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The pedagogical development of elite football coaches - the case of Sweden

The processes that shaped football have demanded and implied new knowledge and roles within the organizations of football, and the one who has become the vehicle of this knowledge, and who fills many of the new roles, is the coach. The aim of the study is to get a deeper understanding of this development, and the main purpose is to examine the changing role of the Swedish elite football coach from 1967, when the amateur regulations were overturned, until today. New knowledge and roles implies new pedagogical challenges and demands improved pedagogical abilities. Therefore the pedagogical development is a vital aspect of this study. In recent years researches have started to recognize the coach as an educator and coaching as a complex pedagogic process (Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2009; Jones, 2006). However, besides the theoretical tools that been used to understand the coaches’ role and solve their problems we ought to have a discussion about how the problems emerged. Only then a deeper understanding can be attained. In the context of Swedish elite football, that’s what this project is about.

The research question is what pedagogical challenges, and in consequence what abilities, does the changing role of the Swedish elite football coach imply?

The method used is a text analysis of the educational material from coaching courses organized by the Swedish football association (SvFF). The analysis will be in two steps. Firstly we will examine the shift in content, because a change in content will indicate a changed role. Then, in the second step, we will discuss what pedagogical changes the new roles may imply.

The theoretical framework is a governmentality perspective (Foucault & Faubion, 2002). Furthermore two settings of ideal types will be used: One who focuses on the different roles of the coach, that is the instructor, the mentor, the coach of the game and the manager. The second focus on the pedagogical development. Here we have the coach as an authority, as a more capable other, and as a democratic leader.

The analysis shows that in addition to practical and tactical knowledge about football, physiological, psychological, and organizational aspects have become more prominent. These findings highlight how the roles and responsibilities of the coach have increased, from an instructor to a manager, mentor and also, to a greater extent, coaching the game. The pedagogical consequences of this are what we want to discuss during the presentation.