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The difficulty of killing two birds with one stone – Fostering competitive athletes and democratic citizens in a Swedish Sports Club between the 1960s and 1980s

Introduction

According to an Official Report of the Swedish Government (SOU 2008:59) Swedish sport associations have two overriding missions: 1) to foster its members into a democratic value system and 2) to produce competitive athletes. However, there is a tension between these missions and the Swedish Sports Confederation stresses that the overall aim of the Swedish sports movement is to create a balance between these two missions. Even though a few studies have undertaken the question how the sports clubs have handled the tension (e.g. Peterson 2007), the knowledge about this area is still scarce and to reach a deeper understanding we need to scrutinize how the tension has developed over time. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how a Swedish multi sectional sports club have been governing its activities in relation to the two divergent missions between the 1960s and 1980s.

Design

First, we examine the professionalization of the Swedish elite soccer coach, because it is equitable to let the coach represent the mission to produce competitive athletes. We examine what kind of knowledge constituted the elite soccer coach. Second, we examine how, in the frame of a multi sectional sports club, the professionalization of the elite soccer coach affected the activities of the youth section, which we argue represent the democratic fostering mission.

To examine why and how the club governed as it did and what capital it invested in, with focus on the consequences for the elite senior soccer section on the one hand and the youth section on the other, the theoretical framework combines a foucaultian governmentality perspective (Foucault 2002) and a bourdieuan capital conceptualisation (Bourdieu 1986).

The method is text analysis of educational material from coaching courses organized by the Swedish Football Association and protocols, annual reports and members review from the multi sectional sports club Örebro SK.

Result
A tentative analysis shows how ÖSK, in the pursuit of winning, invested economic capital in elite soccer coaches. Given the academic capital they possessed through the process of professionalization the coaches could exert more power. As a consequence the objectives of the coach - to produce competitive soccer players – also formed the purpose of the activities of the youth section.

References


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