

The athlete talent development environment in the best ranked football academy in Norwegian football:

The case of the U16 team in the Stabæk football club

Jon Stian Haukli¹, Carsten Hvid Larsen², Niels Feddersen¹ and Stig Arve Sæther¹,

¹ Department of Sociology and Political Science, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway

² Department of Sports Science and Clinical Biomechanics, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

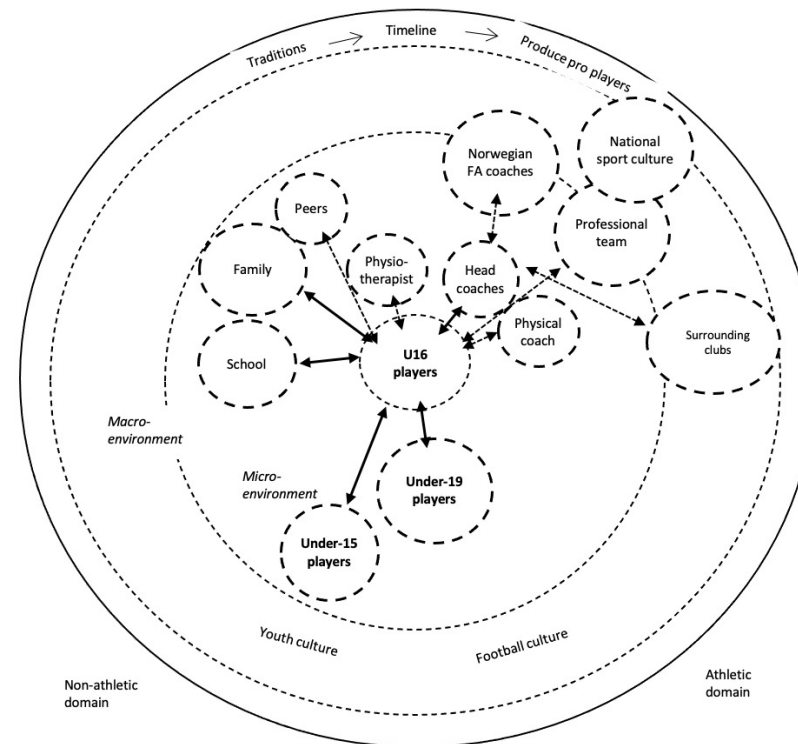


The study

We used the holistic ecological approach to examine the talent development of Stabæk football club. Specifically, the male under-16 team. The environment was categorised as successful based on their history of developing senior elite players and being the highest ranked football academy in Norway.

Methods

The study design was an explorative, integrative, and qualitative study considering an extreme case. Data collection included interviews, observations, and document analysis. The results showed that the environment shared features with other successful environments and deviated on other features.



Main findings

Findings consistent with earlier research on features on successful talent development environments:

- Importance of long-term development focus
- Supportive training groups
- Support from the wider environment

Findings partly contrary to former research:

- Success not underpinned by a coherent organisational culture (examples of ambiguity) (e.g., between espoused values and actual behaviours).
- Lack of integration of efforts
- No support for developing psychosocial skills
- Lack of diversification
- Lack of proximal role models

Conclusion

Our findings show that the club environment could be described as a successful, and yet, success does not necessarily equal all previously suggested successful features.

Figure 1. ATDE empirical model of the Stabæk football club

