent development perspective and (2) the importance of sport coaches and their pedagogical content knowledge sport as well as the sport managers and their impact on the development of the sporting environment.

## Theoretical Background

Talent development research has mainly focused on individual development, coach-athlete interactions, training programs contents, number of training hours, age of specialisation etc. While contextual factors such as interaction with family, friends, training groups, school etc. very often have been neglected (Storm, 2015). Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model of human development (1979) focused on the context and its micro-system, meso-system, and macro-system. Henriksen (2011) transferred Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model of human development (1979) to a sport context. Henriksen's ATDE model, "The Athletic Talent Development Environment model", offers a wider understanding of the development process and the significance of the environment for talent development. According to Alfermann & Stambulova (2007) successful talent development environments in sport are defined as *teams or clubs that manage to continually produce top-level athletes on the basis of their junior athlete and provides them with resources for coping with future transitions*. These total resources are, according to Alfermann & Stambulova (2007), significant for the transition to senior elite level and facilitate the step into professional sports. Fahlstrom et al. (2016) identified several common factors of significance for developing of successful elite athletes. These factors were structured into three main themes, (1) Organisation, culture and material resources, (2) Social factors and (3) The sport and pedagogical competences of the coaches. Further Fahlstrom et al. (2016) developed the ATDE model focusing on the micro level i.e. the club, team mates, coaches, managers, school, family, friends, etc. These results and the ecological perspective have served as a theoretical framework for this project focusing on the athlete perspective on the competence of coaches and managers.

## Methodology and Data Analysis

The Swedish Sport Confederation (RF) is an umbrella organisation consisting of 71 member organisations. Together with representatives from the Swedish Sport Confederation twelve Sport Federations were selected for the study: Athletics, Basketball, Equestrian sports, Floorball, Female and male Football (Soccer), Gymnastics, Handball, Ice Hockey, Martial Arts, Swimming and Tennis. The selection of federations covered different criteria such as team-individual sports, number of members, gender relations, traditional or younger sports etc. One female and one male athlete from each federation (from Football two female and two male athletes) were selected. They were studied through semi-structured interviews, approximately 60 minutes. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using the ATDE model.

## Results, Discussion and Implications

The results are now being processed and analysed. Preliminary, the analysis shows the significant importance of competence among coaches and managers. Their competence and approach influence culture, organisation, use of available resources, the composition and interaction of the training groups, development and interaction within the groups of coaches. The long-term success of the sport environment is depending, not only on the competence of the coaches, but on the recruitment and development of the coach team. The results further show that despite the fact that the clubs and academies are governed by the same national, cultural, financial framework as well as international and national rules and regulations, their results are differently successful, as defined by Alfermann & Stambulova (2007). Therefore a developed ecological model will be presented to describe and discuss the significant affectable factors of the development environment.

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