The implementation of a football certification system

Overcoming barriers and fulfilling success factors associated with the implementation process

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Abstract

Title: The implementation of a football certification system - Overcoming barriers and fulfilling success factors associated with the implementation process

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Aim: The aim of this study is to investigate which factors that influence the implementation process regarding a football quality certification system and especially the certification system in Swedish elite football clubs. We will further look into which factors that are perceived as success factors and which factors that are perceived as barriers.

Method: Our study has the starting point from a previous study made by Carlsson (2011), where barriers and success factors in the implementing phase of the Swedish football certification process was investigated. In this study we wish to develop our understanding of different clubs’ experiences of the certification process, we have therefore used a qualitative approach where we have interviewed four clubs’ playing in Allsvenskan (first division in Sweden).

Result & Conclusions: We can conclude that even though the work with the certification system is fairly new for the Swedish elite football clubs, it appears as they have a satisfying insight into the organizational demands’ of the certification system.

One significant success factor identified in the study is the clubs’ attitude towards the system, where positive attitude overcomes the experienced difficulties associated with the process. Other importing factors that have a major impact of the overall result of the process is having the right prerequisites in terms of staff, time and documentation before implementing the certification system in the club.

Contribution of the thesis: This study has contributed to provide an extensive framework of the possible affecting factors when implementing a football specific quality certification system. Further contribution is the identification of two affecting factors not mentioned in the theoretical framework, communication in the establishing phase and geographical location.

Key words: Football certification system, quality improvement, success factors, barriers, implementation process
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Robert Carlsson & Emil Ring
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1 Introduction

Sport is an activity which engages many people around the world and for elite clubs it has become a significant industry. This development of professionalization in sport has further created an environment where the management in sport organizations has become vital (Hoye et al, 2006, p. 4). In this area, like in others, managers need special skills and knowledge, the ability to lead, coordinate and decide in order to help the organization to be successful (Zec, 2011, p. 331) To manage a sport organization the manager also needs to engage in strategic planning, manage large number of human resources and manage the welfare of elite athletes who earn huge amounts of money (Hoye et al, 2006, p. 4).

Management in sports is a fairly new approach which has two different directions. One side refers to the area where athletes are managed by coaches, team experts and sport scientists. The other side refers to the effective management of the sport organization which controls the sport, sports managers, marketing managers and sport volunteers. This in order to achieve the stated goals with the limited amount of physical and financial resources (Zec, 2011, p. 131). In other words, sport management is about planning, collecting, organizing, arranging and controlling (Caliskan, 2009, p. 23).

It is imperative that sport organizations acquire a profound apprehension of the critical success factors that impacts the quality and performance of their sport systems, as well as the kind of services and benefits their specific customers expect (Van Hoecke, De Knop and Schoukens, 2009, p. 313). Hence, the sport organizations get the possibility “to develop the right prerequisites for well-functioning organisational and operational processes and desired outcomes associated with quality and added value for all stakeholders.” (Van Hoecke et al, 2009, p. 313). This understanding facilitates higher loyalty and stronger involvement of the members in the club, which ultimately leads to higher satisfaction (Van Hoecke et al, 2009, p. 313.). The organization thus needs to create, modify and continuously implement processes that prepare the athletes for the elite sporting environment Zec (2011, p. 332).

Sport policy has the recent decades shifted from being quantity-oriented to quality-oriented. With this new focus, organizations has been encouraged to increase the effectiveness of their systems and by that, they have also been forced to implement different instruments with suitable quality-standards in order to improve their performance (Van Hoecke et al. 2009, p. 309). However, due to the many differences it is hard to decide where to begin when setting up performance management systems for sport organizations (Hoye et al, 2006, p. 182).

As a result of the shift from a quantity to a quality-oriented approach in sports, the use of quality assurance systems has been developed by many sport associations. In terms of developing quality systems in the sport of football, the Dutch Football Association has been one of the most cited initiators (SEF A, 2010-05-14). Additionally, The Belgian organization Double PASS is specialized within the field of management of quality and performance inside the sector of sports, and niched on the training of the younger members of the clubs (Double PASS, A). One project that Double PASS is working with is called Foot PASS, a project developed particularly for the implementation of quality and performance management within football youth academies. This projects aims at getting associations to convey a stronger emphasis on developing a high-quality academy in the football clubs, where home-grown talents will be educated more efficiently (Van Hoecke et al. 2009, p. 322).
Quality assurance in football clubs is further widespread in Europe, however, the implementation of a quality certification system in Swedish elite football was presented first in the spring of 2010 where the organization Svensk Elitfotboll (SEF), which is the elite football clubs’ interest organization, started the work with the development of a certification system with the purpose to make Swedish football more competitive (SEF A, 2010-05-14). This system was completed autumn 2010 and this was the first time a certification system was introduced with the purpose to secure the quality of the development of youth football players. The purpose with the certification system is further that it could be used as a tool to estimate the quality of the work with the talent development within the clubs. The system therefore contributes to clearness within the club both internally, but also externally towards collaboration partners, the municipality and parents. The output of the certification system is that Swedish football hopefully will be more competitive in the world of football (SEF A, 2010-05-14).

Martinez et al. (2000, p. 229) claims that a certification process takes different turns in different organizations, which also means that the effectiveness in the process differs. It is therefore important to study the implementation process of the certification system and to analyze which role different actors play, and what factors that improve the certification process or aggravate it (Martinez et al., 2000, p. 229). Additionally, Carlsson (2011) investigated the implementation process of the Swedish certification system in the club Gefle IF where potential affecting factors were identified. The study revealed that a football club faces affecting factors in the form of success factors and barriers and Carlsson (2011) further concluded that there is a need for future studies within this field. This study is a continuation of that work and the theoretical framework developed therein serves as a partial basis of this thesis, and the reference Carlsson (2001) is used as a service to the reader in identifying the areas where the text is heavily indebted to this previous work. In this sense the bachelor thesis and master thesis should be regarded as one research process.

The aim of this study is to investigate which factors that influence the implementation process regarding a football quality certification system and especially the certification system in Swedish elite football clubs. We will further look into which factors that are perceived as success factors and which factors that are perceived as barriers. This purpose will be answered by looking at what previous research and researchers about the field are saying. However, the main emphasis will be on the experiences the respondents of four Swedish elite clubs have regarding the implementation of the certification system.
2 Theory

2.1 Quality management and organizational performance

In the pursuit of organizational excellence Van Hoecke et al (2009, p. 313) state that it is imperative to integrate the concepts of Total Quality Management (TQM) and Performance Management (PM). This integrative approach demonstrates the central philosophy of TQM which is continuous improvement. By both emphasizing “the value an organisation with a quality orientation gives to its various stakeholders and the way the TQM organisation is managed”, its main objective is to facilitate organizations’ pursuit for improving organizational performance and results (Van Hoecke et al, 2009, p. 313).

2.1.1 Total Quality Management

Quality management (QM) is usually referred as Total Quality Management (TQM) (Stashevsky and Elizur, 2000, p. 54) which “is the decisive beginning of the integration of quality management into the business management in many companies” (Mangelsdorf, 1999, p. 421). Hence TQM is the way to harmonize all activities and programs within an organization. Stashevsky and Elizur (2000, p. 54) further explain TQM as a management philosophy that embraces these activities in the way that satisfy the customers’ needs and expectations. Thus, the organizations’ objectives should also be to strive for having the most effective and efficient approach where the employees also can maximize their potential as a continuing drive for improvement (Elizur, 2000, p. 54). Thus, TQM is part of a wider concept which contribute to organizational performance and recognizes the importance of processes (The Department of Trade and Industry, 2004-2009, p. 2).

From a quality management perspective some practices are most common. These practices can further be developed around two dimensions. The first is called ‘core or hard quality management’ and contains practices that are technique- and methodology-oriented. This dimension includes the use of quality data and information, product design process, and the use of statistical process control and other techniques who involve process improvement. The second dimension is called ‘infrastructure or soft quality management’ which includes practices that are people- and culture-oriented, focusing on organization change and development in the areas of management commitment and leadership, relationships with external customers and suppliers, and the management of human resources (Xingxing, 2009, p. 132).

The efforts of De Knop, Van Hoecke and De Bosscher (2004, p. 61) can further be used to specify these two approaches to conceptualize the functional components of TQM:

- a system technical approach: methods for inspection and control as well as tools and techniques to facilitate the development of strategies and the design of standardized procedures. This is referred to the hard element of TQM, which emphasize product-orientation.
- a social-dynamic approach: focusing on the human aspects of the organization, such as functions of human resource management (containing education and training, involvement and commitment) and organizational culture. This is referred to as the soft element of TQM, highlighting employee relations-orientation.

Additionally, distinction can also be made regarding the level of operation within the organization (De Knop et al, 2004, p. 61):

- operational level: the sport service system includes all primary processes carried out in the service encounters which contributes to the overall sport service experience;
strategic level: the management system involves the additional elements and supporting processes facilitating the creation of added value and the attainment of the higher objectives compiled by the organization and its members.

The authors present a framework combining the dimensions of approach and level, illustrated below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level / approach</th>
<th>System-technical approach</th>
<th>Social dynamic approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operational level</td>
<td>Inspection</td>
<td>Coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statistical techniques</td>
<td>Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedures and instructions</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problem-solving techniques</td>
<td>Interpersonal skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic level</td>
<td>Goal formulation</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic planning</td>
<td>Corporate culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policy development</td>
<td>People management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizational structure</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: De Knop, Van Hoecke, and De Bosscher, 2004, p. 61

Studies have been made where they discuss the relationship between the core QM practices and product quality and whether the system-technical approach practices are necessary for quality improvement. However, existing theory claim that to gain an overall effectiveness of the implementation of QM, both the system-technical and the social-dynamic approach are important (Xingxing, 2009, p. 131). Research further proves that the implementation of the system-technical practices is of significant importance for an organizations ability to enhance the quality of their products/services to satisfy its customers (Xingxing, 2009, p. 135).

2.1.2 Performance Management

Chappelet and Bayle (2005, p. 40) defines managing performance as “defining, measuring, controlling and managing the performance of an organisation or of a network or organisations.” Van Hoecke et al (2009, p. 312) present the definition of PM, provided by Neely et al, as “the process of quantifying action, where measurement is the process of quantification and action leads to performance.” It is regarded as a closed loop system, that in order to manage the performance of the organization, arranges policy and strategy and acquires feedback from various levels of the organization (Van Hoecke et al, 2009, p. 312). As a result, specific tools or operational principles are necessary for helping decision makers and managers in their practices regarding strategy, control, performance evaluation, operations, and/or both of the latter practices (Chappelet and Bayle, 2005, p. 40).

Since the 1990’s an increasingly popular notion in the business world is a company’s quality system, which is the basis for quality assurance in an organization. Gustafsson et al (2001, p. 232) refers to the International Organization for Standardization’s (ISO) definition of a quality system as: “A quality system is the organisational structure, responsibilities, procedures, processes and resources for implementing quality management.” Gustafsson et al
(2001, p. 232) concludes that the standards developed by ISO, in particular ISO 9000, is the most well-known and most used standards for quality systems, however there are other types of quality standards such as ‘the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence’ and ‘the EFQM Excellence Model’ (Srdoc, Sluga and Bratko, 2005, p. 278). By implementing this type of standards, it provided the organization a chance to show its customer that the organization’s processes are capable and under control (Stashevsky and Elizur, 2000, p. 54). Thus, the quality standard systems have been an important tool for company’s survival throughout the years.

2.2 The Foot PASS certification system
We will now look at a certification system developed specifically for the field of football, which is the Foot PASS certification system. As mentioned earlier in the study, the PASS concept, and especially Foot PASS, emanated from the quality standards of Belgian sport organizations. The objectives of Foot PASS is with a long-term perspective emphasize the importance of high quality within the youth academies to increase the efficiency in the development of home-grown players to the club’s first team. The underlying principle is that effective throughput of home-grown players is the central goal of each youth academy (Van Hoecke et al, 2009, pp. 322-323). The Foot PASS certification system is currently implemented in Belgium, Germany, Finland and England (Double PASS A).

The Foot PASS instrument was originally constructed around eight dimensions with seven enablers and a performance measurement. Evaluation was conducted with around 200 weighted standards which can account for a total score of 5,000 points. Below we present these dimensions along with their respective sub-dimensions (Double PASS Brochure, 2011-9-16; Van Hoecke et al, 2009, pp. 322-323):

- 1. Strategic planning & financial planning (STRA): mission and vision of the club regarding youth training, strategic and financial planning
- 2. Organizational structure & decision making (ORG): organizational structure, anchoring of the youth academy within the club and formal decision-making
- 3. Talent identification & development system (DEV): Sport-specific training vision, training plan and working instruments, organization of training courses and competitions, training and playing opportunities, composition of training groups, internal scouting and characteristics of the sport technical staff
- 4. Athletic & social support (SUP): Medical, mental, academic and social supervision
- 5. Academy staff (STAF): Internal communication, dialogue with parents and players, club events, profile and job descriptions, consultation and education, evaluation and compensation
- 6. Communication & co-operation (COM): External communication, cooperation plans, recruiting activities
- 7. Facilities & equipment (FAC): General management, competition and training pitches, facilities and equipment
- 8. Effectiveness (EFF): The result of the youth development process is evaluated on the basis of several performance indicators, such as movement upwards, selections, qualifications etc.

The reader should be noted that after the initial launching of the quality system, modifications have been made by introducing Foot PASS 2.00. The above description of the dimensions is
the most recent, but further on the paper we will refer to results mentioning the previous definitions of the dimensions. Note, however, that even though some dimensions have been changed, they still include similar sub-dimensions as the original system (Van Hoecke et al., 2011, p. 339). The dimension ‘Academy staff’ (STAF) was previously entitled ‘Internal marketing’ (INT) and ‘Communication and co-operation’ (COM) previously was named ‘External relations’ (EXT). The number of standards also increased from 200 in the first launching to 600 (Nürnberger Zeitung, 2012-03-27).

2.2.1 The implementation process of Foot PASS

The Foot PASS certification system is conducted in three major stages in order to guarantee a sustainable installation of the system;

- The first step is to ‘define the quality standards and performance indicators’ which means developing an appropriate performance measurement system. Here various stakeholders (quality evaluators) are involved in the process, such as experts and partners of the football federation, discussing the standards and indicators appropriate in the specific context. In order to create a solid foundation for the next phases when implementing the system in the clubs, it is important to involve these clubs in order to determine a set of mutually agreed standards. “This way, there is a higher chance that it is considered a relevant tool and a common project to guarantee and improve the quality of the distribution network.” (Van Hoecke, 2012-05-05).

- The second phase is referred to as ‘improving through evaluation’, which is the actual implementation of the system within the specific football clubs. In this phase, the purpose of the system is for the clubs to identify their main strengths and weaknesses, which is essential in order for the clubs to improve, not only internally but also towards its key stakeholders. Hence, the certification system is used as a tool for self-assessment and external audits with the purpose of improving the management of the organization. External auditors’ reports about the clubs relative strengths and weaknesses usually form a base for the creation of specific action plans to improve the quality in the club (Van Hoecke, 2012-05-05).

- The system for quality assurance and performance assessment could also be used as marketing tool. This is phase three called ‘positioning by quality’, where the clubs can use the scores from the certification to promote their youth academy to the stakeholders (Van Hoecke, 2012-05-05).

More specifically, the quality audit process is divided into two areas. First there is an audit of the clubs documentation in relation to the standards in the certification system. After the first audit, the clubs are given time to bridge the gap between the certification standards and their specific clubs processes. Thereafter, a second practical audit is conducted (Van Hoecke, 2012-05-05), where auditors show up unannounced and screen the daily practices of the youth academy, such as training sessions and matches (Double PASS Brochure, 2011-09-16). “In this way, the practical value of documents as well as the application of standardised processes is evaluated during several training sessions and matches.” (Van Hoecke et al., 2009, p. 324). Between these two audits, different supporting activities have been organized to provide the youth academy directors with information and professional advice. These activities include; post-audits, media debates, information sessions for club leaders, management courses, and publication of quality manuals etc. (Van Hoecke et al., 2009, p. 324).
2.2.2 Results of the implementation of Foot PASS

Club scores. Performance measurements have been conducted throughout the years in both the Belgian football clubs but also in the German Bundesliga. In the case of the Belgian football clubs, audits were conducted first in 2003 and second in 2006. The results of these audits revealed that the clubs in general scored above the norm in the dimensions of organizational structure (ORG), the talent development system (DEV), internal marketing (INT) (now replaced with academy staff (STAF)), external relations (EXT) (now replaced with communication and co-operation (COM)) and facilities (FAC). Lower average scores on the other hand were found for strategic planning (STR), supporting activities (SUP) and effectiveness (EFF). 15 of 18 clubs failed significantly regarding medical, mental and social support (SUP) and additionally more than half of the clubs were considered not effective in youth development (EFF), were the inadequate throughput of home-grown players were considered to be the most important reason for this lack of efficiency (Van Hoecke, De Knop and Schoukens, 2009, p. 324).

Regarding the case of Foot PASS Deutschland, two audits have been conducted in the Bundesliga clubs. The scores from the first audit of the season of 2007/2008 in 36 clubs, 18 of them in the highest division, 16 in the second division and 2 in a yet lower division (Van Hoecke et al, 2008, p. 448-449), revealed the following: the highest scores were found in the dimensions of strategic planning (STRA), organizational structure (ORG) and facilities (FAC). Lower scores were on the contrary found in the talent development and the football training system (DEV), supporting activities (SUP) and internal marketing (INT) (now replaced with academy staff (STAF)). Additionally, almost half of the clubs had an effectiveness (EFF) below 50 %, which was strongly correlated with the total score of the clubs. Also, the results revealed significant differences between the first and second league clubs the total score, strategic planning (STRA), the football training system (DEV) and facilities (FAC).

The second audit in the 2010/2011 season in the Bundesliga presented significant improvements for 60 % of the participating clubs (Van Hoecke et al, 2011, p. 339-340). The highest scores were at the time found for strategic and financial planning (STRA) and facilities (FAC). Lower scores were on the other hand found in the dimensions of talent identification and development (DEV), athletic and social support (SUP). The results also revealed an increase of home-grown players in the clubs, however, in more than half of the clubs the effectiveness (EFF) is still an issue. As with the first audit in 2007/2008, there was a strong correlation between the score for effectiveness (EFF) and the total score (TOT). Additionally, significant differences were found for the total score, availability and quality of the staff (STAF) and facilities (FAC), between the First and Second League clubs.

Impact of the implementation. Since the implementation of a football quality management system often is conducted in a centralized top-down approach from the Football Federation within the country, this has its effects on the clubs. Looking at the case of Belgian football clubs, Perck and Van Hoecke (2011, p. 449) investigated the impact of the implementation. The implementation of the quality system aims at developing more professional organizations and it is used as a mean for control the clubs. Hence, the quality system imposes a form of pressure towards the clubs, which might affect their motive for implementing the system within the club. One way to encourage the clubs to implement the system was to provide financial benefits for the clubs participating. Facing both intrinsic and extrinsic motives for the implementation of the quality system, the authors investigated the effect of an intrinsic/extrinsic motive on the external/internal goal of professionalization.
The results show that the clubs’ intrinsic objectives are more important than the extrinsic motive of obtaining financial benefits. Rather, the clubs’ motive for implementing the system is to become more professional and to use the quality system as a tool for improving their youth development. The impact of the quality management system in the Belgian Football clubs can be identified in structural improvements within the clubs, but also “better associations with the local authority, schools, other sport clubs and to a smaller extent with other football clubs.” (Perck and Van Hoecke, 2011, p. 449). Hence, the quality system has, apart from structural impacts, an effect on the social variables in the clubs, and potentially an economic impact if the clubs receive financial incentives/rewards from the Football Federation.

Additionally, Van Hoecke et al (2009, p. 324) claim that many directors of the sport organizations use the certification framework as a management tool to gain a better understanding of the critical success factors in order to optimize their internal systems and processes.

### 2.3 Affecting factors regarding the implementation of an quality assurance system

In the study regarding the certification process of the Swedish elite football club Gefle IF, Carlsson (2011, pp. 27-44) identified different variables that might affect the overall effectiveness of the implementation of a quality certification system. These affecting variables, found within the field of business, can be divided into factors that facilitate the outcome of the implementation process but also factors that constitute barriers for a successful implementation of the specific system. The identified factors will be summarized below, where the entire section is derived from Carlsson (2011, pp. 27-44).

#### 2.3.1 Success factors

**Top management support.** The support of the top management for the implementation process is deemed to be one of the most important success factors. The top management is responsible for making sure that the organization has the time and resources necessary for the process. It is also important that the top management has a long-term perspective regarding the certification process, and that this perspective shall permeate the commitment regarding time, resources and personal involvement.

**“Correct” attitude.** Another success factor deemed to be one of the most important factors is the top management’s inner drive for the certification process. The reason why it is regarded truly important is that the attitude towards the certification system controls other factors, which will affect the overall implementation process. The members of the organization thus need to comprehend why the certification process is implemented and the benefits they will obtain through it.

**Quality culture.** The existence or the establishment of a quality culture will facilitate organizational performance, several findings suggest. The quality culture also minimizes the risk for problems regarding the certification system within the organization, since the members are driven by internal motivation.

**Quality manager.** Another success factor identified is the appointment of a devoted and competent quality manager. This person should be the driving force behind the implementation process and function as mediator and facilitator for the work with the certification system.
**Right prerequisites.** The top management also needs to make sure that the right prerequisites in terms of financial resources, time and documentation exists so that the members of the organization can conduct the implementation process in an adequate way. It is imperative to give and create time slot to analyze the certification system and subsequently make a thorough plan for the implementation. The employees need to be given time to plan and adapt the system along the unique aspects of the organization, and to realize the importance of the quality system and the purpose it fills in the organization.

**Employee commitment.** Since the certification system is formed around all the processes within the organization, one can conclude that it is important that the members responsible for these processes need to feel committed towards this implementation. This is especially important in small to medium enterprises since each member’s contribution to the work with the certification system is extra important in order to reach a high quality.

**Education.** According to several studies it is important that every member in the organization is educated around the certification system, especially the people in top management positions. The top management needs to be knowledgeable regarding how the implementation process is conducted in the best manner, and if it does not have this knowledge, education is necessary. Further on, this is also required for the rest of the organization’s members.

**Diagnosis.** As pointed out earlier, it is important that the top management evaluate the financial resources, time and already established documentation of the organization, to get a picture of the requirements in relation to the certification system. A gap analysis is recommended where the organization compare its current capacities to the requirements of the certification system.

**Planning.** Before the actual implementation of the certification system, it is important that the top management integrates the system to the vision, mission and goals of the organization. The strategy developed needs to be adapted to the certification system and still be consistent with previous strategy. Additionally, the organization needs to properly plan for the implementation process with the base in the quality philosophy, education of the members and evaluation of all levels within the organization.

**Documentation.** Another factor determining the success of the implementation of the certification system is the evaluation of already established documentation within the organization. Afterwards, a decision of which documents and manuals that needs to be developed should be taken. Studies also suggest that the documentation should not follow the standard of the certification system, rather, it should be adapted to the organization’s unique processes and activities.

**Consultation.** Some studies point out the importance of the consultation as assistance in the implementation process. This because the consultants are experts within the field and have relevant experiences how to work with the certification system. The certifying body also plays an important role for the success of the organization’s certification in terms of assistance in how the certification system can be interpreted and adapted to the specific organization.

**The establishment of networks.** Another success factor is when organizations implement the same certification system, they should join together and form networks where they work with
the certification system. Here they can exchange experiences and learn from each other which will positively affect the result of the certification.

External pressure. External pressure for the implementation of the certification system from the organization’s stakeholder might function as a catalyst which encourages to a better implementation of the certification system. It also eases problems regarding personal resources and bureaucracy, which might be a consequence of lack of internal support for the certification process.

2.3.2 Barriers

Lack of top management support and commitment. This is one major barrier to successful implementation of a certification system, since if the top management does not show their support and commitment for the certification process to the rest of the members, the process will stagnate.

“Incorrect” attitude towards the certification system. As already mentioned, the attitude towards the certification system is crucial for potential success. However in a similar way, research show that when organizations have an incorrect view towards the introduction of the certification system, this constitutes a barrier to achieve quality improvements. The organizations that have short-term goals with the certification process and overconfidence on the effects of the certification system, are the type of organizations that face the most problems in the certification process.

Lack of resources. One common barrier for organizations’ certification process is the lack of resources in terms of personnel, time and money. Especially in smaller organizations the lack of resources in personnel and time can be the major obstacle to achieve a successful certification.

Resistance to change. Another barrier towards successful implementation is employee resistance to change. This resistance is often a result of the management’s inability to convey and create an understanding of the certification system to the employees, who is responsible for the process and how they take part. The employees hence feel an uncertainty of what this change actually means, thus the commitment towards the certification process decreases.

Lack of education and knowledge. As stated before, the members of the organization need to obtain knowledge how the certification system will affect the organizational processes and activities, in order for the implementation to result in quality improvements. Many obstacles organizations face in this process can be related to the employee’s lack of knowledge regarding the demands and use of the certification system. When the top management does not focus on informing and educating the members of these aspects, frustration and disappointment is likely to occur, which as a result prevent the organization from improving its quality.

Planning and the time aspect. We mentioned earlier that an adequate planning is necessary for a successful implementation, and in the same way inadequate planning might constitute a barrier for the implementation of a certification system. Organizations need to be aware that quality planning takes time and that change cannot occur immediately, and thus that there is not a quick solution for achieving high quality.
**Documentation.** In the same sense that the documentation of the organization’s processes and activities constitute a success factor when implementing a certification system, too much focus on documentation might also be a barrier. The problem does not reside in the documentation and standardization in itself, rather that the organization misunderstands their functions. There is also a risk if the organization focuses more on the documentation rather than the activity that is documented.

**External pressure.** In the same logic as above, external pressure (instead of strategic reasons) from the organization’s stakeholders to implement a certification system, might also become a barrier for the successful implementation of the certification system. This can be related to the requisite of having correct attitude towards the system, which affects how the organization works in implementation process.

**The formation of the certification system.** Many small organizations implementing a certification system point out the fact the difficulty with the formation of the system, since it seems to be mostly formed for larger organizations. As a result the members of the smaller organizations perceive that the certification system does not lead to quality improvements, rather an increase of administration. The formation of the system in many instances also is perceived as bureaucratic, which result into a too detailed documentation. Studies point out that the demands from the system shift focus from issues that actually is more important, which affect the member’s motivation and commitment for the process negatively.

**External help and the lack of commitment from the certifying body.** In the same sense that external help is a success factor for the implementation process, studies also point out that organizations need to find a balance between consultation and too much consultation. If the organization takes too much help, valuable knowledge will thus leave the organization when the process is over. Additionally, if the consultant conducts too much work by him-/herself, the members of the organization will not be as involved in the work with the certification system thus resulting in an inadequate knowledge regarding the process. Finally, the lack of commitment from the certifying body will also affect the organization negatively.

**2.4 Affecting factors specific to the implementation of a football certification system**

**2.4.1 Success factors**

**Knowledge and education.** The success of the youth academies in football clubs is to a great extent determined by a better understanding of the quality determining factors and a more positive evaluation of the organizational elements, e.g. facilities, procedures, systems (Van Hoecke, Schoukens and De Knop, 2007, p. 356). This will result in an enhancement of the satisfaction of the club’s players, parents and coaches etc., and thus improving the effects of the youth academy. Additionally, even though not specifically aimed at the implementation of a football certification system, Zec (2011, p. 332) argues that it is very important that the employees in the sport organization is adequately trained to cope with the changing organizational environment. This because without qualified personnel, any implemented development policy will fail, since the staff within the organization “are agents of the reform, development and progress.” (Zec, 2011, p. 332).

**Supporting policy.** Van Hoecke *et al* (2009, pp. 326-327) conclude that the only way to increase the quality and effectiveness of youth development in a structured manner, is to develop a supporting policy with substantial incentives. Lochmann (2012-02-25) further
mentions that in the case of implementing Foot PASS Deutschland, the people responsible in the clubs lacked the necessary knowledge for the implementation. Here a support system would surmount this barrier where an independent organization, apart from the football association and the certifying body, could provide support to the clubs (Van Hoecke et al, 2009, pp. 326-327). Especially, consulting by professionals is recommended to guide the clubs in the process of quality improvement. As mentioned regarded the implementation process of Foot PASS, “these supporting activities can be organized individually, but also collectively as management courses or by means of quality manuals that outline best-practice standards.” (Van Hoecke, 2012-05-05).

Incentives. Another important aspect regarding the implementation of the certification system Van Hoecke et al (2009, p. 326) argue is that measuring is conducted in a manner as a function of remediation, without far-reaching consequences. This implies that “an obliging or sanctioning policy is to be discouraged at all times.” (Van Hoecke et al, 2009, p. 326). Still it is important that the clubs receive new and reinforcing stimuli for working with the certification system and hence striving to improve the quality of their organizations.

2.4.2 Barriers

Resistance to change. One aspect that explains the differences in professionalization between different clubs is resistance towards the implemented quality system (Van Hoecke, Schoukens and De Knop, 2007, p. 356). The difficulties regarding changing the mentality of the club leaders when implementing the system, has been one of the major obstacles for quality improvement (Van Hoecke, 2012-05-05).

Lochmann (2012-02-25) concludes that there was a substantial amount of resistance within the clubs against the implementation of Foot PASS Deutschland. Lochmann claims that since football is quite traditional in Germany, with a lot of former soccer players/coaches in management roles within the organization, this leads to a lack of highly educated persons. Difficulties implementing new systems are thus an effect, since the responsible persons within the clubs thought it was unnecessary to change.

Lack of strategic management. Even though Van Hoecke, De Knop and Schoukens (2009, pp. 324-325) show the importance of supporting actions, such as post audits, management courses etc., in the case of the Belgian football clubs, the improvements they made between the first audit in 2003 to the second audit in 2006 were still on a moderate level. As mentioned earlier, improvements in football training systems and primary processes were made in the clubs, but further professionalization of the youth academies was deemed essential by the auditor. The authors claim that this moderate level of improving professionalization is due to a lack of strategic management on club level. The top management needs to decide what exactly to expect from their respective youth academy and handle it in an adequate way. However, this audit revealed the lack of vision regarding the youth academy from many Belgian clubs, which has a strong impact on the total scores of the quality system (Van Hoecke, De Knop and De Sutter, 2006, p. 278-279).

Increased work load. The implementation of the certification system also implies substantial work for the participating clubs in addition to the current workload. This constitutes a problem, since the employees within the clubs experience difficulties finding time to finish all the necessary documentation required by the certification system alongside their normal tasks (Lochmann, 2012-02-25).
External pressure. An additional downside regarding the implementation of the Foot PASS system in Germany Lochmann (2012-02-25) states was that the system was based on pressure towards the clubs. This was due to the fact that the German Football Association established a bonus system connected to the attained values from the audits, where the football academies could earn between 1-3 stars. Connected to this form of labeling, the German Football Association provided funds to the clubs, hence applying pressure on the clubs to perform well with the implementation of the certification system.

Lochmann (2012-02-25) argues that the most critical aspect with the certification system applied in Germany is that there was a lack of a person or organization that gave support to the clubs regarding the implementation of the system. When implementing the system, the clubs did not know what to expect, hence leading to difficulties fulfilling the criteria.

Documentation. The documentation of the processes within the sport clubs is another barrier to a successful implementation of the certification system. Many clubs often experience difficulties in transferring the reality or the organization into a document. According to Lochmann (2012-02-25) there was a big lack regarding the documentation of the football specific processes inside the clubs, which to the certifying body is an interesting result since the football process is the core product in the club. In order to circumvent this problem, it is important to have some sort of quality manager within the organization to guide the process of identifying what to do and how to do it regarding the documentation.

Formation of the certification system. The formation of the certification system might also be a problem for the football clubs (Lochmann, 2012-02-25). Issues have been raised regarding the scientific validity of the Foot PASS certification tool, since the tool at the moment consists of about 620 criteria in which the clubs are evaluated. At the same time, Lochmann claims that, in his experience, nothing apart from the certification tool gave more stimuli for the clubs to improve the quality of their organizations. Especially small clubs with insufficient infrastructure often experience problems to deal with the criteria in the correct way (Lochmann, 2012-02-25).

2.5 Summary and comments

Before we move on to describe the results of this study, a summary of what previously has been described is in order. Our theoretical discussion shows that the foundation for quality improvement is the integrative approach of Total Quality Management (TQM) and Performance Management (PM). An organization needs to adapt a comprehensive perspective for quality management throughout the entire organization in order for improvements to be made on a long-term basis. TQM is the management philosophy for which the quality of the organization’s processes is emphasized on a continuous basis and the TQM concept encompasses both a system-technical approach and a social-dynamic approach. Further distinction can also be made on a strategic level and an operational level. PM can be summarized as a system for defining, measuring, controlling and managing the performance of an organization. Thus we can integrate the concept of PM into the system technical approach of TQM.

The development of quality standards has been a way for companies to get an assurance of the quality of their respective processes and activities. Different systems have been developed where companies receive a certificate on the quality of the organization. Quality in the field of sport has not been as common, but because of the shift from a quantity to a quality perspective, the use of quality standards in sport clubs has been acknowledged. Many football
associations now implement quality certification systems in order to improve the quality of the domestic players, where Dutch football is deemed to be cutting edge in this aspect. However the certification system most referred to in research is the Foot PASS certification system developed in Belgium but now also implemented in Finnish, German and English football.

When implementing any certification system, the effectiveness of the implementation of the process will differ from organization to organization. This because there are factors affecting the implementation process, and these factors differ from case to case. The theoretical review shows all the different factors that might affect an organization’s implementation of a certification system. The factors can be of facilitating character, success factors, or hindering character, barriers. Below we summarize all the potential success factors and barriers related to the implementation of a certification system. We have chosen to divide the affecting factors in terms of the ones derived from a business environment and the ones specifically identified when implementing a football certification system. These factors are presented in Table 2 below and provide a comprehensive picture over the affecting factors a club might face when implementing a certification system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success factors</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Business success factors</strong></td>
<td><strong>Business barriers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Top management support</td>
<td>Lack of top management support commitment</td>
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<td>Correct attitude</td>
<td>Incorrect attitude</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality culture</td>
<td>Lack of resources</td>
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<td>Quality manager</td>
<td>Resistance to change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right prerequisites</td>
<td>Lack of education and knowledge</td>
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<td>Employee commitment</td>
<td>Planning and the time aspect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Documentation</td>
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<td>Diagnosis</td>
<td>External pressure</td>
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<td>Planning</td>
<td>The formation of the certification system</td>
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<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>External help</td>
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<td>Consultation</td>
<td>Lack of commitment from the certifying body</td>
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<td>Establishment of networks</td>
<td><strong>Football specific barriers</strong></td>
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<td>External pressure</td>
<td>Resistance to change</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lack of strategic management</td>
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<td><strong>Football specific success factors</strong></td>
<td>Increased work load</td>
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<td>Knowledge and education</td>
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<td>Supporting policy</td>
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<td>Incentives</td>
<td>The formation of the certification system</td>
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<td>Involvement in certification development</td>
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Table 2: Possible affecting factors when implementing a certification system
3 Methodology

3.1 Meaning and reality to us

When undertaking social research, there is a need to identify, explain and justify the epistemological stance, i.e. the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope and general basis, adopted in the paper (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). More specifically, “epistemology is concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate” (Maynard, 1994, p. 10 in Crotty, 1998, p. 8). According to Crotty (1998, p. 8) there are a range of epistemologies, where objectivism, (social) constructionism and subjectivism, categorize the central premises of the different stances. These different stances are concerned with questions regarding what reality is. Objectivism states that things exist as meaningful entities, i.e. within them as objects it resides truth and meaning, independently of consciousness and experience. As a result, scientific research, if conducted in a careful manner, can capture that objective truth and meaning. This is the epistemological stance underpinning the positivistic position, which we will discuss later (Crotty, 1998, pp. 5-6). The social constructionist stance on the other hand claims that truth and meaning is something that is socially constructed, which implies that all knowledge and meaningful reality depends on human interaction in a social context. Hence, truth and meaning differs between different people, even to the same object, since meaning is constructed in different ways. Thus, in the generation of meaning, subject and object emerge as partners. Lastly, subjectivism argues that meaning is imposed by the subject on the object, where the object is deemed to make no contribution to the generation of meaning (Crotty, 1998, pp. 9, 42).

This study takes an objectivistic stance, which means that we are of the opinion that an objective reality exists. However, it should be noted that we as authors do not reject the notion of social constructionism entirely, which means that we agree that reality contains subjective elements. These elements we believe can be objectively obtained and explained in terms of systems. Hence, we do not agree with the objectivistic stance that an ‘object’ can be studied separately from the context it belongs without subjective experiences, instead we are of the opinion that one must consider the context surrounding the studied object, since the different aspects within this context affect each other and thus creating synergy effects (Bjerke and Arbnor, 1994, pp. 66-67, 162-163).

3.1.1 ‘Soft positivism’ as theoretical perspective

The epistemological stance leads us to discuss the theoretical perspective of this study, which addresses the assumptions about reality that we bring to our work. It provides a context for the scientific process in this study and grounds its logic and criteria (Crotty, 1998, pp. 2-3).Within this category there is number of perspectives, where the most common standpoints are positivism and interpretivism (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p. 16). Briefly positivism can be described as a position which considers that the role of theory is to generate hypotheses that can be tested and hence lead to the assessment of explanations and laws. Science should be conducted in a way so it remains its objectivity, i.e. keeping value free (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p. 16) by detached observation, which in all will lead to control and predictability (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). In contrast, interpretivism aims to find culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world. The main division resides in the view that natural sciences focus on explaining while human sciences are keen to develop an understanding of human behavior (Crotty, 1998, p. 67) which means adopting a focus of
interpretive understanding of social action rather than to external forces which, for the people involved in the specific social action, have no meaning (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p. 18).

Since the aim of the study is to investigate the success factors and pitfalls when implementing a certification system in a football organization, we thus strive to explain different affecting factors, from the cases investigated that build on similar structures. This implies that we have a positivistic perspective in this study, which is mostly true. However returning to the previous discussion regarding the possibility to obtain an objective reality where subjective elements might be involved, we would like to consider ourselves as “soft positivistic”. This means that our overall ambition is to explain different affecting factors and their effect on the result of the certification process, however these affecting factors are to some extent subjectively obtained through the respondents’ experiences. In these situations, it also becomes important trying to understand the respondent’s experiences in order to adequately grasp the whole context in which they act (Arbnor and Bjerke, 1994, p. 72). As mentioned earlier though, we believe that these subjective experiences can be deemed objective within the investigated context.

The ambition we have as a result of our epistemological stance and theoretical perspective is to describe, to establish relationships, and to predict results within the studied context. Our ambition in this study is also to guide other actors within the same context. Hence, we believe it is essential and a prerequisite with a shared view on reality, where an objective truth exists within specific systems, in order for the results of this study to be applied to other similar cases. At the same time, the understanding of the subjective experiences we believe is imperative to give an adequate explanation of the area of investigation.

3.1.2 Our view on how the results should be regarded
Our epistemological stance and theoretical perspective adopted has implications for how we believe the results of this study should be regarded. The adopted perspective differs from the more objectivistic/positivistic perspective regarding the possibility of using the experiences from one study to another similar. The results from one study do not constitute an absolute theory as the general positivistic approach would suggest, instead the results contributes to describing analogies when investigating similar systems (Arbnor and Bjerke, 1994, p. 85). Hence we believe that the results of this study with favor can be used as an explanation of the different factors affecting football organizations when implementing a football specific certification system.

The knowledge acquired in this study thus should not be regarded as general in an absolute meaning, since our stance also incorporates subjective experiences. These subjective experiences we believe can be objectively obtained, as long as studied in the same type of context. Hence, the knowledge in theory becomes connected to specific systems, which cannot be discussed in terms of “all else being equal”. The knowledge thus mainly is “judged” in relationship to its users and to which consequences it has to explain, understand and refine the adequateness at different parts of the investigated system (Arbnor and Bjerke, 1994, pp. 85-86, 163).

3.2 Approach
Our study has the starting point from a previous study made by Carlsson (2011), where barriers and success factors in the implementing phase of the Swedish football certification process was investigated. More specifically, an ethnographic study of the football club Gefle IF was conducted, which resulted in the development of a model for analysis consisting of
actual affecting factors (p. 46). Carlsson’s study showed that this field is an unexplored topic which is our impetus to further investigate the topic. We wish to expand the established knowledge by interviewing more Swedish football clubs in order to get a greater comprehension over the affecting factors that a football clubs need to take into consideration when implementing a certification system.

To answer our purpose, we have, as mentioned, Carlsson’s (2011) study as a starting point, this because it has a rich extensive theory from the existing business world regarding the subject. We are of the opinion that this theory with favor can be incorporated into this study. By looking at what is already known about the field implies that we are conducting a deductive approach to the study (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p. 11). However, we are not using any hypothesis which both Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 11) and Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003, p. 86) claim that the process of deduction contains.

In order to answer the aim of this study it is not sufficient just by looking at what is already known. We wish to develop our understanding of the different clubs’ experiences of the certification process and thus provide a description of the affecting factors within the studied context. This means that we also will generalize inferences out of the observations we are doing by interviewing respondents of the clubs (which will be described later), meaning we have an inductive approach (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p. 14). We are collecting new data to see if the theory will or will not hold, thus conducting an approach called iterative (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p. 14). The iterative approach can also be categorized as abduction, which means that we can expand the meaning of our approach. The abductive approach (iterative) is as mentioned interaction between deductive and inductive inference. With the help of induction a description of the current state is given and with the help of deduction the knowledge of the subject is increased with the help of previous theoretical contributions. Abduction is thus based on the dialogue between the theoretical contributions and the result of the respondents understanding of the problem at hand (Olsson and Sörensen, 2011, p. 48).

### 3.2.1 Data collection and respondent selection

With Carlsson (2011) as theoretical background, we started to look for more specific research about the implementation of quality system within football. As mentioned earlier, because of the limited research regarding the subject, we experienced difficulties finding specific literature. However, we found an article written by Van Hoecke, De Knop, De Boch (2004) called “Quality Management in Sport Clubs”. By searching on these researches we find the organization Double PASS. They have, as previously mentioned, developed a certification system in order to measure the quality of the organizations. As we will discuss later in this study, this quality system has many similarities to the Swedish certification system and was therefore interesting for us to have as starting point in the field of security quality in football organizations. This is also the only certification system in which research has been published.

Because of the limited research about the topic we further decided to contact several of researchers by e-mail that we believed had potential knowledge about the field of certification system in football. One researcher, Prof. Dr. Dr. Matthias Lochmann, professor of Sport Science and Medicine, and a member of the Double PASS Company when establishing Foot PASS in Germany, answered the e-mail and was willing to participate and answer our questions. Since this respondent is a leading scientist regarding football quality certification systems we have chosen to integrate his answers to expand the theoretical framework, as a consequence of the limited amount research.
We also received an e-mail from Dr. Jo Van Hoecke, leading scientist in the Double PASS Company (Double PASS B), saying he was willing to answer our questions. On the same premise as with Lochmann, since Van Hoecke is a leading expert within this field we have chosen to incorporate his answers into the theoretical framework. This in order to generate a greater comprehension of the specific affecting factors when implementing a football certification system. Unfortunately, because of the respondent’s lack of time, he was only able to answer the questions to some extent. This means that we were not able to acquire as detailed information as we wished from this interview.

After we stated our research question, we started to think of which clubs that would be appropriate to interview. In the sampling process we considered Gefle IF as one potential organization because of Carlsson’s previous study. Further on, all the Swedish elite football clubs have during the spring of 2011 been audited by the central foundation for Swedish elite football (Svensk Elitfotboll (SEF)) which is responsible for the certification system. The results of the clubs have been officially announced at the website ‘www.tipselit.se’, where the clubs could earn a score from a ‘U-centra’ (the lowest) to a ‘Five-star Academy’ (the highest). In order to establish a representative selection of respondents we decided to interview four clubs representing different results. Gefle IF had the result U-centra. The choice further fell on AIK Fotboll (five stars), GIF Sundsvall (three stars) and IFK Norrköping (three stars) (Tipselit). The additional logic behind this primary choice was then dependent on the geographical location of these four clubs, since our aim was to interview respondents face to face.

The respondents from respective club is the person that is responsible for the certification process, which means that Leif Karlsson in AIK Fotboll Thomas Andersson in Gefle IF, Urban Hagblom in GIF Sundsvall, and Tony Martinsson in IFK Norrköping are the respondents in this study. When visiting AIK Fotboll, however, Karlsson also invited his colleague John Wall, who also has participated in the certification process in the club, to participate in our meeting.

3.2.2 Data collection approach

In order to acquire the most illustrative answers a qualitative method suits the purpose of this study. Since we seek the respondent’s experiences of the implementation process we find this method most suitable. The approach to gather the primary data was the conduction of qualitative interviews with the football clubs. We used a semi-structured interview method, which means that we used a list of themes and questions that would be covered during the interview. However, the questions could differ from interview to interview depending on the conversation (Saunders et al, 2003, p. 246). During the interviews we also asked questions that were not included in the questionnaire, nevertheless, this is a part of the semi-structured approach where questions can be asked depending on issues addressed during the interview (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p. 474). We argue that this approach gives us the flexibility needed for asking every question that we find appropriate, and as result generate as adequate information as possible. It also allows us to ask questions that can be of significant value for the study that we had not thought about while developing the questionnaire. A semi-structured approach is also appropriate if the researchers have a fairly clear focus of the topic at the start of the study, this to cover a wider range of possible responses (Bryman and Bell, 2007, pp. 479-480). We find this as the best way of approaching the topic on the basis of the purpose of the study which is to analyze the respondents’ experiences regarding the implementation of the certification system.
We conducted the first three interviews (AIK Fotboll, Gefle IF and GIF Sundsvall) face to face in the respondents home environment which is appropriate so that the respondent feel safe (Trost, 2005, p. 44). The fourth interview with IFK Norrköping was conducted over telephone, this since we argue that we already had built up the knowledge foundation required in the three first interviews. Further on, we believed that we had established an overviewing picture of the vital aspects such as the opinion over the certification system and why it is needed. Questions were nevertheless asked in a semi-structured way with the same specific context in relation to the research topic which is necessary for this type of interviews (Saunders et al, 2003, p. 247). The questions asked to the respondents of the clubs are presented in Appendix 1. These questions are the same questions that Carlsson (2011) used in his study, which have proven to be favorable for acquiring vivid and adequate responses.

Below we present a model that describe our interview process selection when interviewing the four clubs and an alternative path, where we can see how the approach and how the interaction between the researcher and the participants might differ.

![Qualitative interviews model](image)

Due to the geographical distance the interview with Prof. Dr. Dr. Matthias Lochmann (situated in Germany) took place over the data program Skype, which is a video chatting program. This interview had the same approach as the interviews with the football clubs where we used the method of a semi-structured interview. This was according to us an appropriate approach when the respondent has significant knowledge about the field and could therefore go into areas which we had not thought about. The questions answered, however, were not the same questions asked in the interviews with the clubs, because of the different purposes of the interviews.

As mentioned earlier, we also completed an interview with Van Hoecke. This gathering of primary data was made by an interview over e-mail, due to a lack of time from his side. Nevertheless, the interview questions were the same as for Lochmann but with the exception that we were not able to ask attendant follow-up questions. Still, the questions was of open character where he could speak free about the topic (Kylén, 2004, p. 19), which make the
form of the interview semi-structured though with an approach that leaning towards a structured interview since the questions are predetermined and standardized (Saunders et al., 2003, p. 247). The questions asked to Van Hoecke and Lochmann are found in Appendix 2. The secondary data provided into the study is gathered from scientific journals, conference papers, literature and the internet. The use of these data is implemented into our theoretical and methodical chapter. Further, the largest part of the secondary data comes from scientific journals and working papers.

3.3 Considerations
In order to enhance the credibility of this study the interviews have been recorded and then transcribed. According to Olsson and Sörensen (2011, p. 131) a material should always be transcribed, no matter if the acquired information material. Transcription means that the text is written literally, thereafter processing and selection of the material is conducted. After transcribing the interviews, we also have been undertaking the process of respondent validation. This means that we have provided the respondent with an account of the findings from the interview, in order to ensure that it is an adequate correspondence between these findings and the respondent’s perspective and experiences (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p. 411).

The major source for describing the affecting factors when implementing a certification system is Carlsson (2011). One might criticize our study for this use since Carlsson’s theoretical framework is based on previous research in the field of business. We are aware of this issue, however Albernas et al (2011, p. 341) claim that there has been a lack of techniques and tools, that are developed specifically for managing sport organizations, which takes into account the specificities of its core business. As a result, sport organizations aiming to improve their performance management have had to turn to the systematic approach developed in the world of business. Hence, we argue that our theoretical framework, with the additional contribution from the limited researched field of football certification systems, is a valid framework for describing the affecting factors a football club might face when implementing that specific system.

We are aware that one can criticize us for incorporating primary data in the theoretical framework. Though, we argue that because of the limited research in this field and the respondents’ experiences regarding the topic, they contribute with necessary information vital for this study.
4 Empirical findings

4.1 The Swedish certification system

As mentioned earlier in this study, Swedish elite football clubs have implemented a certification system in their respective organizations during late 2010 and 2011. The certification system is divided into different categories that answer on how the youth activities in the organization are composed, where the categories are A-H described next (Tipselit, 2011):

- **A. Club vision and mission with youth academy**: includes four questions about the association’s goals with the youth activities in the ages 8-19
- **B. Curriculum for players in the youth academy**: issues referring to the association’s curriculum for players in the ages 8-19
- **C. Curriculum for leader in the youth academy**: discuss questions regarding the level of education of the clubs leaders and if there are a curriculum for these
- **D. Facilities**: embody aspects such as facilities for players within the youth activities
- **E. Club school activities**: include the association’s collaboration with schools
- **F. Club collaboration with smaller clubs**: include the association’s collaboration with other smaller clubs
- **G. Recruitment of players and leaders**: investigate how the recruitment of players and leaders are proceeded
- **H. Results from youth activities**: contains the results of the youth activities, which means that the association receive points from how many domestic grown players that have debuted in elite context (Allsvenskan or Superettan) and how many years they have been a part of the association. The longer they have played for the club and if a player has played a national game etc., the higher score for the association.

4.1.1 The implementation process

The development of the Swedish certification system begun in the spring of 2010, where representatives from SEF, the Swedish Football Association, The Association of Women Elite Football, and football districts in the country, have formed a work-group to lead this development (SEF A, 2010-05-14). Representatives from each Swedish elite football club have also been invited to discuss the development of the certification system during several meetings throughout the year. In the spring of 2011, the certification system was ready to be implemented in each club (SEF B, 2010-09-10).

4.1.2 Club scores

Below we illustrate the Swedish elite football clubs’ scores from the first audit conducted in 2011 in table 3. First we provide a compilation of the certification system results from ‘Allsvenskan’ (first division) and ‘Superettan’ (second division) which are the two leagues that use the certification system in Sweden. We also illustrate the results from the four clubs that we have interviewed, AIK Fotboll, Gefle IF, GIF Sundsvall (a Superettan team when the audit was conducted) and IFK Norrköping. The results are the arithmetic average from the two leagues and the specific results from the four clubs. Note that dimension H. “Results from youth activities” has no limitation for the total score, though we incorporated it into the table where we calculated the average index for all clubs.
Looking at the scores, we can for instance see that ‘D. Facilities’ has the highest scores both in Allsvenskan and Superettan. Only one team for each division did not manage to score the highest result. Generally, the dimensions that have the lower results are dimension ‘C. Curriculum for leaders in the youth academy’, ‘F. Club collaboration with smaller clubs’ and ‘G. Recruitment of players and leaders’.

The remaining three dimensions differ within the two divisions where Allsvenskan scores a significant higher result than Superettan. In the first dimension, ‘A. Club vision and mission with youth academy’ the average score of Allsvenskan is 99 % while Superettan only reach 73 %. The same scenario applies to the dimensions ‘B. Curriculum for players in the youth academy’ and ‘E. Club school activity’.

The results from the four clubs AIK Fotboll, Gefle IF, GIF Sundsvall and IFK Norrköping differ significantly. AIK Fotboll has high results in every dimension, they also have a higher result in all of the dimensions comparing to the average index for all of the clubs in Allsvenskan. Gefle IF on the other hand has quite low results with the exception of ‘D. Facilities’, where their results in the other dimensions are under the average for Allsvenskan. The dimensions B. C. F. and G. are even under the average for Superettan. The scores for GIF Sundsvall are varied where they score high in some dimensions and lower in others, however, they do not have any score that is substantially low and their result reflect the average for

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Allsvenskan (First Division) %</th>
<th>Superettan (Second Division) %</th>
<th>AIK Fotboll %</th>
<th>Gefle IF %</th>
<th>GIF Sundsvall %</th>
<th>IFK Norrköping %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Club vision and mission with youth academy</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>83,3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Curriculum for players in the youth academy</td>
<td>90,7</td>
<td>83,3</td>
<td>97,6</td>
<td>77,6</td>
<td>97,6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Curriculum for leaders in the youth academy</td>
<td>65,7</td>
<td>57,4</td>
<td>81,6</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>74,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Facilities</td>
<td>97,6</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Club school activities</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>64,3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>68,8</td>
<td>68,8</td>
<td>68,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Club collaboration with smaller clubs</td>
<td>77,7</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>71,4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Recruitment of players and leaders</td>
<td>71,3</td>
<td>61,7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>45,5</td>
<td>72,7</td>
<td>77,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Results from the youth academy</td>
<td>797,56</td>
<td>636,14</td>
<td>1 362</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>454</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Compilation of club scores in 2011 audit
Allsvenskan in every dimension. Their scores are also in every dimension higher than the average for Superettan. IFK Norrköping scores the highest result in the dimensions A, B, D, and F. They also score over the average in categories C, and G. and the only dimension where they score below Allsvenskan’s average are in dimension E., however they still score higher than the average for Superettan.

Regarding dimension ’H. Results from the youth academy’, Allsvenskan scores a higher average index than Superettan. AIK Fotboll is in top of the respondent clubs in the study and scores significantly higher than the average of Allsvenskan. As for the rest, they all score a result that is both under the average of the first division, but it is also under the Superettan average.

4.2 The implementation of the Swedish certification system in the studied clubs

4.2.1 The implementation process

Below we present the implementation process of the certification system within the different clubs in this study. For AIK Fotboll the implementation process began with analyzing which type of documentation required by the certification system the club already had established. With the documentation at hand, the club started to sort out the material and analyze which material fitted where in the certification system. In those situations where they identified gaps, they simultaneously started constituting new documents filling these gaps. This diagnosis also served as tool for the club to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses and how they could improve within these in the future. Many people within the organization have been involved in this process, where five people, including Karlsson and Wall, have had the main responsibility for this work. All these people have a full-time appointment within the organization, where they represent different levels within the club, which meant that AIK Fotboll could focus on developing the documentation needed in relation to the certification system. In more detail-specific areas the club has made use of specialized employees within the organization (Karlsson and Wall, 2012-04-10).

Gefle IF’s process began with Andersson, as responsible for the work, looking at the documentation at hand and how that could be matched with the criteria of the certification system. Early in the process, the club arranged a meeting where club staff, board members and coaches met to discuss generally about the document and Andersson also informed everybody of the implementation of the certification system. During the meeting, the club assigned a working team mainly consisting of volunteering coaches within the youth academy. There were two people in the working group that had a full-time appointment within the organization, where Andersson as head of the youth academy was one of them. However, this work were put on top of already present tasks, which implied that Andersson only was able to put 25 % of his time on the work. With the already established documentation at hand, the working group met to discuss some parts that Andersson deemed most important in terms of the certification. The working group met during three occasions which led to the improvement of the club’s documentation. When necessary, the club has made use of people with a detailed knowledge in a certain area (Andersson, 2012-04-25).

For GIF Sundsvall the process began with an analysis of the different parts included in the certification system and what gaps needed to be filled in the existing documentation. Hagblom (2012-04-12) mentions that the club had some documentation regarding different policies and some curriculum for younger players and also leaders, but this documentation did
not cover the scope of the entire youth academy. Where gaps existed, a documentation process began. The diagnosis thus served as a tool for identifying in which field the club was high performing and in which dimensions they needed to improve significantly, Hagblom claims. Hagblom was appointed head of the certification and has invested most time in the process. To his assistance were a youth sport director and two appointed instructors, where the sport director focused on developing policies while the instructors assisted in developing specific curriculums for players and leaders. Additionally, in more specific areas experts within the club have helped to develop the documentation. The documentation phase lasted for about six months and after that Hagblom, as responsible for the certification, started to consolidate this work within the organization, first to the board members then to lower levels of the organization.

IFK Norrköping’s approach regarding the certification process was to gather a group of top management employees, including the chairman of the board, the youth sport director etc., in a meeting where they analyzed the dimensions of the certification system. Martinsson (2012-05-11) mentions that during this meeting they identified which dimensions belonging to whom to develop and also under which areas they lacked the documents necessary. After the meeting overall 20 people were involved in the process, where some of these people are volunteers in the club.

4.3 Affecting factors
In the following section we will describe affecting factors the respondents have experienced when working with the certification system.

4.3.1 The attitude towards the certification system
All the respondents in this study deem that the certification system contributes to an improvement of their respective youth academies. They all perceive the system as a tool for quality assurance of these academies and hence Swedish football.

Hagblom (2012-04-12) in GIF Sundsvall claims that the results of the certification system will constitute an adequate “receipt” on the youth academy. This will be positive from the organization’s perspective since they get to know in which dimensions they are high performing and less high performing. The certification system is also positive in terms of communication to external stakeholders, such as players and parents, since it is more evident how well performing the youth academy is but also what type of environment the specific club has for their players. Additionally, the certification system can be used in order to generate more income for the club, Hagblom states.

From GIF Sundsvall’s perspective, Hagblom (2012-04-12) does not perceive the results from the audit as something negative in the sense of competition towards other clubs. Instead, the results are perceived as a useful measurement to which areas the club needs to improve. According to Hagblom, GIF Sundsvall is fortunate, because of their geographic location, not to experience as heavy competition towards other elite football clubs as the clubs in Stockholm do (AIK Fotboll, Brommapojkarna, Djurgårdens IF, Hammarby IF). The certification not only is a tool for quality improvement, it can also be used as a tool for recruiting new players, he says. This means that the club can focus more on their own organization instead of comparing themselves with other clubs through the certification. “For us it is more about receiving a receipt of our performance and then we can identify areas of improvement that we will be working on in the future” (Hagblom, 2012-04-12). Andersson (2012-04-25) touches upon the same subject as Hagblom, stating that Gefle IF does not
experience competition from another elite club in the nearby area. This means that it actually
does not matter how the club is rated, as long as the organization continuously strive to
improve the youth academy. Andersson experience the attitude towards the certification
process as positive throughout the entire organization and that there is high commitment
towards this work from all members.

From AIK Fotboll’s perspective, they welcome the certification system not only from a
quality assurance point of view, but also from a competitive point of view. Karlsson (Karlsson
and Wall, 2012-04-10) says that the organization felt secure that their youth academy was
high performing and as a result they can use the scores of the audit as a tool for recruiting
players to the club. This since the system is a good indicator of the quality of the youth
academies. At the same time, Karlsson is keen to point out that AIK Fotboll does not pursue
this to get acknowledged for a good description of their youth academy, instead they pursue
the certification process in order to develop elite players.

Martinsson (2012-05-11) in IFK Norrköping states that the club’s view regarding the
certification system overall is positive. He claims that the system is a useful tool for quality
improvement and quality assurance, but also in regards to comparing with the other clubs in
the league. Additionally, Martinsson perceives that the commitment from the club for the
certification process has been good all the way through the organization.

4.3.2 Support
Top management support. The respondents in the study perceive the overall support from
the top management within each organization as positive. For AIK Fotboll, Karlsson
(Karlsson and Wall, 2012-04-10) claims that there is a clear emphasis on the importance
of the youth academy, hence the certification process, from all other functions within the
organization. For AIK Fotboll this general support for the development of the youth academy
has resulted in a good quality of the youth academy: “If everybody believes in it [the
certification] and think it is important, then it becomes not only pretty in theory but also good
in practice too.” (Karlsson, Karlsson and Wall, 2012-04-10).

Hagblom (2012-04-12) states that the top management has prioritized the work with the
certification since they all see the great potential value it will have for GIF Sundsvall in the
future. The board members have delegated the work with the certification to the people within
the organization that has had this work as their main task. On lower levels in the organization
on the other hand, Hagblom claims that the commitment has not been satisfying. Additionally,
Andersson as head of the certification in Gefle IF, also perceives the full support for the
process from the rest of the top management (2012-04-25).

Additional support. For Gefle IF, Andersson (2012-04-25) mentions that the audit from the
association behind the certification system (Svensk Elitfotboll (SEF)) was of use for the club.
The person conducting the audit with great experience regarding football organizations, sat
with Andersson during the audit and went through the documentation. “We received very
good feedback and also a substantial list on what to improve. This is something of great use
for our further work with the certification system.” (Andersson, 2012-04-25).

4.3.3 Right prerequisites
Geographical location. According to Hagblom in GIF Sundsvall (2012-04-12) the
prerequisites regarding culture and geographical location will affect the received results of the
certification process. Especially on the subject of geographical location, Hagblom claims that
GIF Sundsvall has an advantage towards other clubs. Since the club is basically the only Swedish elite football club in the northern parts of Sweden (constituting 59% of Sweden’s total area), the club has had the possibility to cooperate with several football clubs, where GIF Sundsvall has the leading role. “I experience that we have developed a bigger and stronger cooperation with the clubs within the region, which for GIF Sundsvall is a huge area” (Hagblom, 2012-04-12). When comparing to clubs in larger cities, this implies that they have a smaller area in which they can cooperate with other clubs. As a result, this difference will affect the result in the audit, according to Hagblom.

**Documentation.** The respondents for AIK Fotboll, Gefle IF and IFK Norrköping speak of the benefits of an already established documentation in the specific dimensions in the certification system. Andersson (2012-04-25) in Gefle IF claims that since the club already had an adequate documentation in some dimensions, this was a lot of help in the implementation process. However, it was not as specific as required by the system and there were many areas in some dimensions that were not documented, still it was a good foundation when starting the process.

For AIK Fotboll the implementation of the certification system suited the organization perfectly, since they already had established a detailed documentation describing the different processes in the youth academy. Hence, when implemented in the organization, almost all the documentation of processes required by the certification system was already in place. Karlsson (Karlsson and Wall, 2012-04-10) estimates that around 80-85% of the documentation required within the system already was developed prior to the implementation. It was actually more a gathering of documentation than composing something new, Wall claims. This implied that the club was well prepared when the implementation process began.

IFK Norrköping also experienced that they had an advantage coming in to the certification process with an extensive documentation. Martinsson (2012-05-11) claims that the club is well-developed regarding documentation that is required in the certification system. Also, the implementation of the system suited nicely in time since the club just previous the implementation had developed documents regarding curriculums for players and coaches. Many people were thus already “in tune” with this type of work. All in all, this gave the club a head start when implementing the system, which has been to a great advantage for them, Martinsson (2012-05-11) states.

**Staff and time.** “We are as well-represented as the certification mentions regarding percental recruitment-rate of the staff, and to see their respective functions in relation to the certification system” (Wall, Karlsson and Wall, 2012-04-10). Additionally, Karlsson claims that for AIK Fotboll the work with the certification has taken a substantial amount of time for all people involved in the process. At the same time, he claims that this work has been prioritized in order for AIK Fotboll to perform well. Andersson (2012-04-25) also mentions that from Gefle IF’s perspective, the certification system would have been easier to implement if the club had more hired personnel to work with the certification system, in terms of coordination and development of the documentation.

**4.3.4 Experienced difficulties**

**Lack of resources.** Andersson (2012-04-25) mentions that the implementation of the certification system has implied an extensive amount of additional work for Gefle IF. The process has been time-consuming for the people involved in the process, which has been experienced as a difficulty. This might be a result of a lack of personnel within the
organization, Andersson claims, since there is substantial work to be made delegated to few persons. During some parts of the season, the work load already is heavy and thus the club has not been able to focus on the certification process as much as they would have liked. This was the case for Gefle IF, according to the respondent, where they were not able to develop their documentation before the first audit. Andersson adds that even though the certification system forces an extensive amount of work in a short period of time, the main objective of the certification is overall positive. It is thus up to each club to prioritize the different issues dealt in the certification system, and put some issues on hold if the resources are scarce. “The aspect regarding resources is of course a barrier, but then it is up to each club to put it on a level they feel they are willing to do” (Andersson, 2012-04-25).

Hagblom (2012-04-12) also mentions the aspect regarding scarce resources, but he claims that even though GIF Sundsvall does not have the financial capacity to appoint staff in every youth team (and thus receive more points in the audit) this is not an issue to them. He claims that the club knows the amount of resources they have and it is thus up to them to prioritize in which areas these resources should be spent. Hagblom acknowledges that other clubs might perceive the aspect of resources as a barrier, perhaps in terms of competition between other clubs.

Martinsson (2012-05-11) likewise state that this process has taken a substantial amount of time and that IFK Norrköping has experienced a lack of time regarding coordinating the work with the certification system between the people involved. He also mentions that the club has not been able to work full-time with the system, compared to some other clubs that has employees whose only task was to work with this.

Documentation. All respondents in the study mention difficulties regarding the documentation phase of the certification process. Karlsson (2012-04-10) states that the process of documentation was tough to some extent for AIK Fotboll. Further he also believes that some other clubs think that the system became too tough with too much specificity. Karlsson expresses for example the aspect with accounting of performance review where one needs to report every time of meeting, and claim that it might be enough that one just verifies that you have had the dialogues. Wall and Karlsson though state that this way of working has led to a way of working that has become more equivalent which only has been positive. Wall also claims that the major difficulty for AIK Fotboll has been to compile all documentation, and for the documentation to land in the same tone throughout the whole paper.

The part that has taken most time for GIF Sundsvall is also how to express themselves in the documents, according to Hagblom (2012-04-12). He further mentions that this can differ depending on what culture an individual grew up in. Hagblom also claims that the documentation process has been a big task for GIF Sundsvall since much of the knowledge of the clubs specific processes has followed a few strong individuals, hence, the documentation has been very important in order for this knowledge not to disappear.

Formation of the certification system. According to Martinsson (2012-05-11) the formation of the certification system in some instances is questionable. For example regarding scores for full-time appointed coaches for players of eight years old, which is not so realistic he says. He also argues that clubs with more youth players in the organization, has an advantage regarding developing players for the first team in the club since the more players the greater the possibility of some to succeed. For clubs with fewer players in the organization, it is harder Martinsson claims.
Communication in the establishing phase. The work with establishing the process would have been easier if every member in the association had shown more commitment towards it, Hagblom (2012-04-12) mentions. If more people had challenged different aspects more, the work to establish the certification would have proceeded in a better way, Hagblom concludes. This is the reason why the certification has been established in the organization in a just a decent way. Hagblom claims that people sometimes take things for granted in the organization, but things changes and even if it is announced on the homepage, everyone will not see it. This makes communication very difficult to work with. The big challenge according to Hagblom for all clubs is to manage the establishing process down to all parents and players, and with this being very clear on what the certification system implies.

Geographical location. According to Hagblom (2012-04-12), the club’s differences in catchment areas (geographic area where players are recruited to the club) affect the results in the certification system. For GIF Sundsvall, that works to develop a strong network between football clubs in the northern parts of Sweden, their approach for youth development is negative in terms of scores acquired. GIF Sundsvall strives to develop football players in their domestic environment, for example in a club several miles away, which means that one player perhaps joins GIF Sundsvall first when he is 21 years old. Indirectly, it is GIF Sundsvall’s effort that has led to the development of this player, but they are not rewarded for that in the certification system. Hagblom claims that this in fact is not an issue for the club, but in an external communication perspective, this might affect how other stakeholders perceive the club.

4.3.5 Perceived effects of the certification system
Karlsson (2012-04-10) states that for AIK Fotboll the certification system develops a clear emphasis towards the clubs regarding quality management, and if the clubs believe that it is important to have a good organization, this system should be on place. Thus, it should not be a problem to send in what they working with, Karlsson claims. “The certification system has implied that we are working a bit more professionally.” (Karlsson, Karlsson and Wall, 2012-04-10). Karlsson (2012-04-10) perceives that the certification system has contributed to the development of AIK Fotboll, and with more effort to have the best educated trainers that are working full time with the association and in schools has infer that the club has gone from being in the bottom of clubs in Stockholm to being one of the best.

Andersson (2012-04-25) claims that one result from the certification system for Gefle IF is a manual for coaches where a clear line of argument runs through the ages 8-19. The manual gives the club a clear curriculum of what the players should be able to do in specific ages. Andersson also state that a curriculum with clear guidelines of how leaders should work has been requested and the syllabus with practices has given the club a basic idea that every member has accepted. This has also developed a more distinctiveness for the younger ages which were not the case before the certification process started. This has further resulted in that every activity is being documented and that a clear value-system has been developed. The system has also resulted in that more people outside the organization know what is demanded and which demands themselves can ask of the club, Andersson (2012-04-25) claims. He also states that they now have a coordinator that looks over the association while it is practiced, where he makes sure that the curriculum for the club is followed.

While working with the certification system Hagblom (2012-04-12) states that GIF Sundsvall has developed a clearer description of the curriculum at the youth side. Hagblom further
express that it is GIF Sundsvall’s apprehension that the better educated leaders one have, the better player you become, and this not only in technical football skills but it has also to do with personal development. Henceforth Hagblom explains that the certification system have made a clearer definition in GIF Sundsvall’s processes, this is further a good result since everyone, both inside and outside the organization can see what values the club has and stand for.

Hagblom states that the certification system is a vital resource since it shows how the club is working but it is also a huge resource referring to curriculums. He explains that some processes have just followed some people, and if these people quit their job in the club, the whole organization needs to start from the bottom again. With this as background, the document that has been developed from the certification system helps the club so that the organization does not stand and fall on a few strong individuals. The document is also a form of a handbook where every question about talent development can be answered.

For IFK Norrköping’s part the implementation of the certification system has resulted in a more thorough work with specific areas such as sports psychology, physical training, finance, law and agents, mostly further “down” the ages of the players. It provides the players and parents of the club more knowledge about not just only the football aspect, which is positive according to Martinsson (2012-05-11).
5 Analysis

5.1 Comparison of Foot PASS and the Swedish certification system

5.1.1 The formation of the systems

In order to conduct a comprehensive analysis, we first need to compare the two certification systems investigated in this study. In table 4 we summarize the dimensions of each system. For a more detailed description we refer to previous chapters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foot PASS certification system</th>
<th>Swedish certification system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Strategic planning &amp; financial planning (STRA)</td>
<td>A. Club vision and mission with youth academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Organizational structure &amp; decision making (ORG)</td>
<td>B. Curriculum for players in the youth academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Talent identification &amp; development system (DEV)</td>
<td>C. Curriculum for leaders in the youth academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Athletic &amp; social support (SUP)</td>
<td>D. Facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Academy staff (STAF)</td>
<td>E. Club school activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Communication &amp; co-operation (COM)</td>
<td>F. Club collaboration with smaller clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Facilities &amp; equipment (FAC)</td>
<td>G. Recruitment of players and leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Effectiveness (EFF)</td>
<td>H. Results from the youth academy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Comparison of the Foot PASS certification system and the Swedish certification system

First we can conclude that the Foot PASS certification system covers more organizational wide aspects, such as financial aspects, organizational structure and decision making. The Swedish certification system to some extent concerns these issues as well, though not as thoroughly as Foot PASS. Apart from this, the dimensions in the two systems in general covers the same aspects (though detail-specific issues within these dimensions might differ), however with different classifications. As mentioned, in order to conduct an adequate discussion there is a need to re-classify the systems. We are aware of this slightly diffuse categorization, but for the sake of analysis this is necessary. Taking Foot PASS as starting point, we can re-classify the Swedish certification system as follows:

- A. Club vision and mission with youth academy = 1. Strategic planning (STRA)
- B. Curriculum for players in the youth academy = 3. Talent identification & development system (DEV) + 4. Athletic & social support (SUP)
- C. Curriculum for leaders in the youth academy = 5. Academy staff (STAF)
- D. Facilities = 7. Facilities & equipment (FAC)
- E. Club school activities = 6. Communication & co-operation (COM)
- F. Club collaboration with smaller clubs = 6. Communication & co-operation (COM)
- G. Recruitment of players and leaders = 6. Communication & co-operation (COM)
• H. Results from the youth academy = 8. Effectiveness (EFF)

It should be noted that the Swedish certification system’s dimension ‘Results from youth academy’ differs from the Foot PASS dimension ‘Effectiveness’ in the sense that the first does not actually measure organizational effectiveness, just how many players the club manages to develop for the first team and their level of involvement. Note also that this compilation is our interpretation of the two systems and thus not a definite description.

5.1.2 The implementation of the systems
The implementation process of Foot PASS and the Swedish certification system we can conclude are quite similar to each other. Referring back to the implementation process of Foot PASS, there are three steps. The first step is the development of the certification system in order to suit the specific environment where it is implemented. The second step is the implementation of the system in each club and the third step is the use of the results as promotion of the respective youth academy. The overall implementation of the Swedish certification follows the same principle, however not theoretically defined in different stages. The major difference lies in the fact that the development of Foot PASS comes from an independent company offering this certification to football clubs in order to make profits. In the case of the Swedish certification system, ‘Svensk Elitfotboll’ (SEF), the interest organization of Swedish elite football clubs, is the driving force behind the system. Hence the overall purpose is not earning profits, only to increase the competitiveness of Swedish football. Here, each club has had a representative when discussing the development of the certification system.

One interesting aspect regarding the overall implementation of the football certification system is the aspect of the football clubs’ involvement in the development stage. As Van Hoecke (2012-05-05) mentioned, it is more likely that the clubs perceive the certification system as a relevant tool for quality improvement. This results in a better understanding of the quality determining factors, which to a great extent affect the success of the youth academy. Hence, even before the implementation of the system in each respective club, an important success factor is the involvement of the clubs in the development stage. Each club in this study conveys an overall positive attitude towards the certification system and a likely explanation for this is their involvement in the development of the certification system.

5.2 Club scores
Looking at the club scores from both the Foot PASS certification system and the Swedish certification system, we can in some cases distinguish some interesting patterns. For the clubs in Belgium the results show that the dimensions with the highest scores in general were found in the dimensions of ‘Organizational structure and decision making’ (ORG), ‘Talent identification and development system’ (DEV), ‘Academy staff’ (STAF), ‘Communication and co-operation’ (COM) and ‘Facilities and equipment’ (FAC). Lower scores were found in ‘Strategic planning and financial planning’ (STRA), ‘Athletic and social support’ (SUP) and ‘Effectiveness’ (EFF).

For the clubs in Germany the dimensions in general with the highest scores were found in the dimensions of (STRA), (ORG) and (FAC), while the clubs had lower scores in (DEV), (SUP), (STAF) and (EFF). Also there was a substantial difference between the first and second division where the clubs in the second division had lower scores in ‘Total score’ (TOT), (STRA), (DEV) and (FAC).
Looking at the Swedish certification system the dimensions with high scores in general are found in (FAC), while the clubs had lower scores in (STAF) and some aspects of the ‘Communication and co-operation’-dimension (COM). Comparing the general scores for the clubs in the first and second division, the clubs in the second division has substantially lower scores in the dimensions of (STRA), (DEV) and (COM).

More specifically, looking at the scores for AIK Fotboll, the results were higher than average in every dimension of the certification system. The only dimension where the score is not substantially high is in (STAF). For Gefle IF, the scores in general were significantly lower compared to the average score of the clubs in Allsvenskan, but they also scored lower than the average in the second division in the dimensions of (DEV), (STAF) and (COM). The only dimension where the club had high scores was for (FAC). GIF Sundsvall’s results of the audit varied between the dimensions. High scores were found in (STRA), (DEV) and (FAC) while they scored lower (though almost in line with the average of the first division) in the dimensions of (STAF) and (COM). Finally, IFK Norrköping’s result revealed higher scores for the dimensions of (STRA), (DEV), (FAC) and (COM) – more specifically club collaboration with smaller clubs. Lower scores for the club were found in the dimensions of (STAF) and (COM) – more specifically club school activities.

We believe that the results of these different certification systems give indications on different success factors and barriers that the clubs have faced in the implementation process. For example, where clubs have scored lower in the dimension of (STRA) this might suggest that these clubs have not had the right prerequisites for this type of work. Relating to the theoretical discussion, a lack of resources in terms of personnel and time will affect how much the club is able to work with the documentation of the club’s processes. This line of reasoning can also be applied to the dimension of (DEV), where the lack of curriculums for example in Gefle IF’s case might be a consequence of poor conditions for developing these, in terms of personal resources and time. Looking at the difference between the first and second division in both Germany and Sweden, we can conclude that in the dimensions of (STRA) and (DEV), which is perceived to be very time-consuming by the respondents in this study, resources again might be the underlying factor this difference. Additionally, even though not quantifiable in this study, the dimension of (STAF) can be correlated to these time-consuming dimensions, since (STAF) gives an indication of the financial and personal resources in the club. Where the clubs have scored generally high in (STAF), it is likely that they also score high in the dimensions that requires extensive documentation.

As mentioned earlier, we believe that the club scores provide us with an indication of the potential success factors and barriers football clubs might experience. We will get back to these affecting throughout the analysis-chapter and thus also refer to these scores in more detail.

5.3 The club’s respective implementation process
As Martinez et al (2000) mention, it is imperative to analyze the certification process of an organization in order to identify the factors affecting the implementation of the certification system. All the clubs in this study have had a similar start of implementing the certification system in the organization. All have begun with a diagnosis over the current documentation and thus identified gaps where they lacked material for describing processes and activities. All respondents pointed out that the system served as a tool for the club to identify strengths and weaknesses, and thus the further process was formed around this analysis.
Differences can though be identified in terms of the people involved in the certification process in each club. AIK Fotboll has had five people with full-time appointment in the club, who basically has worked with this system on a full-time basis, where these people represent different levels of the club. Gefle IF “only” has had two full-time appointed persons working with this process, and that on top of other tasks in the organization. However, the club formed a working group mainly consisting of volunteering coaches, and the group met during three occasions before the audit. In GIF Sundsvall four representatives of the club worked with the certification process, all appointed by the club, where two of these were coaches in the youth academy. In the certification process for IFK Norrköping, overall 20 people were involved, where some are volunteers in the club. The overall differences lie in the amount of people involved and their role in the club. As we can see AIK Fotboll has had resources in terms of personnel and time to work with the certification process, where for example Gefle IF has lacked some resources regarding personnel and hence time. The same line of reasoning can be applied to GIF Sundsvall and IFK Norrköping, though perhaps not to the same extent. Anyhow, every club has had a similar process regarding the involvement of additional people who has contributed with ideas and experiences regarding more specific areas.

5.4 Affecting factors
5.4.1 The attitude towards the certification system
As mentioned in the theoretical chapter one of the most critical success factor when implementing a certification system in an organization, is the attitude towards, and the inner drive of the top management for it. This because the attitude controls other factors which all together affect the outcome of the implementation process. In the same sense, we have identified incorrect attitude towards the certification system as a barrier for successful implementation. Organizations with short-term goals and overconfidence on the certification, will struggle in the process. More specifically, Lochmann (2012-02-25) and Van Hoecke (2012-05-05) describe the issue of changing the mentality of the club leaders when implementing Foot PASS, as one of the major obstacles for quality improvement. Generally, all the responding clubs in this study have a positive view on the certification system, thus we can conclude that especially the top management’s attitude is positive in each club. All the respondents perceive the certification system as a useful tool for identifying strengths and weaknesses and thus for quality improvement. Additionally, they all see the certification system in a long-term perspective regarding improving the quality in the organization. Hence all the clubs in this study have first and foremost overcome the barriers regarding incorrect attitude and resistance to change and they also fulfill the success factors identified in the theoretical discussion. This has (and continuously will have) a major impact on the quality improvements of respective clubs.

No single respondent has a negative perception regarding the scores of the certification system, hence they see no problems with the results in terms of competition with other clubs. This can be related to the geographical position of the club. Both Gefle IF and GIF Sundsvall comment on the fact that they experience no competition with other football clubs in the region, which affects their view on the certification system in terms of competition. For AIK Fotboll, however, their geographical location is characterized by heavy competition between other elite football clubs. Though, since they scored high in the certification audit, they perceive this result positive in terms of competition with these clubs, this because they can use the certification system as a promotion tool regarding the recruitment of players and leaders.
The theoretical review also shows the importance of employee commitment for the certification system, since they are the ones responsible for all the processes within the organization. At the same time, employee resistance to change, mainly because of uncertainty of what the change means constitute a major barrier for successful implementation. This will in turn affect the overall commitment towards the certification process negatively. As mentioned earlier, all respondents mention the high commitment of people in top management positions, and for every club except GIF Sundsvall this also applies to the rest of the members of the club. Hagblom in GIF Sundsvall does not mention it directly, however he discusses the difficulties of the establishment of the certification system to lower levels in the club. If this difficulty is a result of employee resistance to change, or the information sharing regarding this work, the results do not reveal. However, we can conclude that this constitutes a barrier for GIF Sundsvall’s further process towards quality improvement. Thus, we can identify a strong connection between the top management’s ability to convey the use of the certification system and employee resistance to change, where the lack of creating an understanding will lead to a decrease in employee commitment.

5.4.2 Support
Top management support. The theoretical review points out the outmost importance of top management support for the implementation process in an organization. It is the top management’s responsibility to make sure the people involved are able to work with this process to the extent demanded, in terms of time and other resources. They should further on show commitment for the certification system in a long-term perspective. The lack of top management on the other hand, is a major barrier to a successful implementation, since the process thus will stagnate. The empirical findings show that the top managers of AIK Fotboll, Gefle IF and GIF Sundsvall give their full support and see the value of the certification system for future quality improvements. Especially AIK Fotboll points out the importance of top management support and its impact on the overall quality of the youth academy. Once again we can conclude that the clubs in the study have surmounted the barrier of lack of top management support and also succeeded to experiencing top management support as a success factor. As a result, the success of the implementation process increases and thus the quality of the youth academy.

The aspect of top management was not mentioned by the respondent for IFK Norrköping, however since the persons involved in the process have top management positions, it is not bold to claim that top management support is present.

Additional support. Support is deemed to be a success factor referring to previous research. This support can come from different actors, such as independent consultants or a support system developed by the certifying body. Consultants are useful since they are experts in the field and relevant experiences regarding the implementation process on how the system can be adapted to the specific organization. Especially regarding the implementation of a football certification system, both Lochmann (2012-02-25) and Van Hoecke et al (2009) point out the importance of a support system for the clubs, since many clubs lack the knowledge necessary for the implementation to be successful. On the other hand, it is important to find the right balance regarding the amount of assistance acquired by a consultant, since too much assistance can result in necessary knowledge leaving the organization after the process. Additionally, the lack of commitment from the certifying body may also constitute a barrier when implementing the certification system.
The only respondent discussing the use of consultation is Andersson in Gefle IF. He mentions that the representative from the certifying assisted the club in identifying fields of improvement, which he perceived to be truly useful for the club in the future. Thus, we can conclude that the clubs’ implementing a certification system can improve their quality even further if they use additional support, when possible.

5.4.3 Right prerequisites
That an organization implementing a certification has the right conditions for this process is an important success factor pointed out in the theoretical discussion. It is important that the people responsible for the process have the right prerequisites in terms of financial resources, time and documentation. Regarding the aspect of documentation, there is a great advantage if the organization already has an extensive amount of documentation when going into a certification process. This documentation will form a foundation for the diagnosis of which documents that needs to be developed in regard to the certification system.

The respondents for AIK Fotboll, Gefle IF and IFK Norrköping speak of the advantage of an already established documentation of the club’s processes. AIK Fotboll had a substantial amount which implied that their process to a great extent consisted of gathering these different documents and adapting it to the certification system. Even though Gefle IF’s documentation of the club processes and activities were not as comprehensive as AIK Fotboll’s, they still perceive the advantage of an existing documentation which provides a solid foundation for the implementation process. This reduces the work load for the people involved, but the documentation is also a useful tool in the diagnosis phase of the process. Hence, the results of the study show the importance of an already established documentation helps the club to a successful implementation.

Further on, AIK Fotboll speaks of the advantage of being well-represented in terms of staff when working with the certification system. Since the process is time-consuming it helps to have many people involved. Andersson in Gefle IF mentions that it possibly would have been easier to implement the certification system if they would have more appointed persons working with the process, especially in terms of coordination and documentation. Thus, another important success factor when implementing a football certification system is the access to personnel and time.

Another aspect not mentioned in the theoretical framework that Hagblom in GIF Sundsvall speaks of is the advantage of the club’s geographical location. Hagblom mentions that the club has a great advantage of being the only elite football club in the northern parts of Sweden, since they can develop strong co-operations with other clubs. This will affect the results in the audit regarding the dimension of ‘Club collaboration with smaller clubs’, but it will also increase the possibility of developing players for GIF Sundsvall’s first team in the long run, Hagblom claims. As a result, this implies that clubs with a greater possibility for club co-operations in terms of geographical location will have an advantage compared to other clubs with smaller areas where they can co-operate.

5.4.4 Experienced difficulties
Lack of resources. Our theoretical review describes the difficulties associated with a lack of organizational resources when implementing a certification system. The lack of personnel, time and money might constitute a barrier for successful implementation and especially in smaller organizations the lack of personnel and time can be the major obstacle. Specifically for football clubs, Lochmann (2012-02-25) mentions that the certification system increases
the staff’s workload dramatically and as a result they have difficulties with finding time to finish the necessary documentation alongside their normal tasks.

The empirical findings reveal that the respondents of Gefle IF and IFK Norrköping discuss the difficulties of finding time for the certification process. Especially Gefle IF mentions that the members of the organization even before the implementation of the certification system had a heavy work load. With the certification process put on top of these tasks, they have not been able to devote as much time as they would have liked to, and especially during hectic periods during the season it has been truly difficult. IFK Norrköping also comments that the lack of resources in terms of personnel has led to difficulties in coordinating the responsible people in the process.

Thus, we can conclude that the lack of resources forces the clubs to prioritize certain dimensions of the certification system and thus leaving other dimensions for future priorities. When the workload is already high in the club, the implementation of the certification system will increase this even further, thus having a negative impact on the results of the certification. Hence, we can identify a negative relationship between the lack of personnel and its impact on scarcity of time.

Additionally, the lack of resources also impacts the results in the certification audit negatively. Since the clubs are evaluated in terms of the amount of appointed staff, clubs with fewer resources naturally receive lower scores in this dimension.

**Documentation.** We already have discussed the importance of an already established documentation when implementing a certification system. The aspect of documentation might also constitute a barrier as discussed in the theoretical framework. There is a risk that organizations focus too much on the documentation rather than the actual activity they are documenting. Looking at the experience from Foot PASS, Lochmann (2012-02-25) concludes that many clubs lack documentation regarding the football specific processes within the club. Additionally as already mentioned by Lochmann, the increased work load affect the documentation process negatively for the clubs.

All the clubs in this study state the difficulties regarding the documentation required in the certification system. Both AIK Fotboll and GIF Sundsvall comment that the difficulty to compile the different documents into one, and also to achieve the same structure throughout the entire paper. Additionally, AIK Fotboll mentions that some specific dimensions in the certification system have been heavy to document, since they demand in detail different activities to be documented throughout the entire year. Thus, the results reveal the negative impact the documentation phase could have on the success of the certification system. If there is a lack of pre-existing documentation, there might be too much work with documentation landing on few people in club.

**Formation of the certification system.** Another barrier mentioned in previous research is the formation of the certification system. Especially small organizations perceive the certification system mostly to be formed for larger organizations and as a result more leading to an increase of administration than actual quality improvements. The formation may also result in too detailed documentation. Lochmann (2012-02-25) draws the conclusion that there is an issue regarding the criteria of the Foot PASS certification system, since there are a lot of standards the clubs need to address. This is especially a problem for smaller clubs with insufficient infrastructure.
The only respondent addressing this issue directly in this study is Martinsson in IFK Norrköping, where he claims that the formation of the system in some instances is questionable. He mentions that the certification system does not take considerations to how many players the club has, where the more players increases the chance of developing players for the first team, hence receiving more points from the audit. One approach to circumvent this issue is to actually measure the effectiveness of home grown players for the first team, hence the percentage of total youth players that get to represent the first team. The same line of reasoning applies to the scores received for appointed staff within the club. Referring back to the issue of documentation, AIK Fotboll also mentioned that the formation of the certification system in some instances is too specific and thus too tough.

The results thus show the difficulties associated with the formation of the certification system, in some instances it can be too specific, leading to an increase of documentation and additional tasks in relation to the system. How the system is formed will also directly affect how the different clubs are able to receive points, where the organizational prerequisites have a major impact on the initial scores.

**Communication in the establishing phase.** Although not mentioned in directly the theoretical discussion, GIF Sundsvall addresses the challenges to manage the establishing process in terms of conveying the use of the certification system, especially further down the organizational hierarchy. This issue can though be related to the lack of education of knowledge. We can see that the members’ lack of knowledge regarding the demands and use of the certification system might result in frustration and disappointment. This is also highly related to employee resistance to change, which often is a result of the top management’s inability to convey and create an understanding of the certification system. As a result, the commitment towards the certification process decreases (Carlsson, 2011). This is exactly what Hagblom in GIF Sundsvall has experienced. As he claims, communication is an organizational issue, and the struggle with this process might have resulted in the lack of commitment that he perceives in some parts of the club.

**Geographical location.** In the same sense that the geographical location may be a great advantage when implementing a certification system, GIF Sundsvall also experiences some difficulties regarding the geographical location in order to receive points from certification audit. The strategy GIF Sundsvall has regarding youth development, due to their geographical location, has a negative consequence in terms of generating more points from the system. This is because they focus on educating players in their domestic environment and thus recruiting these players to the club when not youth players anymore. This issue can be related to the barrier regarding formation of the certification system, where we can see that how the certification system is formed, might have a negative impact on how the clubs are evaluated.

### 5.5 Unmentioned factors

Under the following section we will discuss the affecting factors presented in the theoretical review which are not addressed by the respondents in this study.

**Quality culture.** The existence or the establishment of a quality culture is deemed to be a success factor when implementing a certification system, leading to improvements in organizational performance. Measuring organizational culture is an issue we have not focused on, however there is a great possibility that the football clubs in this study have an existing culture which they are not fully aware of. Hence, we cannot rule out that a quality culture
exists, rather it is more likely that each club has an existing quality culture, based on their attitude towards the certification system in general.

**Quality manager.** Having a devoted and competent quality manager as the driving force behind the implementation process, is another success factor mentioned. Lochmann (2012-02-25) specifically mentions that a quality manager in the football club is an important aspect in order to circumvent the issues related to the documentation of the club’s processes. Even though not directly mentioned as a success factor by the respondents, they all point out that there has been one person who has the overall responsibility for the certification process. The clubs in this study thus have experienced the positive effects of having a quality manager.

**Knowledge and education.** Another aspect deemed to be important is the education of the organization’s members, and especially the ones in top management positions, regarding the certification system. Both Van Hoecke *et al.* (2007) and Lochmann (2012-02-25) mention the positive impact a better knowledge of the quality determining factors and also specifically the implementation of the system, have on the club’s organizational performance. As mentioned, this is not addressed by the respondents in the study, however since they have been participating in the development of the certification system, they likely also have acquired the necessary knowledge on how to implement it and what it implies for the club.

**Planning.** Planning before the implementation process is another important aspect. The theoretical discussion reveals that inadequate planning might constitute a barrier, since it is important to integrate the certification system with the organization’s vision, mission and goals. Additionally, Van Hoecke *et al.* (2009) claim that the lack of strategic management on club level is a major reason why clubs implementing a football certification system do not improve their quality in an adequate way. When the respondents described their implementation process, no one mentioned planning as a part of that process; instead they “jumped” directly to the delegation of documentation. Hence, we cannot determine if their planning was adequate or not, and if this issue has constituted as a success factor or barrier. Though, referring to the above discussion regarding their involvement in the development of the system, this has probably had a positive effect on the clubs’ implementation processes.

Regarding the potential lack of strategic management, the only way to see this issue is to look at the respective club’s documentation regarding vision and mission with the youth academy. Looking at their scores from this documentation (Tipselit), this is not an issue. Further on, the results of this study do not point out the aspect of strategic management and whether the clubs actually have adequate strategic management or not. Probably only time will tell when looking at the quality improvements the clubs make (or not make) in the future.

**The establishment of networks.** Organizations implementing the same certification system might benefit from establishing networks where they together work with the system and exchange experiences. The results of this study reveal that no networks have been established between any clubs. For future work with the certification system, this aspect can have a positive impact for the clubs.

**External pressure and incentives.** Pressure from an organization’s external stakeholders might also have a positive effect on the implementation process, since it functions as a catalyst which encourages the organization to pursue quality assurance. In the same sense, external pressure can have a negative impact on the implementation of a certification system, if the organization has “incorrect” attitude towards it. Lochmann (2012-02-25) also expresses
this issue regarding Foot PASS, since the implementation of the system in Germany was based on pressure to the clubs. In this study, the respondents do not address this aspect. Once again, we think this is because they have been a part of the implementation process from the beginning, thus they do not perceive the implementation as based on pressure. Related to this issue, Van Hoecke et al (2009) come to the conclusion that it is important that measuring from the certifying body is conducted in a manner as function of remediation and that the clubs continuously are encouraged to pursue the work with the certification system, by providing incentives.

5.6 Categorization of affecting factors
In table 5 below, we provide a categorization of the affecting factors derived from the theoretical discussion and empirical findings. They are naturally divided into success factors and barriers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success factors</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business success factors</strong></td>
<td><strong>Business barriers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top management support</td>
<td>Lack of top management support &amp; commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct attitude</td>
<td>Incorrect attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality culture</td>
<td>Lack of resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality manager</td>
<td>Resistance to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right prerequisites</td>
<td>Lack of education and knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee commitment</td>
<td>Planning and the time aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosis</td>
<td>External pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>The formation of the certification system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>External help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>Lack of commitment from the certifying body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment of networks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External pressure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Football specific success factors</strong></td>
<td><strong>Football specific barriers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and education</td>
<td>Resistance to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting policy</td>
<td>Lack of strategic management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentives</td>
<td>Increased work load</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involvement in certification development</td>
<td>External pressure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Documentation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The formation of the certification system</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Empirically derived success factors</strong></td>
<td><strong>Empirically derived barriers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical location</td>
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Table 5: Compilation of possible affecting factors identified in this study
6 Conclusions

This study has contributed to provide an extensive framework of the possible affecting factors when implementing a football specific quality certification system. First, we can conclude that even though the work with the certification system is fairly new for the Swedish elite football clubs, it appears as they have a satisfying insight into the organizational demands’ of the certification system. One significant success factor identified in the study is the clubs’ attitude towards the system. The reason why this aspect is such a major affecting factor is because of the attitude’s impact on other factors which all together affect the outcome of the implementation process. It is evident in this study that the club’s positive attitude overcomes the experienced difficulties associated with the process. Having a correct attitude from a top management perspective will most likely affect the overall attitude in the whole organization in a positive way. Additionally, this aspect is highly related to the top management support which is proven to be another important success factor when implementing the certification system.

Having the right prerequisites in terms of staff, time and documentation before implementing the certification system in the club will have a major impact of the overall result of the process. Being well-represented in terms of staff will affect the club’s ability to work with the certification system, especially regarding how much time they are able to spend on the process. The more staff available will decrease the negative impact on overall workloads. We can also see that the more people involved in the implementation process will likely affect the club members’ overall commitment towards the certification system, since the comprehension of the use of this system reaches a broader spectra of the organization. Having a preexisting documentation will also contribute to a good start since it facilitates this work. The advantage with a good start furthermore leads to that the clubs do not need to prioritize some dimensions in the system, thus leading to a better immediate result.

This study confirms that the club’s involvement in the development of the certification system before they implement it in the organization, will affect the success of the implementation process. The reason for this is that the clubs acquire a thorough understanding for the positive effects of the certification system which affects their overall attitude. In the same sense it is important that a supporting policy is made available for the clubs since the clubs in many cases lack the necessary knowledge for the implementation of the system. This study proves this importance where the certifying body has acted as a consultant providing knowledge and useful experiences to the clubs for future quality improvements.

This paper shows that a club’s lack of resources constitutes a barrier for successful implementation of a certification system. Not only does the lack of resources directly affect the club’s score in the certification audit, but mostly the lack of resources in terms of personnel and thus time affects how much time the club is able to spend on the process. This implies that the actual work with the process, where the documentation is most extensive, suffers. These clubs are also forced to prioritize some aspects of the certification system and hence leave others for the future. Related to the issue of lack of resources we have found that the formation of the certification system can constitute a barrier in terms of received scores in the audit. For clubs with a lack of resources some dimensions of the certification system might be difficult to cope with, since they in some cases are judged by points which they have difficulties to influence. Thus, how the system is formed will directly affect how the clubs are judged by points, and there we can conclude that the organizational prerequisites have a major impact.
The results of this study contribute to the identification of affecting factors not mentioned in the theoretical framework, where one is the geographical location of the club. The location of the club will have an impact on how the club is able to work with some specific aspects of the certification system, and thus how they score in the audit. In some cases it works to the club’s advantage and in other to the club’s disadvantage, thus it both constitutes a success factor and a barrier. It is not realistic to claim that the formation of the certification system should take these differences into account, however what we can conclude is that it is important that the respective club makes use of the location specific aspects that can work to an advantage in the system and also tries to circumvent the aspects that is to its disadvantage. Additionally, another obstacle identified in the study is the difficulties associated with the communication in the establishment of the certification system within the club. When the club fails to create an understanding of the certification system it is highly likely that the organization’s members will experience a decrease in commitment and possibly also resist the changes associated with the system. How the use of the system actually is communicated throughout the process is of major importance. Hence, it is imperative to gain approval for the implementation of the certification system throughout the entire organization since it otherwise can constitute a barrier for future quality improvements.

We believe that it is important to highlight the fact that the affecting factors identified in this study in many cases can constitute a barrier as well as a success factor. For instance, it is evident that the attitude towards the certification system either can be the major obstacle the organization needs to circumvent, or it is the catalyst for a successful implementation process. Below we will summarize the affecting factors deemed to be important for the clubs in this paper, and also if they have proven to be a success factor or a barrier.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success factors</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top management support</td>
<td>Lack of resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct attitude</td>
<td>Resistance to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right prerequisites (staff, time, documentation)</td>
<td>Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee commitment</td>
<td>The formation of the certification system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting policy</td>
<td>Increased work load</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in certification development</td>
<td>Geographical location</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geographical location</td>
<td>Establishing phase</td>
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</table>

Table 6: Imperative success factors and barriers identified in this paper

To conclude, the football clubs implementing a certification system in general speak of the positive effects experienced with the process. They have seen areas under which the quality of the youth academy improved where they establish a more solid foundation for the development of the organization. It is only for the football clubs to overcome the barriers and fulfill the success factors associated to the implementation of the certification system.
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Van Hoecke, J. Double PASS Company. Interview 2012-05-05
8 Appendix

8.1 Appendix 1

Questionnaire for the respondents of the four Swedish clubs

Berätta om hur du ser på certifieringen.  
Tell us about your view on the certification system.

Berätta om din roll i arbetet?  
Tell us about your role in the process?

Berätta om hur certifieringsarbetet går/gick till i organisationen.  
Tell us how the work with the certification was conducted in the organization.

Vad har varit svårast hittills?  
What has been most difficult so far?

Vad har varit roligast?  
What has been the most fun?

Vad har varit enklast?  
What has been most easy?

Berätta om resultaten av certifieringen hittills.  
Tell us about the results of the certification so far.

Kan du ge din bild av hur det här sättet att jobba skiljer sig från hur ni jobbat förut? Hur jobbar andra med samma saker?  
Can you provide a picture of how this way of working is different from how you previously have worked? How do others work with the same things?
8.2 Appendix 2
Questionnaire for Lochmann and Van Hoecke

Describe your previous role within Double PASS organization.

Describe your view regarding Foot PASS, and the importance of a football quality certification system.

Describe the results of the certification system so far.

Describe the process of implementing the certification system.

What are your experiences regarding the implementation of the Foot PASS certification system?

Could you please describe what was hardest to implement?

Could you please describe what was easiest to implement?

What has been the hardest for the clubs to accept when implementing the system?

What has been the easiest for the clubs to accept?

In your experience, what are the common success factors for the clubs when implementing the certification system?

In your experience, what are the common pitfalls for the clubs when implementing the certification system?

Is there anything else you would like to add?