Knowledge management in youth sport organizations

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In an information society organizations are becoming increasingly aware of the means in which they create, distribute and communicate information. This is also known as knowledge management. The thesis examines the potential that knowledge management offers to youth sports organizations and its current state in a specific youth sports organization.

The thesis attempts to solve its research questions by presenting certain aspects of the theory of knowledge management that might prove useful for youth sports organizations in general. These aspect are outlined to the following four perspectives: information creation & distribution, information storage, education & development and communication skills. The current state of knowledge management in youth sport organizations is evaluated by analyzing empirical data from a case-organization (GrIFK, ice hockey) fitted with the theoretical framework built around knowledge management.

The thesis and its corresponding interviews and questionnaires were conducted in the spring of 2014. The interview was conducted with the Sports Director of the case-organization and the questionnaire with the organization's coaches.

The study is research-oriented and relies on qualitative research methodology. Thus it does not intend to provide generalizable anwers but in-depth understanding and preliminary findings regarding the issue. With a theory-connected premise the thesis attempts to attach knowledge management into youth sports organizations in general and the case-organization in particular. For the examination of the empirical data gathered the study employs content analysis.

The thesis concludes with theoretical, practical and detailed key findings regarding the issue.The results provides numerous insights about the practical usefulness of knowledge management when improving youth sports organizations and indicates topics for future research.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Thesis topic and objectives

Our current society is one in which the creation, distribution, use and attainment of information is of critical importance. In an information society the management of organizations is based on how well this wealth of knowledge is transferred and capitalized. In contrast to the previously dominant forms of our society (e.g. rural and manufacturing intensive), the information society creates organizations that emphasize the high-level of knowledge and capabilities of all employees and aims to maximize the benefits of this.

A typical organization in an information society is a so-called expert organization which occupies individuals that have extensive and in-depth knowledge of a certain field. These organizations are knowledge-intensive in the sense that they pool together and develop the knowledge level of their employees and, most importantly, offer for sale this collective information adapted into various situations. For instance law firms, medical practices and educational institutions are typical examples of expert organizations. Nonetheless, a youth sports organization could just as well be viewed as an expert organization, since it corresponds with the definition of providing knowledge-intensive services for sale in a certain sector (the information and experience coaches have about their respective sport) to groups of people that have a desire to adapt that knowledge (athletes/parents of athletes).

The management of expert organization has been studied extensively since the late 20th century in Finland as well as in other developed countries around the world. Yet the possibilities that knowledge management presents to youth sports organizations have not been studied. This thesis attempts to look into the management of youth sports organizations through the different aspects of knowledge management regarding expert organizations.

The objective of the thesis is to examine youth sports organizations through relevant aspects of knowledge management and empirical data. Furthermore the study aims to bring new light into understanding what youth sports organizations have in common with expert organizations management-wise and what possibilities could be attained by utilizing knowledge management.

The results can offer further awareness of the unique qualities that have to be taken into account when managing youth sports organizations.

The research questions of this study can be divided into two main questions and their corresponding sub-questions:

1) What could knowledge management offer to the management of youth sports organizations?
2) What is the current state of knowledge management in a youth sports organization?

Question 1 is answered through chapter 2, which details relevant aspects of knowledge management that offer potential use to youth sports organizations specifically. The theory of knowledge management is essential in this study and therefore chapter 2 focuses primarily on its theoretical aspects that relate to youth sport organizations. It is noteworthy that the answer to question 1 is based on a review of the current literature regarding the subject. While recognizing what knowledge management could potentially offer to youth sports organizations, it is crucial to understand what this management theory means in general and simultaneously ponder what possibilities the theory might offer to analyzing the management of a particular youth sports organization in practice.

Question 2, on the other hand, focuses on an empirical analysis of the current knowledge management of a particular youth sports organization. The analysis concentrates on the differences between what knowledge management could offer to youth sports organizations made in the previous chapter and attempts to see how these opportunities reveal themselves in practice. Before going into the results of the data it is important to introduce what this thesis means by youth sports organizations generally and briefly describe the organization under study. Thus chapter 3 provides an overview of youth sports organizations and the particular organization under question. Chapter 4 relies on a questionnaire acquired from coaches of a youth sports organization in Finland and in-depth interviews conducted with the Sports Director of that respective organization. The questions posed are all based on the theoretical framework built in chapter 2 and how it applies to youth sports organizations.

1.2. Research motives & structure

In addition to the educational interest in the subject, the underlying motivation behind the study is based on personal experience. After nearly a decade of international employment in various youth sports organizations in numerous roles, I have come to realize that youth sports organizations do not typically present constructive feed-back to coaches nor extensively support employee development and are in general run not as the knowledge-intensive expert organizations that they could be. The management within youth sports organizations, to my experience, does not reflect the qualities that should be present in the management of a knowledge-intensive organization. Therefore my motive for this research stems from personal experience and a desire to examine the management of youth sports organizations through the lenses of knowledge management and bring something new to the table.

The topic has also a professional benefit on a personal and general level, since I plan to manage youth sports organizations in my future career and consider it beneficial for anybody involved to have a deeper understanding how to manage youth sports organizations from a business-point-of view – which the theory of knowledge management arguably presents. Furthermore the topic offers an interesting viewpoint that increases my professional competency in assessing how a successful youth sports organization should be managed.

The thesis first presents the methodology and methods that form the basis of the analysis. Next chapters 2, examines the theoretical content of the study by describing the characteristics and general qualities regarding knowledge management and considers how they could relate to youth sports organizations. Following this the study examines the youth sports organizations in general and the briefly presents the organization that offers the data to chapter 4. Chapter 4 constitutes as the empirical part of the thesis where important observations of how knowledge management reveals itself in practice in a youth sport organization are presented. Finally the concluding chapter draws the analysis to a close and summarizes the study's key findings.

1.3. Methodology & Methods

The study is a research-oriented thesis that uses qualitative data to answer its research questions. As a qualitative study the thesis does not intend to offer generalizable answers but instead focuses on an in-depth understanding of the issue through analyzing a specific youth sports organization with the theoretical viewpoint of knowledge management.

The qualitative research methodology consists of various approaches and methods, but is essentially about answering the questions by finding a previously neglected area of research and combining this to empirical data and the researcher's own reasoning (Töttö, 2004, 9–20). Consequently qualitative research differs from quantitative in the fact that the previously mentioned selects non-numerical data and tries to find meaning from the data by answering questions such as what, why and how. Eskola (2001, 135–140) classifies qualitative research into the following three alternatives depending on the study's emphasis on theory and data:

1) a *data-driven premise* where the researcher emphasizes the findings of the data without having a clear framework or theory in mind. In other words, the researcher does not define what is of importance in the data etc. The approach relies on the researcher's inductive reasoning (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 83).

2) a *theory-driven premise* where the researcher's creates a certain theoretical framework by which the collected data is analyzed. The premise is traditional in natural sciences and it proceeds typically from building a general model and applying that to the specific data. The theory-driven premise relies on the researcher's deductive reasoning. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, 95–99).

3) a *theory-connected premise* which lies between the previously mentioned two. It gives balanced importance to both theory and data. A theory-connected premise presents a theoretical framework that would prove valuable regarding the research topic and analyzes the chosen data mindful of this. Therefore the findings of data are reflected to the theoretical framework and possible contradictions and interpretations are viewed and validated within the framework. The research can also pinpoint differences between literature and empirical findings. This premise trusts on abductive reasoning on the part of the researcher. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, 99).

Of these three approaches to qualitative research this study applies the last mentioned theory-connected premise. This approach is based on the fact that while there are many notions and wide-ranging literature on knowledge management there is no clear-cut theory or consensus regarding it– let alone a ready-made theory on the management of youth sports organizations. The thesis therefore presents a relevant model regarding knowledge management and reflects this adapted theoretical framework to the empirical findings about the management of one youth sports organization.

The study employs traditional data-collection methods within the field of qualitative research, such as interviews and questionnaires. The interviews follow a semi-structured form due to the theory-connected premise since the data does not attempt to answer questions posed from a definite theoretical angle. The study's interview was conducted with the Sports Director from the youth sports organization in question in the spring of 2014. The coaches of the organization answered the study's questionnaire. All in all 28 out of 37 coaches replied to the questionnaire and these answers – along with the interviews – form the data of this study. In addition to this primary material the study also uses extensive secondary material regarding previous literature about knowledge management and selective material about youth sports organizations.

In qualitative research the scientific methods chosen are not as technical as they are within quantitative research. Yet qualitative methods can offer systematic approaches to the analysis of any given qualitative data. This study uses content analysis as a method to evaluate the data gathered from the interviews and questionnaires which are transferred into textual form. Specifically the study exploits theory-connected content analysis that attempts to find differences, similarities and summarizes the findings in the data. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, 105, 109-116). This method was chosen because the study relies on the previously mentioned theory-connected premise and is a suitable method considering the data collected. In the author's view this method can most adequately explain and describe the relationship between knowledge management and youth sports organizations. Figure 1 illustrates the general research design of the study.

Figure 1. Illustration of thesis research design

Youth sports organization management

Knowledge Management

Communication

Storage

Education and development

Creation and distribution

Qualitative: Theory-connected premise

Data

Interviews

Questionnaire

Content analysis
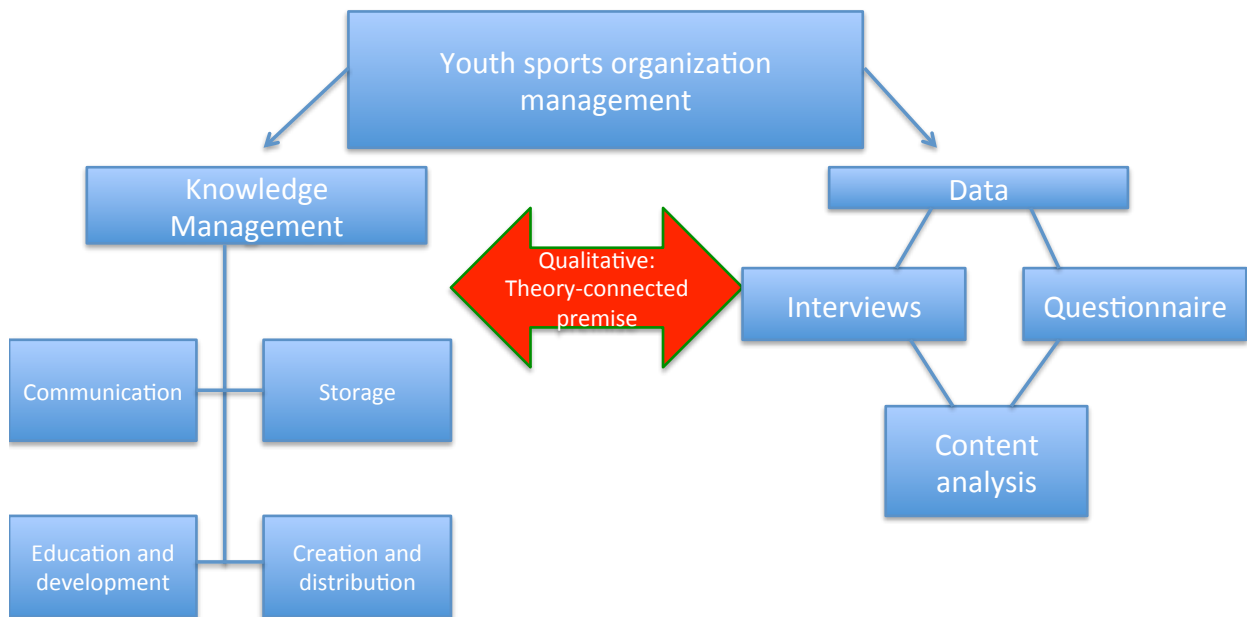
2. Knowledge Management

The management of organizations came to the scientific forefront in the late 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century in order to improve manufacturing efficiency among other things (Taylor, 1917). Modern management is based on expert organizations that are increasingly becoming the typical organizational business form in developed countries. The increased amount of interest in knowledge management is a natural consequence from this transition into a knowledge-based economy where expert organizations are more common. The literature of managing expert organizations is, to a large extent, based upon knowledge management which came to the academic forefront in the 1990's and is therefore the main theoretical concept presented in this chapter. (Alavi & Leidner, 1999, 3–5).

According to knowledge management, in an expert organization the single greatest asset of the organization originates from the knowledge held by the employees. This vast amount of knowledge creates the company's competitive advantage and needs to be managed properly in order to generate maximum benefit for the organization. Managing knowledge is mainly about sharing information between the employees of the organization. Yet this is easier said than done, since information outflow happens while employees move to other organizations or remain with the organization without pooling information (the latter is also called tacit knowledge). In an expert organization the knowledge should be managed by dividing it into three different levels: individual, group and organizational levels. In the individual level, knowledge flows in an individual-between-individual level. In the group and organizational level knowledge should flow within different groups of the organization (e.g. best practices etc.) and among the community, respectively. (Dalkir, 2005, 7–10).

Despite these rather simple divisions of knowledge management presented by Dalkir (2005), the concept itself is, however, too broad and multi-disciplinary (stemming from such various field as sociology, economics, linguistics, anthropology, cognitive science etc.) to be thoroughly examined by all of its aspects in this study. Due to the focus on youth sports organizations this thesis outlines the concept and only focuses on the following 4 aspects of knowledge management:

1) information creation and distribution

2) information storage

3) education and development

4) communication skills

These aspects are all – at least to a certain level – present within youth sports organizations and might therefore offer interesting viewpoints when analyzing the management of them. The following subchapters therefore concentrate on these features of knowledge management. Beyond explaining the aspects the subchapter also identifies how these methods could present themselves in a youth sports organization environment.

2.1. Information creation and distribution

Generally the types of information within any organization can be categorized as either explicit or tacit. There are numerous manners in which explicit and tacit knowledge can be promoted in a knowledge-intensive organization. This subchapter presents three key methods for both types of information through simple examples. Yet first it is necessary to briefly describe what literature means by these concepts.

Explicit information refers to knowledge, which is visible in an organization. For instance, explicit knowledge is information collected in numbers or diagrams into meaningful ways or explicit manuals about how to operate a certain machine or handle a procedure etc. In a modern context explicit knowledge also commonly refers to knowledge that a company produces and distributes in an organizational intra-network or other, which makes the knowledge systematic and accessible to everyone or a selected group in an organization. In recent years managers of large organizations have, however, expressed a concern that there might be information redundancy regarding explicit information and have started to focus on tacit information instead (Knudsen, 2007).

Tacit information denotes to knowledge that an employee possesses but which is difficult to transfer to other individuals within the same organization. Tacit knowledge originates from

personal experience and/or education and can mean for example how to fix a car, solve an IT-problem or similar issues that require a combination of specific knowledge and experience. It can also mean knowledge that cannot easily be put into words and therefore be problematic or even impossible to distribute. The concept itself may lead to confusion since there is no universal definition for it and it came to business literature only in recent decades. Hannele Koivunen (1997), however, describes tacit information as knowledge that impacts an individual's daily actions and decisions but which cannot be expressed by words or other meanings. Some researchers have claimed that the amount of tacit knowledge is on the rise in our knowledge-based economy. For instance, Howard (1995) has claimed that the currently dominant form of expert organizations demand a level of personal involvement and responsibility that, in and of itself, creates increasing amounts of tacit knowledge.

In 1995 Nonaka & Takeuchi created the so-called SECI-model presented in figure 2. The SECI-model aims to provide an overview of the different dimensions of explicit and tacit knowledge and tries to summarize the methods in which knowledge can be improved and transferred within any organization.

Figure 2. SECI-model: The four dimensions of knowledge production and distribution.
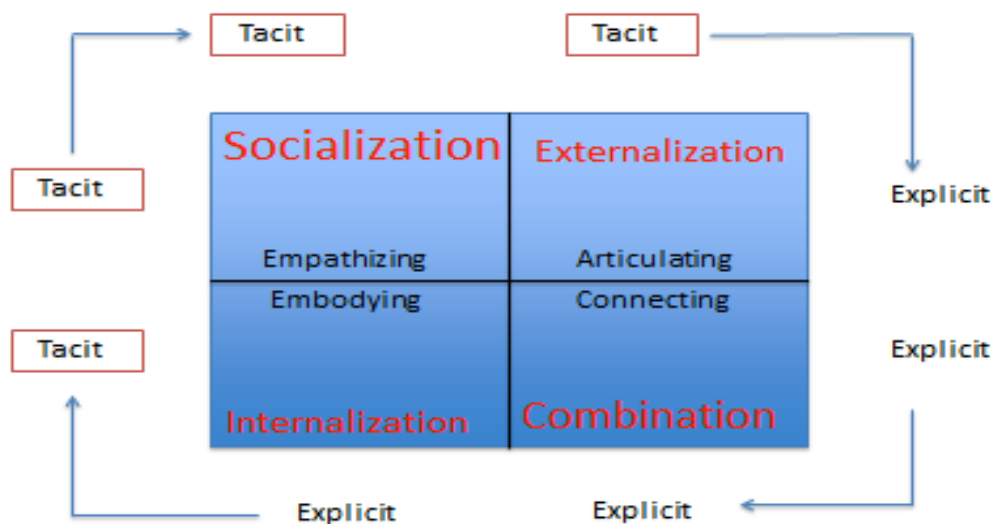
Source: Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995).

Socialization means sharing knowledge through face-to-face communication or experience. The concept refers to both informal and formal exchanges of knowledge and mainly covers tacit information. One of main methods to improve the creation and distribution of tacit information in a formal way is through apprenticeship. In an apprenticeship tacit information is transferred by making a beginner follow the work of an experienced professional within a certain field. This method of promoting tacit knowledge has been around for centuries and has been successfully applied to such various fields as art and practicing law. The mentoring method relies on explaining and demonstrating functions to the beginner on-the-job and thus transfers knowledge in a manner in which the beginner understands how and why a certain procedure is done. Additionally, the method is extremely beneficial since it reveals knowledge even in the absence of language and creates an opportunity for the beginner to imitate manners that the professional has and questioning their importance. (Faust, 2007). In a youth sports organization the apprenticeship method could, for example, be implemented by coupling the assistant coach to a more experienced head coach for a certain amount of time after which the assistant coach would gain the necessary experience and knowledge to perform commendable his future career as a head coach. Furthermore relaxed gatherings, such as a company picnics or recreational days etc., represent informal methods of socialization that promote the exchange of tacit information. In a youth sports organization these can be easily distinguished.

Externalization means the attempt to convert tacit knowledge into explicit. These can range from developing understandable concepts and theoretical knowledge regarding a certain issue. For an economist, for example, different financial theories learned in business schools represent externalization but these can also be done on-the-job. Whereas, in a youth sports environment, externalization could for example mean that a head coach creates a manual on how to perform certain practices.

Combination means gathering explicit knowledge into large groups and forming them into conceptual systems. The combination method also means carefully analyzing available information. For example, in natural sciences knowledge is grouped into large conceptual systems which reveal systematic knowledge. In a youth sports organization the combination method might at first seem rather irrelevant but combined game-video analysis could for example be regarded as

falling under the combination method since in it game performances are evaluated under certain concepts (how many breakaways, shots combined, two-on-ones etc.).

Internalization refers to making sense of available explicit knowledge. In it explicit knowledge becomes tacit through habits and routines. In the management of a youth sports organization this could mean placing a coach in a certain function for a long period of time in order to transform explicit knowledge into tacit. In other words anything that promotes long-term commitment to the organization could be interpreted as something that improves internalization.

In addition to these four concepts presented in the SECI-model, the development of the Internet – and technology in general – has been a major source of creation and distribution of explicit knowledge lately. Organizations in nearly every field of industry have been continuously updating their information systems to provide more accurate, timely and accessible information. This exponential growth of explicit knowledge by the means of technology has created a situation in which knowledge can be created and distributed through electrical means. Furthermore, technological development also creates possibilities to promote the exchange of tacit knowledge through video-conferences for example. In a youth sports environment the method of increasing knowledge through technological means could be done by creating manuals, databases and other tools displaying explicit information regarding e.g. the different functions of coaches. Some youth sports organizations have them in place already, but the extent of this is not known.

2.2. Information storage

The storage of information has been made easier due to the technological development of the past few decades. The storage of information makes it easier to access explicit information and also combine it with already existing tacit knowledge. Knowledge repositories could be viewed as the long-term memory of an organization, since these repository tools save and retrieve vast amounts of organizational data. Information storage has been a part of organizations to various degrees also in the past but the technological possibilities have enabled more effective coordination and archiving of information storage. This subchapter presents the five main tools for effective information storage in general.

The first one is *data warehouses* that form the main tool of any effective information storage. It isolates data extracted from numerous internal databases and produces meaningful information for the organization that can be accessed for future use. Youth sports organizations at first glance do not seem have sophisticated methods for data warehousing but in effect simple data such as match results, practice attendance and performance measurement (e.g. point-production or some other aspect of the athletes' performance) could be viewed as tools of data warehousing. (Erdmann, 1997).

Secondly *knowledge warehousing* storages information from a wide amount of external data bases consisting for example of newspaper articles, web pages, databases and external feedback. In a youth sports organization knowledge warehousing in an external sense does take place.

Data marts represent a separate data base system on a significantly smaller scale that adapts the information to a form that is suitable for the individual user. In the context of youth sports organizations data marts do not seem to exist in the authors perception as of yet but it might that youth sports organizations are planning to develop data marts in the future.

Data repositories on the other hand are traditional information storage facilities. These traditional archives exist in every organization and store information that is usually in a physical form. The benefit of these archives is diminishing due the fact that information is increasingly presented in electrical form. In a youth sports organization data repositories represent archives that store for example practice plans, season calendars etc.

Lastly *content and document management systems* represent systems that systemize and summarize extremely large amounts of information. One example could be a library data base where one has access only to certain details and citation information regarding a specific book, while the book itself does not exist in the data base. This type of information does not currently exist in youth sports organizations due to the confined amount of information and resources.

All in all information storage is a vital part of knowledge management and will also be under evaluation in the empirical part of this study. The amount of devotion directed to the develop-

ment of information storage is an indicator of how well the youth sports organization manages knowledge in general.

2.3. Education and skill development in knowledge management

In a knowledge-intensive organization education and development programs are no longer only the privilege of employees in the higher positions. The amount of costs that an organization spends on its employee training and education is a key indicator whether or not the organization wishes to increase and develop the knowledge and capabilities of their employees. Just as individuals appreciate lifelong learning, the same applies to knowledge-intensive organizations that wish to describe themselves as learning organizations. For outlining purposes of the thesis, education and skill development in a knowledge management sense are analyzed solely through the concept of *learning organization*. This chapter discusses the characteristics that define a learning organization (and how they could relate to a youth sports organization) through Peter Senge's best-selling book (1990) on learning organizations. Senge offers five core disciplines for a learning organization:

1) Personal mastery
2) Mental models
3) Shared vision
4) Team learning
5) Systems thinking

Personal mastery means that organizations truly learn only through their individuals learning. Individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning but it is essentially the only way the latter can happen at all. By personal mastery Senge (1990, 139–142) means that the organization places a renewed emphasis on motivating the continuous strive for learning among its employees. In it organizations take care of providing the employees with concrete future development goals or some plan in general. When it comes to youth sports organizations, this could be estimated by simply checking if the employees have definite professional goals in the future and what is the organization's role in attaining these goals.

Mental models mean that the individual of an organization has a positive mental model of the organization in general. This means that the employee of an organization sees the organization as one that promotes openness and shies away from internal politics. (Senge, 1990, 287–301). In the author's view, internal politics within an organization seem to be relatively common and usually consume too much time and energy from the employee. The manner in which this relates to any organization – youth sports organizations as well – is fairly the same and without a positive mental model individuals in an organization do not have same the motivation to develop and educate themselves.

A learning organization should also apply a shared vision according to Senge. The shared vision simply means that the organizations have – along with individual goals – a common one. This common objective makes it easier for the entire organization to pull the same rope so to speak and generates genuine motivation and interest for the individual to develop not only himself but also others within the organization. (Senge, 1990, 227). When evaluating the quality of an organization shared vision, it is important to estimate the level of enthusiasm that the employees have towards that vision. Without enthusiasm from the employees it most likely is not a truly shared vision. In this study the quality of the youth sports organization's shared vision is evaluated by asking the coaches about the organization's common goals and how committed and important they consider these shared visions.

Team learning is "a process of aligning and developing the capacities of a team to create the results its members truly desire" (Senge, 1990, 236). This aspect of a learning organization highlights the value of working as a team and being able to work together. This does not, however, come by itself but requires the organization to promote dialogue and create an atmosphere of acting together. In a youth sports organization this could be interpreted as events created by the organization for different coaches to exchange views and discuss current ideas etc. Team learning also could be interpreted as creating common rules for the entire organization in consensus and giving the individual an opportunity to express new ideas and critique without judgment so that they can be consider by the entire team (e.g. brainstorming).

The fifth discipline of a learning organization, according to Sengen, is system thinking, which means incorporating all of the other disciplines into one understandable and coherent body of theory and practice that applies to everyone in the organization. In other words Sengen (1990, 12) implies that every organization should have a common way of doing things which would also consider the aspects of team learning, personal mastery, shared visions and mental models in some way. In the case of the youth sports organization – or any organization for that matter – it is rather easy to figure out whether or not they comply with system thinking. This is done by first identifying if they have the four other disciplines in place and then assessing if the organization has a common concept which incorporates at least a few of these disciplines.

All in all when analyzing the quality of knowledge management within employee education and development, the study uses the fore mentioned concept of learning organization and its five disciplines. Furthermore, the study tries to implement and reflect these disciplines against the empirical data of the youth sports organization and reveal to what extent the organization can be classified as a learning one.

2.4. Communication skills

In recent years communication skills have often been misinterpreted as meaning the same thing as knowledge management in general. Yet communication skills, is only one aspect of knowledge management – although a significant one. Effective communication is essential for successful knowledge management and it should be an organizational main driver that every individual in an organization has the proper capabilities to get his/her point across within the organization. When it comes to studies of communication one can either focus on the process of communication itself or alternatively examine the meaning and context of the communication (Parkkonen 2005, 17). This thesis focuses on the context and especially meaning of the communication for the one receiving the information as well as for the one sending it.

Due to the rapid development of information technology many organizations have invested heavily into technology infrastructure but neglected the basic form of knowledge management within an organization, which is communicating on a daily basis. In order to develop successful knowledge management an organization has to align its general knowledge management strategy to its communication strategy (Mei, Lee & Suliman 2004).

When examining the emphasis that an organization places on its communication it is essential to single-out the parts of communication under examination. The entire sphere of communication would be outside the scope of this study. This is why only certain aspects of it, that are critical to knowledge management in the author's view, are observed. In this study the aspects of communication skills in knowledge management are examined by focusing on the following questions regarding communication:

-What is usually the meaning of communicating in the organization?

- Does communication take place often or only during certain functions?

-Is communication and feedback conducted on a one-to-one basis?

-Is feedback constructive and helpful?

The first two questions comprehensively reveal the general nature of communication within the organization without requiring a deep movement into communication details. Specific characteristics of communication in youth sports organizations might be, however, useful and the two latter questions focus on these, since they attempt to find out concretely how communication flows in a youth sports organization. These questions stem from central perspectives regarding coaching literature (Thorpe & Clifford 2003) and are therefore especially suitable in analyzing communication in a youth sports environment.

3. Youth Sports Organizations

In Finland the functioning of youth sports organizations are supported by the state by providing an operational environment for them together with local governments. The state or local government, however, does not intervene into the substance of the activity even though local governments offer financial assistance to youth sports organization operating in the area. Indirectly this financial assistance requires that the management of the organization is in check, since local governments demand that the youth sports organizations have a clear plan of action and business idea in the sense that they are not exceedingly unprofitable (Ministry of Education and Culture 2014).

This chapter describes the basic characteristics of youth sports organizations, especially how they differ from other organizations, which are knowledge-intensive and therefore apply knowledge management. In addition, the chapter presents the particular youth sports organization that is the subject of the study's empirical analysis in chapter 4.

3.1. Organizational characteristics of youth sports organizations

Compared to a normal corporate organization, a youth sports organization differs from it in three fundamental areas: 1) a youth sports organization does not typically seek profit; 2) it employs generally a relatively flat-line organization; and 3) the work itself is remarkably practical and requires some pedagogical skills.

The non-profit seeking nature of youth sports organizations derives from the fact that they generally receive subsidies from local governments. Instead of creating a profit-seeking organization around the activity, youth sports organizations in Finland have typically a long history and good relations with their respective local government thus making it unnecessary and difficult to create a profit-seeking organization around youth sports. This characteristic is not, however, universal as some youth sports organizations in other countries are indeed profit seeking (Ministry of Education and Culture 2014).

The non-profit nature of youth sports organizations in Finland has to be taken into account when evaluating them from a knowledge management viewpoint. Despite the fact that non-profit organizations have no shareholder responsibility they are nonetheless also required to continuously improve their performance, which consequently leads them to renew the management of the organization. On the other hand, this improvement requirement is typically not as demanding as the management changes that are occasionally required from corporate organizations. This is because non-profit organizations are, in a way, public goods that nobody owns (Lettieri, Borga & Savoldelli. 2004). In short the main differences that originate from the non-profit nature of youth sports organizations can be summarized into two main qualities: they do not share the same amount of pressure to continuously update their management style and they require a certain level volunteerism to operate.

The organizational structure of a youth sports organization is another unique characteristic that separates it from a typical corporate organization. Management-wise a youth sports organization consists of a five-stepped hierarchy structure (presented in figure 3) that is rather simple and straight-forward compared to many corporate organizations. Corporate organizations typically have a more complex structure, since they perform numerous different activities, while a youth sports organization can focus solely on the sporting activity at hand.

Figure 3. Structure of a youth sports organization GrIFK, (GrIFK 2014a, GrIFK 2014b).
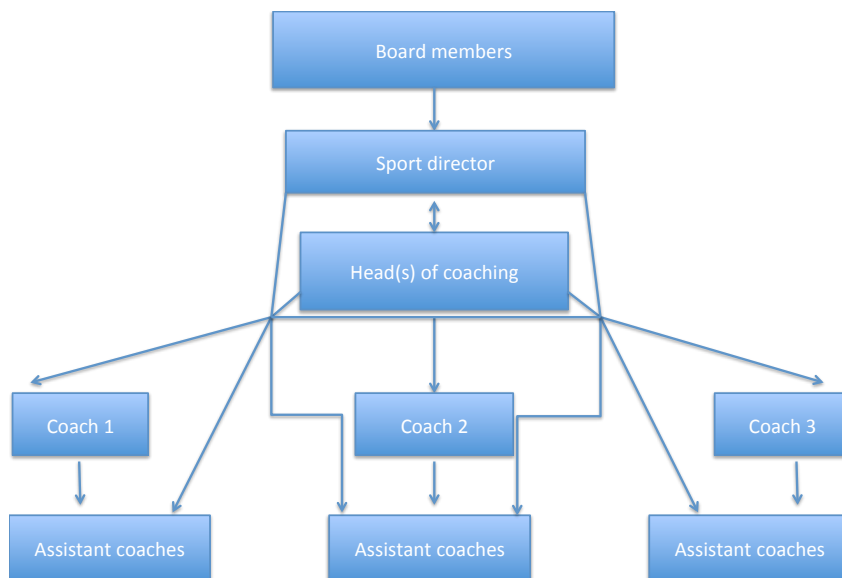
The practical nature of the work might make it seem less knowledge-intensive when compared to other knowledge-intensive organizations in different industries. No sources exist on the subject but, most often than not, coaches of youth sports organizations have extensive knowledge on the subject through personal experience and/or studies in the field. The extent of that knowledge can, however, be debated and is thus one of the results that the analysis of the empirical data attempts to bring about. The same applies to amount of pedagogical skills required by the employees of a youth sports organization.

3.2. The youth sports organization of GrIFK (registered association)

Grankulla IFK is a youth sports organization based in Kauniainen, Finland. The sports organization was founded in 1925 and includes various sporting activities, such as floorball, soccer, handball, alpine skiing and ice hockey. In this study the focus is outlined exclusively to the organization's ice hockey operations, since the club was interested in improving its management methods and provided the necessary support and access for the study. In addition the Sport Director of the ice hockey club was enthusiastic about developing and conducting a study of the current state of the club's management issues (GrIFK 2014d)

Grankulla IFK is an approved member of the Finnish youth sports organization (Nuori Suomi-sinettiseura). This certificate by the Finnish Ice Hockey association (FIHA) requires its membership clubs to abide to various principles set in the association's principal platform. The principals are divided into 11 criteria of which a few have significant relevance when it comes to knowledge management and the focus of this study (Nuori Suomi 2013 , Finnish ice hockey association 2014, GrIFK 2014c).

Firstly the principles require that a membership club takes care of providing children with sufficient and motivational physical exercise that promotes the well-being and ethical upbringing of the children. Secondly the principles maintain that the club has a capable and knowledgeable head of coaches. The head of coaches and sports director – along with the board members – is supposed to develop and upkeep a written mission statement of the club that not only answers the questions of general aims and goals but also takes care that the club's administrational re-

sponsibilities are handled accordingly. In addition the principles state that the coaches employed by the club have participated in the necessary age-specific courses organized by FIHA and that the club ensures that the coaches are in general properly trained and educated according to their respective responsibilities. In short the principles are a quality guarantee and standard for youth sports organization in Finland (Sinettiseurakriteerit 2013, Grankulla IFK 2014c). From the knowledge management perspective of this study it is noteworthy that the principles also demand that the club has an up-to-date education and coaching manuals (and other supporting) material provided to the coaches. This material is supposed to be specifically easily accessible. In addition the development of the coaches should, according to the principles, be promoted in a systematic and informed manner.

The organizational model of Grankulla IFK is rather typical for a Finnish youth sports organization in which the individual coaches are in charge of taking care of their own age-specific teams and their operational issues according to the guidelines of the club. The head of coaches along with the sports director are supposed to take care of coaching education which is either, as previously mentioned, organized by FIHA or provided by another co-operate youth hockey organization. The head of coaches and the sports director are also meant to oversee the implementation of seasonal training plans, providing the individual coaches with the necessary support in general and dealing with disciplinary issues, such as internal conflicts etc. Additionally the head of coaches and sports director recruit and supervise that the coaches receive general feedback. All in all the individual coaches, however, have a large amount of independence when it comes running the daily operations of their respective team (GrIFK 2014a, GrIFK 2014b , Agarth 4 Apr 2014).

4. Empirical Analysis & Findings

The study's empirical data was collected by the means of a questionnaire and a separate interview conducted with the Sports Director of the youth sports organization in question. All of the questions were generated from the theoretical framework built in chapter 2. The method in which the data was collected was thus strongly theory-driven, as mentioned in the methodology-chapter of the study, in order to research the empirical subject from the point of view of knowledge management. The following subchapters present specifically the means in which the data was collected and examine the key findings of the empirical analysis.

4.1. Questionnaire & interview

The questionnaire was conducted in the spring of 2014 with the individual coaches of Grankulla IFK hockey club. It was divided into four main themes according to the different perspectives of knowledge management presented in the theoretical framework (knowledge creation & distribution, information storage, education & development and communication skills). The answering percentage of the questionnaire was roughly 76 % (28 out of 37) with the answers provided anonymously by the coaches. The questionnaire consisted of approximately 27 question of which most were multiple choice questions with the alternative options ranging from two to five. In addition the questionnaire included three open-ended questions. The questionnaire was conducted by using the Webropol-application provided by Haaga-Helia and was open for answering for roughly a week and a half. The questionnaire form in its entirety is included in appendix 1.

The interview was also conducted in the spring of 2014. As a theme-based interview the format was composed into four main themes reflecting the ones in the questionnaire but slightly modified to adequately gain the point of view of the Sports Director. The discussion lasted approximately half-an-hour and offered various issues that were relevant from the study's knowledge management viewpoint. The interview form, as a whole, is included in appendix 2.

4.2. Creation and distribution of knowledge

The manner in which the creation and distribution of knowledge was handled within the subject organization was evaluated through 7 specific and 2 general questions in the questionnaire. The results and findings are discussed using the concepts tacit and explicit knowledge and manners in which to promote them (see figure 2).

The socialization of knowledge means distribution of tacit knowledge through informal or formal channels. Regarding the formal custom the questionnaire enquired whether the organization had adequate mentoring programs etc. By and large a majority of the coaches had been under tutelage of a more experienced coach during their time within the organization. This was also verified by the Sports Director as a conscious goal of the organization, especially regarding younger age-groups. In the younger age-groups (from roughly the ages of 5 to 14) there is a specific assistant to the head coach that supervises the mentoring and gives immediate feedback to the coaches viewed as inexperienced. (Questionnaire, Agarth 4 Apr 2014).

Concerning the informal manners, in which socialization can occur, such as evening gatherings etc. the Sports Director implied that they could be organized and coordinated more often and in a way that attracts more participants. In the past there has been a number of difficulties arranging informal gatherings due to the low level of participation according to the Sports Director. The Sports Director also recognized the importance of informal gatherings but, as of yet, had not come up with a solution to adequately engage all of the coaches to participate. Currently the initiative taken by the Sports Director was to create a separate locker room for the coaches to spend time in-between practice sessions. (Agarth, 4 Apr 2014). On the other hand a large amount of the coaches had no idea that there was any type of recreational activities organized for the coaches (see figure 4). This contradiction implies that at the moment the coaches do not participate into the informal events, not solely because of the lack of will but also because they are not aware of such event altogether.

Figure 4. Recreational activities within GrIFK
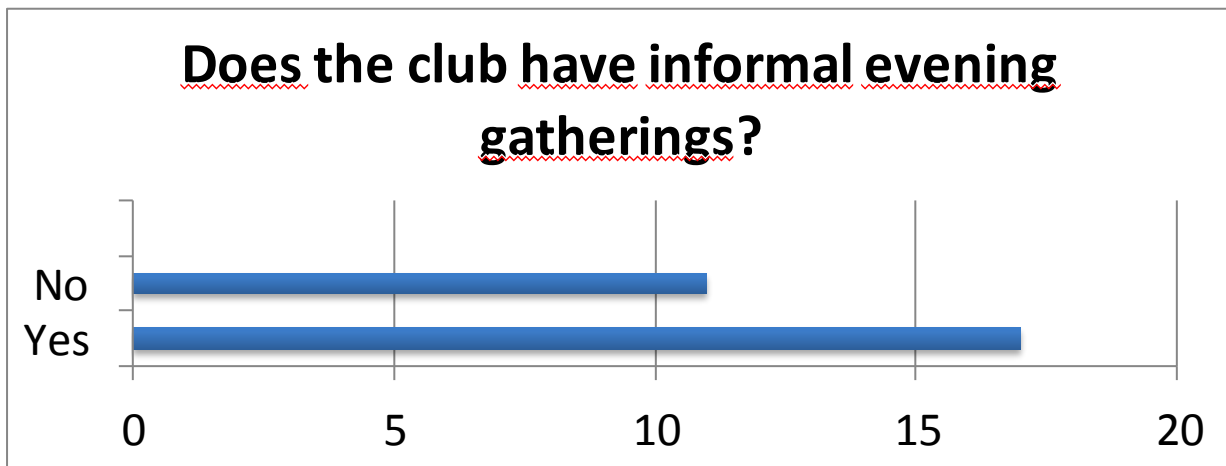
All in all the level of knowledge socialization in the organization can be viewed as adequate in the formal channel but insufficient and unclear in the informal manner. This can be explained by a number of factors, above all by the facts that the apprenticeship method has been a significant and stable feature of the organization's coaching guidelines while there is little time to arrange engaging recreational gathering etc. for specifically the coaches during the busy season and that the coaches are not informed of such events altogether.

When it came to transferring and distributing explicit knowledge to one another (externalization) the issue was again viewed differently from the Sports Director and the individual coaches. The Sports Director saw that there was an extensive amount of manuals and other written information and that they were easily accessible through the use of the club's internal online database. Nonetheless, a significant portion of the coaches in the questionnaire expressed that they, in fact, did not have easy access to the manuals which they to a large part, however, know existed. A few of the coaches did not even know that were available manuals or other written information implying that the view of the Sports Director was not entirely accurate. Thus in the field of externalization one can argue that the organization does not place an adequate amount of attention into ensuring that all of the personnel are capable and knowledgeable of the explicit information available.

Internalization within the organization was determined by finding out the amount of experience that the individual coaches had gained and by asking whether they had developed certain habit

and routines around their coaching duties (both signs of internalizing explicit knowledge into tacit). The average amount of experience was just under 5 years in the sample and an overwhelming majority had formed regular routines to their work. By this sample it seems that the internalization aspect of knowledge management within the organization is currently in an extremely good state due to the fact that nearly all of the coaches have coached for an extended period of time. Another positive signal from the results was that even a large amount of the inexperienced coaches had already included routines and habit into their assignments thus internalizing a lot of the explicit information. The Sports Director himself also has a long history with the organization lasting approximately 13 years. Figure 5 represents the dispersion of the answers in regard to coaching experience in the club.

Figure 5. Experience of coaches at GrIFK
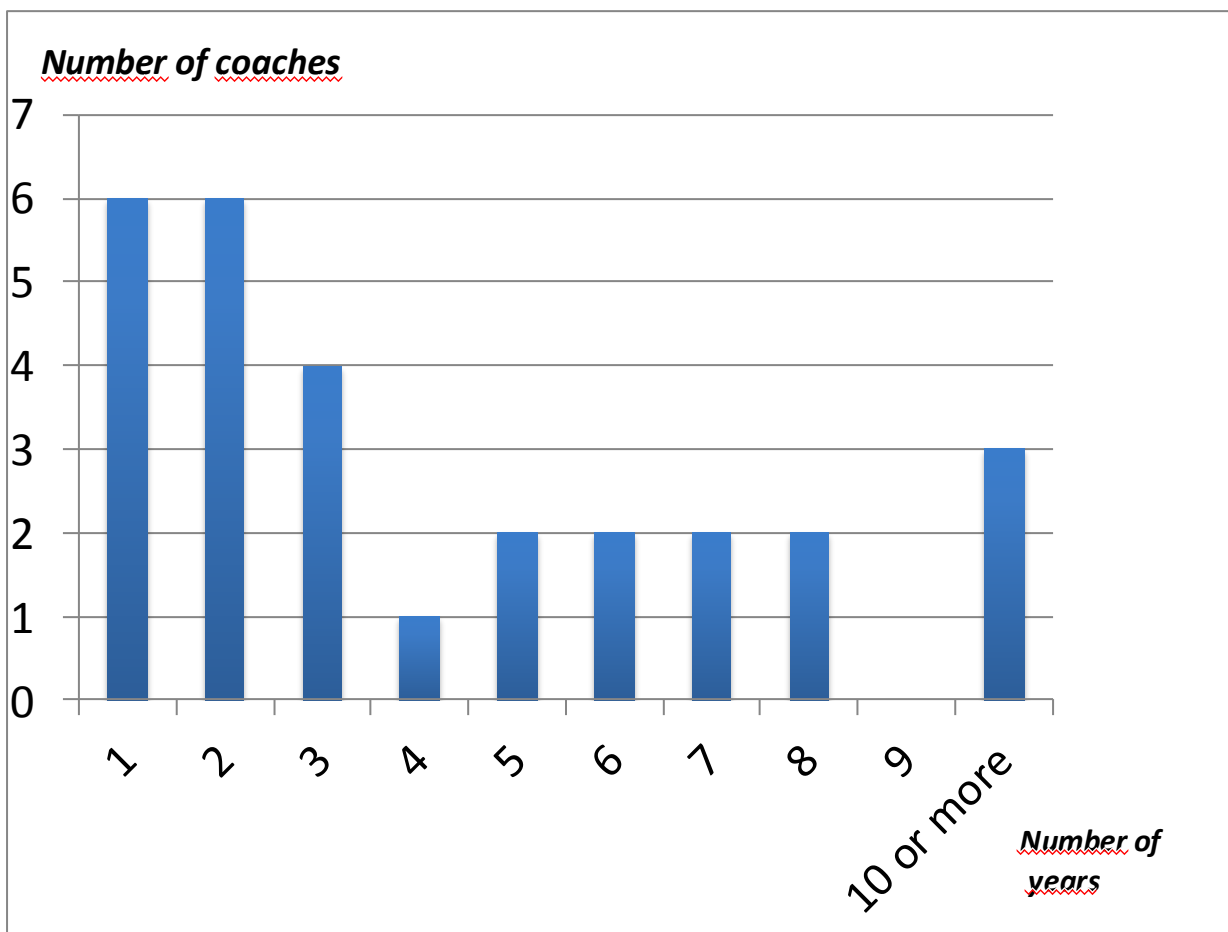
The last sphere of information creation & distribution relates to combining large quantities of information into conceptual systems and in general systematically summarizing available information. This aspect was evaluated by asking the coaches whether or not they analytically sum-

marized game result, training results or any other aspect of their coaching duties. Surprisingly, nearly 60 % of the respondents said that they did not systematically analyze any aspect of information when it came to coaching. The Sports Director also expressed that systematically analyzing game information was one of the major areas of improvement for the coaches and discussed that for a year they had piloted a video-program to give coaches the ability to analyze games thoroughly. This responsibility, however, relies mostly on the coaches' own initiative. All things considered, it seems that currently combining information from various sources is relatively weak in the organization.

In general the coaches do not converse with each other often which, in and of itself, is not a good sign when it comes to distributing knowledge. In addition the coaches do not view the organization as one in which information is properly distributed. The Sports Director tries to act as a distributor of knowledge by gathering good ideas from some coaches and passing them off to others, but a genuine and direct distribution of knowledge between coaches is lacking.

Taking everything into account it seems evident that the organization's capabilities in creating and distributing knowledge are strong when it comes to transferring explicit knowledge into tacit (i.e. internalization) yet the amount of available information and the distribution of that information could be processed more efficiently than presently. The results also point out that the Sports Director has a remarkably different view of the current state of information creation & distribution than the coaches themselves and that there exist an evident mismatch in making created information truly available to everybody involved in the organization. Figure 6 represents an illustration of the key findings in different aspects of knowledge creation & distribution (socialization, externalization, combination and internalization) and a crude estimate what their current state is in the organization.

Figure 6. Illustration of GrIFK's information creation and distribution

Green=Good,   Yellow=Satisfactory,   Red=Poor

| Socialization | Externalization |
| Internalization | Combination |

4.3. Knowledge repositories at GrIFK

From knowledge management vantage point information storage is extremely important in knowledge-intensive organizations. In this study the rate of information storage is determined by assessing the how internal or external information is gathered and applied in the organization. This also takes into account whether the information is archived into common or private databases or storage archives. These aspects are reflected in the concepts of data warehousing, knowledge warehousing, data marts and data repositories presented in chapter 2.

Data warehousing refers to gathering information into internal databases. According to a large majority of the coaches information is not gathered in to an internal database, yet the Sports Director expressed that there indeed exists one with a wide variety of coaching material and other sports related information. The Sports Director also stated that coaches are encouraged to create player profiles that could be used for rating player skills etc. Presently these profiles are not collected into any database whatsoever. Yet again the coaches are not aware of available information or where it could be gathered in the organization despite the fact that these exist.

External warehousing of information (i.e. knowledge warehousing) is used by roughly half of the coaches who exploit the available information online. Interestingly this information is not however, distributed among the organization but used almost exclusively to the coaches' pri-

vate use. This reflects the characteristic of data marts, in which information is modified into personal use. Nonetheless, when it comes to data or knowledge warehousing the organization is arguably not very sophisticated since most of the coaches are not aware of the club's internal database and external databases are used only by some coaches for purely private consumption.

The organization in question does have a physical storage room but, according to Sports Director, information is increasingly being transferred to electronic form. The fact that a majority of the coaches did not know that the organization had an internal database is also reflected in the question whether or not the club had any type of information archives (physical or electronic). Exactly half of the respondents stated that the organization does not have any means for archiving information despite the fact that it indeed has an archive space along with an electronic internal database. Figure 7 illustrates the dispersion of answers about the storage of information in the organization.

Figure 7. Information storage at GrIFK
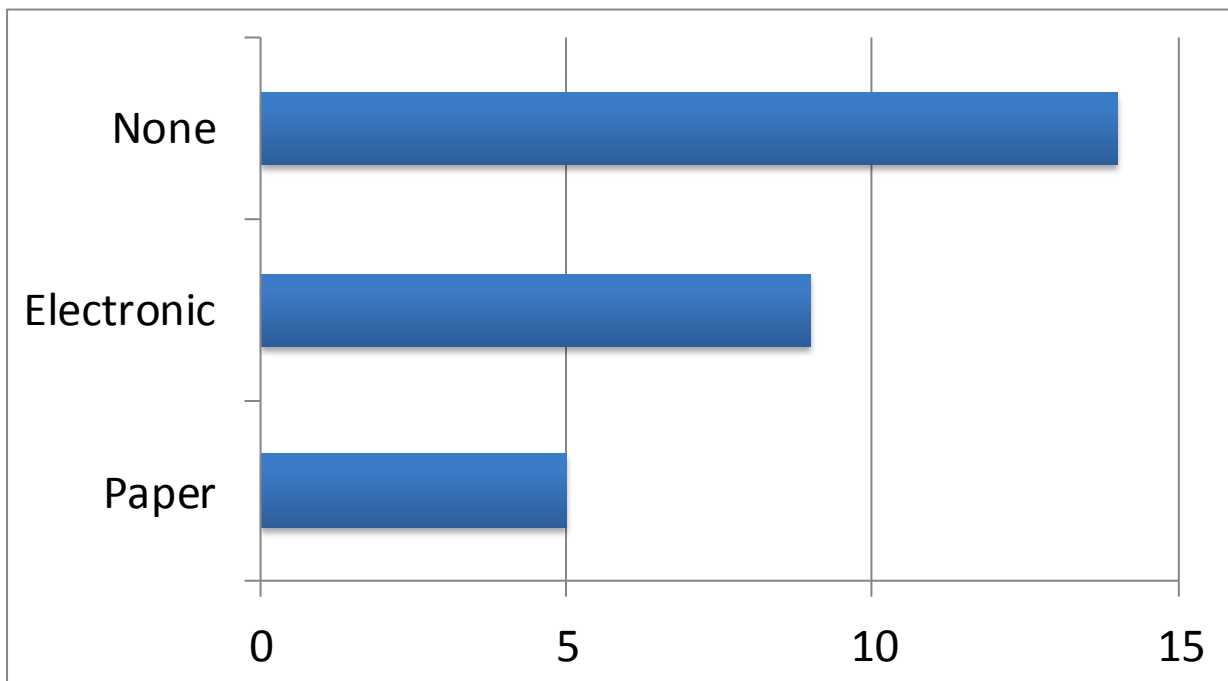
As a whole, information storage is not in order in the organization in question. In this aspect the results between the questionnaire and the interview are in noticeable disagreement. The reasons for this may vary from bad communication to simple neglect and disinterest regarding the storage of information. In the view of the Sports Director there was no need for placing

greater emphasis to the issue since most of the material for coaching is available online – even though it is not in any systematic form.

4.4. Education and skill development at Grankulla IFK

In this study the aspect of education and skill development in an organization was viewed from Senge's 5 core disciplines: personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning and systems thinking. All of these aspects were emphasized in the questionnaire and interview.

Personal mastery was estimated by judging whether or not the coaches themselves had clear goals, which they were pursuing, and how the club helped them in attaining these goals. The answers reveal that almost one third of the respondents do not actually have a goal in their coaching career. The ones' that do have a clear goal, however, thought that the club significantly helped them achieve these goals by encouragement, education, experience, support and various other resources. The Sports Director stated that the club tries to support its coaches by offering them suitable educational courses and actively encourage certain talented and motivated coaches to pursue new challenges by, for example, offering them position in older age groups or promoting them into cop-operational hockey organizations.

Nonetheless, the club does not set specific goals for every individual coach but the club tries to help them set new goals for the same talented and motivational coaches. From this one can conclude that the level of personal mastery in a youth sports organization is mostly dependent on the level of the coaches' own initiative. From a theoretical point of view this does not actually represent a learning organization since it most requires the employee to initiate and make sure that the personal mastery objective is set and achieved.

The second discipline of a learning organization, according to Senge, was based on mental models. In other words, how the employees viewed the organization in general and the level of internal conflicts within the organization. The club management believed that the employees viewed the organization positively and saw that internal conflicts were limited only to player transfers and were not actually real problems. In the questionnaire the coaches were almost unanimous in the positive mental outlook they had of the organization despite the fact that

internal conflicts existed according to the coaches. The nature of these internal conflicts was not enquired and leaves one to ponder whether the coaches themselves viewed these conflicts as insignificant as the Sports Director. One way or the other, it did not prevent the coaches from having a positive image of the organization.

From an educational and developmental viewpoint an organization must also have a common shared vision that is genuinely accepted among its employees. In the case of Grankulla IFK, 90 % of the coaches saw that the organization had a common goal, but were unable to exactly specify what a mission statement. The answers varied somewhat from each other, but many included the same educational and competitive characteristics (e.g. raising balanced children and citizens, motivating sports-mindedness, promoting ice hockey as a hobby and lifetime activity etc.). The Sports Director himself could not specify a concrete common goal but mentioned a lot of the same characteristics. All in all the organization seems to lack a clear and consistent common goal even though many share the same fundamental values. As a learning organization, however, the aspect of a shared vision leaves something to be desired. It is the author's view that the employees of the organization could rather easily be unified around a simple common vision which could serve for additional motivation.

Team learning was another aspect of a learning organization that focused attention into how well new improvement ideas were received and whether or not dialogue within the organization was open and constructive. According to the questionnaire over two thirds of the coaches saw that the communication was in fact open and constructive and improvement ideas were generally speaking well received. Furthermore the coaches saw that the organization also implemented these ideas seemingly well. The Sports Director also agreed on these notions and confirmed that the organization takes carefully care of listening to the ideas spread by its coaches. A rather surprising feature of these results is that from a team learning aspect the organization did remarkably well.

Finally, Senge's last discipline regarding a learning organization depended on how the organization promoted all of the previously mentioned (personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning) combined into a systems thinking approach. The concept itself meant that all of

these features were gathered under a unified approach. In this regard one has to conclude the level of success between the features and come to a conclusion about the organization's holistic line to the subject. When asked if the organization had a unified approach for improving the coaches and club in general, the respondents were rather evenly divided. Figure 8 is an illustration of how well the organization has performed in the different aspects of Senge's learning organization

Figure 8. Illustration of GrIFK as a learning organization

Whether or not GrIFK can be classified as a learning organization as a whole is debatable, but nonetheless certain aspects of the organization can be said to be more strongly in tune with the concept than others. According to Senge, however, if all of the aspects are not in place the organization will not become by itself a learning organization (Argyris, 1999). Thus one could conclude that despite a number of positive indicators GrIFK is not a genuine learning organization, since it does not place significant attention to promoting personal mastery for all of its employees and lacks a clearly defined shared vision.

4.5. Communication at GrIFK

Finally the theoretical framework of knowledge management focuses on an organization's ability to efficiently communicate internally and externally. For this aspect the study concentrated on the meaning of communication in the organization and how often it takes place. Further-

more the questionnaire asked how feedback was usually conducted in the organization and whether or not it was constructive and helpful.

According to the interview the Sports Director maintain communication and give feedback by daily interaction in the surroundings and through informal advice, conversations etc. The Sports Director himself was rather pleased in this manner and saw that there was no need for formal developmental feedback and that every coach received continuous consultation and practical advice regarding their coaching duties. On the other hand the questionnaire revealed that the coaches thought that feedback was available relatively seldom (see figure 9) despite viewing that the feedback given was generally helpful.

Figure 9. The amount of feedback coaches receive at GrIFK
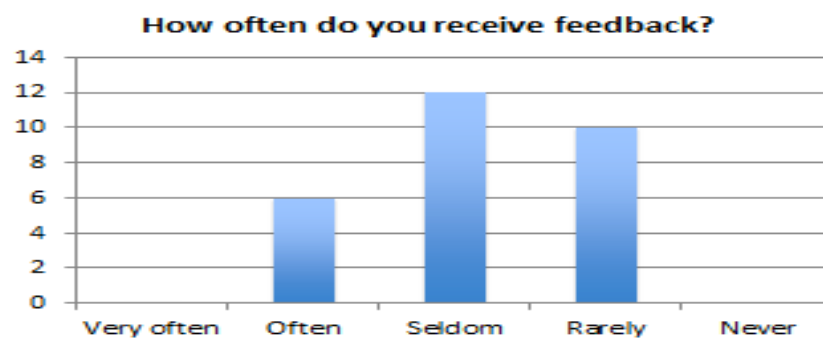
The manner in which feedback was conducted varied wildly within the organization with some coaches saying, verifying the perception of the Sports Director, that they received their feedback during training sessions and weekly conversation while others said that feedback actually never occurred and when it did was usually not constructive. On a positive note, however, the many of the coaches agreed that they received their feedback on a one-to-one basis – a feature often viewed favorably within communication skills. Nonetheless, the fact that communication in the organization was almost without exception done on an informal basis possibly assisted in the element that a majority of the coaches did not recognize conversational topics as genuine

feedback and were left uncertain whether or not they were expected to do correct a certain function in one way or another.

From knowledge management point of view an informal setting for feedback is regarded as one that promotes solidarity among employees but also studies have shown that occasionally formal settings are necessary for making sure that communication between different hierarchies of the organization has been successful.

5. Conclusions

In the introductory chapter this thesis outlined two main research questions:

1) What were the possibilities that the theory of knowledge management could offer to youth sports organizations in general?

2) What is the current state of knowledge management in a specific youth sports organization?

This concluding chapter attempts to summarize and discuss the key findings and contributions of the study. The chapter is organized into three subchapters that all provide insights and possibilities into utilizing these in future research.

5.1. Discussion of the results

Through an extensive overview of the theory of knowledge management this thesis has indicated four main points of entry how to assess knowledge management in a youth sports organizational environment. A selected reading of the theory gives in fact a rather applicable tool into analyzing the knowledge management in a youth sports organization in general.

Firstly one has to recognize the importance of information creation and distribution in the organization. This study employed the concepts of tacit and explicit information and how they can be transformed in order to understand the level of knowledge creation and distribution in a youth sports organization. The comprehension of this issue gives one a better grasp in the management of the organization in general, since in a knowledge-intensive society, an organization has to develop through improving the means in which they create useful information and how they distribute that information to their employees. Being content with the current state can easily lead to decline. Furthermore this part of knowledge-management is not hard to implement in practice, especially in a relatively simply organized youth sports organization, since one only needs to conduct a short inquiry or interview with the employees to understand how they create and distribute information.

In addition to understanding the possibilities that knowledge management could offer to youth sports organization, the thesis attempted to answer its current state in one particular youth

sports organization. In the aspect of information creation and distributing, the current state in the case-organization (GrIFK) was mixed. On one hand the coaches of the organization internalized knowledge seemingly fast and efficiently, yet the organization itself was not capable of creating new explicit knowledge (i.e. manuals and other information) in a constructive manner nor was it able to distribute that information through internal data bases or such. Furthermore the socialization of knowledge especially when it informal meetings was somewhat neglected and could be managed more efficiently.

Secondly information storage was an aspect of knowledge management that offered a direct and measureable manner in assessing how valued information was in an organization. When it came to youth sports organization, information storage could be assessed by revealing how information was collected into archives or internal databases etc. Due to the fact that youth sports organizations focused on specifically one core know-how, all the information stored and collected is likely to be useful to every member of the organization making it that much more important to pool information in one way or another.

Additionally this aspect of knowledge management is also easily implemented. The organization needs only to evaluate how information is currently stored by simply viewing whether members of the organization know the location to the physical archives and/or have access to a possible internal database where information is collected. In the case-organization of this study, the state of information storage left something to be desired: coaches gathered information solely for themselves; many had problems locating the physical archives and accessing the internal database. By improving the management of information storage one can easily imagine how the entire organization might benefit if this relatively straightforward matter was taken into account. This could be solved easily as implementing a educational program for the coaches at the beginning of the season, to teach them how and where they can find the crucial information. Another possibility would be to make an easily understandable short manual that the coaches would receive in the beginning of the season, including passwords, usernames etc.

Education and skill development is an aspect that evidently forms a critical part of how knowledge is managed and valued in a knowledge-intensive organization. From the point of

view of a youth sports organization, education & skill development is something that offers benefits from more than one reason. Yet it is not readily known how one can analyze the state of education and skill development in an organization. In this study the issue was approached by using Senge's five characteristics of a learning organization that all related to how employees were educated and developed in an organization. Furthermore the thesis adapted these concepts into youth sports organizations in general and one in particular.

The current state of education & skill development in the case-organization was varying. Team learning and mental models on one hand were viewed as largely positive because the coaches had a confident outlook of the organization and saw that improvement suggestions were readily taken into account. On the other hand personal development of the coaches was solely the responsibility of the coaches themselves and the case-organization only took steps in developing the employees if they provided a significant amount of initiative. In addition the organization did not a have well-designed vision despite the fact that many of employees shared a number of the same fundamental values. Therefore, when judged as a whole, the case-organization revealed a number of weaknesses as well as strengths when it came to educating and developing their employees. Nonetheless, the thesis filled its objective of adapting a relevant manner in which assessing the current state of education and skill development in a youth sports organization. Possible corrections could be made by the club to include a questionnaire and personal interviews to find out the direction that the coaches would like to move in their perspective coaching careers. This could set the course for the club and drive the coaches forwards, thus improving the learning experience for them and providing value for the club in terms of knowledge.

Lastly the aspect of communication was taken into account when forming a knowledge management theory suitable for youth sports organization. Communication skills in the case-organization were determined by analyzing the general meaning of communication and feedback in the organization. Communication in the case-organization was open and constructive yet feedback was given – according to the coaches – seldom and coaches did not actually communicate with other age groups that often. The analysis of the case-organization revealed that the current state of communication depended largely on the daily interaction between the

Sports Director and the individual coaches, yet there was no systematic manner in which communication and especially constructive feedback was handled. When given however, feedback was generally viewed as positive. Therefore it would benefit the case-organization to organize its feedback structure in systematic manner where all of the coaches would inevitable receive equal amounts of feedback. Despite the problems with feedback communication in general was positive in the case-organization. The amount of feedback could be fixed rather easily by planning a schedule by the head of coaches of practices he will be observing and giving feedback after, thus the coaches could also reserve time from their personal schedule for a such a meeting. This would make it easy to document how much feedback the coaches are getting on a weekly basis, on what subject matter and if there is need for more instructing or even joining the practices.

5.2. Summary of key findings

The key findings of this study can be classified into three different categories: theoretical, practical and detailed. All of these have come about in the previous sections of this study but will be summarized and specifically presented in this chapter.

The selected theoretical framework offers a constructive manner in which to analyze youth sports organizations in general. Through four main perspectives – that are all relatively simple to analyze in practice – one can identify deficiencies in the management of knowledge within any youth sports organization. Furthermore the theory itself is an interesting point of view to dissect the management side of a youth sports organization and assess its strengths, weaknesses and areas of development. Most importantly, the empirical case-study done in this thesis illustrates the fact that the theory of knowledge management is not only possible to implement into youth sports organization, but also offers many concrete observations that could be of assistance when improving their operations management-wise.

On a practical level, possibly the most interesting finding was that despite the organizational clarity characteristic for a youth sports organization, the empirical analysis of the case-organization (GrIFK) revealed that there were many discrepancies between the Sports Director and the individual coaches. The Sports Director saw that the aspects of knowledge manage-

ment in a much more positive light than the coaches themselves. In a way this could be viewed as nothing more than a natural occurrence where the supervisor is not as critical towards his own work as his subordinates. This is typical for any organization, but in youth sports organizations these contradicting notions can be more easily corrected due to the previously mentioned fact that they have a rather simple organizational structure. In other words the Sports Director could align the knowledge management of the organization with his employees by organizing a more systematic approach to information distribution, storage, education & skill development and communication. In a youth sports organization the small size of the organization itself would make the accomplishment of this objective more easily attainable than in an organization that has many core areas of expertise, many supervisors and a much larger amount of employees.

The detailed key findings related to the case-organization can be classified into positive and negative observations. On the positive side, tacit knowledge was distributed well in a formal manner and coaches internalized information quickly by developing routines and habits without significant difficulties. Negative detailed findings, however, revealed that information storage and distribution was mixed and unstructured in the case-organization and the education and development skills of the employees was largely pushed upon the individual's responsibility. These detailed findings are, however, naturally specific to the case-organization but in the author's view they could be issues common in many youth sports organizations. Furthermore the detailed key findings indicate that as a youth sports organization there are many other concrete issues to develop or to examine further.

5.3. Possibilities for future research

The theoretical framework presented in this study could easily be transformed into a much larger quantitative study about the state of knowledge management of youth sports organization in general. Additionally it serves as a platform in which the management of different youth sports activities could be compared and evaluated. For instance, is there an educational manner in which some soccer organizations develop their coaches that could be utilized in other youth sports organizations? All in all there could be significant advantages for sports and leisure management in general to adopt more closely knowledge management or for that matter any other

useful theories from business or management literature that have already been tried and tested. This would not only broaden the horizons of the sports world but also possibly offer interesting insights for the theories that would be adopted.

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Appendix 1. Questionnaire Form

Information creation and distribution

1. How long have you been coaching in the club? (Internalization)

2. Have you developed habits or routines for coaching during time? (Internalization)

3. Does the club have manuals or other material that gives instruction to coaching or such? (Externalization)

4. If so do you know how to access this information and is it easily accessible to you? (Externalization)

5. Have you been under an apprenticeship of a more experienced coach in the club? (Socialization)

6. Does the club have informal gatherings or events? (Socialization)

7. Do you use systematic methods to analyze games, such as video analysis, shot statistics etc.? (Combination)

8. How often do you talk to coaches from other age groups? (General)

9. Do you feel that information is being shared well inside the club? (General)

Data storage

10. Does coaching material get gathered into an internal database? (Data warehouses)

11. Do you use information from games from outside sources (such as FIHA web pages etc.) and if so do you gather it into your own use or for the whole club? (Knowledge warehousing)

12. Does the club have an archive or office space for old game guides, practice schedules, coaching manuals etc. or are these stored in electronic form? (Data storage)

Education and skill development

13. Do you have a clear goal that you are pursuing on your coaching career? (Personal mastery)

14. What is the club's role in gaining this goal? (Personal mastery)

15. Do you have a positive image of the club? (Mental models)

16. Are there internal conflicts inside the club? (Mental models)

17. Does the club have a shared vision – if so what is it? (Shared vision)

18. Do you feel that the communication between coaches is open and constructive? (Team learning)

19. Can you give development suggestion to the club and how are they taken into consideration? (Team learning)

20. Does the club a common understanding how the coaches and club could be improved? (Systems thinking)

Communication and feedback

21. How often do you receive feedback from coaching from the head of coaches/ Sports Director, and in what kind of settings is it given? (Communication general)

22. Do you feel that the feedback is helpful? (Communication flow)

23. Do you receive your feedback in a group or in private? (Communication flow)

Appendix 2. Interview Form for Sports Director

Information creation

1. How long have you been the Sports Director in the club? (Internalization)
2. Have you developed routines or habits in your everyday work? (Internalization)
3. Has the club manuals or other material that give instructions to coaching or something related to coaching? (Externalization)
4. How often do the coaches inquire or rent these manuals? (Externalization)
5. Before you became the Sports Director were you an apprentice for another coach or Sports Director or are you still? Do you have an apprentice now yourself? (Socialization)
6. Do you organize informal gatherings for the coaches with the club where the coaches can discuss freely and informally? (Socialization)

Information storage

7. Does the club keep a record of coaches and players stats? (Combination)
8. How often do you as the Sports Director talk to the coaches and what is it usually related to? (General)
9. Does the club have an internal database and if so who is responsible for its upkeep? (Data warehouses)
10. Does the club produce new information in terms of manuals and guides? If so how often would you say this is done and whose responsibility is it?
11. Have the coaches been guided where they can find information from games and is this information gathered into the clubs use? (Knowledge warehousing)
12. Does the club have an archive or office space for old game guides, practice schedules, coaching manuals etc.? Or are they stored in an electronic form? And who is responsible for all of this? (Data storage/ data repositories)

Education and development

13. How does the club recruit new coaches? Criteria, education versus playing background, does the club try to set up a younger coach under a more experienced one? (General)

14. Does the club try to set up goals for the coaches in the beginning of the season and also for their personal career as coaches? (Personal mastery)

15. How do the Sports Director and the club try to support the coaches in their coaching careers? (Personal mastery)

16. Do the coaches attend seminars and education on issues that are seen as their weakness? And how is the education usually done in the club? (General)

17. How are the weaknesses in the coach recorded? (General)

18. How is the feedback given and followed through in the club? (Communication skills)

19. Is communication between the coaches open regarding the transfer of ideas and practices? (Communication skills /team learning)

20. Do you think coaches have a negative or positive image of the club? (Mental models)

21. Does the club have a common goal? (Shared vision)

22. Have you noticed any internal conflicts inside the club? (Mental models)