



Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences  
Haaga-Helia Bachelor's Degree  
Bachelor's Thesis Instructions  
2023

## Abstract

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<b>Report/Thesis Title</b> Creating and Developing a Team Culture: A Diary Based Research of Leadership, Communication, Team Dynamics, and Cohesion.
<b>Number of pages and appendix pages</b> 32
<p>This thesis is based on the development and growth of the authors journey as a coach in Honka Football club. The author oversees the U17 boys popularly known as B Juniors in Finland. Honka</p> <p>The diary-based thesis explores the role of Leadership, Communication, Team Dynamics, and Cohesion in creating and developing a team. It analyses the role of the author in club and follows his daily experience of an 8 -week journey showing the daily coaching experience through his daily entries emphasizing the role of leadership styles, decisions, effective communication, team dynamics and cohesion in shaping a team and a team culture.</p> <p>The daily reports are set up to follow working tasks and objectives for each day and will be analysed in a weekly reflection. The desired outcome is a clear development of professional practice and coaching effectiveness, supported by the theoretical framework.</p> <p>This thesis serves as a valuable case study that sheds light on the multifaceted nature of leadership and development in football coaching, underlining the importance of a comprehensive approach and the influence of prior expertise in fostering athlete growth.</p>
<b>Keywords</b> Communication, Leadership, Team, Group

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## 1 Introduction

My topic is Creating and Developing a Team Culture: A Diary Based Research of Leadership, Communication, Team Dynamics, and Cohesion. I Chose this topic as I wanted to use the guide provided by my sources to further develop my perceived area of development.

I would classify this period as my first year fully in charge of a team although in my previous role during my internship, I did manage games and oversaw the team when the coach was absent. I also oversaw team Sandnes which was the best team in the whole of the Rogaland region during which time they played with other teams from all the regions in Norway.

This thesis is based on a eight week period from the 1.10.2023 to 27.01.2023 during my coaching process as the head coach of the Honka B3 team in Honka Football club.

Honka Football Club is one of the largest football clubs in Finland. It is based in Espoo. The first team plays in the highest division of Finland's football league and its academy is renowned as one of the best in Finland- It has a huge number of kids that plays in the academy that starts from a very young level. The club has teams designed for kids who want to play at an elite level and caters to kids who want to play as a hobby. They also have intermediate levels and have a system where players can move from one level to another through a choice of their own or through progression in development and selection by the coach.

My role was head coach of the Boys U17 youth team popularly known as B junior's where my job was overseeing try-outs, shaping the team from scratch, designing training sessions, and establishing a development model. Coach role includes the physical, technical and tactical development of the players within my team and the introduction of psychological skill training to the athletes which in turn would help grow their mental and psychological strength.

I also served as an assistant coach with the U15 black team, a role distinct from my primary focus. The Main role was to support the head coach. Here, my aim is to contribute insights and expertise, bridging the gap for a coach who hasn't had direct playing experience. This role was not covered in the thesis.

Skills required by my job included Leadership, Communications, game knowledge and an arbitration role as you are expected to listen to, decide and solve conflicts within the team.

Sports specifics knowledge is a skill that is also needed that I feel I am well suited with as I have attained a UEFA C coaching course certificate, my education knowledge, and my experience as a football player in Kenya, Belgium, Greece, and Finland.

Leadership is defined as “the process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse 2010, p.3). Leadership skills are needed as coach when forming a team, organising the training sessions, planning when and if the team will have a camp, when to play in friendlies, running training sessions and the type of session to be held. The coach is also in charge of appointing the team leaders such as the captain, game day coaching and selection of the players partaking in games. Though I believe that my leadership skills are good, this is one area of development that I see as key and the objective of my thesis. I feel that though I have played the game and been exposed to a high level, I still need experience in this field and that can be done by practising and doing.



Figure 1. The four components of effective leadership  
Coaches guide to sport psychology (Cham-paign, IL  
Human Kinetics 1987), 35.

. Communication skills are needed as the coach must relay information to the players on what is expected of them, their roles in the team and how to successfully implement the roles. This is also another key development area as my Finnish language skills are not very high and I have not been in a head coach position before where I make most of the team decisions.

Group development refers to the process through which a collection of individuals comes together, interacts, and evolves as a cohesive unit over time and thus as a coach my ability to develop a team will be vital and therefore this will be a skill that would be important in this process.

Planning Skills are important as the coach must make an annual plan, organise training sessions and send to the players before time. This is an area that I seek to develop.

My main resource book for the thesis is Foundations of sport and exercise psychology (Robert Weinberg) as it guides in the different aspect and know-hows' of Leadership, communication, Group dynamics and Cohesion.

My second source is Coaching Better Every Season: A Year-Round System for Athlete Development and Program Success. The book covers plans for the whole year round and is an important guide on what to do during the four seasons.

## 2 Framework

For a team to be successful it is important that its creation is done in an effective manner using the laid down procedures that have been successfully applied in the past and thus the importance of a theoretical framework.

Through my daily entries and weekly analysis, I apply my leadership, communication skills and group dynamics and cohesion to create an effective team. This is by use of my leadership styles, selection of leadership roles is done and analysing how that helps in setting up the team and the team culture.

Through the daily entries I use my communication skills for the team creation and to relay my expectations, set goals and roles to team the team members and create strategies that enhances trust and create a rapport with them.

Finally, through proper leadership and effective communication create a team cohesion and create a sense of unity and shared purpose within the team.

### 2.1.1 Leadership

Leadership is described “as the process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse,2010, p.3). In the creation of a team and team culture Leadership skills are vital and contribute greatly to the creation of a cohesive group unit. Without proper leadership the chances of a team to be successful are slim. There are three types of leadership styles that I will be using in my day-to-day activities.

- Transformational leadership styles are one of the most popular contemporary leadership theories (Baas 1998). It is a style where the leader has a vision and inspires people to follow the vision and work with each other to excel. Transformational leadership is about inspiring athletes to achieve greater heights which they didn't think possible.
- Transactional leadership it is almost the opposite of transformational leadership, it focusses on reinforcing and punishing followers relative to team tasks and following their performance.
- Servant leadership – as the name implies this is about being a servant to other with qualities such as caring, listening, empathy, stewards, and strong community builders (Parris & Peachey, 2013) It focusses more on the growth and development on the goals of the followers more than of the organisation itself.

Optimal performance and satisfaction results leads in a style that matches the groups preference (Chelladurai ,93) using this context I must understand the preferred style of my group and using it in establishing a team.

Using a preferred decision style with my players will lead to effectiveness and the higher the satisfaction the easier it is for the team to have success.

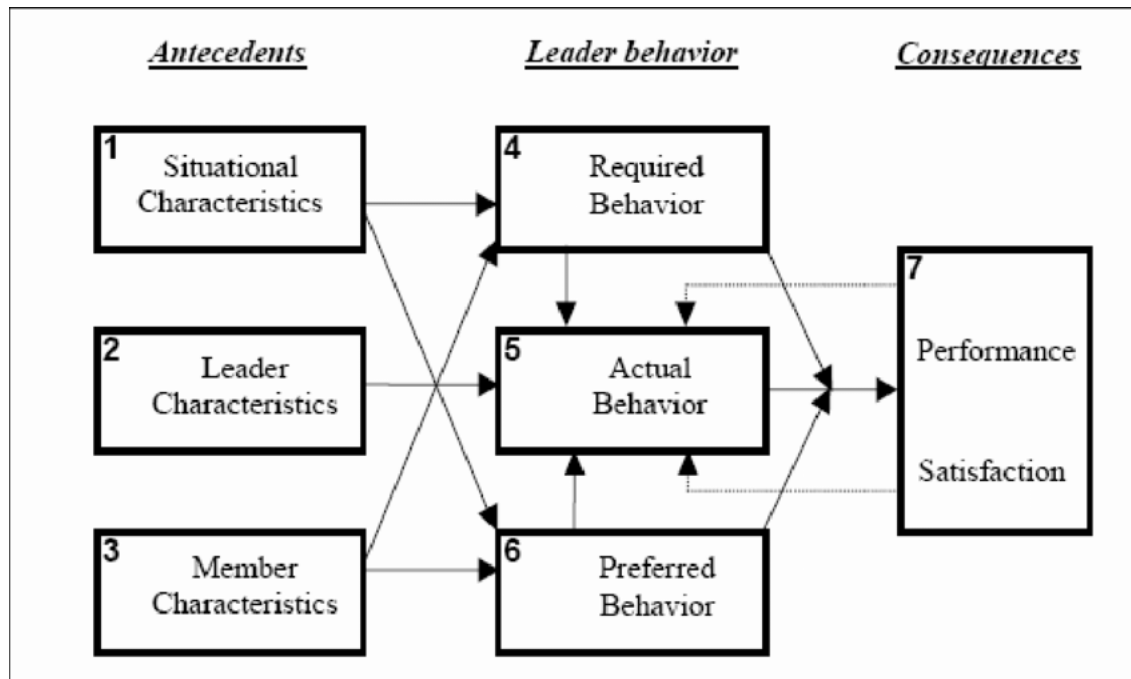


Figure 2. The Multidimensional Model of Leadership for Sport Chelladurai, P. (1999). Human resource management in sport and recreation. (p.163).

According to Baker, Yardley, & Côté, (2003). Team sports athletes found positive coaching behaviour more important than individual- sport athletes thus it's imperative for me to maintain a positive approach which can be done by using the transformational type of leadership.

Perceptions as top in training and instruction positive feedback behaviours, and democratic social support and low in autocratic behaviour leads to teams that were more cohesive Gardner, Shields, Bredemeir, & Bostrom, 1996; Pease&Kozub,1994; Westre&Weiss,1991) thus proper planned and quality trainings, involving my players in decision making and generally offering them support.

Leadership is further divided into approaches namely the Trait approach, behavioural, approach, situational approach, and the interactional approach. Each of these approaches are used in the setting up of a team and team culture and helps in the moulding of team cohesion.



- Trait approach- Which lost favour after Stogdill (1948) reviewed more than 100 studies of leadership and found a few consistent personality traits considered that leaders were people who had traits such as intelligence, assertiveness, independence, and self-confidence and that these make them stand out as leaders no matter what situation they were in. It was determined that even though certain qualities were important for a leader, they did not guarantee successful leadership.
- Behavioural trait – Leaders are made and not born is what this theory suggests that with training and learning the behaviour of successful leaders one could be successful.

Tharp and Gallimore 1976 found out that most of coach's Jon Wooden behaviours included giving instructions (what to do and how to do it) encouraged intensity and effort, spent 50% of his time on verbal instruction, 12.7 percent in hustling players to intensify instruction, 8% in scolding and re-instructing with a combination statement, 6.9% in praising and encouraging, and 6.6% in statements of displeasure (scolding). Focus on instruction and conveying information over praising good performance and scolding errors is consistent with recent research (Gilbert, 2002; Gilbert & Trudell, 2004). Coach Wooden also valued effort over winning.

Gallimore and Tharp (2004) after reanalysing coach wooden came up with findings that are key and leads to successful leadership behaviour.

1. Exquisite and diligent planning that laid behind heavy information load, economic talk, and practice organization.
2. Providing instructions via information as a positive approach to coaching
3. Reserved more praise for reserves than starters.
4. His seven laws explanation, demonstration, imitation, repetition, repetition, and repetition.
5. Being an exemplary role model as a teaching philosophy

These are all exemplary behaviors that culminate to successful leadership.

### 2.1.2 Communication

“You can communicate without motivating but you can’t motivate without communicating” (John Thompson). Good communication skills are one of the most important ingredients that contribute to a performance and the personal growth of athletes and to create a successful team one has to be able to develop strong communication skills. Communication happens in two ways,

Interpersonal communication. Most used, it is the communication between two or more people.

Non-verbal communication is one common type of communication that research has proven.

Intrapersonal Communication is the communication we have within us.

Ineffective communication leads to a host of intrapersonal issues, like decreased group cohesion, lack of trust in team members and decreased team and individual performance. (Wechsmith, Jowett, & Howard,2017)

Coaches’ statements are an important factor in communications as (Zourbanos, Htzigeorgiadis& Theodorakis,2007) found out that positive and negative statements by coaches produced more positive and negative self-talk in their athletes. Positive and negative statements made by coaches produced more negative and positive self-talks in their athletes.



Figure 3, The process of communication

The ability to speak to your players most of the times and consistently helps in calmness in the players and they don’t have to think that something is wrong when their coach (Syer 1986, pp 99-110)

Self-awareness of my coaching style and comfortability with it is an important factor, I must think are my instructions (concurrent), Prescriptive, evaluative, or affective (how did it feel)

Attitude is a must as it's not enough to be honest and accurate as the impact of the message depends on who is receiving it and what they are willing to take in (Percells & Coplan, 1995, p117). Red Aubarch coach of the Boston Celtics said, "It's not what you tell them it's what you hear", Timing of when to pass the information is also critical.

### **2.1.3 Group Dynamics and Cohesion**

Talent wins games but teamwork wins you championships (Jordan, 1994, p. 24) Talent alone is not enough and when the use of other team members abilities is not used it leads to failure, thus it's very important as a coach that I utilise each player and the attribute they bring.

Teamwork and Dynamics plays a vital role in the successful set up of a team and team culture. In a team players play different roles that each contribute uniquely to the success of a team and it's important that a coach recognises these roles.

There are three theory types of group development.

1. Linear perspective which has the forming, storming, norming and performing stages, the assumption is that progress moves through different stages. When one stage is done the next one begins.
2. Life cycle perspective which as the name suggest implies that groups develop like the cycle of life, birth, growth, and death.
3. Pendular Perspective This perspective contains five stages Orientation, differentiation and conflict, resolution and cohesion, differentiation and conflict and termination.

A group creation begins from the first meeting and its outcome depends on the interaction of its members. Group roles and norms are characteristics that must develop for a group to become successful. Roles that exist in a group are informal and non-informal roles.

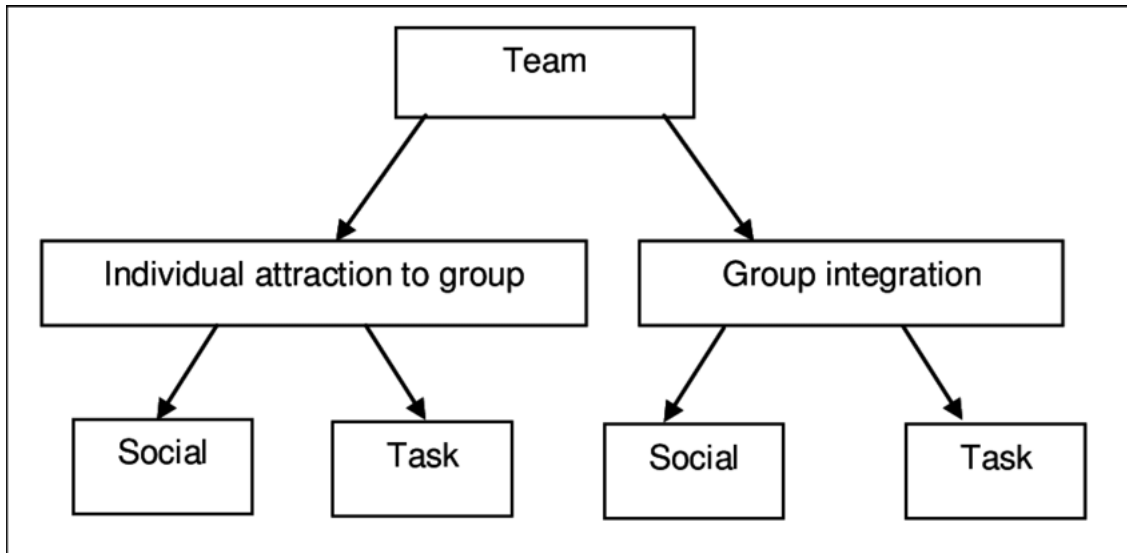


Figure 4. A Conceptual Model for Team Cohesion in Sports

## 2.2 Evaluation of current state

My proficiency in football coaching is at a commendable level, largely due to a one-year internship with the Norway Football Federation and at Sandnes Ulf football club an experience at the top level in Norway. The exposure to top level players boosted my confidence in my ability as they constantly test you and challenge you. The player coach relationship created was one of mutual respect.

A rich playing experience that started at a young age and participating in international tournaments, brief stints in Belgium, Greece, and Finland has been an asset to my understanding of football. These different experiences, involving situations that cannot be taught, significantly contributed to my effectiveness as a coach. The knowledge of what I appreciated and disliked as a player established my approach in dealing with athletes.

Despite these strengths, a key area for potential growth lies in the planning and the documentation phase. Notably, many coaches I have worked with tend to overlook aspects such as creating an

annual plan and using micro and macro cycles in their planning. There is a reliance on traditional methods, indicating an area for improvement in this crucial aspect of coaching.

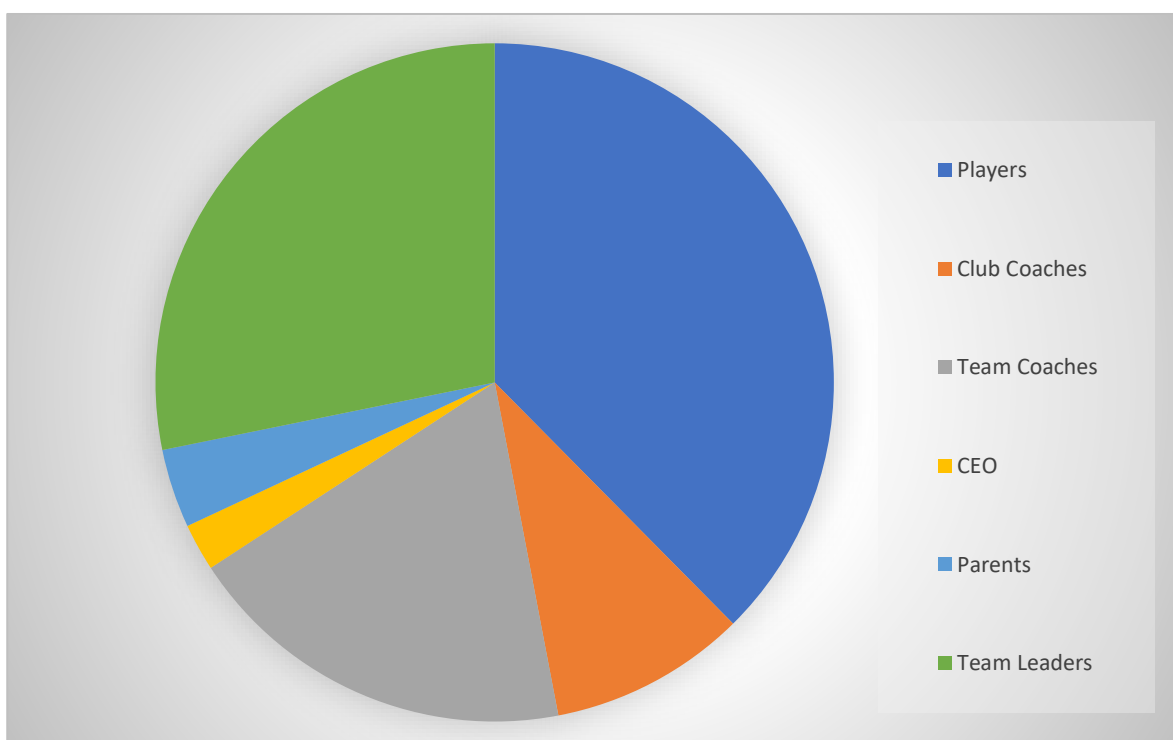
On the other side, my strength lies in game analysis. This strength was developed during my internship and further improved through my role as an international scout. The ability to notice critical situations during both training sessions and matches has consistently had positive outcomes. Major contributions include involvement in the selection process for the Norway U15 boys' Stavanger national team and Team Sandnes boys' team.

My coaching journey has been shaped by a mixture of practical experiences, player perspectives, and a continuous quest for improvement. This reflective analysis highlights both my strengths and areas for development, underscoring the dynamic nature of my coaching evolution.

### 2.3 Stakeholders

### 2.4 Interaction situations

### 2.5 Interest groups at work



In the day-to-day operations of the team, my primary interactions involve a select group of individuals and stakeholders who play integral roles in ensuring the smooth functioning of the club.

. The Club's CEO holds the important position of overseeing aspects beyond the world of the game itself. Responsibilities include managing coaches' needs, ensuring the provision of proper equipment, handling coaches' contracts, salaries, and upholding the club's integrity, values, and standards.

The Head of Coaching, responsible for the U13 to U20 age groups, assumes the role in supervising coaches' development within their respective environments. This involves monitoring whether the teams align with the club's developmental models and facilitating coaches' enrolment in relevant coaching courses. This role is shared by two people with one in charge of U13- 15 and the other one in charge of U16-U20

Figure 5. Interest groups at work.

An important figure in the coaching staff is the Assistant Coach, who steps in during the coach's absence, assists in training sessions, manages warm-ups, and aids in the delegation of duties.

The Team Leader serves as an important bridge between parents and the coach. Responsibilities include relaying parents' concerns, needs, and opinions to the coach, helping in case of player injuries or emergencies, and ensuring the team has the necessary equipment. In the absence of the team leader, two designated parents assume this role.

Players and parents are additional stakeholders in the team dynamics. Players, being the central focus, require constant interaction with the coach both on and off the pitch. Effective communication and trust are important aspect for the team's proper functioning. The coach-player relationship is particularly crucial, underscoring the significance of its thoughtful implementation.

Parents, as guardians of the players, communicate their concerns through the team leader, which ensures the potential for interference or confrontation with the coach is minimized. In instances where players may hesitate to express concerns directly to the coach, parents pass the information to the team leader, who then communicates it to the coach. The coach, in turn, determines the appropriate course of action to address the situation.

### **3 Diary entries**

#### **WEEK 1-3 LEADERSHIP**

##### **3.1 Week 1**

###### **Tuesday Nov 1, 2022**

This was my first official day at work, and I had a meeting with the parents and introduced myself to them. I told them about my expectations for the players and what I needed from them for the rest of the season. I emphasised the fact that I didn't just want good players in term of ability but players who were willing to put in effort throughout the season. I let them know that they could contact me any time and that my lines were open always for them. They asked me about plan for the season with the winter league and if we should play in it, as I am new to Honka I asked the team leader from his opinion and what they thought were the best way to proceed from previous experiences. The team leader thought it was important that we play, and I accepted. I informed the parents that I expected players to attend training consistently and that absences should be reported on time to help for my planning and training purposes. I informed the parents of the fact that I will push their kids to be the best they could, and I got the feeling that they were okay with that. Meeting lasted an hour, and I headed home.

###### **Wednesday Nov 2, 2022**

Today is my first day meeting the players. I had them in a huddle, introduced myself to them and had them all introduce themselves too. I reiterated to them what I said to their parents about effort and giving their all during all practice and games. I told them that my focus was on their development and not on the score sheet of the games. I informed that that the effort ultimately leads to better outcomes because of the work they put in. While I was talking, I noticed some players talking and ignored it but noted who they were. I wanted to check if this was a tendency or a one-off thing that will not happen again. Most of the players were attentive and seemed keen to listen.

I noticed that most of them were nervous, and I could understand that since they had a new coach, from a different background than they were used to and that they were about to undergo try out for 3 weeks.

The training itself was played at an okay level. I noticed that some of the players technical level and decision making was not at a good level but that they had the potential. Some of the players with good technical abilities stood out and it seemed that the training was so easy for them.

During the try outs I intend to mostly observe and check out what players leadership quality stand out.

### **Friday Nov 4, 2022**

Still focusing on my Leadership skills, I planned a training session but as soon as the players started it, I noticed that they would not be able to do it due to the huge difference in skills amongst themselves. I immediately stopped it and re arranged the playing field so that they could go back to the basic of passing and following the ball. My assistant coach disagreed with my approach as he thought that going back to the basic would affect their fitness level. I didn't get his point so I told him to wait until I finished setting up, the field, explain the drills to the players and then I will come back to him. I went back to watch the players while still having a conversation with my assistant. I informed him that next time when he disagreed with me, he should not do it inform of the players and the parents and should call me to the side. I also explained to him that fitness was not a priority for me at this point as the players were on try outs and that we could also achieve optimal level with sport specific drills if the players were capable of doing it at a high-quality level.

I noticed that ant time I talked to the players some players kept talking at the same time and laughing with the same group of players who did it yesterday amongst them. I immediately told them that I expected to have a HEAR principle i.e., Heads up, eyes front, attend fully, remain silent when I am talking or someone else is talking.

### **Weekly analysis**

On the first day, I displayed a strong leadership presence during the meeting with parents. By insisting on the importance of effort over ability, I set the tone for a collaborative and growth-oriented season. The commitment to open lines of communication with parents shows a transformational leadership style, building trust and collaboration within the team's broader community.

The approach on the second day, meeting the players, reinforces key leadership principles. The prioritizing of player development over wins and records aligns with a transformational leadership



style, creating a culture of continuous improvement. The acknowledgment of nervousness among players shows empathy that I have empathy, a trait often associated with servant leadership.

During training, I demonstrated situational leadership by immediately recognizing skill differences. The decision to reorganize the training session based on skill levels shows a flexible leadership.

approach, putting the needs of the team over a rigid plan. The coach's interaction with the assistant coach shows assertiveness in maintaining control over training methodologies.

My response to players talking during training and addressing it immediately with the HEAR principle reflects a strong transformational and democratic leadership approach. Clear communication expectations, such as remaining silent when the coach or someone else is talking, establishes a structured and focused training environment, contributing to the team's cohesion.

### **3.2 Week 2**

#### **Tuesday 8th November 2022**

Today was the continuation of the try outs, I dropped some players as their skill level was not at par and they moved to the team a level below us. The best player according to my assessment also asked if I could allow him to go for try outs in the academy as he thought that the skill level was too low for him, I told him that he was free to go and if it didn't work out, he could always come back. I noticed that some players got very upset when other players made mistakes and used insulting words to their teammates. I also that there was a player who was good with the ball, worked hard but didn't talk much at all. I called them in a huddle and told them that under no circumstances were insults allowed in the team and that mistakes were allowed. I asked the player who worked hard in silence what his name was and praised his effort and hard work and told him to keep it up.

#### **Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

Today's training was a continuation of yesterday. I decided to have a full field session where the players just played with no interference. I wanted to watch their physical, tactical, and technical ability. I have started to notice the strength of the players and notice their behaviors when frustrated. I also have started to have an idea of where the technical abilities lie.

#### **Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

During today's training a bunch of players came late amongst them the two players who were laughing when I was talking. I asked why they were late and informed the whole group that I expected everyone on time and being late for training affected the whole training schedule as we don't have enough field time. We agreed to be 15 mins before schedule at the pitch. Training involved fun games and competitive drills that I intentionally used to try to make the group integrate with each other and have some fun. When it was time to leave, I noticed that everyone just seemed to take their stuff and leave. I insisted that everyone should fist bump me and the assistant coach as a way of goodbye and informed the players that they should always do it before training.

#### Weekly Leadership Analysis:

By employing a transformational leadership style, I demonstrated a commitment to individual player growth by allowing a participant to attend higher level try-outs while expressing openness to their return.

Proactively addressing insults among players during a huddle signified an effective conflict resolution and emphasized a positive team culture.

Using an observational leadership approach, I allowed players to engage in a full-field session without interference, gaining knowledge into their physical, tactical, and technical abilities.

Enforcing punctuality and addressing latecomers showed a transactional leadership approach, showing accountability and adherence to team rules.

Incorporating fun games and competitive drills for team integration aligns with transformational leadership principles and creates team spirit.

Insisting on a fist bump ritual at the end of training added a personal touch to communication and contributed to building a sense of team unity.

In reflection, my strengths lie in balancing transformational and transactional leadership, addressing individual needs while enforcing team rules. Preventing a conflict and intentional team-building efforts contributed to a positive team environment.

Future recommendations included maintaining a consistent approach to solving conflict, having positive communication, and discouraging insults.

This week's analysis highlighted my commitment to individual growth, proactive conflict resolution, and strategic team-building efforts. The combination of transformational and transactional leadership styles stood out as ways in which leadership was developed.

### **3.3 Week 3**

Tuesday 15th November 2022

Players today were on time and didn't forget the fist bump. The team leader informed me that some players kept telling other players that they were bad and using offensive language to each other so I had a pre training exercise talk and reminded everyone to maintain a positive environment and that whoever thought was so good and did not need any more practice should raise his hand, none did. I stated as a rule that insults that were used were unacceptable and that I would drop any player immediately who used that kind of language, irrespective of skill and technical ability.

I started taking notes on players I thought had leadership ability, such as encouraging their teammates when they made mistakes or applauding their efforts. I also made sure to point out when they did well with comments such as praising the scanning of the pitch before making a pass.

**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

Today I noticed one player who showed flashes of brilliance in training and then disappeared. He seemed to be very good but was shy. I enquired who he was, and I found out that he was the son of one of the team leaders. It got me curious, and I asked the parent what his son's football background was. He informed me that the son has played for Honka all his junior life. During the break I called him and spoke to him privately and encouraged him to be more vocal, more assertive and demanding of the ball. He seemed to be in a shell. I also spoke to the group and asked all of them to try and encourage each other and be leaders on their own.

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022 n**

Today was a fun filled day. We started the training with fun games again and it seemed to transfer into the whole session. The players seemed to be in high spirits and worked extremely hard which was positive to see. The level also seemed to be better, and I let them know that. We had a post training talk where I told them I was happy with the effort showed during the training.

### **Weekly Leadership Analysis:**

I employed a transformational leadership approach. I addressed negative behaviour by emphasizing the importance of a positive environment and maintaining a supportive team culture. Clear rules against insults were established, demonstrating a commitment to sustaining a respectful and inclusive team atmosphere.

By observing the principles of observational leadership, I took notes on players displaying positive qualities, contributing to the promotion of favorable team dynamics. This personalized leadership approach allowed me to recognize and engage with a shy player, encouraging their individual development. The focus on creating a collective leadership culture was underscored by promoting teamwide leadership.

Initiating training sessions with fun games became a key strategy for team building, reinforcing positive behaviors. Recognizing and addressing the needs of individual players exemplified an individualized leadership strategy, fostering shared responsibility and teamwork.

## **Week 4-6 COMMUNICATION**

### **3.4 Week 4**

#### **Tuesday 22 November 2022**

This week I must name my team and my concentration is on improving my communication skills.

Today I started the session by asking the players if they know about team values. Most of them had no idea what that was. I explained what team values is to them and told them to think about what they perceived to be their values. I informed them that we will create values for our group as soon as we had the squad for the season. The thought that it was a nice idea and a couple had questions about it. I also spoke to the players more about their communication skills and asked them to think about how and what kind of talk do they have with themselves before games and

during training. I informed the players that I will always be there to listen to them for whatever reason.

### **Wednesday 23 November 2022**

Today's session relates to this week's theme of communication. In the warmup, players had a passing drill where they had to say where they wanted the ball and on which leg. Player passing the ball had to call the name of the player receiving the ball before passing it. I introduced more balls, and the drill became intense and a little bit difficult for the players to concentrate on communicating and the quality of the passing.

### **Friday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

Today I named the squad. I named a team of 24 players. A lot of players were disappointed, and I received a lot of messages from the parent, some complaining and some enquiring because their sons were dropped. I informed one parent who enquired why I his son was not in the team and yet we didn't have a lot of defenders. I informed her that her son had missed a lot of trainings and there was no way I would drop players who had consistently been present. I also informed her that I will follow up on his son's progress with the coach of the team he was dropping to and if he was committed and worked hard. I would be willing to have him back. I also informed the coach that I was willing to have the player if he showed intent to progress.

### **Weekly Analysis**

During the week, I initiated a discussion on team values, encouraging players to reflect on their personal values with the plan to establish collective values for the group after final squad determination. I also insisted on the significance of communication skills, prompting players to consider their self-talk and maintaining and also creating an easy access to the coach policy. Training session based on communication, focused on improving both verbal and non-verbal communication through a passing drill. The announcement of the final squad of 24 players led to disappointment among some players and caused questions from concerned parents.

In response to one parents' inquiry, I explained the selection criteria. I also responded to a question about a dropped player by insisting on the significance of training attendance and commitment but also offering a potential return pathway based on dedication and effort.

Proper communication with the parents was established and they were provided clear explanations for selection decisions, showing transparency and commitment to player development.

Going forward there is need a plan to have communication with the dropped players' coaches so as to monitor their progress and offer them opportunities in case they show dedication to improvement.

### **3.5 Week 5**

#### **29 November 2022**

Today I reminded the assistant coach and the players that I will be leaving for Kenya the coming week for a pre-planned trip. I informed the assistant coach that he will be taking the next two trainings, and I will only be watching and supporting him during the next few days.

Today's training was a continuation of trying to work on the communication skills of the players as well as of the coaches. The drills were an interchange of 4 vs 3, that switched to a 4 vs 4 drill and then to a 3 vs 4. This ensured that the players had to keep communicating on when and who to go in the field, when to switch to a 3 and when to switch to a 4. The players kept each other alert and always reminded the ones who weren't concentrating on when to go to the field.

Wednesday 29 November and Friday 1<sup>st</sup> December

Today I had sent my assistant coach properly planned trained sessions on which to run. The training itself was of high quality and intense. I watched only from the side and didn't get involved in its running. Occasionally I would shout a word of encouragement for the players. After the training I bid the players my goodbyes. I had a small discussion with the assistant coach on whether I should give him autonomy to choose whatever drills at that point or he wanted me to plan some for him. He opted to have his own training sessions. I emphasised the need to keep the communication skills for the boys. I told him to inform me of anything and write to me anytime if he needed help. The team will also break for the holidays in a week's time.

### 3.6 Week 6

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#### B3 Values

- Respect
- Hard Work
- Winning Mentality



#### January 13, 2023

Figure 6. Honka B3 22/23 Team Values

Today we arrived for a bonding camp at Eerikkila. We arrived in the evening and had a light session. The session was a mix of fun games and some 8 vs 8 session to get the team into a little bit of shape. I insisted that the boys stay together as a group and just have chat for a while after training. The team leader and the parents with us informed the boys of the rules at Eerikkila and made sure that everyone knew that it was important to sleep on time and get a good night rest. I gave them freedom to do whatever they wanted but in a responsible money and the trust that everyone will be in bed on time. I wanted them to have autonomy over their decisions and to have the feelings that I trusted them to be responsible.

#### January 14, 2023

Second day at Eerikkila we had a long and tiring day. We had a training session in the morning, but my focus today's were on the creation of the team Values. We had a meeting where I re introduce the issue of team values and the importance of having something to guide us. I asked open ended.

questions about what they thought are I put them into three groups, and I had them discuss. After a 10 mins discussion, one player of their choosing came forward and read the discussions of the

groups. After all the groups were done. We started the discussion of what they thought was the values that best represented them. At the end of one hour the players had chosen the values of respect, hard work, and winning mentality. Before they chose winning mentality as a value, we had a brief discussion on what that meant. I asked them to define what they meant by that. Their answer was that if they didn't give up and kept punishing, they would eventually get what they want and that it was not a reflection of the scoreboard, but of effort and perseverance.

### **January 15, 2023**

My focus today was on setting norms and rules to be followed during the season. The norms had to be based on our values as a team. I had the players sit in different groups from the previous day and discuss what they thought were the best rules to guide them for the season. After a brief discussion and group presentation the players came up with simple rules to guide them. After setting up the rules. The players had to come up with the repercussions or punishments in which governed them when they went against the team values and rules they set. They discussed amongst themselves and came up with the rules with no interference from the team leaders or the coaches.

### **Weekly analysis**

Throughout the bonding camp, I effectively communicated expectations by insisting that the boys stay together after training, insisting on the importance of adhering to rules, and creating a sense of responsibility among the players.

By granting the players the freedom to make their own decisions, I was able to give trust and autonomy, improving team morale and responsibility.

I was able to create meaningful discussions on team values using open-ended questions and encouraging players to express their thoughts, thereby promoting inclusivity.

Communication included groups working together in the rule-setting session, involving players in the process through group discussions and presentations, allowing for open communication and individual perspectives.



I further employed an approach where all players were involved in discussions about consequences for violating team values and rules, creating a sense of ownership and a commitment to upholding standards.

Overall, the week's activities focused on using effective communication strategies to build a cohesive and accountable team environment, resulting in the establishment of team values and rules, and thereby creating a collective identity for the Honka B3 team.

## **WEEK 7-8 Team Dynamics and Cohesion**

### **3.7 Week 7**

#### **Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

Today I got a message from a team leader who said that one player had complained about my coaching style during the camp, and she wanted me to talk to one of the parents about it. I enquired what the complaint was about in details, but she couldn't really tell me. I informed her that I prefer hearing it directly from the player or the parent of the player rather than from another parent. I kindly declined hearing it from anyone else. The player sent me a message saying that he won't be attending the training and thus we would have the conversation the next training day. Using that information, I went through in my head the way I handled the camp just trying to put myself in the boy's shoe and I came to my own conclusion that I was not tough at least not in a negative way. I put the thought away and concentrated in running a quality training. Before training I asked the boys to select three people who would be captain and two vice captains. As the boys started suggesting I noticed that the one who had the most vocal support was from the younger group who were the majority in the team. The boys selected two vice captains, one from the younger group and one from the older group, as they were about to vote on the captain I intercepted and decided that the coaches and the team leaders would decide who was to be the captain. The reason I did that is that the majority group were suggesting the most popular kid amongst them who was more like the joker in the group. The assistant coach and the team leaders came up to me and told me that they agreed with the decision. We decided to choose one of the boys who was not only technically good but his attitude towards training and others had been exemplary, he was not only the star player but also a team player. I realized that I was keen on the informal roles that these players played and that I had decided with insight from that knowledge.

#### **Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

Today before training I had a chance to talk to the player who had complained and enquired what his grievance was. He told me that he wanted to move to the team that was a level lower as he felt that he didn't like my coaching style. I enquired what exactly about my coaching style didn't he like, and he said I shouted at him in the camp so much. I asked him if there was any other reason that he wanted to leave the team and he said no. We had a long chat where I told him if that was the only reason, he shouldn't leave the team and I would try to communicate in a better way. I didn't think that I had communicated in a negative way, but I took his feelings serious, and he decided to stay in the team. I informed all the players to be open on what they felt and asked if there was any other player who felt aggrieved. I suggested that they send me private messages or give the team leaders or captain or whoever they felt safe with anonymous messages to me if they felt they needed to communicate. I felt that my team's creation progress was in line with the linear perspective and was now in the storming period. I also realised that to create an effective team climate I must provide listening support and emotional support to the players.

### **Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

Training was cancelled today due to the field having a lot of snow and the city not clearing it due to the power rationing going on countrywide. I Used the time to think of ways I could have more team bonding activities using play. The solution came from the fact that the weather had been cancelled and thus since we had a Monday outdoor training, I asked the team leader for the availability of futsal indoor training. We got a school, and I asked the players to vote between futsal and outdoor training and almost all of them voted for futsal. The voting was done through a poll on the teams WhatsApp group.

### **Weekly analysis**

I received a complaint about my coaching style but chose to hear it directly from the player involved rather than relying on indirect information. In this way I showed a commitment to open communication and a desire to build trust within the team.

I involved players in the selection of team captains and vice-captains, providing a sense of ownership and empowerment. but, when it came to selecting the captain, I decided to involve the assistant coach and team leaders, showing the importance of a balanced decision-making, and ensuring effective leadership within the team.

I addressed the complaint by having a conversation with the player. This demonstrated that I had listened, empathized, and understanding willing to solve concerns. My willingness to adapt my coaching style based on the player's feedback reflects an emphasis creating a listening support which helps in building an effective team climate.

I encouraged players to share their feelings and grievances openly, either through private messages or anonymous channels. This approach promotes a culture of open communication, encouraging shy players to speak out and providing the players with various avenues to express their concerns, contributing to a more transparent team environment.

I adapted quickly by responding to the cancellation of outdoor training due to snow. The decision to organize a futsal indoor training session based on player preferences, decided by an open voting process, showed my commitment to considering the preferences of the team members.

I recognized that the team is at the storming period, accepting that conflicts and grievances might arise. This awareness of team development stages allows me to adapt my leadership and support strategies accordingly.

Despite the challenges we had during the week, I sought ways to establish team bonding, through team activities. By focusing on cohesion, I contributed to the development of a strong team culture.

### **3.8 Week 8**

#### **Monday January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023.**

Today was the first day of futsal I wanted to use this game as means for establishing cohesion and as a team bonding exercise. Through futsal, players are divided into smaller units and must work as team in the game thereby developing collective competency. The games were very competitive and fun for the players. It also gave me a chance to have a closer look at their technical and tactical ability in small spaces. Though during training, I noticed that a team was less with one player because one player had left and went to sit outside. I asked him if something had happened or if he was feeling unwell and he said that he was okay and the reason he went out was because his teammates weren't that good and that they weren't passing the ball to him. I immediately stopped the game for a while and called all the players in a huddle. I reminded them that they should not take it for granted that they get to play football for Honka and that many players willing to be in their place were dropped. I also emphasized that no one was superior and that all players were equal. I let it be known that I will not accept a player leaving training because his feelings were hurt. I told the player to choose between going back or going outside the hall as I was not going to allow him to sit there and nonverbally complain and influence the rest of the team. He

decided that he will play. The rest of the session went well, and I was pleased with the commitment the boys showed.

### **Wednesday January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Before training the team leader informed me that there were factions in the team between the younger age group and the older age groups and that they had argued over what had happened the on Monday. They seemed to have been not in a good mood. I changed my warmup and the plan for the day after receiving that. I paired each younger player with an older player and had all of them hold a ball between them. I created two teams and told them to play football while holding hands. The losing team was going to collect all the stuff after training and bring the stuff for next training. The game started slowly with frown and moans but after a while it became competitive and ensured that they all had to work as a team. For the next training I switched all the players position and had them play positions they weren't comfortable with. Most of the players struggled in the new positions and made a lot of mistakes. After training I reminded them of their core values of respect, hard work, and mentality. I encouraged them to think about how hard it was to play in their teammates position and to appreciate the effort that their teammates put.

### **Friday January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Due to the events of the week I decided to encourage team cohesion through a game before the training session. I divided the players into two groups, and the assistant, and I oversaw each group. A player had to say something about himself, and the rest of the group had to decide if it was true or false. I used that to get the players to know more about each other and to try to create a connection between them beyond the football field. I also asked them to decide what they wanted to do for training, and they said that they wanted a 11 vs 11 game. I decided to let them have fun and enjoy the game. During the game I noticed that some players were working hard than the others.

I encouraged the players to all push and do their best. During the game break I put them into groups of 4 and had them clap first as individuals and later as a group, I asked them to compare how easy it was to clap in uniform when one or two players clapped and how difficult it was when 4 players clapped I told them to play hard and "clap" in the field as hard as if they were alone and not letting the rest of their teammates do the hard work. I noticed an improvement in the second period of the training.

Weekly Analysis

Throughout the week, my focus was on the team dynamics and cohesion. When issues arose such as individuals who were not content, I dealt with it immediately to maintain an effective team climate. An effective climate is an important ingredient in the creation of a successful team.

By using of teambuilding activities, position switching, and the reminder of our core values as tools in the development of a cohesive team environment was able to create an environment that was suitable for the creatin of a cohesive and efficient team.

I insisted on understanding one another, sharing responsibilities, and creating connections among players beyond the playing ground and creating a holistic approach to building a strong and unified team.

## 4 Discussion

After 8 weeks of consistent writing on the day to day of my coaching activities it's time to discuss what I have learned from those 8 weeks and what I can use in the future in my development.

My leadership and communication skills have tremendously developed during this period, and this can be seen for example by my openness to listening the critique of my player directly and empathizing with him and trying to come up with a solution that helps in the creation of a cohesive team and also by the encouragement of my players to express their feelings openly and anonymously without fear of retribution thereby creating transparency and a supportive team environment.

I have become adaptable, and this is seen for example by my quick response to the cancellation of outdoor training by switching immediately to indoor futsal training based on the opinions of my player and thereby also considering their needs. I have developed my conflict resolution skills after being able to handle a lot of issues which seemed to threaten the creation of a cohesive and united team. I am also more confident in my ability as a leader.

I have learnt the different leadership styles and how to use them in their own unique way. I have learnt that you don't necessarily have to use one style, but you must be comfortable with what you use and can intertwine and use them according to a situation.

I have learnt about the different types of communications. That interpersonal communication and intrapersonal communication both go hand in hand in the development of players and that my interpersonal communication affects the intrapersonal communication that my players have with themselves. That it is important that your interpersonal communication aligns with your nonverbal communication when dealing with players. For example, when praising the effort of your player you should make sure that your face does not indicate displeasure.

I have learnt the different approaches in group development such as the linear perspective which I think suited my group more than the other perspectives and that players also have informal roles which are significant as the formal roles in the stages of group development and that you must be aware of them to create an effective team climate.

That is better to deal with an issue as soon as it arises to avoid delay and letting it affect the cohesion of a team.

Interesting I noticed and will use in the future include methods such as switching playing position roles for my players helped them appreciate the role that their teammates play and thereby creating mutual respect and understanding and by creating means which players can communicate anonymously encouraged them to share their feelings openly and was an innovative way to build trust and handle individual needs. The use of bonding activities and group discussion was an effective way to create team unity and handle internal issues.

In conclusion these 8 weeks have been a major eye opener especially in terms of the knowledge that is out there that can be applied. By seeking to

use the theoretical framework I got to expand my development. I will continue to seek and use the knowledge even after this period.

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