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Erna Kristjansdottir

Thesis of 12 ECTS credits
Master of Project Management (MPM)

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WHAT CAN PROJECT MANAGERS LEARN FROM THE ICELANDIC NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM'S MANAGERS IN SHAPING GROUP DYNAMICS?

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ABSTRACT

Football is one of the most popular sport games in the world. The football strategy is about creating the correct winning environment, overcoming significant challenges, handling expectations and pressure. At first sight, this environment seems very similar to the project management environment, but is it really?

The IPMA Eye of Competence, Behavioral competence, is used as a framework for this thesis. The main focus is on leadership and team behavior. The thesis is built up in two ways: *qualitative study and quantitative study*.

Two semi-in-depth interviews were conducted with the Icelandic national football team managers. The conclusion from the interviews is that team leadership and team behavior are the main building blocks of team success. The conclusion from a questionnaire sent out to the Icelandic national football team players is that the key success factors in the training process are: *structured working environment, discipline, mutual trust, mutual respect and repetition*.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Icelandic national football team has been climbing up FIFA's World Ranking List ever since 2011 when Lars Lagerbäck and Heimir Hallgrímsson started leading the team. By the end of 2014 the national team rose from 104th place, to 33rd place. Questions are raised among people: *"What is it in their leadership and team building that makes the national team as successful as it is?"*

The author was addressed by her classmate, Anna Sigridur Vilhelmsdottir, about whether we should combine our efforts to write a master thesis about this topic. The author was very fond of the idea, because she like everybody else would like to know the secret to how to build a successful team. Since the topic is big, the author and her colleague decided to split the task between them. That is the reason for these two thesis:

- a) What can project managers learn from the Icelandic national football team's managers in project management? The author of this thesis is: Anna Sigridur Vilhelmsdottir³.
- b) What can project managers learn from the Icelandic national football team's managers in shaping group dynamics? The author of this thesis is: Erna Kristjansdottir.

Two frameworks are used for reference in this thesis. The first framework is: *The IPMA Eye of Competence, Behavioral competence*. The main focus is on leadership and team behavior. The second framework is the book: *The Manager. Inside the minds of football leaders*. The term football manager is used for the national team coaches, instead of head coach. This is done to be in line with the book content. Youth football coaches will be referred to as youth coaches, since responsibility is not as complex as with football managers.

In laying the cornerstone for shaping a successful team, one must carefully review the leadership method and the team's behavior. How do these two factors align with each other? What are the qualities' that the manager and his team should have? How is a successful team shaped? To answer the questions, two in-depth semi-structured interviews were taken with the Icelandic national football team's managers, Lars Lagerbäck and Heimir Hallgrímsson. Also a Survey Monkey questionnaire was sent to the players of the national team, asking them to state the key success factors in the national team managers' training process.

³ In the thesis: "What can project managers learn from the Icelandic national football team's managers in project management?" author Anna Sigridur Vilhelmsdottir looks deeply into following topics: strategy, vision, stakeholders and media.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To answer the master thesis research question: “*What can project managers learn from the Icelandic national football team’s managers in shaping group dynamics?*” the author needs define the project management environment, the football environment, team leadership and the teams’ behavior.

2.1 Project managers’ environment

The project managers’ environment is all about planning, organizing, motivating, and controlling resources and procedures to achieve specific goals. The factors that project managers need to have in mind when planning a project is: *scope, time, budget and quality*. In project management environment, the projects and its scenarios differ a lot between projects, almost no task is the same. Improvements are performed only when the work isn’t going according to plan. In project management the framework, IPMA Eye of Competence, is used as guidance for the project manager. The Eye of Competence describes what elements project managers needs to review when evaluating a project (IPMA, 2015), as listed in Figure 1.

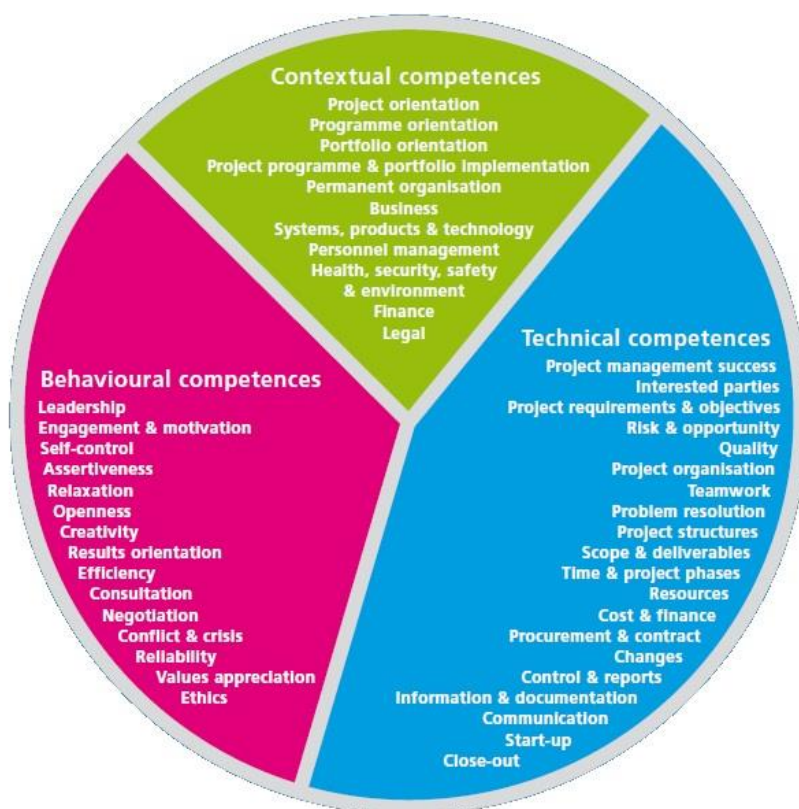


Figure 1. The IPMA Eye of Competence (IPMA, 2015)

In this thesis, the main focus will be on behavioral competence. The human factor within the project management is a fundamental part of project success. The project managers need to work closely with all stakeholders and team members of the project, and in cooperation with them, the project manager defines the strategy, goal and vision. The atmosphere within the team must be positive to ensure that the team can work successfully together. In project management, the project manager often cannot choose who his team members will be. Instead, it is the department which the project manager is working for at the time that selects the team members based on what individuals are available. The project manager shall initiate an open communication within the team and stakeholders⁴, where mutual respect and trust are foundational. On this foundation, the project manager can prevent a conflict or crisis within his team. If a conflict or crisis occurs, the project manager needs to address it in an honest and humble way. The team members need to be humble as well and take responsibility for their action. In this way, the team members will receive reliability from all stakeholders (IPMA, 2015).

2.2 Football manager's environment

In the football environment the football manager is the only one who defines the strategy, goals and the vision of the team. The football manager has the power to choose the players for the game. Team selection is based on the players' skill and the tactics. The roles of each player are well-defined, as listed in Figure 2. In football, key performance indicators are well-defined. The football team receives points for their performance in the game. The same applies for each individual player, who is judged by his performance. Based on this information, it is very easy for football teams to assess their status and improve if things are not working according to plan. Fields and opponents change, but the basic lineup of the team does not, regardless of how carefully the football environment is reviewed (Carson M., 2013).

⁴ In the thesis: "What can project managers learn from the Icelandic national football team's managers in project management?" author Anna Sigridur Vilhelmsdottir looks deeply into following topics: strategy, vision, stakeholders and media.

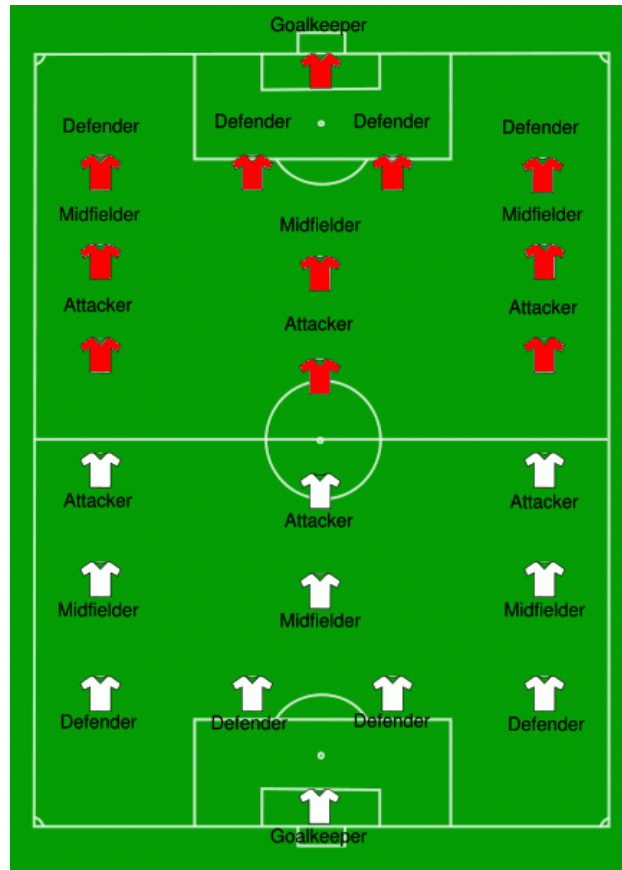


Figure 2. Roles of team members (Soccer Net World, 2015)

In football, the group dynamic is one of the main pillars for success. Each member of the team needs to be selfless and work as a one person. The team's welfare is primary. The team manager has to make every team member feel equal and find ways to keep them inspired. If a team member displays unwanted behavior within the team, the manager needs to address it. The manager needs to listen carefully to what is said, and what is not said. It is his duty to figure out the root cause of such problems (Carson M., 2013).

2.3 Task focused leadership and person focused leadership

A task focused leadership can be categorized after three behavior patterns: *transactional*, *initiating structure* and *boundary spanning* (Hirst, L., Pirola-Merlo, & Richver, 2004). The transactional behavior can be praise, a reward or a punishment based on role expectation (Burke, Stagl, Klein, Goodwin, Salas, & Halpin, 2006). Initiating a structure consists of two dimensions: *directive leadership* and *autocratic leadership* (Pearce & Conger, 2003). The national team is led with autocratic leadership; decisions are made without consulting the team members (Schriesheim, House, & Kerr, 1976). By initiating structure, the leadership is primarily oriented toward task accomplishment. Team members have a clear sense of

direction and purpose, and that can give a positive outcome with regard to team effectiveness and team productivity (Burke, Stagl, Klein, Goodwin, Salas, & Halpin, 2006). Boundary spanning involves collaborating with others outside the team, spanning the environment and negotiating resources for the team (Burke, Stagl, Klein, Goodwin, Salas, & Halpin, 2006).

A person focused leadership can be categorized by four behavior patterns: *transformational, consideration, empowerment, and motivational* (Burke, Stagl, Klein, Goodwin, Salas, & Halpin, 2006). Transformational leadership is when leaders can change vision driven people and context (Bass, 1985). This kind of leadership proactively seizes opportunities and solves organizational problems (Tichy & Ulrich, 1984). Transformational leadership makes the follower move from self-interest through idealized influence (charisma), inspiration, intellectual stimulation, or individualized consideration (Bass, 1999). Consideration is a behavior when a leader can maintain a close social relationships and group cohesion. This is done with open communication, mutual respect and trust, and emphasis on satisfying team members' needs (Burke, Stagl, Klein, Goodwin, Salas, & Halpin, 2006). Empowerment is when the leader can develop the team members' self-management and self-leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003). Motivational behavior is used to promote team members' continued effort, especially in times of difficulty. Motivation is generated when needs and values are met through the provision of support for team members and their efforts (Fleishman, Mumford, Zaccaro, Levin, Korotkin, & Hein, 1991). Researchers have found that both task- and person-focused leadership are almost equally important in team effectiveness and team productivity. This result provides support for the recommendation that leaders need to be trained in both types of behavior as they both contribute and are needed for teams to be effective (Burke, Stagl, Klein, Goodwin, Salas, & Halpin, 2006).

2.4 Constructive leadership

The team manager goes through a progression of various development roles - mentor, instructor, coach and facilitator (Kozlowski S., Gully, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 1996). It is important to foster all these roles if a manager wants to lead his team to success. Constructive leadership assists teams to drive above expectations, by focusing on strengths and weaknesses. This process attracts the best in each team member and gives him the opportunity to improve himself (Cameron, 2008). Constructive leadership can be categorized to four ways: *Constructive atmosphere, constructive relationships, constructive communication and constructive purpose* (Cameron, 2008). Constructive atmosphere is when positive emotions are flowing around the environment. An atmosphere like that has a positive effect (Mathieu &

Zajac, 1990) and maximizes performance (Fredricksson, 1998; 2001). A positive relationship is when individuals communicate and act in positive way toward each other. The individuals show mutual respect in their actions. Constructive purpose is when team members feel that their being a part of the team makes a difference; this applies for all cultures (Franl, 1959).

2.5 Team behavior

In the last years, research with regard to team behavior and their mindset have been performed (Ilgen, Hollenbeck, Johnson, & Jundt, 2005). In the book, *The Manager—Inside the minds of football's leaders*, an iceberg is illustrated. The iceberg can be converted to human beings, as shown in Figure 3. At first only a small part of us is visible and that is our behavior and outcome: *What we say and do*. However, a huge part of our mindset is under the waterline: *all the things we think, feel, believe, value, need and fear*. As we go deeper into the iceberg we discover: *the things that drive us*. Our behavior is driven by our thoughts and feelings, in turn, those are driven by our values and beliefs and, still deeper, these are driven by our needs and our fears (Carson M., 2013). It is vital for the national football team managers to address negative behavior in their team member in every level of the iceberg when it occurs. To be able to reach the root cause, the manager should use the demand pronoun: *Why?* The basic rule is to use the “why” five times, that is, until you reach the root cause for the behavior (Liker & Convis, 2011). If team members believe the team is capable of achieving its goals, i.e., being successful, they are more willing to engage in the task (Zacarro 1996; Zaccaro, Blair, Peterson, & Zazanis, 1995)

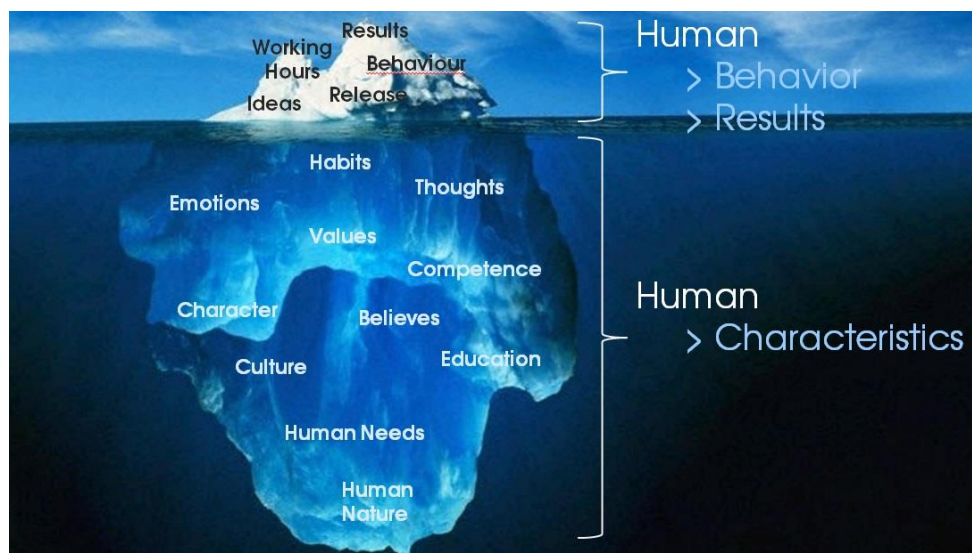


Figure 3. The iceberg of behaviors (Hammel, 2013)

2.6 Team cohesion

Team cohesiveness is the emotional climate of the team, that holds it together (Barsade & Gibson, 1998). A positive mood among team members can foster more cooperation, more participation, less conflict and stronger social cohesion (Carnevale & Isen, 1986; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989; George, 1996). Team cohesion includes both social and task components. Social cohesion is when members of a team like each other, while task cohesion is when team members cooperate to achieve a common performance goal (Carron, Widmeyer, & Brawley, 1985). In a competitive sport like football, the manager's leadership and the relationship between the manager and team members are stronger factors for task cohesion than social cohesion. The reason for this is that the underlying goal is to elevate the team's climate, where team members can work better together to bring success and performance accomplishments to the team (Carron et al., 2002; Mullen & Copper, 1994; William & Widmeyer, 1991).

2.7 Team success

One part of being successful is to have a positive atmosphere within the team. It is very important that the team members display selflessness, recognizing one another's qualities, as well as their weaknesses. In that way, the team can balance out the positive and negative things within the team. As projects get tougher and more complicated, there is more to gain by combining individual strengths (Karau and Williams, 1993). A team has to have the will to reach a common goal, whereby the team stands and falls together (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). One quality of a successful team, is that they are constantly trying to improve themselves by learning more from each other and from their environment (Day, Gronn, & Salas, 2004). Successful teams can be categorized by five characteristics: *clear vision, inspiring environment, inspiring attitude, and outstanding training and support* (Hackman & Walton, 1986). It is vital to establish a shared vision between the team manager and team members, with a well-defined strategy and goals to aim at (Carson M., 2013). The environment has to carefully define the roles of each team member, open communication and success needs to be valued (Larson & LaFasto, 1989). The team members need to show an inspiring attitude by showing mutual respect and mutual trust. This can be achieved by spending time together and assisting each other with improvements (Larson & LaFasto, 1989).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The main focus of this thesis is to examine whether there is a difference between the leadership style of a project manager and a football manager. If a difference can be found, then it should be addressed and carefully looked into. The approach chosen for this master's thesis is both quantitative and qualitative.

3.1 Participants

Lars Lagerbäck and Heimir Hallgrímsson are the Icelandic national football team managers. Under their leadership the national team climbed up the FIFA World Ranking List, from 104th place when they started in 2011, to 33rd place by end of 2014.

Lars Edvin Lagerbäck, born July 16, 1948, is best known for his former position as Sweden's national football team's manager. Lagerbäck led Sweden in five big tournaments until he resigned. After he resigned from the Swedish national football team, he started coaching the Nigerian national football team and led the team to the World Cup 2010. In the summer of 2011, the Football Association of Iceland (KSI) made the decision to hire a non-Icelandic football manager. Lagerbäck was then introduced as the national team's manager on October 14, 2011. He was the main national team's manager until 2013. In the year 2013, Lagerbäck and Hallgrímsson became joint football managers of the Icelandic national football team (Lagerbäck, 2015).

Heimir Hallgrímsson was born June 10, 1967. Hallgrímsson had great progress as a coach at the club, Íthrottabandalag Vestmannaeyja (IBV). On October 14, 2011, the Football Association of Iceland (KSI) announced his appointment as assistant manager of the Icelandic national football team. In the year 2013, Lagerbäck and Hallgrímsson became joint football managers of the Icelandic national football team (Hallgrímsson, 2015).

3.2 Analysis

The analysis was constructed in two processes: *Qualitative study and quantitative study*. In the first process, questions were written down by the author and her colleague. These questions were reviewed with an input from two former national team managers and two youth coaches. Final questionnaire was revised according to the input. Two in-depth interviews were conducted with the Icelandic national team managers. Based on the interviews, qualitative data was reviewed by the author and her colleague through the framework of IPMA Eye of Competence. The focus was on the Behavioral and Technical results, but the

Contextual competences were excluded from the analysis, as listed in Figure 4. In the second process, one open question was inserted into Survey Monkey website and sent out with email to the players of the Icelandic national team. The aim of the question was to receive feedback from the players on what, in their opinion, makes the team successful. The quantitative results were written down on a paper and categorized into sixteen success factors. Each time a certain success factor was mentioned, it was counted. Process 1 and process 2 are described in detail in section below.

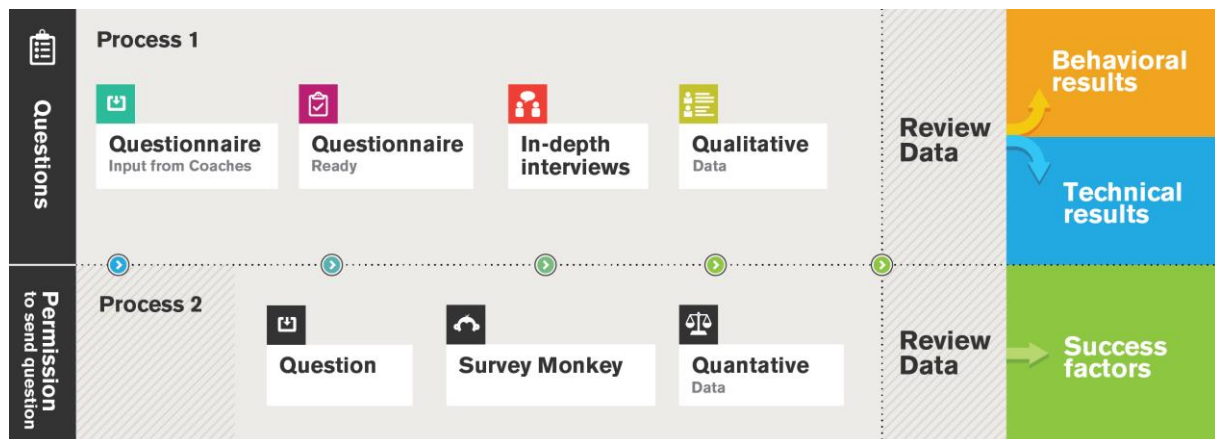


Figure 4. Research method - a graphical representation

The analysis strategy for the interviews was designed to identify the two areas of competency, behavioral and technical, of the International Project Management Association (IPMA). The author took a further look into behavioral competence and her colleague took a further look into technical competence, as listed in Figure 5.

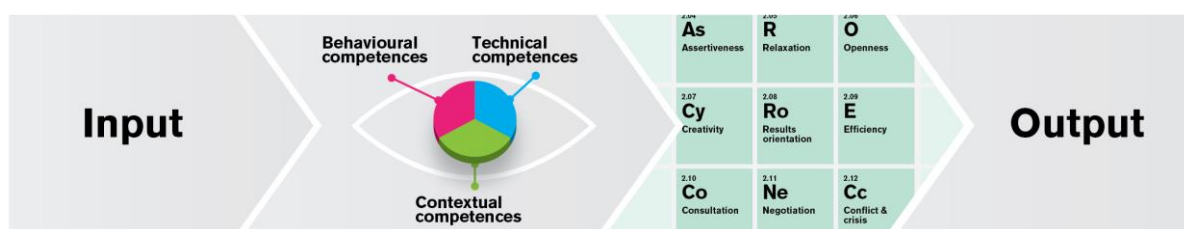


Figure 5. Research framework and fundamental categories for data analysis.

3.2.1 Process 1

To begin with, the author along with her colleague, Anna Sigridur Vilhelmsdottir⁵, started to prepare 10 questions about football from a project manager's perspective. In the preparation phase the author and her colleague contacted Gudjon Thordarson former Icelandic national team manager. He gave a good insight into the football environment and reviewed the questions prepared. The meeting was recorded and uploaded to a shared site where both the author and her colleague, could access it; we started to update our questionnaire, with new questions. The next person to contact was Thorlakur Arnason, former national U17 football team manager. A meeting was held with him at the Football Association of Iceland (KSI). The meeting was setup in the same way as the previous meeting with Thordarson. First football was discussed in general, and then the questions after last meeting were reviewed. After the meeting the questionnaire was updated once again. This meeting was also recorded and uploaded to a shared site where both the author and her colleague, could access it. The author and her colleague both live in Hafnarfjordur and therefore the ideal thing was to contact youth coaches at Fimleikafelag Hafnarfjardar (FH). They contacted Bjarki Benediktsson and Kristmundur Gudmundsson, who work together as youth coaches, and asked if they were willing to review the updated questionnaire; whether something should be added or removed from the list. The author scheduled a meeting with Benediktsson in Hafnarfjordur. The author and Benediktsson went over the questionnaire and talked about the questions. Benediktsson and Gudmundsson both reviewed the questionnaire very carefully and came up with a good suggestion on how to improve it even further. They also added a question about youth coaching. This was a good opportunity for them to hear from very experienced and qualified managers how they thought youth coaching should be. This meeting was not recorded. The final questionnaire was sent out to the supervisor, Helgi Thor Ingason, for review. The questionnaire included 32 questions about: *Preparation, strategy, stakeholders, the team, the players, the match day and other topics*.

Two in-depth interviews were conducted with the two national football team managers. They decided on the places where the interviews would be conducted. One was held at the Football Association of Iceland (KSI) and the other at a hotel in Reykjavík. The researchers were introduced and the research questions were asked. A smartphone was used to record the

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interview. After the interview the results were sent to Rev Transcript Service. The author and her colleague divided the questions between themselves. One researcher asked questions with a focus on group dynamics, while the other focused on project management. This was an in-depth semi-structured interview using a questionnaire as a guide.

Lars Lagerbäck agreed to meet the author and her colleague in January at a hotel in Reykjavík. The interview lasted 1 hour, 24 minutes and 11 seconds. It was recorded and uploaded to a shared site where both the author and her colleague, could access it.

Heimir Hallgrímsson agreed to meet the author and her colleague in February at the Football Association of Iceland (KSI). This was also an in-depth semi-structured interview where the questionnaire was only used as a guide. The interview lasted 1 hour, 29 minutes and 49 seconds. It was recorded and uploaded to a shared site where both the author and her colleague, could access it.

3.2.2 Process 2

The author and her colleague contacted Omar Smarason at the Football Association of Iceland (KSI) and asked him to send a Survey Monkey questionnaire to the players of the national team. The questionnaire had one open question: *What in the training process of national team leaders makes the Icelandic national football team successful?* The players were asked to state the key success factors that came to their mind. The questionnaire was sent out to a total 31 team members. A few of these team members were not active at the moment, but had been on the national team in the past. Forty percent, 12 individuals out of 31 answered the questionnaire.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

The focus of this thesis is the International Project Management Association's (IPMA) body of knowledge on behavioral competence, with the main emphasis on following topics: *the leadership, engagement and motivation, self-control and relaxation, openness and reliability, efficiency, conflict and crisis*. The text below is the author's interpretation of group dynamic based on the interviews with Iceland's national team managers, Lars Lagerbäck and Heimir Hallgrímsson.

4.1 The leadership

In 2011, when Lars Lagerbäck came to Iceland to coach the Icelandic national team, he had a clear idea about how a successful national team should be established. Lagerbäck first job was to define and structure the working environment for the team. In the new structure the following topics were addressed: *the vision, goals, values, roles, rules and the meetings of the national team*⁶. Every team member needed to know their role, what was expected of them and to understand how they might improve. The national team and the team behind the team (including a doctor who reviews the players, a masseuse, a physiotherapist and others) are selected according to the values prepared by Lagerbäck and Hallgrímsson. The five values are: *hardworking, relentless, joyful, disciplined and focused*. Lagerbäck and Hallgrímsson believe the team should have as few rules as possible. The fewer the rules the easier they are to remember. The national team should act like professionals both in the field and out. The Icelandic national team is one of the few teams in the world that has no agreement with the Football Association of Iceland (KSI). Icelandic team members are not after money, because the salary within the Football Association of Iceland (KSI) is small compared to salaries that other players receive at their clubs. Instead, it is national pride that drives the team members to play.

From early stages of their cooperation, Lagerbäck and Hallgrímsson divided the responsibility of leadership between them. Lagerbäck main role at the beginning (as solo manager) was to prepare well defined guidelines and structure for the team, these guidelines are still today three years later the same. Today, Lagerbäck has the overview of the games

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ahead and reviews the strengths and weaknesses of the Icelandic national players. Hallgrímsson's main role is to analyze the next opponent and to prepare the technical part (video clips, powerpoint shows and etc.) for the team. This process happens behind the scenes and usually between games. Since Lagerbäck lives in Sweden, he and Hallgrímsson do not actually meet each other until 7 to 10 days before a match. During the 7-10 day period, Lagerbäck and Hallgrímsson have an intense work schedule. In the preparation phase for the big game, they decide what players, exercises and tactics will be used at the game. A lot of communication is done in-between games via internet, skype and phone.

Most of the players in the national team play for foreign clubs. A permission letter must be sent to the club at least 2 weeks prior to a match, to make sure that the national team players who have been selected will be available. The normal standard is that the national team arrives in Iceland 4 to 5 days before a match. Once team members arrive, they go straight to their hotel where they have an entire floor for themselves. The national team managers want to create an atmosphere where the team players can relax and feel at home. Lagerbäck and Hallgrímsson think it is important to have them all together at the same location, because they have been working at different clubs all over the world and each country has a football culture that is slightly different. They believe that successful teams operate best within such a structured environment. Another reason for keeping the group together is for shaping a positive group dynamic. This way, team members can more easily bond together and discuss the upcoming game. The hotels have sport facilities for team members; also it has a big recreational area where the team members talked to each other, played computer games and enjoyed themselves.

To lend structure to the environment, Lagerbäck and Hallgrímsson prepared team meetings that are well-defined. It is the standard to hold 5 such meetings: *one to welcome, one about defence, one about offense, one about the opponent and one meeting about how they are going to play against the opponent*. At the meetings all mobile phones are shut off. It is important to continually repeat all the things which have been mentioned at the meetings, so that everyone is fully aware of the tasks ahead. The national team normally spends 3 full days together for each game and most of the time is spent on tactics.

Training sessions are held in the mornings and team members get free time in the afternoon. During this time they can meet their families, friends or relax. The only rule is that they return to the hotel for an evening dinner together and stay there until next morning. Since the team members do not have much time together, for the sake of efficiency, they needed to be disciplined on how they used their time and have complete focus during practice.

In football there are always 23 players. Each player has a big role within the team. The normal process is that 11 play on the field and 12 sit on the bench. The team is setup in a way that each position always has a substitute in case somebody gets injured or has a bad match day. Lagerbäck and Hallgrímsson are extremely happy with the Icelandic national team's mindset. The team is positive and tries their best to work as a one person in the field. Lagerbäck believes that team spirit is built on discipline. If you do not have discipline, you cannot get the team members to work well together. One of the main principles of the national team is: *Team members talk to each other instead of talking about each other*. The team members need to respect and trust each other, even though they might not click together. If a team member does not like something, he needs to address it otherwise the atmosphere will become negative. It is very important that the team members display selflessness and recognize each other's good qualities, as well as their weaknesses. In that way, they can more realistically measure the positive and negative things within themselves. It is necessary for every team member to understand their role but also to understand the other team members' role. The better they know each other, the easier it is for them to cooperate. Careful attention should be given to each team member and if something needs to be corrected, it should be addressed constructively. To build a good team, the manager needs to be patient and have a good estimation of the positive and negative sides of their team.

Lagerbäck believes that a manager should never follow sport trends. Instead he should focus on the skills each individual has within his team, so the player and the team can utilize that ability most efficiently. The development of the team should be done in small steps. The team needs to be ambitious but not overly ambitious, yet still sharing high expectations about their performance. However, their expectations need to be realistic, so that it will not backfire and get everybody down in the team with bad atmosphere if it is not achieved.

In the preparation phase before each national game, Lagerbäck and Hallgrímsson choose the 11 team members who will be the lead stars on the game day. Their decision is based on tactics, that is, which team member fits best for the lineup. In the working structure of the national team, each player knows that he might not get to play. He needs to be okay with that, putting himself aside and thinking about the team first. Selflessness is required. The Icelandic players have an extremely good character and are willing to sacrifice themselves for team's success. So far no team members who sit on the bench have taken it out on other team members or on the managers. Reason for this might be that the national team has been winning. The team members often can't see the whole picture; instead they focus on themselves or on their performance. Therefore, communication is a big factor of leading

strong and successful teams. It is vital that the manager never forgets that the team members are human beings with all kind of behavior. If a negative atmosphere occurs, the manager needs to find the cause. Once the cause is understood, a solution can be found. In this process the manager needs to be frank with his team and give constructive advice. While the manager may need to make tough decisions that some members may not agree with, at the same time he needs to build a strong relationship with his team.

In football, there is always a team captain and he is one of the 11 lead stars within the team. The captain needs to be a role model embodying all the values. The captain must be: *joyful, hardworking, relentlessness, disciplined and focused*. With his joyfulness, the captain needs to give positive inspiration to the team, both on and off the field. The captain is a facilitator between the managers and the team members. If a problem occurs, he is normally the one who brings it to the manager or the board of directors. The team captain has a bigger role than other team members, since he is the one they can rely on. He must have good communication skills and be solution oriented. The captain needs to clearly understand the roles of each team member. In the Icelandic national team, the captain plays the central role. During a game, he is in a good position to delegate information from the manager to players. The captain needs to be a good reader of the game and know the tactics inside and out.

On the match day, the national team members are allowed to relax and prepare themselves in different ways mentally. Some team members listen to their own music while others listen to a psychology audio, some engaged in an activity with another team member while others read a book. Each team member finds his own way to handle the tension before the match. There is not much structured preparation on the match day. Lagerbäck estimates that 90-95 % of the preparation and strategy gets done before the match day. The team members are all well aware of the strategy. If on the match day, the team members are still unsure where they should be located in corners or in free kick, then they can find information about that topic in the dressing room. At a match day, Lagerbäck and Hallgrímsson do not want to have a long motivational speech. The players are self-motivated. The captain always has the last word in the dressing room. He makes a targeted speech to the team members before the game gets started. The half time talk is all about tactics. If the team shows good performance then they continue with the similar tactics. However, if the team has a poor performance in the first half, then they need to change tactics according to their strategy. There is always some kind of explanation for why things aren't going as expected. That is why managers should never let their feelings control what they say to the team in the dressing

room. After the match day, the team members normally eat together before they formally say goodbye to each other.

The most challenging aspect of being a football manager is to keep one's head high when things are not going according to plan. The manager does not only have the team members' expectation on his shoulders, but also all the stakeholders'. Each and everyone has their own explanation on what went wrong in a game. If the team stops winning, the manager needs to be prepared with a plan on how to handle the team under this kind of pressure.

The x-factors⁷ of the national team are several according to Lagerbäck and Hallgrímsson. The team members are hardworking players. They have good characters and a positive attitude. These elements combined, has made the Icelandic team with highest quality it has ever been. The team behind the team is also a hidden factor of the national team's success. This team is extremely qualified in their field. Lagerbäck and Hallgrímsson would like to complement the Football Association of Iceland (KSI), because of the Icelandic team's improvement over the years. Today, the Icelandic national team is probably one of the best organized European teams.

Coaching a national team is very different from coaching a club. In a club, managers meet the team members daily. A club can build up a good team with one extremely good player. The team would be structured around this individual. This takes time and that is something the national team doesn't have. The national team has limited time together so everything needs to be very clear when the team members arrive in a country. In the national team, the manager cannot focus for long on one individual; instead he needs to think of the whole team. Everybody in the team has to deliver their best during the time the team is together.

Youth coaching is extremely important because the youth are the players of the future. The youth needs to have good amount of practice and fun when playing. Once they become teenagers, quantity and fun are still important factors. However, more experienced coaches are needed because teenagers should be educated in many different ways: *in football, fitness, technique and attitude*. These are the most important topics in understanding the game. In future, Hallgrímsson thinks that it would be great if the Football Association of Iceland (KSI) could implement similar working environment for U16 to U23 as has been structured for the national team. In that way, the jump between stages will not be so high. Then team members know both the structure and how to act. It would be best to start with implementing this into

⁷ A noteworthy variable that can impact the outcome

the younger national teams and if it succeeds, it could be implemented into the Icelandic clubs.

4.2 Engagement and motivation

The Icelandic national team is very inspired and does not need much additional motivation, according to the Icelandic national team managers. Besides having the chance to represent their nation, they know that playing well for the national team could be a springboard for them. If the team is successful, then all eyes are on the team and on the manager. The team members could be offered better contracts in a foreign clubs. The same applies for the manager.

4.3 Self-control and relaxation

The national team needs to have good self-control. Professionals need to display self-control both on the field and off. Team members need to take good care of their body by eating healthy foods, drinking plenty of water, exercising and getting enough rest. Relaxation is a big part of being professional. The team members need to take care both of the mind and body. If the mind or body is tired, team players will not be as efficient on the field, therefore it is very important to relax and have enough rest. Self-control and discipline are imbued in the cornerstone of the national team.

4.4 Openness and reliability

Team members on the national team have good self-esteem and are true to their values. They know what is expected of them and therefore it is easier for them to deliver results. All matters, both the positive and negative topics, are discussed in an open and honest manner. The team members need to display respect and trust for each other. As professionals they always must behave responsibly.

4.5 Efficiency

Football is all about running and moving around the field, so team members need to be physically fit. The team member can take about 12,000 steps in a game and cover around 9 kilometers. The more the national team members move, the more likely the team is to win.

4.6 Conflict and crisis

In a national team, conflict and crisis is not something a manager wants to have. It is the Football Manager role to be proactive and have a well-defined structure available on how to react if such behavior occurs within the team. If a player is unhappy with something, he needs to open up and address the topic. Otherwise, the atmosphere becomes negative. The national team has a great working structure and all the team members know how to work within that structure. They know that for each game, the manager picks out the 11 lead stars, based on tactics for that game. If they are not one of the 11 lead stars, they need to accept it. The team members can address this topic to the manager and ask: *What can I do to improve?* The manager needs to be honest and give constructive advice. The manager decides who is in the game and the team members cannot change that. Usually the manager is the only person who can see the game objectively.

4.7 The national team

A Survey Monkey questionnaire was sent out to the Icelandic national team, with one open question: *What in the training process of the national team leaders makes the Icelandic national team successful?* Please state the key success factors that come to mind.

The key success factors that 12 team members of the national team stated are: *Structure, discipline, preparation, mutual trust, mutual respect, repetition, experience, honesty, well defined roles, professionalism, believe, communication skills, ambition, will to win, positivity and simplicity*. These key success factors are shown in a graphical way in Figure 6. A national team shirt is used as a symbol for how often the national team mentions a particular success factor. The results are in line with the fundamental structure, which Lagerbäck and Hallgrímsson, have setup for the national team.

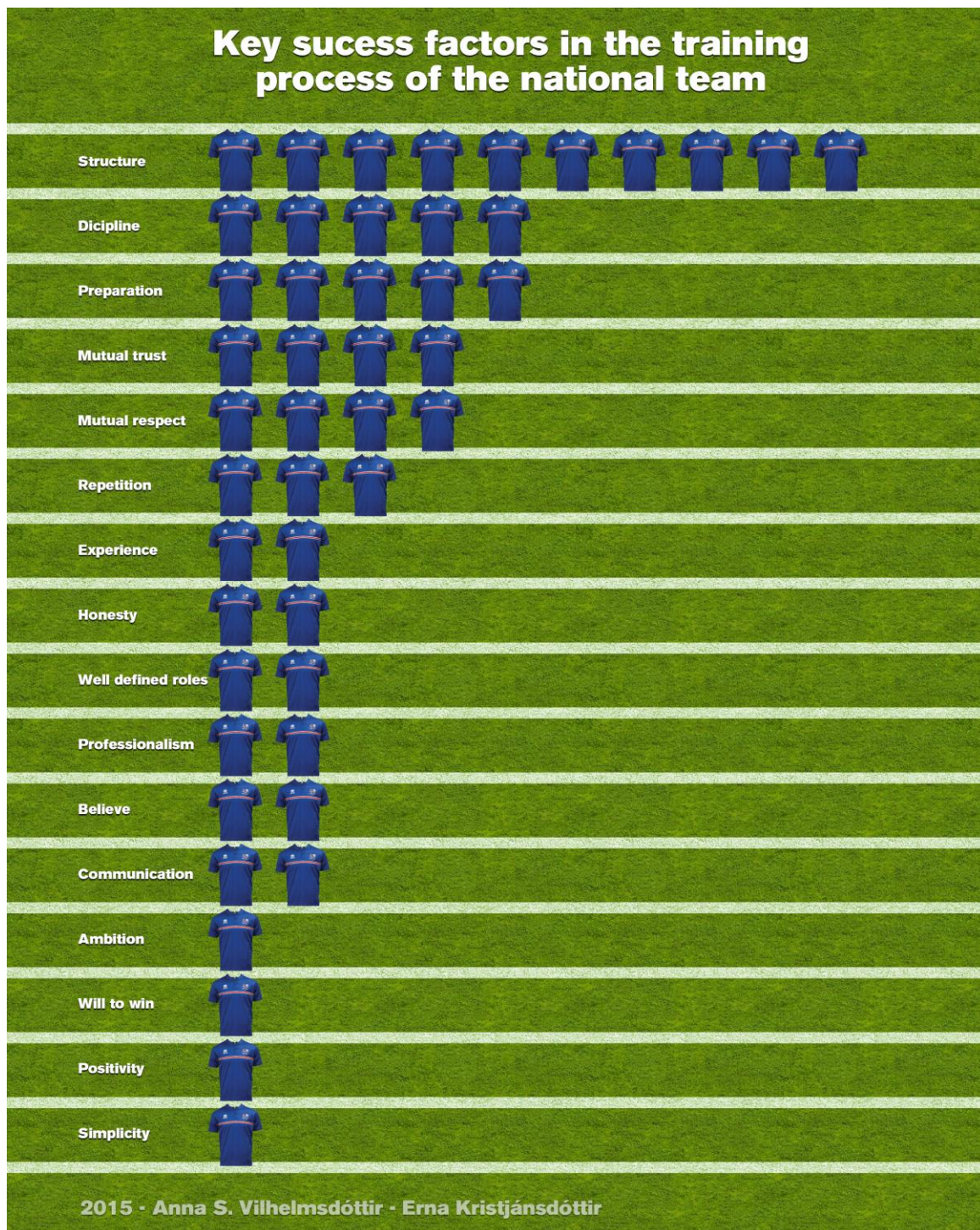


Figure 6. Key success factors in the training process of the national team.

5. DISCUSSION

The Icelandic national football team is led by two individuals, Lars Lagerbäck and Heimir Hallgrímsson. This is an unusual approach in football; normally it is one manager and one assistant. However, Lagerbäck and Hallgrímsson have been able to make the national team very successful with joint forces. If we look further into their character, Lagerbäck and Hallgrímsson seem to be both task-focused and people-focused. Through the combination of these qualities Lagerbäck and Hallgrímsson complement each other well. Not all leaders are born with these two qualities, but it can be learned by practice. Should there maybe be two project managers within a team, who complement each other well? This is an area project managers need to look into more carefully.

In the national football environment, the key focus is on the team. Teams should be shaped and developed in small steps. Managers should not follow trends in their environment, instead they should estimate the skills of each member on the team. In the corporate world, Lean, Agile and Scrum, have been leading the trends for years. Project managers, similar to football managers should not follow trends. Instead, they should look within the team itself. The project manager, should assess the quality and skills of its resources, that is, the team members, and decide how to use them to the best advantage.

It was very interesting to see how much the behavior of the team weighs deeply on the manager's mind, when structuring successful teams. The team members should all work as a one person and display selflessness. Teamwork is above all. This is best demonstrated when the manager needs to take tough decisions, which could hurt a team member's feelings. Team members need to be humble when this occurs and think about the team's welfare. If selflessness is not displayed then a negative atmosphere can be created.

It is important for repetition to be used frequently within group shaping, so team members are fully aware of the tasks ahead. It is very important for managers to foster the cohesion within teams, which is why it's very important to keep the team members together as much as possible. In this way the team builds up mutual trust and respect; there's open communication and the seeds for success.

6. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this thesis is based on the initial research question: *“What can project managers learn from the Icelandic national football team’s managers in shaping group dynamic?”*

It is the conclusion of the author that project managers can learn a lot from the Icelandic national football team’s managers in shaping the group dynamics within a team. First, the project managers should look within themselves and discern whether they are more task oriented and social oriented. To build an effective leadership, the balance between these two factors is important. The human factor within the project management is one of the fundamental parts of project success. Project managers need to be aware of the team’s behavior and how to address it. It takes time to build a good team; that is why patience is important. It is also very important to have the team located at the same place, when shaping group dynamics. In that way, the team bond better together and becomes unafraid of open communication. The project manager should foster cohesion within its team, because cohesion is the glue that holds the team together and in a way, makes it successful. The cohesion, includes both social and task components and there needs to be a balance between them. Team members need to respect each other and at the same time achieve common goals. The team is above all individual concerns.

It is the conclusion of the author that a constructive environment should be fostered within teams. The project manager should look at himself as mentor or an instructor of the team. Under his lead the team should improve and prosper in their environment. In this way the team feels like its making a difference. The project manager should emphasize repetition and encourage open communication within the team, so the team members always have a clear understanding and can discuss openly the tasks ahead.

The football environment provides a good testing ground for project management, however, people should be aware that fewer variables effect the outcome in football than in ordinary business dealings. The variables in the football environment can be found more in planning the strategy than in group dynamics. In these ways the authors’ conclude that the Icelandic national football team’s managers are a good role model for project managers when shaping successful teams.

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Appendix I – Questionnaire in English for the Icelandic national team football managers

What can project managers learn from the Icelandic national football team's managers in project management in shaping group dynamics?

Group dynamics

The team

1. What is it that you as football manager need to have in mind when shaping a team and what do you try to avoid?
2. How is the competition between individuals within the team? How do you deal with it?
3. How do you as football manager tackle dissatisfaction of the players sitting on the bench?
4. How do you make the team work as one group in the short time you have before games, although the players have been playing all around the world and have not trained much together?

The players

1. How do you choose individuals for the team and what qualities are you looking for?
2. Are you as a football manager searching for the best qualified players or are you searching for players who fit well with your system (lineup) for the game.
3. How do you as a football manager define the role of each player on the team?
4. When choosing a captain for the team, what qualities do you consider?
5. In your opinion, what is the role of the captain?
6. How do you get the team to commit to each game?

The match day

1. What methods do you as football managers use, so that the team players will be mentally ready for the game?
2. How do you make sure that the players get enough rest before a game?
3. How do you strengthen the players self-confidence before and after national games?

4. Do you practice mental training?
5. How do you tackle the players tension/excitement on a game day?
6. What kind of motivational speech do you give to the team in the dressing room before games and during a half time?
 - a. Do you talk to each individual player or do you talk to the whole team?
 - b. Do you have different approaches for each individual on the team?

Other topics

1. What is the most challenging aspect of being a national football team's manager?
2. How do the people behind the team help it to get maximum performance?
3. In your opinion, what is the x-factor for the success of the Icelandic national football team?
4. What is the main difference between training a club and training a national team?
5. Can you name one item which you think that youth trainers should focus more on in their training so that future national team members will be better players?
6. Once a game is concluded, do you as a team do something together to celebrate success or to keep the team spirit up?

Appendix II – Questionnaire in Icelandic for the Icelandic national team football managers

Hvað geta verkefnastjórarlært af þjálfurum íslenska landsliðsins í knattspyrnu í myndun liðsheildar?

Hópefli

Teymið

1. Hvað þarf að hafa í huga við mótun liðsheildar og hvað ber að varast?
2. Hvernig er með samkeppni einstaklinga innan liðsins? Hvernig er tekið á henni?
3. Hvernig takið þið á óánægju þeirra sem sitja á bekknum?
4. Hvernig náði þið að stilla liðið saman fyrir landsleiki, þar sem leikmenn leika út um allan heim?

Leikmenn

1. Hvernig veljið þið inn í landslið og eftir hverju eruð þið að leita?
2. Veljið þið tæknilega bestu leikmennina eða þá sem henta í leikkerfið?
3. Hvernig skilgreinið þið hlutverk hvers og eins leikmanns?
4. Hvaða eiginleika horfið þið mest til þegar þið veljið fyrirliða?
5. Hvert er hlutverk fyrirliðans að ykkar mati?
6. Hvernig fáið þið landsliðið til að skuldbinda sig?

Leikdagur

1. Hvaða aðferðum beitið þið landsliðspjálfarar þannig að leikmenn séu andlega tilbúnir fyrir leikdag?
2. Hvernig passið þið upp á að leikmenn fái næga hvíld fyrir leik?
3. Hvernig eflið þið sjálfstraust leikmanna bæði fyrir leiki og eftir?
4. Hvernig æfið þið hugarþjálfun?
5. Hvernig takið þið á spennustigi á leikdegi?
6. Hver konar hvatningarorð látið þið falla í búningssklefanum fyrir leiki og í hálfleik?
7. Talið þið við hvern leikmann fyrir sig og/eða talið þið yfir allt liðið?
8. Eru þið með mismunandi nálgun við hvern leikmann?

Annað efni

1. Hvað er mest krefjandi við það að vera landsliðsþjálfari?
2. Hvernig reynist fólkið á bakvið landsliðið (team behind the team)?
3. Hver er að ykkar mati „X-Factorinn“ að velgengni íslenska landsliðisins?
4. Hver er helsti munurinn á því að þjálfra félagslið og landslið?
5. Ef þið þyrftuð að nefna eitt atriði sem mætti leggja meiri áherslu á í yngriflokkabjálfun á Íslandi til að landsliðið verði enn betra í framtíðinni, hvað væri það?
6. Eftir landsliðsleiki gerið þið þá eitthvað saman, til að fagna árangri eða til að hvetja landsliðsmenn áfram?

Appendix III – Survey Monkey questionnaire for the Icelandic national football team

Íslenska landsliðið í fótbolta

Meistararitgerð í verkefnastjórnun

Sælir verið þið,

Við erum tvær, Anna S. Vilhelmsdóttir og Erna Kristjánsdóttir, sem erum að klára meistaránám í verkefnastjórnun við Háskóla Reykjavíkur í vor. Okkur fannst snilldar hugmynd að tengja meistararitgerð okkar við þann framúrskarandi árangur sem þið landslið okkar íslendinga hafið náð. Tekin var fókus á það að skoða til hlítar stjórnunaraðferðir, Lars Lagerback og Heimis Hallgrímssonar. Núþegar erum við búnar að taka viðtal við Lars og stefnum að því fljótlega að ræða við Heimi. Við erum handvissar að það er margt sem við verkefnastjórar getum lært af þeim félögum sem og aðrir stjórnendur í íslensku samfélagi.

Meistararitgerð okkar ber heitið:

Hvað geta verkefnastjórar lært af þjálfurum íslenska landsliðsins í knattspyrnu - í verkefnastjórnun og myndun liðsheildar ?

Okkur langar að bera eina stutta spurningu upp við ykkur strákana í landsliðinu. Okkur þætti vænt um ef sem flestir tækju þátt, en þess ber þó að geta að engum ber skylda að svara þessari spurningu. Þið sjálfir þurfið að meta það hvort þið hafið tíma til að taka þátt. Nafnleynd er við svari sem lagt er fram, þannig að ekki er hægt að komast að því hver sagði hvað innan landsliðsins.

Við þökkum þeim fyrirfram sem vilja taka þátt, við metum það mikils.

Bestu kveðjur,
Anna Sigríður og Erna

- 1. Hvað er það í þjálfunarferli landsliðsþjálfara sem gerir það að verkum að íslenska landsliðið er jafn farsælt og raun ber vitni. Hvaða árangursþættir koma helst upp í huga?**

Appendix IV– Feedback from the Icelandic national team to the Survey Monkey questionnaire

Skipulag, agi og endurtekning

2/6/2015 8:12 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

Skipulag, traust, fagmennska

2/5/2015 2:09 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Undirbúningur og skipulag frjálslýndi sem leikmenn fá í kringum leiki. Treysta leikmönnum fyrir hverju verkefni

2/5/2015 1:58 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Gott skipulag, þjálfaramir vita nákvæmlega hvernig meir vilja að við spilum og kunna þá aðferð í þaula. erum alltaf með sömu áherslur og allir þekkja sitt hlutverk. Einnig hafa þeir mikla virðingu innan hópsins og ná vel til hans.

2/5/2015 1:55 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

undirbúningur, skipulagni, endurtekning, tru, metnaður, einfaldleiki, traust og virðing

1/14/2015 1:32 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Áhersla á endurtekningu þannig að menn þekki sín hlutverk. Krafa um fagmennsku af hendi leikmanna. Árangursmiðaðar æfingar, þ.e. allt í undirbúningnum miðast við að vera í toppstandi í leiknum. Mikilvægast er þó að þjálfarar hafi ómælda virðingu leikmannahópsins til þess að menn flykki sér á bakvið hugmyndir þjálfaranna, og þannig er það í tilfalli íslenska liðsins.

1/14/2015 1:32 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Mjög gott skipulag og góður agi í bland við afslöppun. Andstæðingurinn er vel kortlagður og allir í okkar liði mjög meðvitaðir um sín hlutverk inná vellinum

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Agi, gríðarleg reynsla, óbilandi trú á að allt sé mögulegt, mikið skipulag og árangursríkar æfingar og taktík.

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Skipulag, virðing, sigurvilji

1/13/2015 11:20 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Heiðarleiki þjálfarans, góð mannleg samskipti og gagnkvæmt traust. Lars hefur auk þess mikla alþjóðlega reynslu sem hann kann að miðla áfram.

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Skipulag, agi og jákvæðni

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Skipulag, agi

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