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Talent Management in Sports

- *A qualitative analysis of Swedish sport federations*

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Abstract

The *purpose* of this thesis is to explore how Swedish sport federations define talent, how they conduct their talent management practices and which factors that affect talent definitions and talent management in different sports. To investigate this a *theoretical framework* is designed which merges the literature from the fields of talent definitions in business, talent management in sports and institutional logics in sports. The *method* used is an explorative abductive approach with a qualitative study design. In-depth interviews were conducted in 12 different Swedish sport federations. Our *conclusion* is that there is a homogeneity in how the sports define talent and how they conduct their talent management activities. There is a strong focus on motivation when talent is defined and little focus on results. Talent identification is done by using different assessment methods. The view shared among the sports is that there is a variety of factors which are important for elite success. Another similarity between the sport federations is that there is a strong emphasis on adapting to individual needs when it comes to talent development. A factor which affects talent management is how the sports are organized in the Swedish sports model, a model which we confirm gives rise to institutional pluralism between the sport-for-all logic and result-oriented logic.

Keywords: talent management in sports, institutional logics in sports, talent definitions, talent identification, talent development

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Definitions

Elite sport	For the purpose of this thesis elite sport is referring to the senior level of national or Olympic team activities.
Grassroot sport/breadth sport	The amateur level of sport, oftentimes referred to as breadth sport by interviewees as it is a direct translation from the Swedish “breddidrott”.
Talent in business	Employees who are perceived as having characteristics needed for the organization’s long term success (Bolander et al., forthcoming).
Talent in sport	An individual whose athletic performances are superior to his/her peer group and is capable of reaching or has achieved consisting performances at top level (Boccia et al. 2017) For the purpose of this thesis a talent is someone who is playing at the elite level of his/her sport.
Talent management (TM)	Talent management encompasses all the activities in an organization which have the primary goal of attracting, identifying, developing and training employees who are perceived as having characteristics needed for the organization’s long-term success (Bolander et al., forthcoming).
Institutional logic	A set of ideas, beliefs and values that shape prevailing conceptions of what an organization should be doing, of how it should be doing it, and how it should be judged (Gammelsæter, 2010).
Contextual factors of TM	Background factors which can affect talent management, such as characteristics of an organization or circumstances in the external environment (Thunnissen & van Arensbergen, 2015). In the thesis, institutional logics are also referred to as a contextual factor.
Sport federation	A member-driven and non-governmental governing body for a given sport. In this thesis, sport federation refers to the national level of a sport federation i.e. the Special Sports Federations according to appendix 9.1.
District sport federations	The regional departments of the sport federation in a given sport, i.e. the Special Sports District Federations according to appendix 9.1. Sometimes referred to in the thesis as just districts.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Research during the last decade has shown that the competition on the international sports arena has increased. Analyses of larger international championships have shown a significant increase in both the number of participating nations and the number of countries which have a potential capacity for winning medals, despite the increased competition (För framtids segrar, 2011).

In a large study with 15 countries the factors determining sport success was investigated. The results showed a strong positive relationship between the absolute amount of elite sport funding invested by nations and their success in international competitions (De Bosscher et al., 2015). But what can a small country with limited opportunities for large sport funding do to be competitive on the international sports arena? One answer would be to gain competitive advantage by developing effective talent identification and talent development processes, as this area seems to be underdeveloped (De Bosscher et al., 2008).

An example of a nation with high goals in sports is Sweden. The Swedish Olympic Committee states: "We are a small country. Therefore, we need to be best at taking advantage of every individual's potential" (Ny plattform för idrott och innovation, 2017). In order to do this, more research is needed about talent management in Swedish sports as few studies have been made on the topic.

Furthermore, talent management (TM) is a relatively nascent field and there is a high need for more empirical research (Thunnissen et al., 2013a; Lewis & Heckman, 2016; Collings & Mellahi, 2009) and more research within other contexts than traditional commercial businesses (Thunnissen et al., 2013a). To investigate TM in sports is interesting as the concept of talent has been in use much longer in the sports world than in the business world.

1.2 Problem discussion and research contribution

Even though developing successful elite talents is of special interest for the Swedish sports world and the academia there is little empirical research about talent management in Swedish sports. A mapping of how the concept of talent is defined in different sports and how different sports conduct their talent management activities (talent identification, selection and development) is necessary in order to get an initial understanding of the research area before future studies can be made about how to improve TM in Swedish sports.

If one looks at TM research in sports on a global scale, it can be concluded that the research needs a more holistic view. For example, there have been many studies about how single variables such as physiological measures (e.g. oxygen uptake or strength) can predict an athlete's future success. Other factors such as psychological competences and the impact of the environment in the form of e.g. emotional support have only recently been added to the picture (Buekers et al., 2015). There is a narrow focus in the sport TM research on finding measurements to predict talent and on specific matters of how to train talents. Asking broader questions about e.g. the underlying factors of why TM is conducted the way it is in sports can

give a deeper understanding about how TM can be improved and how different components interact with each other.

1.3 Research purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to expand the empirical research within talent management by making an explorative study in a non-traditional business setting, namely sport federations in Sweden. The aim is to see if there are any patterns between (1) talent definitions, (2) talent management activities and (3) contextual factors (such as characteristics of the organization or the institutional environment).

1.3.1 Research questions

Within a Swedish context:

1. How do different sports define talent?
2. How are talent management activities conducted in different sports?
3. What factors influence talent definitions in different sports?
4. What factors influence talent management practices in different sports?

1.4 Delimitations

The study covers 12 sports in Sweden, of which all are Olympic sports as the study is part of a larger research project at Stockholm School of Economics in collaboration with the Swedish Olympic Committee (SOC). Sports participating in the Olympic Games are interesting to investigate as these sports need to find and develop talents for a highly competitive international sports setting. Different talent management activities and approaches are described but an investigation of the effectiveness of them are beyond the thesis' scope.

1.5 Thesis disposition

The thesis consists of seven chapters. This first chapter gives an overview of the topic investigated and the research purpose. Chapter two explains different theories applied in the thesis and how they connect to each other in our theoretical framework. In the third chapter, the methodological approach is outlined. This is followed by chapter four which presents our empirical results. These are then analyzed in chapter five. Following from the analysis, a discussion is held in chapter six. Presentation of the contributions and suggestions for future research concludes the thesis in chapter seven.

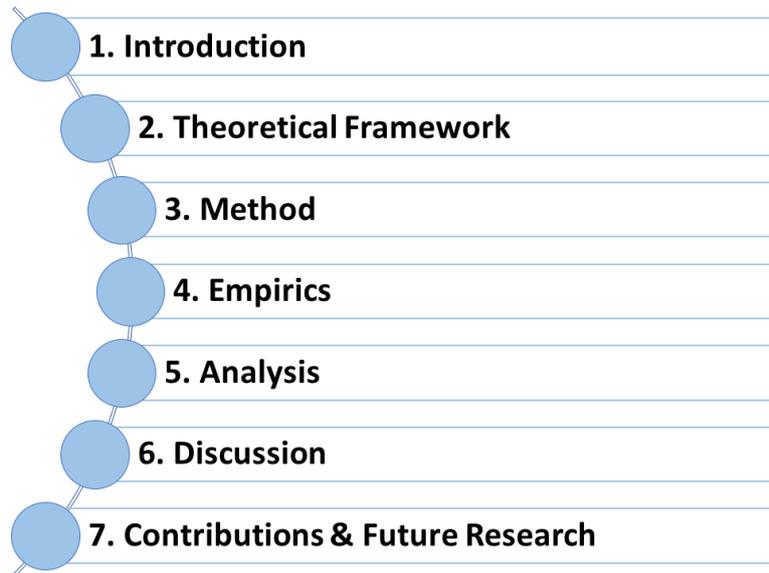


Figure 1: Thesis disposition

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter starts by discussing the field of TM research in a business context. Then research about TM in the sports world is presented. The theoretical framework is also complemented with literature discussing (1) the importance of understanding context when conducting TM research and (2) institutional theory within sports.

The model below is developed to illustrate the relationship between the theoretical fields that will be used when analyzing the research questions.

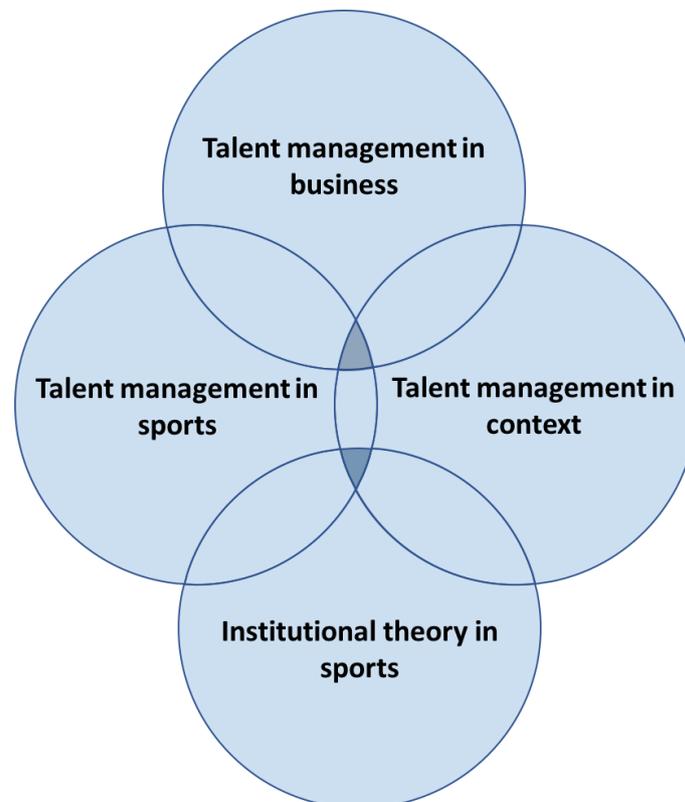


Figure 2: Venn diagram of literature review and intersection resulting in the construction of the theoretical framework

Firstly in this chapter, an overview of the current progress of the research in talent management in business is presented. A special focus will be given to talent definitions in a business context. Thereafter, literature about TM in sports is discussed with regards to two talent management activities: talent identification and talent development. The third research field "Talent management in context" explores the theories which highlight the importance of considering context when conducting and analyzing TM research.

The thesis' research questions lie within the research field of TM in sports, but as explained in the introduction the existing literature in the field has a narrow scope. To complement the literature, the two other mentioned research fields are used, thereof the illustrated intersection. Firstly, a topic which has been investigated in TM in business but not in sports is how talent definitions determine the design of talent management activities. Secondly, the research about TM in context has newly begun to explore the implications of organizational and environmental

factors (i.e. context) for TM in businesses, but the topic of context's effect on TM in sports is almost unexplored. Therein lies our main research gap, which will be discussed more in section 2.9. To research how context is affecting TM in sports, the sports' context is mapped with the help of institutional theory in a sport setting. Lastly, the literature review will present the little research which exists about how the institutional environment affects TM in sports.

2.1 Overview of talent management in business

Since the topic of talent management first appeared in management journals two decades ago (McDonnell et al., 2017), there has been a steep increase of studies published about TM (McDonnell et al., 2017; Dries, 2013). But what is talent management? There is still no consensus among the scholars about its definition. Lewis & Heckman (2006) mention the difficulty of identifying the precise meaning of 'talent management' because of the confusion regarding the terms and assumptions made by authors who writes about TM. For example, terms such as 'talent management', 'succession management', 'talent strategy' and 'human resource planning' are often used interchangeably by authors. The confusion regarding the definition of talent management has also been verified by Collings & Mellahi (2009), Thunnissen et al. (2013a) and most recently by McDonnell et al. (2017).

A pragmatic definition of talent management is that it encompasses all the activities in an organization which have the primary goal of attracting, identifying, developing and training employees who are perceived as having characteristics needed for the organization's long-term success (Bolander et al., forthcoming). Thunnissen et al., (2013a) categorize the main topics in the literature into (1) the definition of talent, (2) the intended outcomes and (3) effects of talent management and talent management practices and activities.

In the following section, the literature about talent definitions in businesses are presented. It is deemed as relevant for our empirical analysis as this part of the literature is elaborating on how different talent definitions affect talent management activities. However, a detailed discussion about talent management activities in businesses will be left out of the scope. Instead the specific TM activities of talent identification and talent development in a sport-specific context will be presented later in the literature review.

2.2 Talent definitions in businesses

Although there is an increasing interest in TM research, there is still no consensus on the definition of talent among scholars (Dries, 2013; Thunnissen & Van Arensbergen, 2015; Meyers, 2013). To bring some clarity about the definition of talent Dries (2013) has uncovered five tensions in the literature and explained how the different perspectives on talent have implications for the policies and practices of TM.

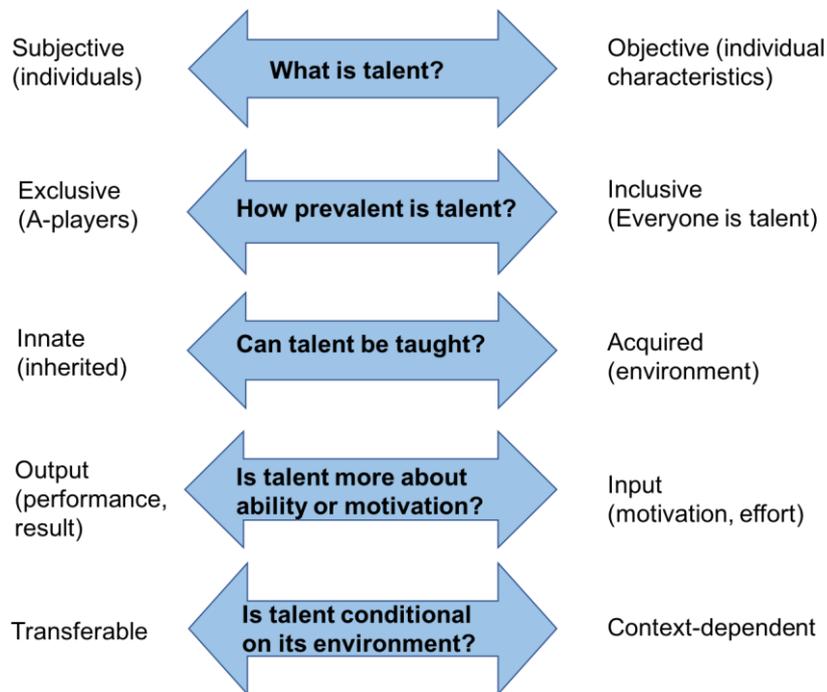


Figure 3 - Talent definition approaches, adapted from Dries (2013)

Object or subject approach

The first tension is between object and subject perspectives on talent. Companies with subjective perspectives focus on the identification of talented people and rely more on succession plan and organizational career management (Dries, 2013). This approach sees the people themselves as talent (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). Companies with objective perspectives focus on identification and development of characteristics of the talented people. Talent is thus the characteristics of a person. Therefore, they rely more on competence management and knowledge management (Dries, 2013).

Inclusive or exclusive approach

The inclusive and exclusive approaches is concerned with the prevalence of talent in the work force. An inclusive perspective is based on the assumption that all people are talented while the exclusive perspective is based on the assumption that some people are born to be more talented than others in certain contexts (Dries, 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo et al. 2013). In an inclusive approach resources are allocated more equally on the employees so that everyone can develop their strengths, while companies with an exclusive approach spend proportionately more resources on a selected few (Dries, 2013).

Innate or acquired approach

An innate perspective on talent holds the view that talent cannot be taught and therefore, it focuses on talent recruitment, identification and retention (Meyers, 2013). However, an acquired perspective argues that talent can be taught and focuses on the tools for talent development such as training and learning. (Dries, 2013; c.f. Meyers, 2013)

Output or input approach

An input approach to talent argues that talent depends more on motivation such as effort, ambition and career orientation while the output perspective argues that talent depends more on ability, that is to say the output, performance, achievements and results (Dries, 2013).

Transferable or context-dependent approach

A transferable approach has the view that talented people demonstrate their talent regardless of the environment while context-dependent perspectives argue that individuals' talent is dependent on the environment. This leads to that companies with a transferable approach focus on recruitment and talent identification before company entry (as talented people will be talented in all environments), while companies with a context-dependent approach want to see how an individual interacts with the context, and talent identification is done after a period of time (Dries, 2013).

2.3 Configurations between talent definitions and talent management practices

As a brief summary of the previous section, the connection between how talent definitions affect TM practices will be outlined with relation to the activities of talent identification and recruitment and talent development and training.

2.3.1 Identification and recruitment

Talent recruitment refers to hiring talents outside of the organization, while talent identification is a more general term and also refers to discovering talent that already exists in the organization. If a company has an innate approach, the view is that talent cannot be developed and therefore the most emphasis is put on talent identification than on talent development. When talent is identified depends on if the company thinks that talent is transferable or not. As mentioned earlier, if talent is viewed as transferable, talent identification is done before a person enters the company. Bolander et al., (forthcoming) have identified four different typologies of how firms define talents and how they conduct TM. The two typologies which concentrate on talent identification and talent recruitment had both an **innate** and **transferable** view on talent. Thus, these two approaches seem to go hand in hand.

2.3.2 Development and training

When firms have an acquired approach to talent, more emphasis is put on talent development and training. The distribution of resources on how much that is spent on developing employees depends on if the firm has an inclusive or exclusive approach. When the approach is inclusive, the resources are distributed evenly between employees while it is unevenly distributed in an exclusive approach. In Bolander et al.'s (forthcoming) research the two typologies which focused on talent development had both an **acquired** and an **inclusive** approach. These two approaches seem to go hand in hand.

2.4 Talent management in sports

A common definition of "sports talent" is lacking, but it is accepted in the literature and in sport environments "that a talent in sports is an individual whose athletic performances are superior to his peer group and is capable of reaching or has achieved consisting performances at top level" (Boccia et al., 2017, p.2). In the sport literature, the term "talent management" is seldom used. Instead there is focus on two main areas: talent identification (TI) and talent

development. For the purpose of this thesis TM in sports will for convenience be an umbrella term for both these activities.

Talent identification programmes has the aim “to identify young athletes who possess extraordinary potential for success in senior elite sport, and to select and recruit them into talent promotion programmes” (Vaeyens et al., 2009, p.1367). TI is focusing on how one can assess an athlete’s current capabilities in a specific sport and thereby predict future talent (Vaeyens et al., 2009; Breitbach et al., 2014). In comparison, talent development programmes focus less on current abilities but more on how to train athletes in order for them to reach their future potential (Breitbach et al., 2014).

As in TM in businesses there is also a debate within TM for sports about the importance of innate qualities when determining talent. Authors disagree about how important e.g. genetic attributes are for future success. But as in TM for businesses, what can be said is that the less importance that is given to innate qualities of athletes, the more emphasis is put on the development process (ibid.).

2.4.1 Talent identification

Many scientific papers have tried to find reliable predictive values for determining future sport success (Buekers et al., 2015). The typical study design in conventional TI research is to investigate how single anthropometric variables (such as stature and body composition) or physiological measures (such as oxygen uptake and strength) affect performance. Top performing athletes are then compared to athletes with lower performance and the attributes that have the most significant differences are determined as discriminate or predictor variables. But these kind of variables have low explanatory power. In for example basketball, only 60% of the total variance of basketball performance could be explained by anthropometric or physiological variables (Breitbach et al., 2014). Furthermore, comprehensive conclusions are hard to draw from the literature as the classification of “elite”, “successful” or “talented” athletes differs between studies (ibid.).

As a reaction to the low explanatory power of conventional TI research, studies have been made on other possible predictive variables such as technical, tactical and psychological competences. (Buekers et al., 2015) But these variables have been studied in isolation and voices have been raised about the need of a multidisciplinary approach and an investigation of how the variables interact with each other. (ibid.; Breitbach et al. 2014; Abbott & Collins, 2004) Also, only recent attention has been given to factors such as the environment’s impact through e.g. emotional support (Breitbach et al. 2014).

Criticism has not only been raised about the narrow scope of variables included in TI studies or the one-dimensionality of them. “Evidence from 19 European countries suggests that most talent identification systems in sport use current junior performance [...] as the main criterion for selection to a development programme” (Rees et al., 2016, p.1047) But the idea that current performance or early competitive success can predict future talent is questioned. It is especially hard to predict future success from a young age, as there are many other factors which will affect if someone will become an elite athlete (Buekers et al., 2015).

Lastly, a distinction needs to be made of how TI research is conducted compared to how TI processes actually are made in practice in sporting environments. Buekers et al., (2015) highlight that there is an *experience versus experiment conflict*. Many coaches spot talents with the help of intuition while sport scientists are convinced that scientific measurements are the most appropriate method for TI. The drawback of the intuitive approach is its subjective nature, while the advantage is that it focuses on the person as a whole and integrates a variety of elements when predicting future performance. The scientific approach is in comparison objective but often neglect contextual factors (Buekers et al. 2015).

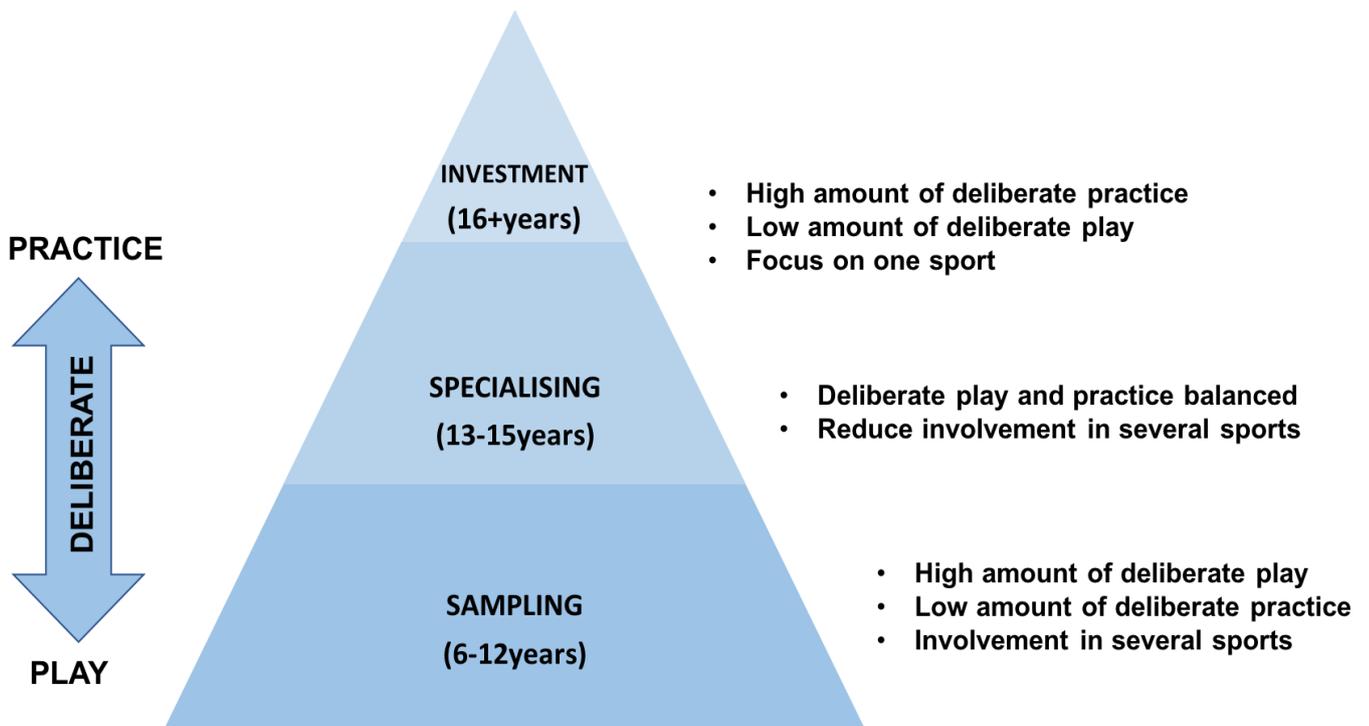
2.4.2 Talent development

As mentioned, the focus of talent development is to train athletes so that they get the right opportunities to become top-performing elite athletes. Main questions in the literature are how much training that is needed, how much of that training that needs to be sport-specific and how early you should specialize within a sport. Next, these topics will be discussed with the help of different theories. Lastly, a popular model for talent development is presented.

Deliberate practice and deliberate play

According to *deliberate practice* (DP) theory (Ericsson et al., 1993), athletes need to have gathered a large amount of organized sport-specific training to become world class. DP theory also says that the more DP practice accumulated, the higher the performance attained. In its original form, DP theory suggested that 10 000 hours of DP practice for 10 years is needed to become world class. But the author has later claimed that he did not intend the 10 000 hours limit to be “a rule”. (Rees et al, 2016). When Rees et al. 2016 examined the evidence for this theory, they concluded that “the quality of evidence that extensive DP is an important contributor to the development of super-elite performance in sport is high to moderate, while high/moderate quality of evidence suggests that the applicability of the 10 years/10,000h rule is limited and that DP alone does not guarantee sporting success” (ibid., p.1048).

When considering how early an athlete should specialize within a sport, research shows that early organized sport-specific training comes with risks such as less enjoyment, overuse injuries and increased risk of dropout of the sport. Comparisons between elite and so called super-elite athletes within 50 Olympic sports even demonstrated larger volumes of practice/training in other sports among super-elites than the elites. Mostly the super-elites also had a later specialization in their main sport (ibid.). An alternative model to deliberate practice has been coined by Côté called *deliberate play* where athletes are involved in playful training in different sports in early years (up to 11-12 years) and gradually increases the organized and sport-specific training and specialize at about age 16 (Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2008).



- **DELIBERATE PRACTICE:** organized activities in which the principle focus is skill development and performance enhancement
- **DELIBERATE PLAY:** activities undertaken primarily for intrinsic enjoyment but that may nevertheless ultimately contribute to the acquisition of expertise

Figure 4 - Deliberate play, adapted from Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2008

The Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model

Internationally, the LTAD model has in many cases been used as a point of reference or a template for different sport federations' talent management. The model is a talent ladder and gives a normative structure for what and how athletes should train in different ages.

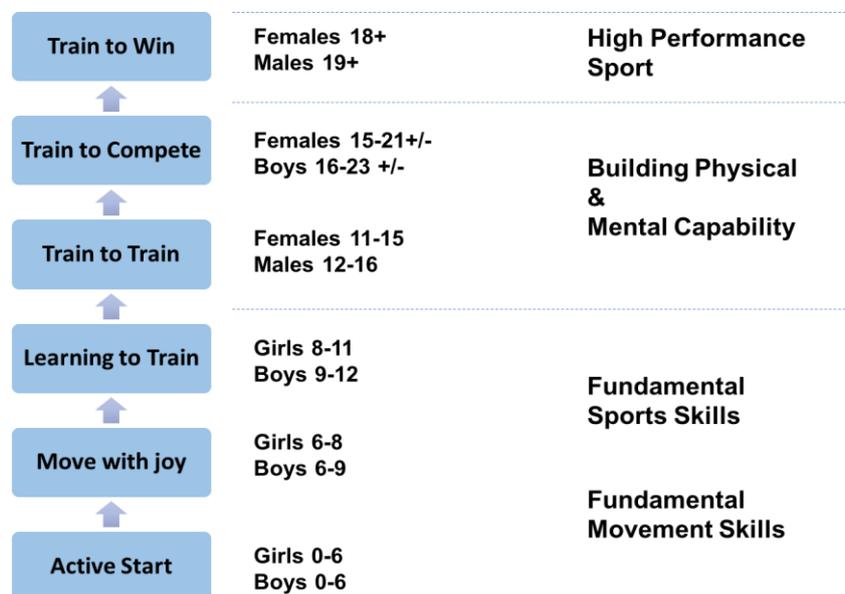


Figure 5 - the LTAD model, adapted from Fahlström et al., 2015

But the model has been criticized by researchers. The critique focuses on that the model has a physiological normative perspective which takes little consideration to individual differences and to social, psychological and contextual factors (Fahlström et al., 2015).

2.5 The importance of context in TM

Several authors highlight the importance of considering organizational and/or institutional contexts when investigating talent management (Al Ariss et al., 2014; Thunnissen et al. 2013b; Thunnissen & van Arensbergen, 2015). While Thunnissen et al., (2013b) discuss how TM can bring non-economic and economic value to organizations and societies, Al Ariss et al., (2014) and Thunnissen & van Arensbergen (2015) instead discuss how context affects talent management. Thunnissen & van Arensbergen (2015) state that organizational context can impact talent definitions and TM activities. The interpretation of talent can depend on the *characteristics of the organization* (such as financial means) and *circumstances in the external environment* (e.g. the job market). As an example, they describe that one department within an organization which had many possible job candidates had different TM activities than another department faced with labour shortages. Due to the context, the latter one put more emphasis on talent development.

As highlighted in Thunnissen & van Arensbergen’s model of talent and TM, to contextualize talent is an important contribution to the field as mostly universal talent models are dominating (Thunnissen & van Arensbergen, 2015).

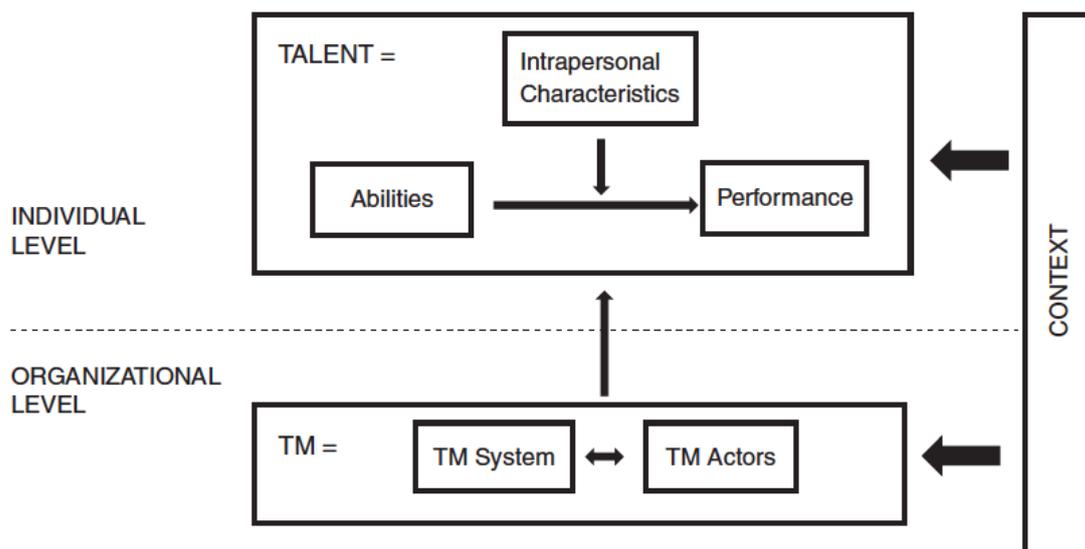


Figure 6 - Talent, TM and the impact of context, Thunnissen & van Arensbergen, 2015 p.16

To map out the contexts which sport organizations in Sweden are facing can help us investigate if different contexts affect the talent definitions and TM activities prevalent. As a help, institutional theory and then specifically institutional logics in sports are presented in section 2.5 and 2.6. But as institutional logics are mapping out context in quite broad terms, the following section will present a sport-specific model which categorize contextual factors both on a macro level and on a more detailed level.

2.5.1 A model for the factors affecting elite sport success

The international research about countries' elite sport and elite sport systems contains different models for structuring the diverse factors which might influence a nation's sport success. One of these models is presented below.

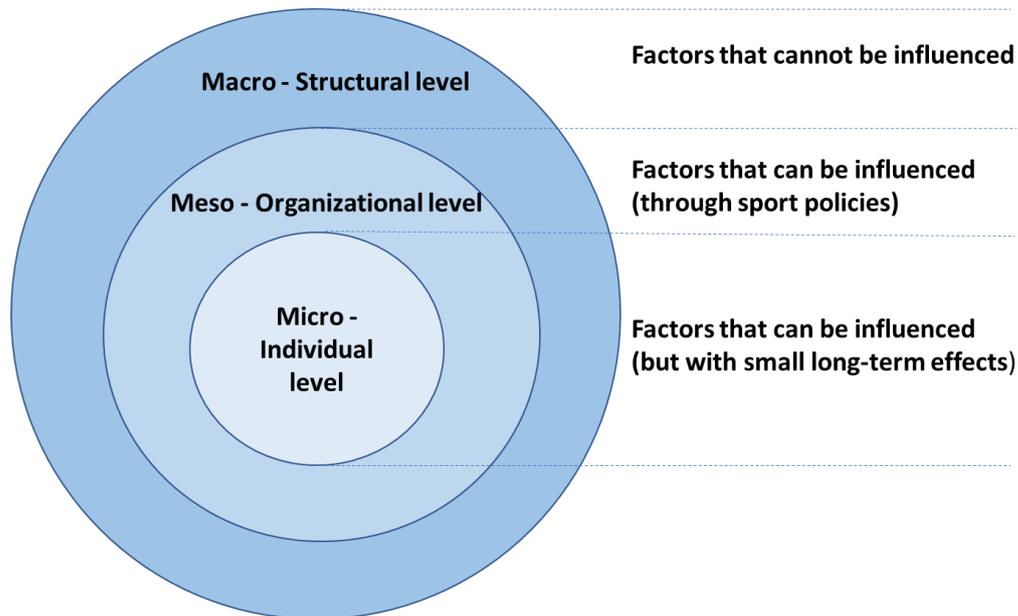


Figure 7 - De Bosscher & Verle's (2008) model showing the relationship between factors determining individual and national sport success (adapted)

The *macro* level contains the structural influences which affect sport success. Examples are socio-economic factors, population size, welfare system etc. The *meso* level includes organizational factors and the sport's specific conditions such as the sport's policies and politics, their organization and economy etc. Lastly, the factors in the *micro* level are related to the individual and his/her conditions. These factors can e.g. be genetic qualities, immediate environment (parents, friends, coaches), training techniques used, psychological and medical support (De Bosscher & Verle, 2008; c.f. För framtids segrar, 2011).

2.6 Institutional theory and institutional logics

Institutional theory as defined by DiMaggio & Powell (1983) is based on the concept that organizations have unclear goals and therefore adapt themselves to the environment to gain legitimacy for their activities (as cited in Stenling & Fahlén, 2009). The focus of institutional theory is to determine how and why specific parts of the environment affect organizational actions (Washington & Patterson, 2012). The environment consists of different stakeholders who have different demands, and "[i]nstitutional theory suggests the conceptualization of such demands as 'institutional logics'" (Carlson-Wall et al., 2016, p.47). An institutional logic resembles an "interpretive scheme" which is defined as "a set of ideas, beliefs and values that shape prevailing conceptions of what an organization should be doing, of how it should be doing it, and how it should be judged" (Gammelsæter, 2010, p.574). To clarify, the main idea is that different groups of actors in the environment has their own interpretive scheme or institutional logic which they bring upon an organization. For example, a group of state actors might have a political logic which they apply to an organization, media actors in turn apply a

media logic and so on. But these institutional logics are not only applied by actors outside the organization, the organization itself adopts them too when guiding their own actions.

The situation where organizations are facing pressure from different and sometimes conflicting institutional logics is called institutional pluralism (Scott, 2008). One strategy for organizations to manage the institutional complexity is called structural differentiation, which “means partitioning an organization into different subunits, each of which can act independently and according to the demands of ‘their’ institutional logic” (Carlsson-Wall et. Al, p.48). However, the challenge is that there needs to be some integration of the sub-units as they are part of the same organization.

2.7 The Swedish sport model and institutional logics in Swedish sports

Sports in Sweden are organized as an independent voluntary movement (Riksidrottsförbundet, 2012). Sport clubs are non-profit and primarily based on non-salaried work. The sports organizational model in Sweden is characterized by a bottom-up approach with large emphasis on member governance. The state has for long supported Swedish sport clubs through government grants (Kilger & Börjesson, 2015) and the core value of the Swedish sports movement is that everyone should be given the opportunity to participate in sports. The view of the voluntary sport clubs as contributing to public welfare and fostering democracy emerged already during the 1940s (Stenling & Fahlén, 2009). But Swedish sports have gradually been influenced by market and commercial pressures. Therefore, an interest has emerged in examining the existence of different institutional logics in Swedish sports.

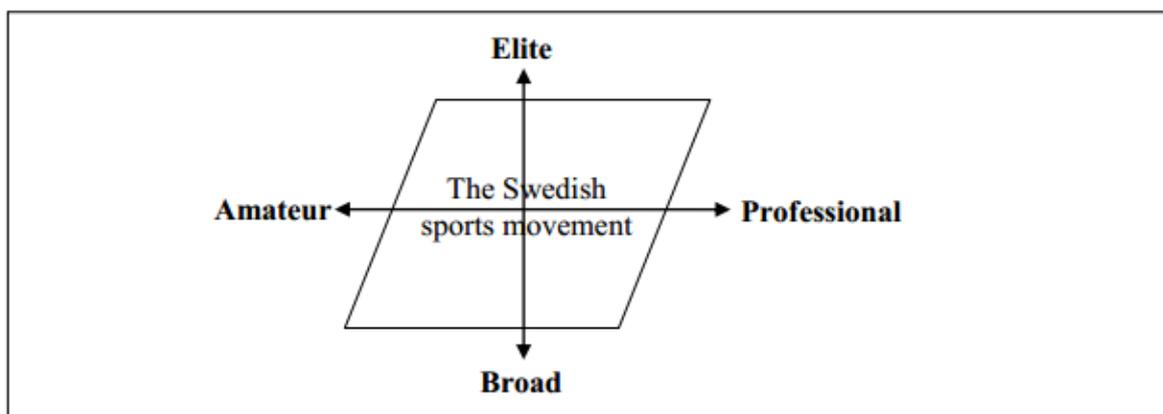


Figure 8 - The Swedish sports model, Stenling & Fahlén (2009) p.130

Furthermore, Swedish sport clubs and the sport federations are arranging activities in all the fields in the above matrix. They both have leisure activities and an aim of having as many participants as possible (broad/amateur) and activities for selected athletes who want to reach a national or international top level (elite/professional). These circumstances create a high demand on the sport organizations as they are subject to a number of forces originating from different institutions (Stenling & Fahlén, 2009).

Stenling & Fahlén (2009) have through interviews in Swedish voluntary clubs in six different sports detected three dominant logics, these are described in Table 1.

Logic	Sport-for-all	Result-oriented	Commercialization/ professionalization
Domain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fostering of democratic, social and moral values - Open to all regardless of age, ethnicity, religion, sexual preferences and social class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Competitive sport - Open to those who wish to compete, and preferably do it well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on the exchange value of sport - Related activities such as restaurants and arena companies are eligible
Criteria of effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The organization is effective when members are satisfied and activities are run according to the sport-for-all ideal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The organization is effective when performing well in relation to its sport-specific goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial criteria of effectiveness, e.g. turnover

Table 1 - Institutional logics in sport, adapted from Stenling & Fahlén (2009)

The authors also suggest that there is an order of how the logics are prioritized. As the result-oriented and commercialization logics are easier to measure they are overshadowing the sport-for-all logic. Carlsson-Wall et al. (2016) detected two institutional logics in Swedish football clubs, the sports logic which arises from institutional demands for success in sports and the business logic which focuses on financial performance. Furthermore, in Petrelius Karlberg's (2012) model a voluntary movement logic and a commercial logic are described, but she also adds a media logic. She argues that sports nowadays are to a large extent consumed and experienced through the media and that sport clubs therefore need to consider how to organize their activities in order to gain media's attention. A consequence of this logic is that more emphasis is put on finding elite talents which the media can report about.

2.8 Adapting talent management in sports to the institutional environment

Research on how the institutional environment of sport federations and sports clubs is affecting talent management is hard to find. But one relevant study has been made by Kilger & Börjesson (2015) where they explain that Swedish sports have a problem legitimizing their talent selection activities. The source of the problem is that sports club as publicly funded organizations have conflicting dual goals, namely to offer sport to all but also foster elite adult athletes. The authors do not use institutional theory in their analysis, but connections to it can easily be drawn as the study focuses on how sport organizations try to gain legitimacy from the environment for their talent management activities.

The authors describe that the main principle that the sports need to justify is that youths who are selected as potential talents are getting special treatment. To justify that equal investments are not made on all children, the argument is put forward that there would be "no widespread

grassroots sport were it not for an elite that has created an interest” (Kilger & Börjesson, 2015, p.98). But to gain legitimacy the selection apparatus needs to be fair and ethical. The selection process is legitimized if it is seen as a natural process, and not really dependent on the decision of a coach. A scientific and unbiased selection with objective measurable variables are preferred. But at the same time ambition as a basis for selection is also used, which communicates that qualifying as a potential talent is a matter of will and thus the system is in a sense just (ibid.). Using Stenling & Fahlén’s classification, the study of Kilger & Börjesson (2015) is focusing on how the sport-for-all logic is affecting TM.

2.9 The theoretical gap and the modified theoretical framework

In TM for sports more emphasis is put on how talent is identified and predicted rather than how it is defined. To research how talent is defined using the theory from talent definitions in businesses can give insights about how talent definitions in different sports affect TM activities. Furthermore, for TM research in business there has been a recent emphasis on investigating how contextual factors affect talent management. In the literature for TM in sports, the idea of looking at context is greatly unexplored and thus constitutes a theoretical gap. Another theoretical gap can be found between the research fields of institutional environment in sports and TM in sports.

Drawing inspiration from Thunnissen and van Arensbergen’s (2015) model, we have developed the theoretical framework and multi-dimensional conceptual model below for investigating TM in sports. De Bosscher & Verle’s (2008) model is not specifically designed for analyzing TM, but we still find it useful for investigating and especially categorizing contextual factors in sports. Therefore, elements of the model are used but less focus is put on the micro level. Furthermore, Thunnissen and van Arensbergen’s (2015) model states that different characteristics of the organization is part of context. In our model, we investigate how different characteristics of the sport itself affect TM.

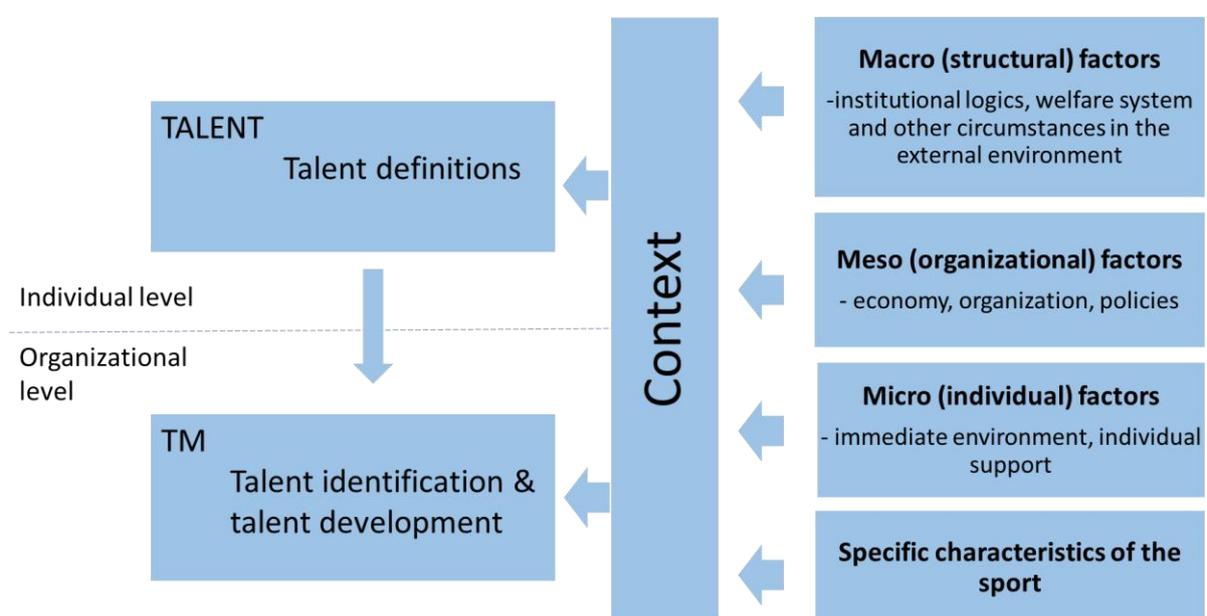


Figure 9 - Theoretical framework

3. Method

This chapter will outline the thesis' methodological approach. The selected research method, study design and analysis methods are described and motivated. Additionally, the quality of data and ethical considerations are discussed.

3.1 Research approach

As previously explained, little is known about how and if talent definitions and talent management activities differ between sports and why. Specifically, knowledge about how contextual factors are affecting TM is lacking. The aim of our study is to expand current research by filling the empirical and theoretical gap.

Justesen and Mik-Meyer (2011) suggest that the purpose and problem formulation of the thesis should be in focus when making the methodological choice. An exploratory approach is advantageous to discover areas not yet noted by previous research (Bell, 2006). In our study knowledge from different research fields are combined, but the specific research area is unexplored. Therefore, a *fairly explorative approach* is used. Furthermore, Edmondson and McManus (2007) describe that the state of theory in management theory falls along a continuum, from nascent to mature. They propose a framework for methodological fit which ensures that the method chosen is consistent with the maturity of the theory. The less that is known about a specific topic, the more open-ended the inquiries should be. If the state of theory is more developed, the research questions should propose relationships. As we have theories from different fields to lean on but as they only partially cover our research area, we choose to have *open-ended inquiries* as it is unnecessary to narrow down the focus of the study beforehand. For open-ended inquiries the authors state that *qualitative data collection* is the most appropriate.

When choosing to adopt an inductive, deductive or abductive approach we found it most relevant to choose an *abductive approach, but with elements of an inductive approach*. A deductive approach derives hypotheses from theory in order to test it empirically and confirm the theory and hypotheses. In an inductive approach the theory is instead the result of empirical findings. The inductive approach thus draws generalizable conclusions and forms theory based on observations (Bryman, 2011). Abduction starts from empirical findings just as in induction, but also allows for theoretical preconceptions. The analysis of the empirics can be influenced by theory, but is not applied in the same mechanical way as in deduction. In an abductive approach, there is an alternation between empirics and theory during the research process, where both areas are interpreted in the light of each other (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2011).

A deductive approach is not suitable for us as theories about our specific research topic is lacking. But as described in the literature review, theory and models from different adjacent research areas can possibly be combined to understand the overall picture. Therefore, it is suitable to have an abductive approach which considers previous research but we will still stay close to an inductive approach.

3.2 Study design

3.2.1 Comparative multiple case study

According to Yin (2014) a case study method is relevant when the research questions seek to explain some present circumstance and an extensive and in-depth description is required. A case study is advantageous when “how” and “why” questions are asked and therefore this method goes hand in hand with our research topic of how TM is conducted in sports and why. Furthermore, we choose to do a multiple case study not only because it improves the study’s robustness (Yin, 2014) but it will also allow us to compare if contextual factors differ between sports and if that has an effect on TM. To get a detailed understanding in-depth interviews are chosen as the data collection method, paired with collection of written documents of talent development programmes within each sport.

So far, the first part of the method chapter has focused on motivating the choices made for the methodological approach. The remaining sections will focus on describing how the study was conducted.

3.2.2 Selection of cases

Our study is part of a larger research project conducted between Center for Business and Sports at Stockholm School of Economics and the Swedish Olympic Committee (SOC). Therefore, the first selection criterion was that the sports studied are Olympic sports. A trade-off needed to be considered between going in-depth in each sport or cover a larger number of sports. Going in-depth gives us a more detailed picture of why TM is conducted the way it is in a particular sport, but sacrificing scope has the consequence that we can draw less generalizable conclusions. We reasoned that a middle path between depth and scope would be to cover 13 sports.

There is a report from Riksidrottsförbundet¹ (*Att finna och utveckla talang*, Fahlström, 2011) which studies talent management in Swedish sport federations. But as the report’s nature had much more emphasis on presenting empirical data rather than analyzing talent identification and talent development in Sweden from a theoretical perspective, it was deemed more appropriate to have the report as a secondary source than to include it in the literature review. We prioritized to cover the 13 Olympic sports which were investigated in the report to build on existing data.² But as it was deemed likely that not all sport federations were willing to participate, four additional sports were selected for contact. The sports were selected after how many active members they have, prioritizing the largest sports which were not covered in Riksidrottsförbundet’s report.³

Interviews at the national sport federation level are conducted as the federations are responsible for organizing youth national team activities and national team activities. They also decide the TM policies and design the talent ladders which are used in the clubs.

¹ For more information about Riksidrottsförbundet, see section 4.1

² For a list of the sports investigated in the RF-report, see appendix 9.2

³ See appendix 9.3 for data about the number of active participants in the investigated sports

An interview with SOC is also included in the data collection as their talent development programs are important for the sport federations and it can therefore be relevant to investigate their view on TM.⁴

Interviewees from the sport federations were suggested by SOC. The contacts given are the people SOC has exchange with when it comes to TM. If SOC's contacts were not available for an interview the contacts suggested other interviewees within their federation who are involved in TM.

In the end, 12 sport federations participated in the study. Because of a late interview cancellation, possibility was not given to cover 13 sports as planned.

⁴ For a description of the activities and the role of SOC, see section 4.1

3.2.3 Primary sources

	Sport	Name	Profession	Date	Interview method
1	Athletics	Anders Rydén	Education Manager	20 th Mar	F2F
2	Badminton	Jonas Herrgårdh	Sport Director	4 th Apr	Telephone
3	Cross-country skiing	Lars Selin	National Coach for Men's Senior Team	28 th Mar	Telephone
4	Equestrian	Lars Göran Breisner	Olympic High Performance Manager	28 th Mar	F2F
5	Football	Anneli Gustafsson	FA Instructor Players Development	20 th Apr	F2F
6	Golf	Katarina Vangdal	Head Coach	11 th Apr	F2F
7	Handball	Lasse Tjernberg	Head of National Teams	31 st Mar	F2F
8	Sailing	Marit Söderström Nord	Talent Development Manager	7 th Apr	F2F
9	Shooting	Jonas Edman	Sport Director	31 st Mar	Telephone
10	Swimming	Henrik Forsberg	Sport Director	23 rd Mar	F2F
11	Table tennis	Peter Sartz	Head of Women's National Team	21 st Mar	Telephone
12	Tennis	Fredrik Hörnell	National Coach for Youth Teams	4 th Apr	F2F
	<i>Others</i>				
13	SOC	Peter Reinebo	CEO	3 rd Apr	F2F

Table 2 - Primary sources

3.2.4 Secondary sources

Apart from the research papers presented in the literature review and the RF-report mentioned in the previous section, written documents describing the sport federations' TM were collected. These could be in the form of talent ladders, requirement analyses, teaching material for coaches etc. The documents were either sent by our contacts at the federations or downloaded by us through the federations' websites. For a complete list of the documents analyzed, see appendix 9.6.

3.3 Interview design

Semi-structured interviews were conducted. In semi-structured interviews there is a list of themes and questions which will be investigated, but there is a flexibility as other questions can be asked (Bryman, 2011). As we have a fairly explorative approach we wanted to provide space for the interviewees to expand on questions that they have a particular interest in. Thus, we want to allow for digression and depth in our data collection. But as we also do a comparative study and wanted to explore some theoretical points, we needed some formal structure in order to compare the same questions across different sports. According to Bryman (2011) some degree of structure is needed in a multiple-case study.

As recommended by Bryman (2011) and Bell (2006) we used an interview guide in our data collection. Firstly, we structured the questions according to themes and tried to make a good flow between the themes (Bryman, 2011). We were careful about not asking any leading or judging questions (Bell, 2006).

The interview guide has to a small extent been altered along the interviewing process depending on if we saw that some questions or formulations worked better than others. The first conducted interview was our *pre-study* and a thorough evaluation of the interview guide was done after the interview. But little alteration was needed and as we have a limited number of cases the first interview is part of our empirical data.

As it is important to be knowledgeable (Bryman, 2011), background information about the different sports were gathered in order to read up before the interviews. This saved time as the interviewee did not need to explain too much about the sport and its organization and it also built trust with the interviewee as we communicated a genuine interest in the sport.

When possible interviews were conducted face-to-face in an environment that the interviewee was comfortable with. Phone interviews were only used when necessary because of their drawbacks. Firstly, they are not suitable for long interviews as it is easier for an interviewee to end the conversation early. Secondly, an interviewee's body language cannot be seen and we cannot interpret how they react to different questions (Bryman, 2011).

All interviews were recorded and transcribed directly afterwards, to enable simultaneous analysis and to see if there were interesting themes that we wanted to investigate more in upcoming interviews (Bryman, 2011.) The interviews lasted from 60 minutes to 86 minutes, with most them being around 75 minutes.

3.4 Analysis method

Edmondson and McManus (2007) recommend to use thematic content analysis coding for qualitative research in a nascent theoretical field. When analyzing the data we used different qualitative coding methods to sort the data to make it easier to find patterns and draw conclusions from the data. Saldaña (2013) distinguishes between first cycle coding (when the data is analyzed for the first time) and second cycle coding (applied after first cycle coding to organize the codes).

In the first cycle, we used structural coding which means that the data is coded in relation to the interview questions. Similarly coded segments from different interviews were then collected together for more detailed coding and analysis. This is a method that is particularly appropriate for studies employing multiple participants. We also used descriptive coding in the first cycle. Descriptive coding put “labels to data to summarize in a word or short phrase - most often as a noun - the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data” (Saldaña 2013, p.262). This method was used for the parts of the interview that could not be related to a specific interview question.

In the second cycle, pattern coding was used. Pattern coding is about applying category labels that identifies similarly coded data. The aim was to develop major themes from the data and search for explanations, rules and causes in the data (Saldanã, 2013).

The secondary sources were analyzed by picking out relevant data that could be connected to existing codes and themes from the interviews, but also allowing for new themes and codes to be added. Lastly, an in-depth analysis of all the data and the detected themes and connections was made in relation to theory.

3.5 Data quality

When a qualitative approach is used four areas are of interest when assuring the quality of the data. These will be discussed below.

3.5.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to whether the results of a study are representing the reality in the research field (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility can be enhanced by using several observers, several theoretical perspectives and several data sources (Bryman, 2011). Both authors were present at all interviews and when we started coding the data we did it independently. Afterwards, we compared our results to arrive at a coherent coding scheme. The data was then analyzed and categorized independently before comparison and final analysis were done together. In this way potential biases were minimized. As explained in the literature review and method several theoretical perspectives were used and both primary and secondary sources are part of the empirics.

Furthermore, to ensure that the answers from the interviews represented reality we used open-ended questions and gave interviewees enough time to respond without. The interviews were recorded and after transcription, summaries of the interviews including quotes were sent to the interviewees so they could confirm that everything was correct.

3.5.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree which the study’s results can be transferrable to other contexts or the same context at a different time. But as all qualitative studies focus on depth rather than breadth, the transferability is limited (Bryman, 2011). But we try to provide a basis for drawing general conclusions by adopting a replication logic (Yin, 2014) and cover a wide range of sports. The similarities between all the 12 sports have a high chance of being transferable to other Swedish sports as well.

The unique context of different sports can of course affect transferability and this issue is really the core of our research purpose. By examining contextual factors we take the initial steps for understanding under which circumstances results can be transferable or not. Furthermore, by providing “thick descriptions” of the method and empirics we help other researchers to judge if the results can be transferable to other contexts (Bryman, 2011).

3.5.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the extent which the research is conducted in a scientific way, and is closely related to credibility. To judge a study’s dependability it is important to have a thorough description of all the phases in the research process - this facilitates an audit of the study (ibid.). This topic has been elaborated on in the method section.

3.5.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is the measure of that the researcher has acted in good faith and that she has tried to be as objective as possible (ibid.). Confirmability has been achieved by ensuring credibility and dependability. Furthermore, as none of the researchers have prior working experience or have been participants in any sports and thus had little prior knowledge of the field, it minimized the risk of us applying subjective preconceptions on the study.

3.6 Limitations

One limitation of the study is that we have to trust the words of the interviewees as our time limit does not allow us to use observations as an additional research method. Interviewees might have their own agenda for answering the way they do and give a certain picture of their federation. For example, they might feel a pressure from SOC or RF to follow certain policies and cannot give answers which deviate from these. Thus, there is no guarantee that the information we have been given is actually applied in practice. We can compare some of the answers with written documents such as the talent ladders, but neither the ladders need to be applied in practice.

All except two interviews were conducted in English. English was not the interviewees’ first language and this can have limited their ability to speak freely. But the interview questions were sent out beforehand so that they could prepare their answers and the interviewees were informed that they could switch to Swedish during the interview when necessary.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Qualitative interviews have the drawback of being a subjective method and there is a risk for bias in how the interviews are conducted and how they are interpreted (Bell, 2006). It was important for us to have the mindset that this is an explorative study and that we are not looking for any set answers. Other ethical considerations that need to be made are that there is consent from the interviewees to participate in the study and that they fully understand what the interview will be about and what will be done with the results (ibid.). We followed the advice from Bell (2006) that the description of the study should be given in print beforehand rather than just at the beginning of the interview.

4. Empirics

Firstly, an overview of how the Swedish Olympic Committee and the Swedish Sports Confederation are organized is presented. Thereafter, the empirical data is presented according to the areas presented in our theoretical framework.

4.1 SOC and RF

The Swedish Olympic Committee's main responsibility is to prepare and operate the country's participation in the Olympic games and contribute to competitive Olympic teams by supporting Swedish athletes who have the potential to win Olympic medals. They organize the talent programs Topp & Talang (Top & Talent) and Utmanarstöd (Challenger program). For a description of the programs' content and purpose, see appendix 9.4. SOC consists of 36 member organizations, which are the national sport federations for the Olympic sports⁵ (The Swedish Olympic Committee, 2017).

The Swedish Sports Confederation, in Swedish named Riksidrottsförbundet (RF) is an umbrella organization for Swedish sport federations. It represents the whole Swedish sports movement in contact with authorities, politicians etc (Sports in Sweden, 2016). The national sport federations which are members of SOC are also members of RF. But SOC and RF are separate organizations and have different boards (Setzman, 2016).

For an organizational map of RF, see appendix 9.1. RF are responsible for distributing government grants among the 69 national special sport federations, who in turn distribute funds to the local sport clubs. RF also decides how much of the government grants SOC will receive for their activities.⁶ RF is a voluntary member-led organization, the 3.4 million members consist of individuals who are members in local sport clubs (RF och svensk idrott, 2017). RF has policies and guidelines which the federations and the local sport clubs need to follow in order to be a member and take part of the government funds. One of the policies is called "Idrotten Vill" and is described in appendix 9.5. Furthermore, the government can also give directives to RF about how the funds should be used. For example, in 2009 a directive was that more support should be given to develop elite sports, a directive which was kept until 2012 (För framtids segrar, 2011). In the latest budget for 2017, there is a directive to focus on integrating Swedish immigrants in the sport world. (Satsningar på idrotten i höstbudgeten, 2017).

As described in appendix 9.4, SOC gives funds on an individual basis to selected high performing athletes from the different sports. In comparison, RF gives a so called "Landslagsstöd" (translated to national team support) which is not individualized. In order to take part of the elite supports from RF and SOC the federation needs to have a talent ladder (also called talent development program) and requirements analysis (För framtids segrar, 2011). The talent ladder describes an athlete's path from junior to senior elite level and gives recommendations about what to train and how much to train. The requirements analysis

⁵ There are also 14 "recognized federations" - sports recognized by the International Olympic Committee, but not currently on the Olympic programme

⁶ In 2016, 39 million SEK were distributed to SOC from the total government funds of 1,9 billion SEK (Petterson, 2016; Idrotten får miljoner för integration, 2016).

describes what the athlete needs to achieve in order to have the potential to be a top performing elite athlete.

Furthermore, RF is also together with other parties part of organizing *Riksidrottsgymnasium* (RIG) and *Nationella Idrottsutbildningar* (NIU) - sport high schools (gymnasiums) for youths.⁷ At the RIGs and NIUs youths can combine studies and the pursuit of having a career within sports. Generally, the RIGs are aimed at young athletes who want to compete on a high international level, while NIUs are for athletes who want to compete on a national level (Forsell, 2016). RF decides which sports and which schools that can have RIGs and they also distribute the number of places given to each sport. The sport federation is responsible for developing and following up both the NIUs and RIGs. RF does not have a formal role when it comes to the NIUs, but they support the federation in their work with the NIUs (Anordnare av RIG/NIU, 2016). The federations have higher quality criteria for the RIGs than the NIUs. The NIUs can e.g. have more students per coach than the RIGs. The federations are in most cases following up the students at the RIGs more systematically than the students at the NIUs.

4.2 The organization of talent identification (TI)

This section will give an overview of TI in the sport federations by describing how TI is organized. What the sport federations look for in a talent and which assessment methods that are used will be discussed in the next section.

4.2.1 The start of TI

The start of TI in the sport federations are presented in table 3, after section 4.5. The start differs and that is largely depending on the specific characteristics of the sport. In shooting, there is no use of looking for talents before the age of 13-15 years as the children do not have the physical ability to shoot standing up before this age. Similarly, the screening of talents in sailing is done at the age of 15 years as younger children are often sailing in the so called optimist class with small boats which differ a lot from the boats that are used in the Olympic competitions. As a contrast, table tennis looks for talents from the age of 8-11 years and badminton from the age of 11-13 years. The identification starts early in these sports as a lot of training is required from an early age to be competitive on the international arena. But the rest of the sport federations start to identify talents at the age of 13 years or later, mainly because 13 years is the age when RF allows the federations to have national competitions. As the interviewees answered when they start to identify talents on a national level, it might be that sport districts start to identify talents earlier than what is shown in table 3.

4.2.2 The structure of TI

Almost all sports describe the selection to the RIGs as a key component in their TI. But some sports such as handball, football and badminton explain how they organize their TI around training camps. The structure is similar in the three sports; the local clubs nominate promising athletes to district training camps. The district sport federations then make a selection of the nominated candidates. At the district camps competitions are held and sometimes physical tests are done. Representatives from the national sport federation participate at the district

⁷ Swedish children start gymnasium (high school) the year they turn 16 and the education is usually three years

training camps to screen how the youths are playing. Selected candidates from the district camps are chosen to be part of national training camps and can ultimately be given a place in the national youth team. The national training camps can be seen as talent development programs where athletes get an elite-oriented training.

Equestrian, swimming, tennis and golf also have the stepwise structure with talent development activities first on a district level and later on a national level, but with some variations from the process described above. Notably, in tennis the sport clubs have a prominent role in TM. Therefore, they also select athletes by communicating with club coaches and not only with the districts.

The interviewees of the other sports did not elaborate on the TI process of selecting athletes to their youth national teams, nor did they mention anything about the role of the district sport federations in the TI process. Table tennis explains that the sport is so small that talents can be selected through networking and communication with the different sport clubs and by looking at results from competitions. For all the other sports not mentioned in this section, the focus was on the selection to the RIGs when the TI process was described.

4.3 The assessment of talent and talent definitions

Firstly, the interviewees were asked an open question about what they look for in a talent. Later, they were asked specific questions about the approaches described in figure 3. In this section, the findings for the first open question and the latter questions are presented in a combined format. Additional aspects which are not covered in Dries' (2013) talent definition approaches are also elaborated on. Lastly, the TI methods used are described. For an overview of some of the results, see table 3.

4.3.1 Predictability

A common opinion in the sport federations is that it is hard to predict talent and this circumstance affects how they identify and select talents. For example, the average age for the top 10 Olympic athletic athletes in the different disciplines are between 26-28 years. Athletics say that it is impossible to say if a 12-year-old will be a top performer or not in 14-16 years. Similar views are expressed by the other sports; there are many years left before a youth will reach the top of their career, much can happen along the way. It is also hard to know if a youth might be achieving good results just because he or she is early developed physically. The ones who are late developed will later surpass the ones who are early developed, which further complicates the issue of predicting talent.

4.3.2 Output or input approach

All sports say that they value motivation and attitude more than results when they identify talents. Some sports make a distinction and say that results are not that important in a young age, but at senior level talent is assessed mainly on results as predictability becomes easier. The categorization of which approach the sports have in table 3 is from the youth perspective.



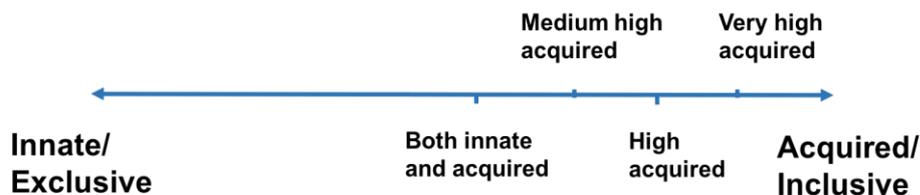
Results

All the sports say that they look at the athletes' sport results when selecting them, but none of them says that it is the most important factor. Most sports say that they do not put that much emphasis on what athletes are able to perform at the moment because these results do not accurately predict what they will perform in the future. But if an athlete's results show a steep development curve, this person is of special interest even though he or she is not performing as well as other candidates. Moreover, the same kind of reasoning is also applied by SOC when they pick out athletes from different sports to their talent development programs.

Motivation

All sports mention that motivation (or attitude) is an important selection criteria when looking for talents, and the majority of the sports mention motivation first when asked about what they generally look for in a talent. Motivation is especially important since athletes need to train for many years before they reach the top. When shooting and sailing pick talents to their RIGs they are primarily looking for motivation. The athletes are in these sports basically beginners when they attend the RIGs and to develop them as much as they can during the high school years, the athlete's motivation is the most crucial.

4.3.3 Innate or acquired approach and inclusive or exclusive approach



Sports such as cross-country skiing and athletics lie between an innate and an acquired approach. The view is that there is a maximum limit of how far you can reach only with training and without the right innate abilities. But nevertheless, it is not sufficient with good genes to reach the top.

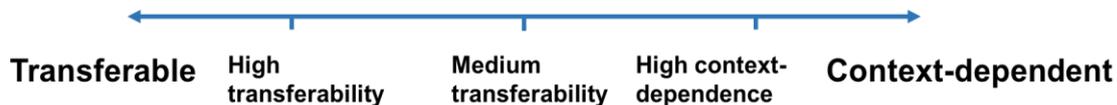
Handball is a sport which expresses a medium high acquired/inclusive approach. Not everyone can be an elite player. But as there are many positions to play in handball, with the right training there are good possibilities to reach the top independent of which innate qualities you have.

But as the sport is rather complex, we can use small fast players, we can use big and strong players. With the right training, with the right interaction between coaches and athletes, you can become a top player with a special set of skills. And you can also become a top player with another set of skills. (Handball)

Some sports such as football express a quite high acquired approach as they think that you only need some minimum level of innate talent, the rest is acquired. Lastly, there is also a very high acquired approach expressed by golf.

We see few signs that talent is genetic and that you are born with it. Those who are best and on top of different rankings are those who have practiced the most, with good help and sparring. (Golf)

4.3.4 Transferable or context-dependent approach



The interviewees were asked if talent is general and can be transferred between sports or if talent is specific and dependent on that sport's context. In general, talent is perceived as transferable between sports if the focus is on a specific physical ability such as endurance, strength or speed.

Lots of sprinters can move over to American football when they are at the late stage of their career because they run fast. (Athletics)

But talent is generally perceived as less transferable when the sports involve more technical factors. Swimming thinks that a good swimmer can be successful in another sport. But an athlete from another sport might not be as good in swimming because the sport is so technical.

The three racket sports covered in this study say that talent can be transferable to or from their sports if the sports are somewhat similar. But badminton and tennis add that the transfer needs to be done quite early. Golf has the mindset that everything in the sport can be learnt, it depends on if you have the right motivation and especially that you have enough time to learn. But golf does not express that it would be a crucial advantage to be talented in another sport in order to be talented in golf. Shooting does not think that talent can be transferable.

Some interviewees were also asked to elaborate on if talent is context-dependent or transferable in another perspective, namely if a switch in environment might affect talent, e.g. if a non-successful athlete in one sport club can be talented in another. The answer was that a switch of sport clubs can matter as coaches in another club can have another way of working which suits that person better. Handball has examples of athletes who went to play in Germany but were not that successful abroad but were good again when they moved back to Sweden.

When elaborating on if a person's talent will shine through even though that person is in an environment with less optimal conditions, cross-country skiing says that if e.g. an athlete is training at a NIU instead of a RIG and do not have many peers that are as dedicated to skiing, it might be strugglesome for that athlete. But if the athlete has talent and the motivation to train on his/her own, he or she can still reach the top. Tennis also expresses that success is to a great extent dependent on the athlete's own will and ambition.

4.3.5 Object or subject approach

Interviewees were not asked if they had an objective or subjective approach to talent as the question was proven to be too hard to answer. The empirical data does not show any apparent examples of an objective approach to talent, but there are examples of that the sports adopt a subjective approach and sees the whole person as a talent and therefore work with the whole person. Athletics say that their task is to support the athletes as individuals. They might not make the best decisions when they are young and immature at the age of 15 years, so the federation's task is to help them make the right decisions. Many sports also mention that they need to work with keeping the athletes after high school, as there is a tendency for the athletes to pursue something else at that age. They need to enroll them in programs or give other forms of support for them continue to train so that they will be good enough for the senior level. Often, they are given a place in a talent program which is in between the youth level and senior level. SOC's challenger program is also used for this target group.⁸ This can in a way be resembled to the practice of succession plans which are prevalent in TM for enterprises.

Next two other factors that the sport federations assess when they identify talents are described and lastly the TI methods used are outlined.

4.3.6 Physical abilities and physical properties

Many sports use physical tests for e.g. speed and endurance when assessing athletes. But it is not a very important selection criteria, many sports such as badminton and football say that the athletes have the time to develop these abilities. Sailing and equestrian are the only sports who mention definite selection criterion when it comes to physical properties. Sailors need to be of a certain height to have a chance to become successful Olympic sailors, and riders cannot be extremely short or tall, or extremely heavy. But other than that, the sailors and riders do not need to have the best physical abilities, it is enough if they are fit for purpose. Physical abilities and properties also play a minor role in shooting. In contrast, more "one-dimensional" sports such as athletics of course have a high focus on physical abilities such as speed and endurance for some disciplines.

4.3.7 Technique

Many sports say that sport technique is something that can be developed with enough amount of training. Therefore, it is more important with other factors such as motivation, the willingness to learn and coachability than the athletes' current technical level. However, several technical sports such as golf, tennis, table tennis and badminton say that there is a time window of when the technical abilities should be developed. For example, the time window for golf is between 7-12 years. Golf says that it is possible to be good in the sport if you start later too, but it is like learning a language, it is easier if you learn it naturally as a child.

4.3.8 TI methods

As mentioned earlier, some methods which are used when identifying talents are physical tests and screening of sport results. Many sports also depend on the subjective assessment

⁸ For information about the challenger program, see appendix 9.4

of experienced coaches. This is mentioned as one of the potential assessment methods in RF's guidelines for the selection to RIGs.

“Common sense” (or “practical reasoning”), that is the silent knowledge and experience which coaches have collected and from which they identify what talent is, constitutes a subjective assessment. The sport federation should together with coaches reflect on which values and presumptions that are underlying the subjective assessment.

(Riksidrottsförbundets riktlinjer för urval till riksidrottsgymnasier och nationellt godkända idrottsutbildningar , p.4 - see appendix 9.6)

As explained by the interviewees, another method used for the selection to RIGs is interviews where the sport federations try to find if the athletes understand what it takes to be an elite athlete and if they have the right attitude and motivation. For a summary of the assessment areas in RF's guidelines for RIGs, see appendix 9.7.

Which assessment areas that SOC has for selection to their talent development programs can also be found in appendix 9.8.

4.4 Talent development

The interviewees did not put focus on explaining the specific content of what is educated to the youths at training camps or other talent development programs. But a majority of the sports spontaneously choose to emphasize that it is key to give **individual support** to athletes. It is important to find out what a specific individual needs in order to be better. Swimming says that they previously only sent all their top youth athletes to standardized training camps. They still have these camps, but more focus is put on doing individual development plans for the athletes.

The rest of this section will summarize the findings from the different sports' talent ladders, see table 3. Some theoretical concepts from section 2.4.2 will be used. Some talent ladders from the sports were not available online and were neither sent by the federations upon request. Therefore, the information is incomplete.

It is evident that all sports have used or been influenced by the **LTAD model** in the development of their talent ladders.⁹ But the age spans have been adjusted to the specific sport and it is communicated clearly that consideration needs to be taken to individual differences, the role of puberty and mental and physical maturity.

If a step in the talent ladder mentions play or/and focus on joyful training and if the latter step does not mention it, the starting age of the latter step is defined as the **transition from play to practice** in table 3. If the steps in the LTAD model are used the transition is defined as the age when there is a transition from “move with joy” to “learn to train”, given that the “learn to train” stage is not focusing on play too in that sport federation's design of the talent ladder. Badminton has the earliest transition from play to practice and the age span of 10-12 years encompasses both the “learn to train” and “train to train” stages. In this age span the development opportunities for training technique is large.

⁹ The different phases such as “learning to train”, “train to compete” etc. have been used, or the goals of the stages such as building “fundamental movement skills” are reflected in the talent ladders.

The age for **specialization** is when the sport federation recommends an athlete to only focus on one sport. The sources used are primarily the talent ladders but if there was no information in them, the age was searched for in the interview transcripts or in the report by Fahlström (2011).¹⁰ None of the sports recommend a particularly early specialization. A few of the sports have decided to not have an official recommendation. Golf says in the interview that the decision to specialize usually comes naturally for the youths. When the training amount in a sport increases there is usually little room left for practicing other sports too. The sports which elaborated on the topic of specialization in the interviews were all positive to late specialization. It can e.g. give benefits such as improved athleticism. But for all sports except shooting, the view is that you need to specialize at some point.

The start of the **high performance** stage is when an athlete in a sense turns professional and tries to pursue an elite career, in the LTAD model it is the transition to the “train to win” stage and when the focus is on “high performance”. Sailing has the latest start of their high performance stage and their age span for developing fundamental sport skills (15-17 years) is also late compared to other sports.

In the material we have access to, not many of the sports give specific recommendations about the amount of training which is needed in different ages. But given that a large amount of the training in younger years focus on play and that federations recommend training that is not sport-specific (i.e. late specialization) high up in the years, support cannot be found that the 10 years/10 000h rule of organized **deliberate practice** which was presented in the literature review in section 2.4.2 is practiced in the sports. Instead, the (limited) empirical data we have suggests that the concept of **deliberate play** could be prevalent in the sport federations.

4.5 The importance of TI compared to talent development

Interviewees were asked if TI or talent development is the most crucial for successful TM. All sports say that talent development is the most crucial, except for badminton and football who say that both are equally important. Badminton says that both are important because “you cannot take one of the things away”. But badminton comments that the identification of people with good skills does not guarantee success because you cannot predict if they are willing to put in the amount of training it takes to reach the elite level. Similarly, the most usual comment from the sports is that it is hard to predict talent and who will be an elite athlete and therefore talent development is naturally the most important. Table tennis and golf say that talent development is the most important because TI is relatively easy. Golf says that it is easy because there are so few youths who are competing in the sport, and therefore “no one is flying under the radar”. Table tennis expresses a similar view.

¹⁰ For information about this report, see section 3.2.2

Concerning the relationship between TI and talent development, it is said in RF's guidelines for selection of youths to the RIGs that:

We are not finding talents, we are developing them. Focus should therefore be on the student's potential to develop rather than on identification based on previous achievements.

(Riksidrottsförbundets riktlinjer för urval till riksidrottsgymnasier och nationellt godkända idrottsutbildningar, p.4 - see appendix 9.6)

Sport	Popularity of the sport (2014)		Talent definitions				Talent ident.	Talent development					TI vs TD
	Active participants	Average participation/member ¹⁾	Output/input	Innate/acquired-Inclusive/exclusive	Transferable/context-dependent	Start of TI		Transition from play to practice	Specialization	Start of high performance stage	Hours of training/year at high performance	Most crucial for successful TM	
Athletics	374,596	4,3	High input	Both innate and acquired	High transferability	15 years (RIG)	No info	17-18 years	No info	No info	Talent dev.		
Badminton	25,083	22,2	High input	Medium high acquired	Medium transferability	11-13 years	10 years	15 years	19 years	(25-35h/week) About 1125-1470 ³⁾	Both		
Cross-country skiing	103,457 ²⁾	3,8 ²⁾	High input	Both innate and acquired	High transferability	15 years (RIG)	13 years	12-16 years	20 years	700-900	Talent dev.		
Equestrian	155,044	17,1	High input	Medium high acquired	Medium transferability	12 years (district) 16 years (national)	12 years	No info	18 years	No info	Talent dev.		
Football	441,869	45,9	High input	High acquired	High transferability	13 years (district) 15 years (national)	12 years	No info	19 years	No info	Both		
Golf	467,523	0,9	High input	Very high acquired	High context-dependence	14 years	13 years	No official recommendation	19 years	No info	Talent dev.		
Handball	78,199	38,1	High input	Medium high acquired	High transferability	15 years	No material	No material	No material	No material	Talent dev.		
Sailing	37,472	2,8	Very high input	High acquired	Medium transferability	15 years (RIG)	15 years	19-20 years	23 years	750-810	Talent dev.		

Shooting	83,317	2,3	Very high input	High acquired	High context-dependence	15 years (RIG)	No material	Other sports recommended	No material	Talent dev.
Swimming	136,584	16,2	High input	Both innate and acquired	Medium transferability	13 years (girls) 14 years (boys)	12-14 Years	No official recommendation	17(girls) 19 (boys)	1200-1400 Talent dev.
Table tennis	40,744	16,1	High input	Medium high acquired	Medium transferability	8-11 years	No material	No official recommendation	No material	Talent dev.
Tennis	90,902	16,3	High input	High acquired	Medium transferability	13 years	13 years (boys) 12 years (girls)	17 years (boys) 16 years (girls)	21 years (boys) 20 years (girls)	1100-1300 Talent dev.

Source for *Popularity of the sport*: Idrotten i siffror (2015)

- 1) Participation: the count of each time a member goes to a training or other sports activity
- 2) The data is for all skiing sports and not only cross-country skiing
- 3) Given that an athlete trains 45 weeks per year

Table 3: Summary of results for talent definitions, TI and talent development

4.6 Contextual factors

In this section, the contextual factors affecting the sports and their TM are presented. For clarity, the contextual factors will be presented according to our theoretical framework (see figure 9). Even though institutional logics are part of the macro-level in the theoretical framework, they will be elaborated on separately in the next section as the scope of the data related to these aspects is large.

4.6.1 Specific characteristics of the sport

As mentioned in section 4.2.1, the specific characteristics of a sport has an impact on when TI is starting. In the interviews, it was also notable that the selection processes were less elaborate if the sport has less active participants to choose from. However, connections between how popular the sport is and the TI and talent development dimensions outlined in table 3 could not be seen.

Moreover, some sports say that there is a window of opportunity for learning the techniques of a sport (see section 4.3.7), this characteristic has an impact on these sports' talent development as they have a perception of when it is too late to start practicing that sport if the goal is to become an elite athlete.

Furthermore, if the sport is such that it takes many years after high school before the athletes will break through on the international arena and earn a living, that will also affect talent development as measures need to be taken to keep the athletes committed to a career within sports. The economic conditions for pursuing an elite career in Sweden will be discussed in section 4.6.4.

4.6.2 Micro factors

There are several examples of that consideration is taken to an athlete's immediate environment when conducting TM. SOC puts focus on evaluating an athlete's social environment when they select people to their talent programs. If they are in a bad social environment they need to have the will to change it. In sailing's guidelines for selection to their challenger program they have the requirement that the athlete's life situation need to be compatible with the sport. For the athletes in golf's talent development program, it is a standard procedure to always invite the parents and coaches to every activity the athletes do. They see the athletes, the parents and the coach(es) as a team who have a strong influence on the success of the athlete.

A contextual factor which is in between the micro and meso level is to which extent an athlete has other good athletes around them. It is part of their immediate environment (micro) but it is also an organizational question of how the sports decide to arrange their activities (meso). To gather the best athletes at the same place for inspiration and joint training is something that several sports mention as advantageous. RIGs are such a place and cross-country skiing says that their most talented athletes throughout history were not the best in their youths. But in their age group there was always someone better than them. That these future top stars had someone in their immediate environment that they always had to try to beat contributed to their success.

spending money on this level will improve talent development. Cross-country skiing says that if they would have more money, they would put resources on youths between 14-16 years and try to improve their athleticism. In that way, they would have better candidates to choose from when they select students to the RIGs.

An example of how the organization's economy affects TM is given by sailing. They say that it is hard to plan long-term when they do not know from year to year how much money they will get from RF and SOC.

It is also mentioned that having too much money for talent development is not good. Athletics says that as Swedish coaches to a very large extent are volunteers and coach on their spare time, it means that they do it because they love the sport. In some other countries, the coaches might do it for the money and that might affect quality to the worse. Furthermore, swimming thinks that there is a break-even point where the money you spend on developing talent will not lead to more top talents. Sweden can e.g. never produce more swimming talents than another country with a bigger population no matter how much money that is spent.

Policies (from RF)

RF affects the sport federations' TM as they have policies and demands which the federations need to follow to get governmental funds. Examples of how RF's policies affect TM are given by several sports.

The badminton federation has had ranking lists of their 11-year-old players. They were not public and the lists were only used when tournaments were held so that the two best players did not meet each other in the first match. But these lists were not approved by RF and were ultimately taken away.

Golf is affected by RF's policy that athletes cannot compete nationally or internationally before the age of 13 years. It leads to both the problem that good golfers might not get enough stimulation and that golfers from Sweden are not as skilled as their international counterparts who start to compete earlier. However, golf says that a golfer's career is long and it might be wise to not rush. On the other hand, especially female golfers might want to reach the peak of their career earlier. This might suit better with their personal life and aspects such as starting a family.

In RF's policy document *Idrotten Vill* it is stated that the focus for children sports (below the age of 13 years) should be on play, that the federations should encourage late specialization and that consideration should be given to individual differences. In the report *Att finna och att utveckla talang* (Fahlström, 2011)¹¹ it is said that all the investigated sports had started to write their talent ladders in cooperation with RF and/or SOC. What can be seen in the now finished talent ladders are that these mentioned aspects are strong elements in all the sport federations' talent ladders. The sport federations' own policy documents also reflect the content which can be found in RF's *Idrotten Vill*.

¹¹ For information about this report, see section 3.2.2

Furthermore, cross-country skiing says that coaches/teachers at high school nowadays are more and more occupied by other tasks than training and teaching students.

The coaches must have time to be the coach and not get caught up in too much red tape issues. – Cross-country skiing

The coaches/teachers need to follow up on policies and do other administrative tasks which are imposed by them from RF or the Swedish National Agency for Education and this gives less time to talent development of the athletes.

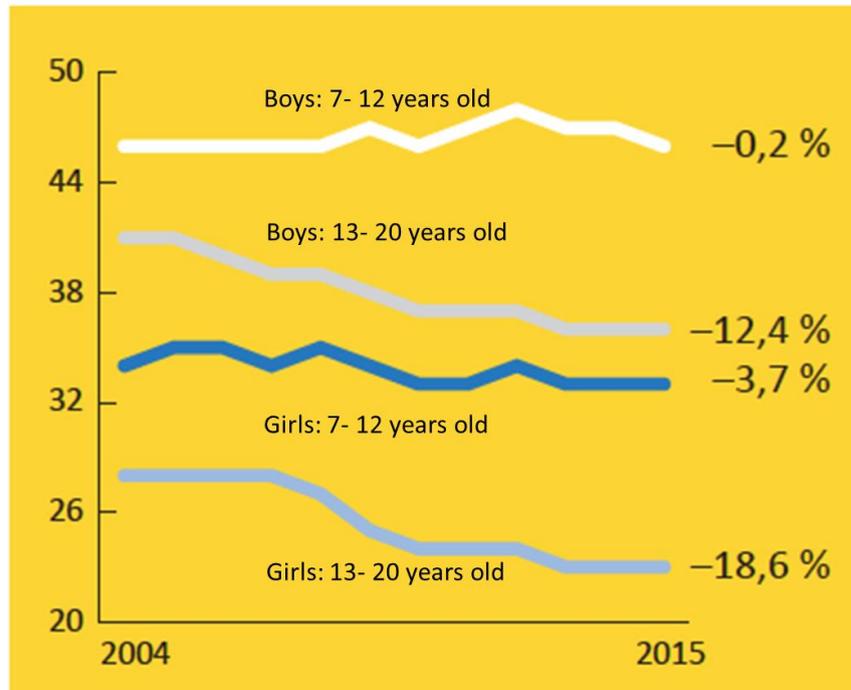
None of the federations give examples or problematize that there are certain policies from SOC which affect their TM. As SOC's goal is to help the sport federations to develop athletes so that they achieve the potential to win Olympic medals, they are a valuable partner. But some sport federations bring up that SOC operates in "four year cycles" while they do not have the same periodical thinking.

4.6.4 Macro factors

Interviewees were not asked any specific questions about macro factors affecting the sports, but the factors described in this section were elaborated on when the interviewees spoke freely. Some of the factors were mentioned when the interviewees were asked a general question about which challenges their sport is facing when it comes to TM. All macro factors which were detected in the interviews centered around two problems: (1) the base for recruitment to talent development programs is weak and (2) there is a struggle to keep athletes who want to pursue an elite career, the drop off is a large problem.

Sport participation has decreased

Several of the investigated sports say that they have a problem with that they have less participants than before. When looking on a national level for all sports in Sweden, sport participation has decreased.



The numbers next to the lines show the percentage change between 2004-2015

Figure 10 - Sport participation (the number of trainings attended) per capita. Svensk idrott idag (2016), page 4 - adapted

The decrease is much more prominent for the age group 13-20 years compared to earlier ages. Several sport federations experience that youths decide to not pursue an elite career mainly at two times. First, when youths start high school as school occupies the athletes' time. This is mainly a problem for the sports which cannot successfully attract athletes to their RIGs and NIUs. Later, the sports have a struggle to keep athletes after high schools, no matter if they have gone to a sport high school or not. This will be elaborated on later in this section.

However, the most popular sports in Sweden have seen an increase in participation.

Sport	Participation 2009	Participation 2015	Percentage change in participation from 2009 to 2015
Football	18 799 668	20 668 001	9.94%
Floorball	5 293 253	5 531 744	4.51%
Ice hockey	4 281 548	4 337 513	1.31%

Table 4 - Sport participation for the three largest sports

This implies that some sports are struggling relatively more with decreased participation than others. But also football says that they have a problem to keep athletes in their sport during and after gymnasium. In addition, new sports have emerged and as there are more sports to choose from this leaves even less active participants to each sport.

The decreased sport participation affects TM activities in such a way that the sports have a sentiment that they need to "work with what they have" and focus on motivating and developing

the athletes they have available. They need to keep all doors open, especially for late bloomers, and cannot have too exclusive TI processes.

Sweden's small population

Talent development with the goal of fostering international elite athletes in the sport is further complicated by Sweden's small population, which is a problem mentioned by several of the sport federations. The implications of this factor for TM are the same as described above for decreased sport participation. As an example of that TI processes cannot be too exclusive, athletics mentions the high jumper Stefan Holm.

He is 181 (cm) tall, which is very small for high jump. His father is a goalkeeper at a very low level. He seemed not to be the right coach, but still, Stefan won the gold medal at Olympics and still had his father as the coach. In our position, we have so few athletes and we have to say yes for these ones. Sometimes we are lucky. - Athletics

Decreased physical activity among children and youths

A problem mentioned by swimming, cross-country skiing and athletics is that children are less physically active than before.¹² The children are less physically fit when they start participating in the sports. Even though the athletes develop their physical abilities during training, it matters if they are physically active also on their spare time, outside school and training.

The economic attractiveness of pursuing an elite career

How economically attractive it is to pursue an elite career in sports is a factor which is both on the macro and meso level. It is on the meso level because the sport federation's economy decides if the athletes can get economic compensation or not. But it is also on the macro level because the job market in Sweden and other societal factors affect how relatively attractive it is to be an elite athlete.

The common situation is that even though an athlete is performing at top level when he or she is a youth, there is a large gap to the top performance on the senior level when the athlete ends gymnasium. Some sport federations have addressed this problem by having talent development programs for athletes which are in between the youth level and the senior level. The goal is to motivate the athletes to continue to train. However, in most of the sports the situation is that not even the athletes who are part of the senior national team can support themselves economically without working or studying part-time, even if they get the much-needed scholarships from SOC's Top and Talent program. To pursue a career within sports is particularly unattractive for sports with expensive equipment such as sailing and in sports for which it takes a very long time before you reach the peak of your career.

Several sport federations say that they feel that their athletes have a pressure to get a university education in order to get a good job and support themselves after the end of their elite career. But university studies are hard to combine with elite training and therefore initiatives which try to facilitate the situation for studying athletes have been important. Some Swedish universities have a collaboration with RF and different sport federations where they try to customize study plans according to elite athletes' needs so that they can combine training, competitions and studies (Riksidrottsuniversitet, 2017).

¹² For more information on the topic, see Karlsson (2017)

When talking about the athletes' economic situation the general sentiment in the federations was that the circumstances are sad, but that they do not have the resources to give the athletes more economic support. As outlined previously in this section, the interviewees were asked what they would prioritize doing with regards to TM if their budget was higher. Only shooting answered that they would prioritize giving more economic support to the athletes. Thus, the federations seem to feel that other measures for improving TM is more urgent.

4.7 Institutional logics

With the institutional logics in sports as an inspiration (see section 2.7) the interviewees were firstly asked some general questions connected to the theory. For example:

Do you feel that you are affected by commercial influences? If so, in which way? Has it had an impact on your work with finding talents and developing elite athletes?

Afterwards, the institutional logics in sports as given by Stenling and Fahlén (2009) were presented by the help of table 1 and the interviewees were asked to elaborate about how the logics might affect TM. The general questions were asked first so that the interviewees were not guided in their answers.

Next, the findings from both the general questions and the latter questions when the institutional logics had been presented are described in a combined format. A summary of the findings are found in table 5.

4.7.1 Media

None of the sports except for football says that their TM practices are affected by media. Football thinks that media has such a strong focus on them because the sport is so big. They say that media only concentrates on the bad aspects and not on the good aspects of the sport. A hot topic covered in the media at the moment is the matter of selecting children to talent development activities. They feel that this criticism is only given by media to football and not other sports, such as individual sports. This matter has had an influence on their TM. The topic of selection in football will be further discussed in section 4.7.4.

When expanding on the topic of media's role, several sports say that they do not want to have media attention for their young athletes. If they are labelled as talents by the media it might put negative pressure on them. Only a few sports spontaneously discuss positive effects of media attention. Golf and badminton say that it is important for children to have role models in the sport and it is therefore good if media reports about their successful athletes. But on the other hand, badminton says that that there is a danger if media reports negatively about an athlete as that would have the opposite effect. Tennis says that if the sport gets media attention it might lead to that children discover the sport and starts to practice it instead of traditional sports such as football and ice-hockey.

But as said, even though the sport federations express that media is not an actor which is absent in their sport, the federations do not feel that their sport or their TM is directly affected by media (with the exception for football). Handball gives an example of when they were

criticized in media for not selecting a specific athlete to their national team. But the media criticism did not change their decision.

4.7.2 Political

If the influence from RF (which can be seen as a political actor) is disregarded, none of the sports feel that they are affected by any political influences. The role of RF and their policies is elaborated on in section 4.6.3. Football says that they are affected by politics within their federation when their district sport federations have different opinions about TM. This will be further elaborated on in the next section.

4.7.3 Sport-for-all

The sport-for-all logic is prevalent in all sports but some sport federations say that it affects their TM while some say that it does not. Some interviewees interpret the logic as the grassroots sport logic and argue that good broad and amateur sports¹³ is positive for the elite sport as it creates a good base for selection.

Football and badminton say that the sport-for-all logic affects TM, but in a negative way. In the sport-for-all logic there is a resistance against selecting individuals and give them special treatment. For badminton, there is an outside force in the form of RF which hinders them to select talents at an earlier age and give them extra training. In football, the resistance against selection comes from the organization itself. In some district sport federations it is not allowed to pick out talents to the regional training camps, everyone who wants can participate. As other sport federations, the football federation has a bottom-up approach and the districts have autonomy to shape their own policies. The effect on TM is that if everyone can go to the regional training camps some of the best might stay at home and train with their club instead because they do not find it enjoyable to be at the camps. This makes it hard for the representatives from the sport federation to pick out talents.

In fact, the football federation is having a conference with all districts where the topic of preparatory elite activities will be discussed. They hope that the districts which are against selection see the importance of having a common strategy for TM. Football gives an example of a parent who called the national sport federation and explained that his two young daughters really wanted to pursue an elite career in football but that their district's policies made it impossible. The parent felt that youths should be given equal opportunities no matter where they live, an opinion that also the national sport federation has and which will be raised on the mentioned conference.

4.7.4 Result-oriented (sport logic)

Only handball says that a result-oriented mindset or logic is affecting their sport and TM. Sweden is used to having good results in handball. They hope that this mindset affects the work in such a way that they keep a pride in always having high quality in their work. But at the same time, the federation says that result-orientation is not something that should be applied to youths. They need to remind the youths over and over again that it does not matter if they win a match or not. The focus should be on development. Similarly, several other sports

¹³ For more info, see section 2.7 about the Swedish sports model

say that they are not result-oriented, but rather development-oriented. They do not want to have a too competitive environment. Measures for putting less focus on results are given by e.g. tennis. They have started to have ranking lists later for their youths and the youth championships start at a later age. They hope that it will contribute to decreased stress.

However, even though the sports say that they are not guided by a result-oriented mindset in their federations and that it does not influence TM, they explain that the result-oriented logic exists in their federation when Stenling & Fahlén's three institutional logics are presented. An explanation of this inconsistency could be that the result-oriented logic exists but that the federations do not feel pressured by it.

4.7.5 Commercialization

All of the sports except equestrian say that the federation and/or the sport itself are not affected by commercial influences, and commercial influences are certainly not affecting their TM work. Some federations mention as an example that even though they have sponsors, the sponsors do not try to shape their work.

Even though the sport federations answer that they are not influenced by commercial influences when given a direct question about it, some sports discuss the topic of commercial influences from the athlete's perspective and express that they have an impact. For example, table tennis says that it would be good if the federation could support the athletes more when it comes to issues related to working professionally as a table tennis player. They need to get education about how to get sponsors and to handle the business side of the sport.

Equestrian is the only sport which says that they are strongly affected by commercial influences. The riders need to learn how to run a business already from an early age. It is expensive to have horses and have employees for them.

Furthermore, commercial influences can be detected in tennis as the sport has commercial tennis academies beside the ordinary voluntary sport clubs. But the tennis federation does not express that it affects their TM in any particular way. To our knowledge, this phenomenon is not prevalent in any other of our investigated sports. Interestingly, when discussing commercial influences, golf uses the existence of private tennis academies as a bad example and expresses that it is a path which they wish that their sport will not follow. They have been approached by several commercial projects who want to take care of the junior's talent development for them, but the federation has rejected them. When asked about how a commercial actor's approach to talent development might differ from their own golf says that they think that the commercial actor will be more short-term and result-oriented.

4.7.6 Prevalence of and interaction between the institutional logics

After being presented the sport-for-all, result-oriented and commercialization logics the interviewees were asked to elaborate on how prevalent these logics are in the sport and in the national sport federation. They were also asked to discuss how they interact with each other and if they experience any difficulties combining them. The findings from these questions are presented in this section and are also summarized in table 5. Notably, few of the sports choose

to elaborate on the commercialization logic. Therefore, the focus of this section will be on the sport-for-all and result oriented logics.

Some of the sport federations say that the institutional logics are held separate in the sport and that the logics are not at conflict with each other. Athletics say that the sport-for-all logic is prevalent in younger age groups while the result-oriented is present in older age groups. Equestrian says that sport-for-all is what guides riders who ride for recreation while the result-oriented logic is what guides professional riders.

However, most other sports say that there is a conflict between the sport-for-all logic and the result-oriented logic. Some federations just explain that there is a conflict and how it appears, while other federations have the strong opinion that the conflict is unnecessary and that the two logics should be able to exist together.

An example of how it is difficult to combine the two logics is given by shooting. They had previously tried to develop elite athletes in a sport-for-all setting. But that only led to that many athletes got little resources but no one got enough. TM became much easier when a separate budget and organization was created for the elite athletes. Other sports say that it is difficult to combine the logics in situations when they want to select more talented athletes to train together. As explained in section 4.7.3, this can meet opposition.

Some sports say that the result-oriented logic should be allowed to take more space and especially that it should be accepted that it co-exists with the sport-for-all logic. A common argument is that it would be no grassroots sports without a successful elite which makes the sport attractive. Cross-country skiing says that the sport-for-all logic might lead to that athletes which have an intrinsic motivation to compete and be result-oriented are not given the freedom to do so.

Sport	Meso	Effect of institutional logics on TM					Prevalence of and interaction between the institutional logics
		Media	Political	Sport-for-all	Result-orientation	Commercialization	
Athletics	Organization of TM						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Result-orientation • Sport-for-all • Commercialization
	Partly centralized			No, not that affected because the logic is mostly in younger age groups			<p>Sport-for-all in younger age groups</p> <p>Result-oriented in older age groups</p> <p>Commercialization is not that prevalent, only when an athlete and coach duo tries to pursue a professional career.</p> <p>No debate about where to put money - elite or breadth sport. The sport clubs are proud to produce good athletes</p>
Badminton	Mostly centralized	No effect		Yes, especially in sport clubs but also in the federation as RF does not allow them to select talents at an earlier age		No effect	<p>Needs to be a system which combines both RF's sport-for-all logic and SOC's elite thinking of achieving good sport results.</p> <p>Hard to combine sport-for-all and result-orientation sometimes, especially on the club level</p>
	Centralized		No effect	Yes, it might stifle youths who have an intrinsic desire to achieve good sport results. They should be allowed to have an elite thinking	No effect		<p>The sport-for-all logic is something that is present in the clubs and which the ski federation represents. But it would be good if the result-oriented logic could be given more space</p>
Equestrian	Mostly centralized			No, because riding on elite level and recreation level are separated.		Yes, strong effect	All logics are prevalent, sport-for-all for riders who do it as a hobby and the others for those who are professional
	Partly centralized	Yes, strong effect		Yes, especially when it comes to selecting players			All logics are prevalent and they can all work together, even though some districts might not think so. Some districts are more sport-for-all and do not like result-orientation
Golf	Centralized			No, but the federation wishes that the clubs could be more sport-for-all and play more with the kids		No effect	<p>The commercial logic is very prevalent on the club level. In the federation, it is a combination of sport-for-all and result-oriented. The clubs need to prioritize their economy and that can lead to that less focus is put on training children. There needs to be a view that golf is also a "regular sport".</p>

Handball	Partly centralized			Yes, because if more kids play handball the better the selection for the elite level	Yes, on the senior level.	No effect	All logics are prevalent and it is important for them to work together. The commercial side brings money to the elite sport and the breadth sport. With good breadth there will be more elites. If elites perform well it will attract people to the sport giving more breadth
Sailing	Centralized		Yes, if more people start with the sport there is a greater chance that they will continue to the elite level			No , but athletes need to learn how to get sponsors	Most of the federation's member clubs are not into competitions or have elite sailing as a priority/activity
Shooting	Centralized		No , not now when they have their own budget for the elite level		No effect	No effect	Sport-for-all and result-orientation are prevalent and they might be hard to combine. They have separate departments for them, one working with sport-for-all and one with the elite teams
Swimming	Mostly centralized		No , there are possibilities for people who want to swim for recreation and for those competing			No effect	Mainly sport-for-all is prevalent. Result-orientation is not that prevalent in the federation but the board has decided that swimming should perform on the international level. But for the other sports in the federation* the aim is just to increase participation
Table tennis	Partly centralized		Yes , with good breadth sport the chances of finding good elite talents increase			No , but athletes need to learn how to get sponsors	All aspects are prevalent and they go hand in hand. It is a pity that the elite sport and breadth sport thinking are put against each other
Tennis	Decentralized		Yes , because good breadth creates economic possibilities for hiring coaches for the elite players			No , but there exist several prominent commercial tennis academies	All are prevalent, but the importance of them differ between the clubs. But the sport-for-all logic is the base, then there is a separate section for the elite athletes which focus on results

*The other sports are water polo, synchronized swimming and open water

Table 5 – Summary of results for contextual factors

4.8 Justification of TM activities

In order to study if the sport federations are affected by other factors than what the interview guideline investigated, the interviewees were asked a general question about if they have to justify their TM activities in any way to athletes, parents or other stakeholders.

The only activity which some sport federations feel that they need to justify is talent selection to different teams, development programs etc. Then they usually need to justify it to **parents**. As explained in section 4.3 the sport federations assess more factors than the results when they select talents. But the parents want the federation to pick out athletes strictly on results. Some sports think that it is a problem that the parents nowadays are more involved than before and that the parents try to change how they work. The sport federations try to handle this problem by taking the time to explain how they assess talents and why a specific person was not selected. Some federations also say that it has made a difference for them to have meetings with the parents to explain how they work before the selection process starts. But it is still hard to e.g. explain and justify that an athlete with good results was not picked because he or she did not do a good interview and did not seem to have enough motivation.

4.9 Findings from secondary sources

The report *Att finna och utveckla talang* (Fahlström, 2011) is used as a secondary source and the sport federations in this study¹⁴ were asked about what they look for in a talent, their view about specialization and how much training they recommend to their elite athletes.

In line with our results, the sport federations put a lot of emphasis on motivation and attitude when selecting talents and all sports (except for gymnastics) recommend late specialization. The study was made when almost all of the federations were in the process of developing talent ladders. Some of the sports had recommendations about the amount of training from before while others planned to formulate these recommendations. But with the information given the study concludes that none of the federations had recommendations which was any way near the often cited 10 years/10,000h rule.¹⁵ This finding is also in line with our results.

Findings from the talent ladders are outlined in section 4.4.

¹⁴ For a list of the covered sports in this report, see appendix 9.3

¹⁵ Simply put, the theory that an athlete needs to train 10,000 hours sport-specific for 10 years in order to reach elite level (see the literature review in section 2.4.2 for further information)

5. Analysis

*This section analyzes the empirical data by referring to the literature review in chapter two and by answering the research questions stated in chapter one. The chapter will be structured into three sections: (1) Talent definitions, TI and talent development, (2) Contextual factors and (3) Institutional logics. **As differences and similarities between the sports and also some of the theoretical concepts from the literature have already been discussed in the empirics, the focus of the analysis will be on a few selected areas.***

5.1 Talent definitions, TI and talent development

Firstly, this section will shortly summarize the empirical data which answers our two first research questions. Secondly, a deeper analysis is given in relation to the literature about talent definitions in a business context and the literature about TM in sports.

How do different sports define talent?

This research question has been investigated by looking at what the sport searches for when they identify talents and what the views are of talent in relation to Dries' (2013) talent definition approaches.

All sports put a large emphasis on motivation when finding talents. The reason for this is that the athletes need to train hard for many years before they reach the top level, and that requires motivation and the right attitude. The sport federations even say that they value motivation more than results, especially when the talents are young. That is because they do not think that current performance can predict future performance to any large extent. Furthermore, some sports think that innate qualities can matter when it comes to if someone can be a talent or not. But innate qualities do not guarantee success and none of the sports have a high innate approach to talent.

How are talent management activities conducted in different sports?

A large majority of the sport federations start talent identification quite late, around when the youths are 13-15 years. A variety of different assessment methods are used when finding talents. The federations use result tables, physical tests, the subjective assessment by coaches at e.g. training camps and interviews focusing on psychological factors such as motivation.

Some common characteristics of the different sports' talent development is that there is a focus on play and fun until about when the children are 13 years and the sport federations all recommend late specialization. Another common approach between the sports is that they think that it is important to design individual development plans for their athletes. Furthermore, sport high schools play an essential role in TI and talent development for many sports.

5.1.1 Analysis in relation to the literature

Dries' (2013) talent definitions and the configurations between TM practices

The connections between talent definitions in businesses and how TM practices are conducted have limited applicability in a sports context. This is because TM in sport differs largely from the business setting.

For example, in sports talents are usually identified and developed for performance many years into the future. In a business context, the talent should be able to perform in a much nearer future. Both in the TM literature for business and in sports it is said that the less importance that is given to innate qualities, the more emphasis is put on talent development than on TI (Dries, 2013; Breitbach et al., 2014). This could not be supported in our study. Also the sports which have a moderate emphasis on innate qualities think that talent development is more crucial than TI. We can neither see a pattern of that sports with a high innate approach would also have a high transferable approach.

The reasoning of the interviewees suggests other possible connections between talent definitions and TM practices. It seems that the harder it is to predict future talent through results, e.g. when the athletes are young, the higher the input approach and the emphasis on talent development. But when predictability is higher in older ages, the higher the output approach and more focus will instead be on TI.

Literature about TM in sports

The literature says that there is a too strong focus in TI studies on the predictive value of single measures and that there is a need of a multi-disciplinary approach and an investigation of how different variables interact with each other (Buekers et al., 2015; Breitbach et al. 2014; Abbott & Collins, 2004). In contrast, the intuitive approach of TI which is applied in practice in sporting environments has the advantage of being able to incorporate a variety of elements when predicting future performance. But the drawback is its subjective nature (Buekers et al. 2015). The sport federation uses an intuitive approach when assessing talents at e.g. training camps. But other assessment methods are used too and one can say that they have a quite multidisciplinary approach to TI where they look at psychological factors through interviews, physical variables through tests etc. In sum, the federations seem to have a good foundation for having a balanced approach to TI. The federations are also asked by RF to reflect on the subjective nature of the intuitive assessment by coaches. This is a measure which can improve TI further. To look at different variables other than just results or physiological measures are also an approach that is applied by SOC when they select athletes to their talent programs. Likewise, it is given in the guidelines for selection to RIGs that a variety of factors should be taken into consideration when picking out athletes (see appendix 9.7 and 9.8).

The idea of having a more holistic approach and look at contextual factors is not only present in the TI practices of the sports but also in their talent development. The LTAD model is used to a great extent in Swedish sports. The model has been criticized for taking little regard to individual differences and context (Fahlström et al., 2015). But this has been compensated by that the federations state clearly in the talent ladders that one needs to consider individual differences, the role of puberty etc. Furthermore, the talent ladder is used as a point of reference but individual development plans are used on top of it. These plans are also a requirement from SOC when athletes want to be enrolled in their talent development programs.

5.2 Contextual factors

This section will give a brief summary of the empirical data about contextual factors and thereby answer our two last research questions. Institutional logics will be analyzed separately in the next section.

What factors influence talent definitions in different sports?

Specific characteristics of the sports can e.g. effect if talent is defined as transferable or not. But other connections between contextual factors and how they affect the sports' definition of talent cannot be found in our research.

What factors influence TM practices in different sports?

Micro

It is recognized by the sports that the immediate environment affects talent development. Some sports mention that it is important to gather good athletes together so that they can train and learn from each other. Some sports also say that the immediate environment plays a role in TI as an athlete might not be picked to a talent development program if they do not have a supportive environment around them.

Meso

Organization - it cannot be explicitly said that the organization in the federations give certain TM practices or if it is the other way around that TM practices give rise to different organizational structures in the federations. What can be said is that how much the national sport federation takes part in talent development for elite athletes differ between the sports. But most sports have an approach that is between a centralized and a decentralized structure; TM activities are conducted both in the national sport federation and in the local sport clubs.

Economy - the economy of the federations naturally affect TD. If the sport federations would have more money they would prioritize improving the talent development programs for their selected athletes by e.g. having more coaches or activities for them. But also strategical measures are mentioned such as spending money on improving the base for recruitment to the programs.

Policies - RF's policies put boundaries on how the sport federations can conduct their TM. For example, RF have policies against participation in national and international competitions before the age of 13 years. This affects the sport federation's start of TI.

Macro

Different macro factors lead to the consequence that many Swedish sports have a weaker base for recruitment of athletes to their talent development programs and that they have a struggle with keeping them in the elite sports. Among those factors are that there is a general decrease in sport participation and that it is relatively unattractive to pursue a career in sports compared to other career paths. This affects TM in such a way that more focus needs to be put on talent development of the athletes available rather than on extensive talent identification.

5.3 Institutional logics

This section will mainly analyze the institutional pluralism detected and thereby expand on the answer to the research question about which factors that affect TM practices. Our data does not suggest that the institutional logics is a factor which affects talent definitions in the sports.

The empirical data confirms that there is institutional pluralism within Swedish sports in the form of a clash between the sport-for-all logic and result-oriented logic. As explained in the literature review, the underlying reason is that the elite sport and grassroots sport need to exist side by side, all the way from the sport club level to the sport federation level. In the sport-for-all logic effectiveness is achieved if the organization is run according to the sport-for-all ideal which means that everyone should be included. But in the result-oriented logic the effectiveness is instead measured on sport performance (Stenling & Fahlén, 2009). In this logic, it does not make sense that everyone should be included and it is given that more resources should be put on the best performing athletes. In the sport-for-all logic resources should be equally distributed. The difficulty of combining the logics was exemplified by shooting. To develop elite athletes with a sport-for-all logic did not work because everyone received little resources but no one received enough so that they could develop themselves to their highest potential.

That the shooting federation handled the institutional pluralism by creating an elite-oriented division is an example of structural differentiation (Carlsson-Wall et al., 2016). This is a given approach in the other federations too where the elite-oriented division is run independently alongside the sport-for-all division. But as the literature points out, the challenge is that some integration between the divisions is needed. When the interviewees expand on the interaction between the logics there seems to be a need to defend the result-oriented logic in relation to the sport-for-all logic. But no examples are given of that the sport-for-all logic is threatened by the result-oriented logic.

Furthermore, when asked no federation says that they are guided by a result-oriented logic. This could be because that the question was asked in such a way that the interviewee needed to speak for the whole federation, and not for the elite-oriented division which the interviewee usually was from. This hints that the sport-for-all logic has an upper hand in the sport federations. This is a contrast to Stenling & Fahlén's (2009) finding that the commercialization and result-oriented logics are overshadowing the sport-for-all logic in Swedish sports. The potential prominent role of the sport-for-all logic might affect TM if the interests of the elite sport is given less importance in the federations.

Lastly, in the literature review in section 2.8 it is said that in order to legitimize selections in Swedish sports, the selection needs to be perceived as unbiased and objective by other stakeholders (Kilger & Börjesson, 2015). The sport federations give examples which support this view. They receive criticism when selections are not based only on results and they have a harder time justifying their TI when a mixed approach including other variables is used. Kilger & Börjesson (2015) suggests that ambition as a basis for selection is accepted as a just method, but this is not something that is found in our interviews. The sport federations also have a hard time justifying that selection is based on motivation or attitude. But when the sport federations give information to parents about how they try to in an unbiased way assess talent

and why there is a need to look at multiple factors, the selection process generally becomes accepted by the parents.

6. Discussion

The *purpose* of this thesis is to explore how Swedish sport federations define talent, how they conduct their TM practices and which factors that affect talent definitions and TM in different sports. To investigate this a *theoretical framework* is designed which merges the literature from the fields of talent definitions in business, talent management in sports and institutional logics in sports. Our *conclusion* is that there is a homogeneity in how our 12 investigated sports define talent and how they conduct their TM activities. There is a strong focus on motivation when talent is defined and little focus on results. TI is done by using different assessment methods. The view shared among the sports is that there is a variety of factors which are important for elite success. Another similarity between the sport federations is that there is an emphasis on adapting to individual needs when it comes to talent development. A factor which affects TM is how the sports are organized in the Swedish sports model, a model which we confirm gives rise to institutional pluralism between the sport-for-all logic and result-oriented logic.

As few differences are found between the sports and as the sports are affected by common factors on the macro level, it would be of interest to use our theoretical framework to investigate the conditions for TM in sports in other national contexts. In other words, to investigate varying macro environments gives the opportunity to detect differences in TM and creates a possibility to theorize how macro factors shape TM in sports. Research has found that most talent identification systems in European countries use current junior performance as the main selection criteria for talent development programs (Rees et al., 2016). But the Swedish TI process in sports is an example of the opposite. The use of our theoretical framework and especially the investigation of institutional logics can contribute to valuable empirical and theoretical knowledge about why TM differs between countries.

Given our abductive approach, empirics were throughout the research process analyzed in the light of existing theory and respectively theory was continuously analyzed in the light of our collected data. Relating to this, one can note that our theoretical framework suggests that connections between contextual factors and talent definitions should be investigated but our empirical data shows almost no such connections. But the scope of our thesis gave little room for a deep analysis about this specific aspect. For example, could it be that Swedish sports would put more emphasis on results when defining talent if the contextual environment was such that they had a larger selection base to choose from? Before more research is done, this dimension of the theoretical framework is still valuable to keep.

Lastly, a few words can be said about what is detected as a major challenge in Swedish sports, namely that the sports have a hard time motivating their athletes to pursue an elite career. The non-attractive economic conditions for training to become and also being an elite athlete is a main reason of the problem. De Bosscher & Verle's (2008) model for factors affecting elite sport success is incorporated in our theoretical framework and the model outlines that factors on the meso (organizational) level can be influenced by sport policies and give long-term effect. An improvement of the economic support to athletes can to some extent be carried out by the sport federations and might help decrease the drop offs and give the opportunity for athletes to concentrate more on their training. This should be weighed against the priorities which the sport federations currently have for improving TM and elite sport success, such as employing

more coaches or having more talent development activities for the athletes. But a real improvement of the problem could be achieved if the sport federations cooperate and try to affect the economic situation for elite sport on a structural (macro) level. For example, by influencing politicians as they give valuable government grants and shape directives to RF about how they should work when it comes to elite sport.

7. Contributions & Future Research

7.1 Contributions

There is a high need for more empirical TM research (Thunnissen et al., 2013a; Lewis & Heckman 2016; Collings & Mellahi, 2009) and more research within other contexts than traditional commercial businesses (Thunnissen et al., 2013a). The empirical contribution of the study is the provision of evidence for how talent is defined and how TM is carried out in Swedish sports. The study also examines how context is affecting TM in sports, an area which is greatly unexplored. The theoretical contribution of the study is that different research fields are brought together and a theoretical research framework is presented which creates synergies between the combined fields. Particularly, the examination of institutional logics is found to give valuable insights about how TM in the sports are affected by their external environment. A practical implication is that the sports are found to be affected by similar challenges when it comes to TM and therefore it is suggested that they should jointly try to face these challenges on a more structural level than try to handle them by themselves separately.

7.2 Suggestions for future research

As TM in the 12 Swedish sports we have investigated and the additional sports which have been investigated by Fahlström (2011) (see section 4.9) all show similar characteristics when it comes to how talent is defined and also how they conduct some aspects of TM, further mapping of more Swedish sports gives limited contribution to the empirical data of talent definitions and TM practices. But as football because of its popularity seemed to be more influenced by the institutional logics than other sports, an in-depth study about TM and context for football and other larger Swedish sports such as floorball and ice-hockey is suggested.

Another suggestion for future research is to map how talent is defined and how TM is conducted in other countries and investigate country-specific contextual factors. Research about how TM is carried out in the Swedish sport clubs is also recommended as their TM might differ from the policies and guidelines for TM which are set from the federation. Lastly, future research focusing on TM on the senior level is suggested as this study has mainly been focusing on the youth level.

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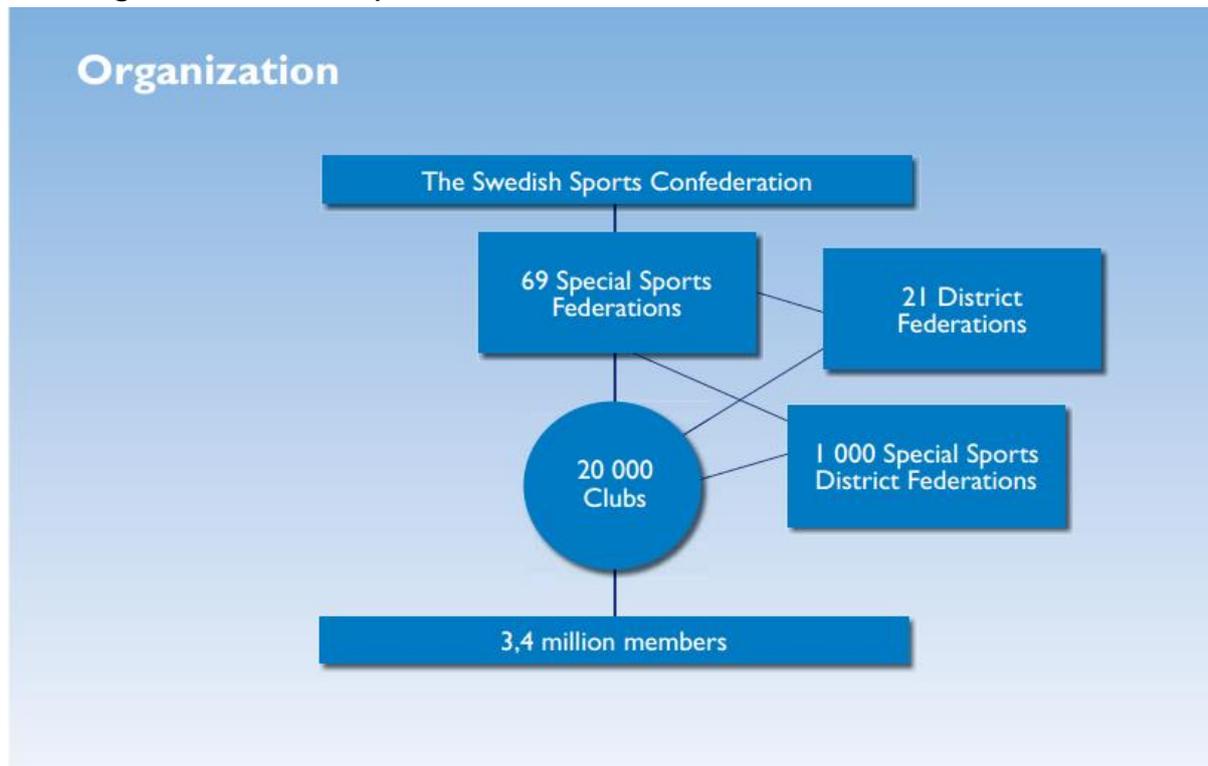
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9. Appendix

9.1 Organizational map of Riksidrottsförbundet



Source: Sport in Sweden (2012), p.11

9.2 Sports investigated in the report *Att finna och utveckla talang* (Fahlström, 2011)

Sports	
Athletics	Ice hockey
Badminton	Orienteering
Basketball	Skiing
Climbing	Shooting
Floorball	Swimming
Football	Table tennis
Gymnastics	Volleyball
Handball	Wrestling

* Sports in bold are Olympic Sports
 * Sports in bold and italics are sports that have been covered in our study

9.3 The number of active participants in the investigated sports

Sports	Active participants 2014	Participation at trainings 2014 ¹⁾	Average participation at trainings per member ²⁾
Athletics	374 596	1 604 961	4,3
Badminton	250 83	556 782	22,2
Equestrian	155 044	2 652 518	17,1
Football	441 869	20 288 830	45,9
Golf	467 523	416 392	0,9
Handball	78 199	2 981 283	38,1
Sailing	37 472	104 611	2,8
Shooting	83 317	191 236	2,3
Skiing	103 457	397 218	3,8
Swimming	136 584	2 212 574	16,2
Table tennis	40 744	656 919	16,1
Tennis	90 902	1 485 853	16,3

1)The count of each time a member goes to a training or other sports activity
2)Participation at trainings or other sports activity divided by active participants

9.4 SOC's talent development programs

For sport federations to be part of the programs, it is required that the federations have talent ladders, requirement analyses, individual development plans and close follow up of the athletes.

Topp & Talang (Top & Talent)

Topp & Talang is an individually tailored support program for athletes in the Olympic sports who have the potential to win an Olympic medal. The goal is to reach the international top level within 3-8 years. The support can e.g. be in the form of economic funds to participate in international competitions or training camps. Other individuals might need to have good sparring partners. Some federations have scarce economic resources and SOC can then help with economic funds so that coaches can be employed either full-time or part-time. The participants in the program have access to a medical resource team and other support functions. The athletes can also get scholarships from SOC (Topp och Talang, 2017; Topp och Talangstöd, 2017; P. Reinebo, 2017, April 3, Personal interview).

Utmanarstöd (Challenger program)

The goal of the challenger program is to develop individual athletes so that they meet the criteria for being part of Topp & Talang. It is a three-year project which started in 2013 and ends in 2016/2017. The plan is to renew the project in a near future. SOC gives economic support to the participating federations in the program who then decide how to use the funds for the athletes to achieve the goal (Utmanare drar vidare efter halvtid, 2015; Utmanarstöd, 2017; P. Reinebo, 2017, April 3, Personal interview).

9.5 Idrotten vill

The policy document *Idrotten Vill* (What sports want) was written in the middle of the 90s and was revised in 2009. *Idrotten Vill* states the values of the Swedish sports movement and outlines guidelines for how children and youth sports should be organized. Sports activities for children up to the age of 12 years are defined as children sports and activities for persons between 13-25 years is defined as youth sports. However, "The line between children sports and youth sports is not static as all people develop differently" (Idrott en del av uppväxten, 2017).

Some of the guidelines for children sports are:

- Sports for children should be playful, versatile and be based on the child's own needs and conditions, and take variations in development into consideration.
- Children benefit from participating in different sports and have the right to do this in different clubs
- Sports for children should primarily be carried out in simple forms in the children's vicinity. Also competitions should be hold locally and the results should be given little attention.

(Idrotten Vill, 2009, p.22 – see appendix 9.6)

Some of the guidelines for elite youth sports are:

- All boys and girls who have talent and ambition to seriously reach elite level should be given the opportunities to do so in socially safe environments
- The transition between children sports and youth sports should be carried out successively and consideration should be taken to girls' and boys' different needs, conditions and development
- The organization of competitions for both girls and boys should be designed so that it stimulates qualitative and long-term sport development, and counteract burnout

(Idrotten Vill, 2009, p.26 - see appendix 9.6)

Apart from the values and guidelines expressed in *Idrotten Vill*, RF has also concretized their demands in so called **instructions for the clubs and federations**. Some of these instructions regard competitions.

- National championships are not allowed for children, neither competitions which require qualification
- Ranking lists are not allowed for children
- The federation cannot select children to national teams or similar
- The federation should not sanction any international competitions for children

(Anvisningar för barn- och ungdomsidrott, 2014, p.7)

9.6 Secondary sources

Sport	Documents retrieved
Athletics	<p>Coach education material (book) <i>Grundträning i friidrott 10-14 år. (1. uppl.) (2011). Stockholm: SISU Idrottsböcker.</i></p>
Badminton	<p>Talent ladder <i>Talangutvecklingsprogram (TUP.)</i> Retrieved 2017-04-10 at: http://www.badminton.nu/globalassets/svenska-badmintonforbundet---/ungdomslandslag/1618/administration/talangutvecklingsprogram-version-1.0.pdf</p> <p>Player education material <i>Spelarutbildning</i> Retrieved 2017-04-10 at: http://www.badminton.nu/globalassets/svenska-badmintonforbundet---/ungdomslandslag/1618/administration/spelarutbildning-version-1.0.pdf</p>
Cross country skiing	<p>Talent ladder <i>Svenska skidförbundets utvecklingstrappa.</i> Sent by the federation</p> <p>Website describing the thought behind skiing's talent ladder. Accessed 2017-04-10 at: http://www.skidor.com/Grenar/langdakning/Utbildning/blagulavagen/svenskaskidforbundet---etsutvecklingstrappa</p> <p>Policy document for children, youth and senior skiing <i>Blågula vägen.</i> Retrieved 2017-04-10 at: http://www.skidor.com/globalassets/alpint/dokument/utbildning/blagula-vagen/blagula-vagen-alpint.pdf</p>
Equestrian	<p>Talent ladder (2012) <i>Ridsportens plan för talangutveckling.</i> Retrieved 2017-04-10 at: http://www.ridsport.se/ImageVaultFiles/id_27760/cf_559/Talangutveckling_LRORIGINALL.PDF</p> <p>Talent ladder (2016) <i>Ridsportens utvecklingsmodell</i> Retrieved 2017-04-10 at: http://www.ridsport.se/ImageVaultFiles/id_53637/cf_559/Talangutveckling_2016.PDF</p>
Football	<p>Policy document <i>Fotbollens spela, lek och lär.</i> Retrieved 2017-04-10 at: http://d01.fogis.se/svenskfotboll.se/ImageVault/Images/id_117046/scope_0/ImageVaultHandler.aspx151207160538-ug</p> <p>Talent ladder <i>Svenska fotbollsförbundets spelarutbildningsplan.</i> Retrieved 2017-04-10 at: http://fogis.se/ImageVault/Images/id_93383/scope_0/ImageVaultHandler.aspx</p>
Golf	<p>Organization plan and talent ladder <i>Verksamhetsplan för juniorverksamhet.</i> Retrieved 2017-04-10 at: http://www.golf.se/globalassets/klubb-och-anlaggning/spelarutveckling/verksamhetsplan_for_juniorversksamhet.pdf</p> <p>Talent ladder Website, accessed 2017-04-11 at: http://www.golf.se/klubb-och-anlaggning/spelarutveckling/</p>
Handball	<p>Visionary document <i>Vision svensk handboll 2017.</i></p> <p>Organization plan <i>Elitarbetet.</i> Sent by the federation</p>

Sailing	Talent ladder and requirement analysis <i>Kravanalysfrågor och utvecklingstrappa.</i> Sent by the federation
Shooting	Policy document <i>Skyttesporten vill.</i> Retrieved 2017-04-10 at: http://www.skyttesport.se/globalassets/svenska-skyttesportforbundet/information/skyttesporten-vill/skyttesporten-vill.pdf
Swimming	Talent ladder <i>Simlinjen.</i> Retrieved 2017-04-10 at: http://www.svensksimidrott.se/globalassets/svenska-simforbundet/dokument/simning/riktlinjer-simlinjen.pdf Talent ladder Website. Accessed 2017-04-10 at: http://www.svensksimidrott.se/Varagrenar/Simning/Simlinjen/MaterialSimlinjen/
Table tennis	Visionary document <i>Måldokument för svensk pingis framtid 2011-2016.</i> Retrieved 2017-04-10 at: http://www.svenskbordtennis.com/globalassets/svenska-bordtennisforbundet/bilder/maldokument/maldokument.pdf
Tennis	Talent ladder <i>Utvecklingstrappan.</i> Retrieved 2017-04-10 at: http://www.tennis.se/globalassets/svenska-tennisforbundet/dokument/utbildning/utvecklingstrappan-svtf.pdf
Other	
Riksidrottsförbundet	Study about TM in sports Fahlström, P. G. (2011). <i>Att finna och att utveckla talang: En studie om specialidrottsförbundens talangverksamhet.</i> Riksidrottsförbundet Policy document for selection to RIGs <i>Riksidrottsförbundets riktlinjer för urval till riksidrottsgymnasier och nationellt godkända idrottsutbildningar.</i> Retrieved 2017-04-10 at: http://www.svenskidrott.se/globalassets/svenskidrott/dokument/undersidor/idrottsgymnasium/rfs-riktlinjer-antagning-rig.pdf Policy document for children and youth sports <i>Idrotten vill.</i> Retrieved 2017-04-10 at: http://www.rf.se/globalassets/riksidrottsforbundet/dokument/barn-och-ungdom/idrotten_vill_2015_webb.pdf Policy document for children and youth sports <i>Anvisningar för barn- och ungdomsidrott.</i> Retrieved 2017-04-10 at: http://www.stockholmsidrotten.se/globalassets/svenskidrott/dokument/undersidor/barn--och-ungdomsidrott/riktlinjeranvisningar/anvisningar-for-barn-och-ungdomsidrott_bladet.pdf

9.7 Assessment areas for selection to RIGs

- Sport-specific knowledge and abilities
- Sport psychological abilities and conditions (attitude, will, motivation, grit)
- Social abilities and conditions (life skills, interaction in groups, maturity and social support)
- Organizational abilities and conditions (to be able to plan training and studies)
- Study ambition (the ability to combine sport and studies)

Source: Riksidrottsförbundets riktlinjer för urval till riksidrottsgymnasier och nationellt godkända idrottsutbildningar (see appendix 9.6)

9.8 Assessment areas for selection to SOC's talent development programs

- Talent
 - What is seen as talent differs between sports. It can e.g. be movement talent, game talent or strength. If a sport has a specific attribute which is important for success, that is taken into consideration
- Results
 - But more emphasis is put on development potential rather than current performance
- Experience
 - In the form of accumulated training hours or number of competitions. This is a complex assessment area. If an athlete has long experience but still has not reached his/her potential, that could be telling. In comparison, you might have an athlete who has not trained as much yet, but shows very good potential. But it is not known if this athlete will be able to train as much as the former one.
- Immediate environment
 - The athlete needs to be in a supportive environment
- Goal-orientation and "drive"

Source: P. Reinebo, 2017, April 3, Personal interview