Rings on the water: An exploration of sport pedagogy in juvenile justice settings

A case study at a Swedish youth detention home

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Abstract

A growing body of recent research demonstrates that sports-based education has numerous benefits for youth in compulsory care or criminal justice settings. These benefits include crime reduction; pro-social identity formation; socioemotional development; improvement in mental and physical health; and available support structures for reentry. Research, however, has paid little attention to sport pedagogy within youth correctional settings, and has insufficiently connected these outcomes with pedagogical aspects – the values/principles and strategies/methods that guide or facilitate learning through sport. There is little guidance, therefore, as to what pedagogical strategies teachers and coaches in compulsory care contexts should employ to achieve objectives of sports interventions, and how broad objectives – such as “building pro-social skills” – can be translated into teaching practice.

Within this background, this thesis utilizes a case study approach to investigate perceptions of sport pedagogy in the context of an educational sport program at a Swedish youth detention home. The objectives of the study are to (1) explore and describe sport pedagogy, and (2) analyze the relationship between pedagogical aspects and program objectives/outcomes. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 12 respondents (students, educators, and stakeholders) involved in the program. Grounded theory was used to analyze the data and generate a model, “rings on the water” (the Swedish translation for “ripple effect”), that characterizes how a variety of sport-based pedagogical strategies were represented to set in motion and guide a cumulative, developmental process for students. Based on this analysis, findings show that the relationship between pedagogy and objectives/outcomes in the case study can be sequenced by five accumulating themes (“rings”): getting involved; foundations for teaching and learning; developing skills and knowledge; gradual steps and opportunities for practice; and positive futures. The findings from this study can be used to design and improve sport activities for court-involved youth, and provide a substantial foundation for future research.

Keywords: Sport pedagogy, sports-based interventions, juvenile justice, correctional education, Sweden
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## Abbreviations and acronyms

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<tr>
<td>ART</td>
<td>Aggression Replacement Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brå</td>
<td>Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention <em>Brottsförebyggande rådet</em></td>
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<td>ICE</td>
<td>International and comparative education</td>
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<td>LVU</td>
<td>The Care For Young Persons Act (Sweden) <em>Lag med särskilda bestämmelser om vård av unga</em></td>
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<td>PYJ</td>
<td>Positive Youth Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>RNR</td>
<td>Risk-Needs-Responsivity</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBI</td>
<td>Sports-based intervention</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBL</td>
<td>Sports-based learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDP IWG</td>
<td>United Nations Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SiS</td>
<td>The Swedish National Board for Institutional Care <em>Statens institutionsstyrelse</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>SF</td>
<td>Swedish Football Association <em>Svenska Fotbollförbundet</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>VAIS</td>
<td>Visingsö Sport Club <em>Visingsö Allmänna Idrottssällskap</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>YOI</td>
<td>Young offender institution</td>
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I am not sure that I can adequately describe how meaningful this project has been for me; this research has been more rewarding and uplifting than I could ever have imagined. I would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank all of those people whose support and enthusiasm have made this study possible.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

It is estimated that, at any one time, over one million youth worldwide are detained in youth prisons or similar detention facilities (Pinheiro, 2006). When released, youth who have been placed in custody or youth prisons face numerous challenges returning home and reintegrating into their communities. While some manage to navigate these challenges, research across the globe indicates that many will recidivate – return to the criminal justice system – either as adults or juveniles (Brå, 2012; Mendel, 2011; UK Ministry of Justice, 2015). The consequences of incarceration and re-incarceration extend far beyond nations’ correctional expenditures and public safety, and include numerous financial and social costs to individuals, their families, and communities (Bonnie et al., 2013; Clear & Frost, 2014; Schuller, 2009; Visher et al., 2014).

Although youth leaving corrections frequently recidivate or relapse into crime at high rates, evaluative research shows that certain juvenile justice interventions have beneficial effects (Benson, 2013). Among such research, education has been shown to be a cost-effective way to reduce recidivism and improve life chances for offenders (Davis et al., 2013; Normore & Fitch, 2012). Recent research and policies, such as the US Second Chance Act and similar legislation within Europe (Davis et al., 2013; Hawley et al., 2013; Langelid et al., 2009), reflect growing international recognition and investment in correctional education.

Educating youth in correctional or alternative1 settings, however, can be a challenging task. Compared with other school-aged youth, incarcerated youth have typically experienced less academic success and opportunities prior to entering the juvenile justice system (Davis et al., 2013; Hugo, 2013; Leone & Weinberg, 2010; Schuller, 2009; SiS 2013). Burdick et al. (2011) state that “Youth adjudicated delinquent are in an educational crisis—they are more likely than their peers to be absent or truant, face disciplinary action, need evaluation and remedial services, perform below grade level, have a disability that qualifies them for special education services, and drop out of high school” (p. 6). Recognizing the complex learning needs of court-involved youth, a report by the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform in the United States (US) asserts that “Youth in the juvenile delinquency and foster care systems, perhaps more so than other youth, need high-quality education services and supports in order

1 “Alternative education settings usually include self-contained schools, day treatment centers, residential facilities, and juvenile justice settings” (Flower et al., 2011, p. 490). As an extension of the juvenile justice system, alternative settings also encompass youth probation, aftercare and reentry programming.
to make successful transitions from adolescence to adulthood” (Leone & Weinberg, 2010, p. 7). However, partly as a result of previous negative experiences in school, many youth in custody have developed a degree of school resistance (Hugo, 2013), and are often reluctant learners in traditional classroom settings (Meek et al., 2012). Therefore, in order provide innovative and high quality programs and support for court-involved youth, it is critical for educators to think outside of the box of conventional correctional approaches.

One such innovative approach is the use of sports-based interventions (SBIs), or educational sport. A growing body of research demonstrates that sports-based approaches have numerous benefits for offender rehabilitation (Andrews & Andrews, 2003; Digennaro, 2010; Gallant et al., 2015; Meek, 2012; 2014; Meek & Lewis, 2014a; 2014b; Van Hout & Phelan, 2014; Verdot & Schut, 2012; Williams et al., 2002). Rationales and support for SBIs point to both long-term, or developmental, and immediate, or diversionary, benefits. Studies have shown that sport in correctional settings can promote formation of pro-social, or anti-criminal, identities (Meek, 2014; Meek, 2012); develop social, emotional and cognitive competencies (Meek, 2014; Meek, 2012); help to release stress or cope with the negative aspects of institutionalization (Verdot, 2010; Meek, 2014); improve relations between inmates and personnel (Meek & Lewis, 2014b); provide a “hook” for learning (Meek, 2014); and, more generally, offer an alternative to criminal or risky behavior (Nichols, 2007).

Some studies have found that discovering or re-discovering sport and physical activity often coincides with crime desistance (Meek, 2014; Van Hout & Phelan, 2014). This research suggests that crime desistance and reintegration is related to the development of personal and interpersonal competencies through sports-based learning and socialization processes (ibid). It is argued that these processes can be aligned with inmates’ dynamic criminogenic needs (Meek, 2014) – the needs and risk factors associated with crime and desistance (Andrews & Dowden, 2007).

Many studies agree that sport can be used as a “hook for change” (Meek, 2014) or turning point (Van Hout & Phelan, 2014) in the life course of court-involved youth, eventually leading to desistance. This has been substantiated by some recidivism evaluations of sports-based interventions (Meek, 2012; Meek, 2014; Nichols, 2007). Additionally, these evaluations show that SBIs are also cost-effective. Meek’s (2012) evaluation of the Sports Academies at Portland Young Offenders Institution (YOI) in the United Kingdom provides a clear example. While the average annual, per-prisoner cost of young offender institutions was £47,137 the sports academies at Portland YOI were operated at a cost of only £1,130 per prisoner, per year (Meek, 2012). The academies also showed a significant impact on
recidivism: only 18% of program participants were reconvicted compared to a prison average of 48% after one year (ibid). The example of the Portland YOI academies is not unique; other studies have shown decreased reoffending or re-incarceration for participants in sports-based programs (Gallant et al., 2015; Meek, 2014; Nichols, 2007).

Another advantage of sports-based interventions is that sport is an available and established platform for engaging youth in both correctional and community settings. The “prison gym” – whether it is a weight room, sport hall, outdoor yard, or simply an inmate’s cell – is an important part of life inside correctional institutions worldwide (Meek, 2014). Studies (Meek, 2012; Verdot & Schut, 2012) indicate that a large majority of young males in custody show a high degree of interest for sport or physical activity, and many discover or re-discover sport during placement, custody or reentry (Meek, 2014; Roe, 2015; Van Hout & Phelan, 2014). During the transition from corrections to community, and sometimes well into adulthood (Roe, 2015), sport organizations or communities can provide various forms of support for court-involved youth (Meek, 2014; Meek, 2012; Nichols, 1999; Nichols, 2007).

While research frequently points to the potential benefits of sport, it is also clear that the extent to which sports are effectively used as an educational or developmental tool depends on multiple factors (Meek, 2014; Verdot & Schut, 2014). Sport, particularly its educational or social nature, is often overlooked or under-utilized as a tool for rehabilitation. In several instances, it is described as being used to “fill time” in prison regimes with unclear rehabilitative objectives (Martos-Garcia, 2009; Meek, 2014; Roe, 2015). Additionally, scholars repeatedly caution that sport is not a “panacea” for offender rehabilitation and note several challenges, limitations, and even consequences (Gallant et al., 2015; Meek, 2014; Nichols, 2007; Verdot & Schut, 2012). Examples can include the logistical impracticality of sports activities in secure settings, an over-emphasis on competition, hyper-masculinities, aggression, and bullying or social alienation (Andrews & Andrews, 2003; Martos-Garcia, 2009; Meek, 2014; Verdot & Schut, 2012). Therefore, instead of viewing sports as a cause of socialization or learning outcomes, it is perhaps better understood as a “site” or platform for learning (Crabbe, 2007; Haudenhuyse, et al., 2012; Van Hout & Phelan, 2014).

Sports-based learning (SBL), or learning through sport, is an emerging opportunity for educators working with court-involved youth. In order to optimize potential benefits and limit consequences in correctional settings, research often recommends a greater educational or pedagogical role within sport activities (Devis-Devis et al., 2012; Verdot & Schut, 2012; Meek, 2014). It is argued that broader developmental outcomes of sports and physical education are significantly influenced by the interactions and methods of coaches and
teachers (Bailey, 2006; Camire et al., 2011; Danish et al., 2000; Haudenhuyse et al., 2012; Jacobs et al, 2013). In this way, pedagogy is a key component of developing and empowering youth through sports. However, studies of sports-based interventions have largely overlooked pedagogical methods (Haudenhuyse et al, 2012) and how sports teachers and coaches translate broad objectives – such as “building pro-social skills” – into methods and strategies (Vella et al., 2011).

Studies point out that correctional personnel responsible for administering sports activities are frequently not educators, and often lack pedagogical training, coaching experience, or both (Devis-Devis et al., 2012; Gallant et al., 2015; Roe, 2015; Verdot & Schut, 2012). Furthermore, it is likely that sports pedagogy aimed at youth development is frequently derived from sports models, rather than the “educational enterprise” (Drewe, 2000). Drewe (2000) notes that there is a prevailing attitude of “coach not teacher” in physical education and sports generally, although the role of a coach is very much educational. This is potentially problematic, as Crabbe (2007) argues that sports-based interventions should center “‘approach’ and ‘style’ of delivery rather than sport in the engagement of disadvantaged and ‘hard to reach’ young people” (p. 27). Similarly, Coalter and Taylor (2009) suggest that “youth work” sports-based approaches are more effective in promoting positive youth development than “sport-led/coach driven projects”. The importance of pedagogy is reflected in several studies of community-based programs that explore coaching strategies related to positive youth development. Some common methods identified in these studies include developing meaningful relationships with athletes (Camire et al., 2011; Coalter & Taylor, 2009; Haudenhuyse et al., 2012), generating positive cultures or climates (Haudenhuyse et al., 2012; Vella et al., 2011), and an appropriate emphasis on competition (Andrews & Andrews, 2003; Haudenhuyse et al., 2012).

Nonetheless, coaching experience and sport-specific skills should not be discounted. Haudenhuyse et al. (2014) summarize this tension: “Briefly put, sport coaches are viewed as not having the sufficient sociopedagogical competence to work with socially vulnerable youth towards broader outcomes, whereas youth workers in sports settings are viewed as lacking the necessary sport didactical and sport organizational skills to provide sport activities” (p. 143).
1.2 Research questions

Several studies acknowledge that outcomes of sports programs in correctional settings are largely influenced by interactions with instructors and staff (Andrews & Andrews, 2003; Meek, 2014; Van Hout & Phelan, 2014). Likewise, it is apparent that when using sports for broader learning and social outcomes, especially when working with vulnerable, high-need or reluctant learners, certain socio-pedagogical approaches may be needed (Haudenhuyse et al, 2012). However, research has paid little attention to sports pedagogy within youth correctional settings. Studies have focused mostly on social and “learning” outcomes and have insufficiently connected these outcomes with teaching and learning processes. Thus, it is unclear what pedagogical strategies teachers and coaches in compulsory care contexts employ to achieve objectives of sports interventions. Within this framework, this thesis raises the following research questions:

1. How do students, educators and stakeholders experience and describe learning and teaching through sport?
2. How are pedagogical aspects related to objectives or outcomes?

1.3 Aim and objectives

The aim of the study is to investigate sports pedagogy in the context of youth detention/compulsory care. To this end, the thesis uses a case study of the perceptions of actors involved in an educational sport program at a Swedish youth detention home. The study has the following objectives:

- Explore and describe teaching and learning processes of sport through the perceptions of various actors (students, educators, stakeholders).
- Analyze the relationship between pedagogical aspects and program objectives or outcomes.
1.4 Organization of the thesis

The thesis is organized into six sections. In the remainder of Section 1 (Introduction), Section 1.5 (Significance) discusses why exploring and describing sport pedagogy in this context is significant, and situates this study within the field of comparative education. Section 1.6 (Limitations) acknowledges that findings from the thesis have limited generalizability. It also raises the issue of subjectivity in qualitative research. Following the recommendation of Potts (2007), in Section 1.7 (Personal note) I reflect on how my personal experiences have shaped enquiry, and address some ways in which subjectivities have been de-limited in this research.

Section 2 (Conceptual framework, context, and key concepts) elaborates a conceptual framework that views sport pedagogy as the values/principles and strategies/methods that guide or facilitate learning through sport. In this case study, sport pedagogy is contextually embedded in a unique setting: a youth detention home. As such, contextual aspects and concepts cannot be neatly separated. After presenting and summarizing the conceptual framework for the study, section 2.1 summarizes international juvenile justice perspectives followed by a background on education in Swedish youth homes (2.2). Subsequently, the following key concepts are elaborated: meaningful learning (2.3), sport as an available and established resource (2.4), sports-based learning and development (2.5), and perceptibility of sport pedagogy (2.6).

In Section 3 (Methodology), the research design, methods and ethical procedures/considerations of the thesis are explained. The final subsection (3.6) describes the grounded theory analytical procedure that generated the “rings on the water” model.

Section 4 (Findings) presents the findings of the grounded theory analysis. It begins by introducing the “rings on the water” model generated through the analysis, and describes how the model captures the key themes in the data. Key themes from the study are presented in accordance with the model, and as such represent a cumulative sequence or process set in motion and guided by various pedagogical aspects. This process set in motion and corresponding aspects of pedagogy are represented by the following sequence of themes (“rings”): getting involved (4.1); foundations for teaching and learning (4.2); developing skills and knowledge (4.3); gradual steps and opportunities for practice (4.4); and positive futures (4.5). Additionally, the last two subsections add perspective to the model with insights into defining success (4.6) and support and influences of sport pedagogy (4.7).


Section 5 (Discussion) reflects upon these findings, and relates the themes and key categories from the findings to previous research. The discussion focuses first on the overall significance and characteristics of the rings on the water model. It is proposed that the model can be significant for facilitating an understanding of how intentionally designed and implemented sport-based pedagogy can lead to positive developmental and learning outcomes in juvenile justice settings. In addition to a more general discussion of findings, several specific themes and categories from the findings are re-visited and expanded upon.

Finally, Section 6 (Concluding remarks and future research) summarizes the study and proposes some future directions for research.

1.5 Significance

Sport pedagogy within juvenile justice settings can be thought of as a “black box” in the current research base. It is widely argued, however, that the social and learning processes within sport, and not simply physical activity in itself (Crabbe, 2007; Haudenhuyse et al., 2014; Meek, 2014; Van Hout & Phelan, 2014), are more clearly related to positive outcomes such as reduced recidivism in rehabilitative sports programs. Through a grounded theory approach, this case study seeks to describe and analyze these processes, thus opening new avenues for understanding and future research.

Through out the world, there is an urgent need for innovation and improvement within education for court-involved youth. Effective approaches are not only valuable for saving money through recidivism reductions (Davis et al., 2013), but also can help create safer and more productive communities (Normore et al., 2012). However, while there is a growing demand for innovative and effective initiatives within correctional education, including sports-based programs (Butts et al., 2010), these initiatives are often concealed in the closed settings of institutions. Jolivette (2013) asserts that one of the major barriers to improving education in juvenile justice settings is a lack of research. This is compounded by difficulties for obtaining approval and access to these settings (Abrams, 2010; Jolivette, 2013). Also, Gehring (2011) observes that correctional educators are frequently isolated from their peers, both physically and intellectually, and are generally unaware of major research in their field or “what works” in other nations. As a result of this isolation, policy makers and practitioners may be unaware of successful practice elsewhere and are often forced to “reinvent the wheel” (ibid).
Although correctional education, and particularly the use of sport in this context, is not typically dealt with in International and Comparative Education (ICE), an ICE perspective is both relevant for and can significantly contribute to this emerging research area. Several ICE scholars (see Bray, 2007a and Phillips, 2009) view the “copying” or “borrowing” of educational models as a central practical concern of the field. In other words, actors in the field of comparative education are commonly interested in how education in foreign contexts can be useful for other contexts. Additionally, the field of ICE has accommodated (and should continue to embrace) a wide, multidisciplinary range of scholarship (Bray, 2007b). ICE therefore provides an ideal forum for discourse and exchange regarding best policies and practices in correctional education. Educators working with adjudicated youth are likely to have similar questions and share similar experiences. In this case, previous research demonstrates that educational sport in youth correctional settings can be extremely effective in facilitating positive pathways into adulthood. Educators are left in the dark, however, as to how to effectively structure and deliver such programs. Furthermore, it is likely that sports-based approaches in juvenile justice settings can benefit from collaboration across several disciplines, including education, sport management, psychology, and criminology. Exchanging concerns, experiences and solutions in this area can add to the tool kit for a variety of stakeholders and practitioners. Moreover, it can lead to lead to improved outcomes for youth in custody.

As many systems move towards evidence-based programs (EBPs), the need for a wider range of research within correctional education has become greater. This trend in policy and practice has placed pressure on institutions to use “branded” therapy programs that have been consistently evaluated (Abrams, 2013). Abrams (2013) observes that a paradigm shift towards EBPs has steered research in juvenile justice away from untested interventions, and may limit innovation and the diffusion of new approaches. Seeking out and exploring promising new initiatives in this field can provide visibility to lesser-known approaches, and subsequently advance our understanding of teaching and learning in this often challenging context. This case study has attempted to contribute a base of knowledge regarding a relatively unknown and under-utilized approach and, through doing so, open up new directions for research and practice that have been previously overlooked.

Lastly, but not least, this study gives voice to practitioners and students whose perspectives, although extremely important, are on the margins of educational discourse.
1.6 Limitations

Social research is often referred to as “messy” (Bryman, 2012), or imperfect, and as such will have a number of limitations. Two of the more significant limitations of this research design had to do with the generalizability or external validity of case studies, and the potential for bias in qualitative research. More specific limitations regarding research methods are addressed in the methodology section.

Case studies are limited in terms of generalizability and external validity (Bryman, 2012), and as such findings are grounded within the local context of the case. Through a grounded theory approach, this study seeks to go beyond description by generating a model for understanding sport pedagogy in relation to objectives and outcomes. Although youth detention settings may share some similar characteristics, such as a student body that has commonly failed in traditional schools, these settings vary considerably across and within nations (Muncie & Goldson, 2006). Therefore, while the discussion section seeks to extend or relate this model to other research, concepts and themes discussed in this study should be considered as grounded in data that emerges from a particular context (Charmaz, 2006).

In qualitative studies, the researcher can be thought of as the research instrument. As such, qualitative research is commonly criticized as value-laden and prone to the subjectivities and biases of the researcher. Fairbrother (2007) suggests ways in which qualitative comparative education researchers can ensure trustworthiness in their research:

*With regard to the question of the objectivity or value-ladenness of the research endeavor, qualitative researchers draw attention to the need for sensitivity to the greater potential bias and unquestioned assumptions when researchers work outside their own cultural contexts. They maintain that effort must be made to become conscious of such biases and to question one’s own assumptions underlying the societies and cultures which are the targets of research.* (p. 46)

Additionally, Potts (2007) asserts that a researcher’s experience is an important part of enquiry in comparative education. However, leaning on one’s own experiences introduces a degree of subjectivity into the research, and should be balanced by “self-critical consciousness” and “balancing the voices of others” (ibid, p. 81).
1.7 Personal note

When reflecting on how personal experiences have shaped research, Potts (2007) claims that it is appropriate, perhaps necessary, to use the first-person. Sports have always been a major and (mostly) positive force in my life and I feel a strong desire to share my experiences with others. Also, as a teacher, I witnessed the educational potential of sports in juvenile justice and alternative settings. It became clear to me that teaching in a non-traditional setting with a unique population of students called for non-traditional approaches and teaching methods. Basing my enquiry upon this experience, I have searched for relevant research for guidance in this area, with a future goal of improving sports education in the context of juvenile institutions and reentry programming. Perhaps these experiences throughout my life have helped me to grasp the potentials of sports-based learning and the meaning of sports for detained youth. On the other hand, perhaps my experiences have imparted an overly optimistic view of, or attachment to, the power of sports.

I have tried to reflect upon and balance these matters through out the research process. While my experiences with sports, coaching and teaching court-involved youth have likely helped me to approach and understand this case study, I have constantly reminded myself that I have my own beliefs or expectations. So, I have tried to keep an open mind as to what my possible biases are, and attempt to limit them accordingly. In this respect, I have often returned to the surprisingly substantial body of research related to this study in order to inspire, substantiate, and temper my perspectives.
2. Conceptual framework, context, and key concepts

This section presents the conceptual framework of the thesis and defines or describes the key contextual issues and concepts related to the object of the case study – sport pedagogy and its relationship to program objectives/outcomes. The term conceptual framework has a variety of applications in educational research (Suter, 2012). In qualitative studies, it can be thought of as “a network of linked concepts and classifications [used] to understand an underlying process; that is, a sequence of events or constructs and how they relate” (ibid, p. 344). As this is an inductive and exploratory study, the conceptual framework presented here is not used for deducing a hypothesis (Charmaz, 2006). Instead, it is used as an analytical tool for guiding the research and making sense of the data (Suter, 2012).

The conceptual framework for this study is partly based on Alexander’s (2001) comparative pedagogy framework. Acknowledging diverse use and meanings of the word, Alexander (2001) claims that pedagogy can be commonly defined as “both the act of teaching and the discourse in which it is embedded” (p. 507). Alexander’s (2001) framework links the act of teaching, generically defined as “the act of using method x to enable pupils to learn y” (p. 514, emphasis in original), with the process of “curriculum transformation”, in which objectives and values are translated and transformed into teaching and learning. Because curriculum transformation has multiple levels (from macro to micro), pedagogy can be seen as having a frame (i.e. curriculums and lesson plans), a form (the lesson itself) and act (task, activity, interaction, assessment). In this manner, pedagogy is co-constructed by social actors (i.e. teachers and students) and their context (i.e. different values, curriculums and settings) (Alexander, 2001; Kelly, 2013). As such, contextual aspects constitute a necessary element of the conceptual framework for the study. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study.

![Conceptual framework of the study](image)

This study considers that broader outcomes in sports-based interventions (SBIs) for incarcerated youth are derived from the social and learning processes of sport, rather than
participation in sport alone. Sport pedagogy can be understood as the set of values/principles and strategies/methods that guide and facilitate learning through sport. In other words, sport pedagogy is more than simply providing activities, it is an intentional set of methodologies to advance learning through sport. The conceptual framework above therefore illustrates how objectives are transformed into outcomes through a process of sport-based learning guided by sport pedagogy.

Pedagogical aspects and related objectives or outcomes, such as youth development, are embedded in a set of contextual factors – in this case, the context of a Swedish youth detention home. As such, the values and objectives of this particular context shape sport pedagogy and related outcomes. Accordingly, sports pedagogy and sports-based learning opportunities in juvenile justice or correctional settings are shaped by the values and structures of learning and education in the juvenile justice system. Stated somewhat differently, sport practice is negotiated within the functions and ideologies regarding the education and treatment of adjudicated youth. Similarly, sport pedagogy is also shaped in part by the values and structures of sport.

2.1 Juvenile justice perspectives

In conceptualizing the role of sport in correctional settings, Meek (2014) suggests that sport practice can be seen as a reflection of the “contrasting notions of punishment, containment and rehabilitation” (p. 14). All forms of incarceration or compulsory care restrict individuals’ freedom in some way; however, it is possible to distinguish international perspectives or ideologies regarding education and treatment of youth adjudicated delinquent (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Hawley et al., 2013; Muncie & Goldson, 2006; Warner, 2007).

The Swedish and other Scandinavian justice systems are frequently praised in the media (Benko, 2014; James, 2013; Larson, 2013) and scholarly literature (Friday, 1976; Pettit & Kroth, 2011; Ward et al., 2013; Warner, 2007) as models for effective criminal justice through the rehabilitation and humane treatment of offenders. This can be contrasted to an “Anglo-American” (Warner, 2007) perspective over the past few decades characterized by punishment, “tough on crime”, and “zero-tolerance” policies (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Bonnie et al., 2013; Muncie & Goldson, 2006; Travis et al., 2014). Recently, criminological research has shown that such policies actually do little to deter crime, but instead have led to mass incarceration and, subsequently, widespread and devastating social consequences (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Clear & Frost, 2014; Travis et al., 2014).
Comparative criminologists (Muncie, 2005; Muncie & Goldson, 2006) have raised concern over the influence of globalization processes on policy transfer between juvenile justice systems. Likewise, Warner (2007) cautions against the “narrowing of perspectives” regarding education in correctional settings globally and argues that a European, and particularly Nordic, perspective is more supportive of “best practice” in correctional education. Warner (2007) concludes, “it seems that at the heart of both a good approach to adult education and good penal policy is recognition of people's full humanity, their individuality, autonomy and potential, and acceptance of them as full members of the larger society” (p. 181).

A developmental approach to youth justice

The premise that adolescents are developmentally different from adults has long upheld a separate juvenile justice system (Abrams, 2013; Bonnie et al., 2013). Recently, a large body of research has renewed this premise and advocates a developmental or Positive Youth Justice (PYJ) approach for interventions with court-involved youth (Abrams, 2013; Bonnie et al., 2013; Butts et al., 2010). Empirical research has demonstrated that adolescence is a period of human development typically characterized by increased experimentation and risk-taking behavior, identity formation, and ongoing cognitive and socioemotional development (Bonnie et al., 2013). The developmental and PYJ frameworks view youth delinquency as a result of the interaction between the normal processes of adolescence and the social contexts in which these processes occur (Benson, 2013; Bonnie et al., 2013). In these frameworks, the purpose of detention or compulsory care can be understood to intervene in a certain developmental trajectory or environment and to provide the support and services that support positive youth development. Positive youth development in the context of the juvenile justice system therefore can be understood as a relative term. That is, positive youth development focuses on providing opportunities for an alternative developmental trajectory. Within this framework, school is considered as one of the most important contexts “for the attainment of the assets needed for successful transition to young adulthood” (Bonnie et al., 2013, p. 108).

2.2 Education in Swedish youth homes

In Sweden, approximately 1,000 young people are placed in compulsory care each year (SiS, 2013; SiS, 2015c). Most of these youth are detained according to the Care of Young Persons
Act (LVU), which stipulates that youth can be detained for “serious psychosocial problems” (SiS, 2015b). More specifically, within this sentencing structure the majority of youth are detained for “living a destructive life with, for example, drug abuse or criminality” (ibid). The Swedish National Board for Institutional Care (Statens Institutionssstyrelse, abbreviated SiS) supervises youth detention homes. Education in SiS institutions, however, is overseen by the Swedish National School Board (Skolverket) (Hugo, 2010).

Similar to other nations (see Leone & Weinberg, 2010 and Meek, 2014), detained youth in Sweden are prone to have had problematic childhoods with extensive drug use, physical and mental health issues, abuse at home, criminality, and school failure/expulsion (SiS, 2013). Regarding education prior to detention, statistics on the student group in Swedish youth homes indicate an over-representation of learning disabilities; high rates of expulsion, suspension and truancy; incomplete grades in primary school; and behavioral issues such as disrupting class and problems with teachers (ibid).

### 2.3 Meaningful learning

Part of the expressed mission of schooling in SiS institutions is to provide students with a “meaningful learning experience” (SiS, 2004 in Hugo, 2013). Meaningful learning – associated with student-centered learning as opposed to subject learning – can be characterized as a set of processes through which students actively engage in the construction or acquisition of knowledge and skills (Mayer, 2002). In this way, meaningful learning originates from and is relevant to students’ life-worlds – their own constructed view and experience of the world (Hugo, 2013). SiS recently commissioned and published an ethnographic study, *Meaningful learning in school activities at special youth homes*, in which Hugo (2013) explored the learning experiences of youth in Swedish compulsory care. The project is based on nearly 400 hours in the field, including interviews and conversations with 59 students and 36 teachers (ibid). In order to clarify the concept of “meaningful learning”, particularly in the context of youth homes, it may be useful to present and summarize some relevant findings and recommendations from this project (see Table 1 below).

Hugo (2013) shows that meaningful learning in Swedish compulsory care can be facilitated by providing students with opportunities for success in education that is relevant to their needs and interests. In this context, it is critical that teachers cultivate positive school identities for students through encouragement and positive reinforcement (ibid). Additionally, Hugo (2013) finds that positive student-teacher relationships are an important foundation for
meaningful learning. However, because of students’ backgrounds in school, typically marked by negative experiences, a positive school identity and relationships with teachers may take some time to develop (ibid). In this view, Hugo (2013) emphasizes the value of practical and aesthetic school activities because students can identify with the content, experience joy and relaxation, and participation in such activities often precedes increased student motivation.

Table 1: Key findings and recommendations from Hugo (2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question:</th>
<th>How can learning situations be arranged in special youth homes so students develop an interest in education, become motivated for learning, and experience meaningfulness in the study situation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Important findings:** | • A clear majority of youth experience meaningful learning at SiS schools  
• Many youth have had previous negative experiences in school  
• It is crucial that students develop a positive school identity in order to experience success  
• Importance of positive experiences and success in school  
• Practical and aesthetic activities (in which sport is included) are important because students can identify with the content, experience joy and relaxation, and can become more motivated in school generally  
• Learning is founded upon the relationship with the teacher |
| **Recommendations:** | • Meet the student (at their level and interests)  
• Teachers’ relationship skills are “superior” to subject knowledge  
• Treat students with respect and provide positive encouragement  
• Students should not experience failure again  
• Use resources that already exist |

Source: Hugo, 2013; 2014

2.4 Sport as an available and established resource

Sport pedagogy has the potential to be implemented consistently with these above recommendations. Of note is Hugo’s (2013) emphasis on using practical and aesthetic activities as well as resources that already exist to create more meaningful learning opportunities for students. Although sport is an established resource that is available within most Swedish youth institutions (SiS, 2014c), it is under-utilized educationally. Hugo (2013) notes, “There are special youth homes that have nice sport halls where students play sports relatively often during their free time, but they also did not have an opportunity to get grades in physical education in schools.” (p. 133).
Other studies echo these recommendations, and show that sport is an available resource ideal for connecting incarcerated youth to established community structures. Gallant et al. (2015) suggest that correctional facilities should consider using “outside” sport clubs and volunteers to provide sport instruction for inmates. It is also widely regarded in the literature (Digennaro, 2010; Gallant et al., 2015; Meek, 2012; Meek, 2014; Nichols, 2007; Van Hout & Phelan, 2014) that coaches and sport organizations can be a valuable contact and offer support during the reentry process. Interestingly, Sweden ranks among the most physically active nations in Europe, and 18 percent of Swedes engage in voluntary work that supports sporting activities – the highest percentage in Europe (European Commission, 2014). With over 3,000 clubs throughout the nation, football is Sweden’s most popular sport (Swedish Football Association, n.d.; Swedish Sports Confederation, 2012).

Similarly, but in a more theoretical sense, sport can bring youth into contact with and reinforce positive, pro-social values or attitudes through processes of social inclusion (SDP IWG, 2008, Prisoners on the Move, 2012). Values and processes of social inclusion are socially constructed, and vary in respective sport communities or cultures (Beedie & Craig, 2010; Nichols, 2007). Thus, while sport is widely associated with positive values such as self-discipline and teamwork, certain sport cultures may permit or encourage negative aspects such as a win-at-all-costs attitude, doping, hyper-masculine identities, and bullying or other forms of social exclusion (Beedie & Craig, 2010; SDP IWG, 2008).

2.5 Sports-based learning and development

So far, a definition of sport has not been provided. As in a similar study (Van Hout & Phelan, 2014), this study adopts a broad definition of sports set forth by the European Sports Charter (Council of Europe, 2001): “Sport means all forms of physical activity which, through casual and organized participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels” (p. 5). This definition reflects the positive aspects of sport, indicating that it has wider applications beyond simply improving physical fitness.

Sports-based learning (SBL), then, can be understood as the learning that occurs within and through sport participation. In other words, sport can be thought of as a medium by which skills and knowledge may be acquired. As indicated in the above definition of sport, SBL encompasses a variety of social, emotional and cognitive learning processes associated with sport participation. Although SBL includes the development of sport-specific
skills, the social, emotional and cognitive learning that occurs through sport participation is most relevant for positive youth development (Perkins & Noam, 2007).

Meek et al. (2012) and Nichols (2007) describe sports-based learning as a developmental or cumulative process. In this manner, SBL and development through sport can be explained sequentially with progressing stages (see Table 2).

Table 2: "The elements of a crime reduction program in sequence"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of participant</td>
<td>Process of getting involved</td>
<td>Program content and process</td>
<td>Intermediate effects</td>
<td>Main objective: reduce recidivism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Meek (2014) and Nichols (2007) suggest that sports-based learning should be based on an individual’s needs and capabilities. In other words, sports-based learning should be tailored to the individual. Another initial step is to use sports as a “hook” for getting involved (Meek, 2014). This concept draws on the popularity and enjoyment associated with sports participation, and is one of the most commonly agreed upon concepts in literature regarding SBIs for offenders (Meek, 2014; Nichols, 2007). Meek (2014) concludes, “As with music and the arts – potentially even more so – sport and physical activity can undoubtedly be used as a ‘hook’ with which to engage and motivate prisoners, particularly those who typically respond better as a result of active participation methods of delivery” (p. 170).

Using sport to hook or engage individuals subsequently opens up a variety of teaching and learning opportunities (see above, element 3 – program content and process). During this phase, socialization and learning through sport develops the personal and interpersonal skills or competencies that youth may need to desist from crime and other risky behavior (see Table 3 below). Through sports participation, youth are engaged in structured leisure activities and have the opportunity to develop important relationships with role models and pro-social peers (Nichols, 2007). This may be particularly important, as criminological research has consistently shown that youth who have structured leisure interests and pro-social peers are less likely to engage in delinquent behavior (Haynie & Osgood, 2005; Steketee, 2012).

Accumulated competencies and social bonds (relationships) developed through sports can assist youth in their reentry to the community. Meek (2014) suggests that “soft skills” developed through sports, such as communication and social skills, can be useful when
entering the labor market, or continuing to higher education. Additionally, these skills can enable integration into new sports clubs in the community. Successful SBIs typically offer support during reentry, including placement with sport clubs or through sport-related employment opportunities (Gallant et al., 2015; Meek, 2014; Meek, 2012; Meek et al., 2012; Verdot & Schut, 2012). This aspect of sports-based interventions illustrates the importance of continuation or transferability of skills and knowledge from correctional education to community settings (Daugherty et al., 2013; Tolbert, 2013).

Finally, it is likely that sport can play a role in long-term reintegration or desistance well into adult life by offering a way to “give back” as well as creating “intergenerational learning benefits” (Meek et al., 2012, p. 4). Such sport-related life transitions are not only significant for reinforcing noncriminal identities for adults, but can also have a positive effect on future generations. Participating in sports activities with one’s children, for example, can be seen as a platform for parental learning and building positive family relationships.

### Table 3: Sport benefits related to personal and interpersonal criminogenic needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal needs*</th>
<th>Interpersonal needs*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Anti-criminal identity formation (Meek, 2014; Van Hout &amp; Phelan, 2014)</td>
<td>• New pro-social peer groups, structured leisure time (Meek, 2014; Nichols, 2007; Van Hout &amp; Phelan, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cognitive development, i.e. problem solving (Meek, 2014; Williams et al, 2002)</td>
<td>• Positive adult role models (Nichols, 2007; Van Hout &amp; Phelan, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emotional control/empathy (Meek, 2014)</td>
<td>• Working with others, social skills, social capital (Meek, 2014; Parker, Meek &amp; Lewis, 2014b; Van Hout &amp; Phelan, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Motivation for learning (Meek, 2014; Parker, Meek &amp; Lewis, 2014b)</td>
<td>• Conflict resolution (Meek, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Appraisal and positive feedback, experiencing success (Nichols, 2007)</td>
<td>• Reentry support (Meek, 2012; 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Substance abuse treatment (Van Hout &amp; Phelan, 2014; Weinstock et al., 2008)</td>
<td>• Anti-drug peers/alternatives (Van Hout &amp; Phelan, 2014; Weinstock et al., 2008)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Criminogenic needs based on Andrews and Dowden (2007) and Serin et al. (2010)

The developmental and learning processes described above can be aligned with the criminogenic needs of offenders and, through appropriate implementation, can reduce reoffending and promote crime desistance (Meek, 2014). Criminogenic needs are the developmental needs or risk factors for offenders that are associated with criminality (Andrews & Dowden, 2007). The most significant criminogenic needs/major risk factors\(^2\) proposed by Andrews and Dowden (2007) are categorized as: pro-criminal attitudes,

\(^2\) These risk factors form the basis of the Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) model – the “accepted overall model for understanding effective correctional programs” (Serin et al., 2010, p. 59).
antisocial personality, antisocial associates, family/marital factors, social achievement (school/work), leisure/recreation pursuits, and substance abuse. Criminogenic needs can be seen at various levels: personal, interpersonal, and community (ibid). Table 3 above summarizes some of the benefits of sports related to personal and interpersonal criminogenic needs highlighted in the literature.

Boot camps – a contrasting example

While certain methodological approaches to sport can lead to positive educational, social and criminal desistance gains, others have been shown as less effective. Several quantitative studies examining the relationship between sport participation or physical activity and delinquency or re-offending have yielded mixed results (Begg et al., 1996; Farrington et al., 2002; Mahoney et al., 2001; Veliz & Shakib, 2012). It can be argued, however, that examples of physical activity that “don’t work” further illustrate the significance of the social and learning processes within sport. In other words, the ways in which sport and physical activity are structured and experienced by youth is more correlated with outcomes than physical activity itself.

A prominent example of ineffective use of physical activity in juvenile justice settings can be seen in the rise and fall of boot camps for juvenile delinquents in the United States. In many ways, these programs provide a clear contrast to some of the concepts discussed above (i.e. positive youth justice and meaningful learning) and highlight how juvenile justice perspectives frame pedagogy.

Boot camps subjected youth to physical activities in the form of drills and rigorous exercise with an intention to accomplish rehabilitative objectives (Correia, 1997; Cullen et al., 2005). Although the general rationale for boot camps was to “shock” and deter youth from future crime, evaluative studies on boot camps for delinquent youth showed little effects on reoffending and often high rates of recidivism (Cullen et al., 2005; Farrington et al., 2002; Kilgore & Meade, 2004; MacKenzie et al., 2001). Correia (1997) and Cullen et al. (2005) state that boot camp approaches to juvenile delinquency were largely ineffective because they applied “simplistic” solutions to complex social problems without a depth of understanding. Boot camps were popularized because they appealed to the “tough on crime” mentality, and

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3 Boot camps are not considered as sports-based interventions because they do not conform to the definition of sport offered above. That is, the expressive, well-being, and social elements of sport are not visible in boot camps.
“would not be mistaken for lenient bleeding heart corrections” (Cullen et al., 2005, p. 57). Cullen et al. (2005) argue that in this perspective, public opinion and policy makers were “prepared to subject offenders to a Spartan lifestyle, to exhausting physical demands, to planned and repeated humiliation, and to authoritarian (if secretly well-intentioned) drill sergeants who would be unrelenting in their discipline” (p. 57). In such a climate, what options do educators have for providing meaningful, high quality education?

The example of boot camps shows how juvenile justice perspectives can either limit or support learning. One commonly-held learning objective for strict regimens of physical activity was to teach students “self-discipline”. However, in an ethnographic study of a juvenile boot camp in the US, Kilgore and Meade (2004) concluded that the boot camp method “approaches the teaching of self-discipline in a manner that does not facilitate its development” (p. 183). They found that although the boot camp aimed to instill self-discipline, students had no opportunities to practice it, and instead of becoming autonomous, students learned “faking it to make it” (ibid). This example demonstrates the dual importance of the teaching methods and of the values/principles that constitute pedagogy. It can also be argued that one of the factors why these interventions failed, and other sports-based interventions can be successful, is a perceptibility of the values and methods that affect learning (discussed below). Likewise, it suggests that certain values/principles and strategies/methods can be more “effective” or educational when implementing sport and physical activity in juvenile justice settings. For example, an autocratic or disciplinarian coaching style may be less supportive of youth development than more open or “emancipatory” styles of sport leadership (Haudenhuyse et al., 2012).

2.6 Perceptibility of sport pedagogy

Similar to other scholars (Crabbe, 2007; Haudenhuyse et al., 2012; Van Hout & Phelan, 2014), Meek (2014) argues that sports in correctional settings should be “characterized as a vehicle by which to implement social, psychological and physical change, rather than as a solution in themselves” (p. 171). From this statement and the conceptual framework presented above in Figure 1, the centrality of pedagogy in relation to broader outcomes in juvenile justice settings seems rather logical. However, sport and physical activity are not always understood or implemented in this way. Instead, research indicates a prevalence of narrow and shallow understandings of rehabilitative or educational sport for incarcerated or at-risk youth (Chamberlain, 2013; Devis-Devis et al., 2012; Gallant et al., 2015; Meek, 2014;
Nichols, 2007; Verdot & Schut, 2012). In many instances, sport is shown as serving a recreational as opposed to an educational or rehabilitative function (Devis-Devis et al., 2012; Gallant et al., 2015; Verdot & Schut, 2012; Meek, 2014). Studies likewise observe a widespread attitude or tendency of “coach not teacher” that disregards or minimizes the significance of learning within sport (Drewe, 2000; Haudenhuyse et al., 2014). Furthermore, although conventional logic and political rhetoric have advocated sport as a means for crime reduction and youth development, there is often a separation between these statements and the realities of practice (Chamberlain, 2013; Kelly, 2013; Haudenhuyse et al., 2014; Verdot & Schut, 2012).

It is thus reasonable to venture that one significant challenge to improving sport practice in juvenile justice settings is related to a perceptibility of sport as a tool or platform for pedagogy. In other words, practitioners and stakeholders should be able to clearly see the learning potential of sport in order to align sport practice with the objectives of youth corrections. Several recent studies have noted that sport activities in correctional settings are often unstructured or vaguely oriented toward rehabilitative objectives, and have subsequently recommended a stronger pedagogical or educational role for sport (Devis-Devis et al., 2012; Meek, 2014; Verdot & Schut, 2012).

An additional barrier to perceptibility of sport pedagogy is a frequent lack of flexible or innovative thinking in correctional settings. Institutions are often closed, isolated settings in which it may be difficult to offer innovative programming (Meek, 2014). Yet the challenging nature of providing quality education within institutional settings requires alternative or “out of the box” thinking. As stated by one educator (cited in Meek, 2014), “Prisons have got to be more imaginative in how they deliver [education]. Sometimes you’ve got to change the learning environment” (p. 171). Similarly, when proposing some “flexible solutions” for meaningful learning in Swedish youth homes, Hugo (2013) notes, “Often there are shortages of flexible thinking in adults, educational bureaucracy, and formal barriers or hierarchies between occupational groups which limit the opportunities that already exist” (p. 133).

Finally, as mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, there is a lack of evidence regarding sports pedagogy, particularly related to adjudicated youth. Haudenhuyse et al. (2014) assert, “There is a paucity of references on the coaching and organizational principles underlying sport practices for socially vulnerable youth” (p. 140). This gap in the research necessitates an in-depth exploration and description of pedagogical processes related to sports-based learning and youth development.
3. Methodology

This section describes the methods undertaken in this thesis in order to accomplish the aim and objectives of the research. The previous section illustrates that sport pedagogy, by guiding and facilitating learning and development through sport, is a key element of sports-based approaches in juvenile justice settings. As little is known about sport pedagogy in these contexts, the objectives of the study are to (1) explore and describe sport pedagogy, and (2) analyze the relationship between pedagogical aspects and program objectives/outcomes. To accomplish these objectives, this thesis utilizes a case study approach to investigate perceptions of sport pedagogy in the context of an educational sport program at a Swedish youth detention home. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 12 respondents involved in the program (students, educators, and stakeholders) during a four-day field visit in March 2015. Grounded theory was used to analyze data and generate a model for characterizing findings.

The remainder of this section further describes the research methodology, and is organized in the following subsections: ontological position and research design (3.1); research setting (section 3.2); ethical procedures and considerations (section 3.3); participants and sample (section 3.4); data collection (section 3.5); and grounded theory data analysis (section 3.6).

3.1 Ontological position and research design

This thesis adopts a constructionist ontological position – that social phenomena are continuously accomplished and constructed by social actors and their contexts (Bryman, 2012). From this view, a version of social reality can be constructed through the analysis of representations of a collection of social actors. By analyzing the experiences and perceptions of actors involved in the sport and health program, it is possible to make a description and characterization of sport pedagogy. The “case” in this study is therefore considered the purposive sample of actors’ perceptions, and not necessarily the institution. Consequently, as mentioned above in the limitations, the study is limited to the context of the case study, and can be seen as a version of social reality co-constructed by the research participants and the researcher.

The site for the case study, SiS Youth Home Stigby, was selected for its unique approach to teaching and learning through sports – it is the only institution in Sweden that
has created a sport and health program specifically to address reentry needs of youth. All case studies are concerned with “an intensive and detailed analysis” of a single phenomenon (Bryman, 2012) but may differ in their design or purpose (Yin, 2009). In this thesis, a case study approach was chosen in order to explore and describe an unknown or un-researched phenomenon. More specifically, it was considered as a way to open, portray, and characterize the teaching and learning processes within the “black box” of a sports education program in a youth detention home.

As sports-based interventions within correctional settings become increasingly systematized approaches, several scholars (Devis-Devis et al., 2012; Haudenhuyse et al., 2012; Meek, 2014; Van Hout & Phelan, 2014) have highlighted the need for further research examining the teaching, learning and socialization processes through sport. Likewise, several comparative education scholars (see Crossley & Vulliamy, 1984 and Stenhouse, 1979) have highlighted the importance of case studies for understanding these processes and “day-to-day educational reality”. Stenhouse (1979) advocates “that we develop in [comparative education] a better grounded representation of day-to-day educational reality resting on the careful study of particular cases. The accumulation of cases may yield some generalisations in due course; but these will never supplant the need for shrewd practical understanding which can only feed on the descriptive representation of practice” (p. 10). Additionally, Crossley and Vulliamy (1984) argue that if the field only focuses on the comparison of larger systems, without any grounding in daily practice, then it can only produce surface-level comparisons.

3.2 Research setting

The site for the study, SiS Youth Home Stigby, is a youth detention home in central Sweden. The home is located on an island – a popular tourist destination in the summer – and is surrounded by forest, small farms and one of Sweden’s largest lakes. It is an open institution with no barbed wire fences or walls around it. Visitors are not required to go through metal detectors and are relatively free to walk around the campus. Accommodations for youth are part of a chain of care from locked placement to independent living. The institution houses approximately 31 boys between ages 16-20 in three separate wards that include both lockable and open residences (SiS, n.d.b). One of the wards is an emergency ward that houses youth temporarily while they await placement or trial. In addition to these wards, the institution has
training apartments nearby in which youth can practice independent living, as well as an out-
processing facility in the nearest major city (ibid).

Youth admitted to Stigby are described as having “severe psychosocial problems and
ongoing criminality and drug abuse” (SiS, n.d.b). Typically, students at the institution have
had a complex and challenging background. Table 4 provides an overview of residents’
background at the institution.

Table 4: Overview of residents’ background at SiS Stigby

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abus​e/Addiction</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abuse including alcohol (95%)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana abuse (85%)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat use of multiple substances (65%)*</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criminality</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criminal record (100%)*</td>
<td>all SiS youth homes (62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat offenses (85%)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Heavy addiction” combined with violent crime (65%)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Family</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessed as having family problems (71%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessed as having psychological problems (68%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need extra support in school (89%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack primary school grades/certificate (65%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peers and leisure</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need support with respect to peers (88%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack leisure interest at admission (80%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indicates data from social services.

Source: Institutional follow-up data

The institution’s aim for treatment is “to help young people to a good life by reducing
risk factors and strengthening the factors that can protect them from the recurrence of anti-
social behavior” (SiS, n.d.b). Although Stigby works with several treatment programs, such
as Anger Replacement Therapy (ART), treatment programs consist of a small percent (2%)
of the total waking hours for students. Rather, the institution emphasizes a more “holistic
perspective” wherein treatment is “based on individual relationship work and pro-social
training” (SiS, n.d.b).

The institution offers a range of school, vocational training and leisure activities for
youth. Education at Stigby often combines practical and theoretical instruction, and is
individualized according to the student’s background, circumstances, and interests (SiS,
2014b). The institution also has an emphasis on leisure activities, with an aim to help youth
find leisure interests and connections to new, pro-social contacts (SiS, 2014a). One unique
feature of the institution is that it has closely collaborated with the local sports club, VAIS, in
a number of sports and activities. Stigby and VAIS have worked together for several decades,
during which students and staff from the institution played football on the club’s men’s A-team. VAIS shares the institution’s sport hall for a variety of activities, including football trainings in the winter.

Stigby conducts two-year and five-year follow-up interviews with all students released from the institution. In 2014, Stigby made an analysis of the follow-up interviews conducted since 2010, consisting of 30 former students. One of the significant findings from this follow-up analysis was that none of the former students belonged to a club/organization or were engaged in the voluntary sector (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Former students’ leisure interests 2 years after release

![Figure 2: Former students’ leisure interests 2 years after release](image)

Source: Institutional follow-up data provided by the institution

Additionally, it was discovered that although many students had a leisure interest, leisure interests were often unstructured or individual, such as belonging to a gym. It was therefore considered that the vast majority of former students lacked a “pro-social” leisure interest.

In the summer of 2014, the institution started a new sport and health program with a focus on football. The aim of the program is to build students’ interests in sport and provide opportunities for a “good life” with an emphasis on club membership or involvement in the voluntary sector (SiS, 2014b). The project formalizes the institution’s collaboration with the local sports club, VAIS, and is also supported by the Swedish Football Association (SF) and the regional football association. The program uses a modified version of the physical education and health curriculum in community upper secondary schools, and has a particular focus on football. During a typical school day, morning lessons are held in a classroom and are more theoretical, while afternoon sessions consist of sport and physical training. One of the plans for the future is to build a network of sport contacts and to connect students with
sports clubs during reentry. As the program is in development, to date there has been no follow-up data with former students.

### 3.3 Ethical procedures and considerations

Generally, social research should be mindful of harm to participants, acquiring informed consent, protecting the privacy or confidentiality of subjects, and avoiding deception (Bryman, 2012). Furthermore, due to the nature of care and the situation of youth in custody, additional ethical procedures and considerations were undertaken throughout the study.

Conducting research at SiS Stigby necessitated following specified institutional guidelines. SiS ethical guidelines have been stipulated with the stated intent to protect the rights and integrity of youth, and recognize that youth in custody are in a situation of compulsory care, vulnerability and dependence (SiS, n.d.a). When conducting social research with “vulnerable” youth or youth in compulsory care, it is important for researchers to be aware of their relative position of power and forms of (albeit unknowingly) coercing participation or crossing ethical boundaries (Abrams, 2010; Swartz, 2011; Taylor, 2009). Additionally, Swartz (2011) argues that conducting research with vulnerable youth should go beyond general ethical standards and that youth should benefit in some way from the research. Considering these aspects, the study undertook the following steps to ensure that the research was ethical.

Prior to data collection, the researcher discussed ethics and procedures with the contact person at the institution over the phone, and reviewed the SiS ethical guidelines (SiS, n.d.a). Upon arrival to the institution, the researcher signed a form that required keeping personal information about students confidential. Also, the general aims and methods of the research were discussed in this briefing and before the field visit via telephone.

When the researcher met with students, either he or the head teacher informed them of the nature of the researcher’s visit. It was explained that the purpose of the visit was to study learning through sports. Consistent with this purpose, this study has declined the use of students’ criminal background data. Additionally, the researcher explained in Swedish that participation was voluntary and all information would be kept confidential. While explaining the purposes and procedures of the study, the researcher encouraged students to ask questions. To ensure confidentiality, participants were provided pseudonyms and potentially identifying information was withheld during observations, interview transcriptions, and when
writing up the study. Finally, the students were encouraged at the end of each interview to
contact the researcher via the head teacher if they had any questions or concerns in the future.

Students can benefit from the research by “articulating their self-awareness” (Marsh,
2002; Shamai, 2003 in Abrams, 2006, p. 64). In this way, participating in the study could
help students understand their education and improve confidence in their goals and strategies.
Moreover, the researcher sought to provide a positive and meaningful experience for students
that participated in the study. Before each interview, students were encouraged that their
perspectives were important to other people. Often, the voices of incarcerated youth are
excluded from research and policy discussions (Abrams, 2006; Lane et al., 2002). Therefore,
it was hoped that this study could help provide a voice, or at least show appreciation for, the
perspectives of the student participants. This was illustrated at the end of one of the
interviews:

    Student 1: When guys like you come here, at first we are like, who’s that? Who’s that?
    He’s new here, we don’t like outsiders like that. But then, alright, he’s here to talk with
    some of us and, yeah, he’s going to ask questions. There’s nothing wrong with that. As
    long as we can help and it’s cool if you can take it with you back to the US.

    Interviewer: I hope so…

    Student 1: Yea, if you can do that, get the opportunity to do that, it would be really cool
    I think. And everyone here would think that, too. Because then we helped.

Partly to reinforce this point, the researcher has planned a follow-up visit for roughly three
months after the field visits and plans to provide students with copies of the completed study.

For adult participants in the study, informed consent was acquired prior to the
interviews. Additionally, adult participants consented to the research using their professional
titles in the report.

Finally, this study has been conducted for research purposes, and has not been used
for commercial or non-scientific purposes (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002).

3.4 Sample and participants

The study utilizes a purposive sample of 12 respondents in order to explore pedagogical
aspects in the Stigby sport and health program and their relationship to objectives and
outcomes. According to Bryman (2012), “the goal of purposive sampling is to sample
cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research
questions” (p. 418). To this end, the sample aimed to gather perspectives from students, teachers/coaches, and stakeholders who were either directly involved in the sports program or could provide insight into the values and objectives surrounding the program. Additionally, qualitative samples with a variety of perspectives can increase the dependability of data through triangulation (Bryman, 2012). In this way, responses from different interviewees can be used corroborate or contest statements for validity, and similar responses can therefore suggest a shared social reality. Table 5 provides an overview of interview participants including their professional roles or involvement in the program and the language and length of interviews conducted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Length of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Head teacher</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>64 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coach</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>47 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Institution’s chief</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>66 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Administrator/chairman at VAIS(^4)</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>51 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Research secretary</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>50 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Psychologist</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>32 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Former national team coach</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>22 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students (* plays with VAIS)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student 1 *</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>52 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student 2 *</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student 3 *</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>16 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student 4</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>13 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student 5 *</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5 Data collection

The primary method for data collection was qualitative semi-structured interviews with a variety of actors involved in the program. This method was selected to allow flexibility to inductively explore responses relevant to the research questions as they arose during data collection (Bryman, 2012). Similarly, Bryman (2012) notes that the flexibility of semi-structured interviews generally allows for deeper exploration of participants’ perspectives and a richer data set. Because different actors were able to provide different perspectives,

\(^4\) This respondent held two professional roles of interest in the study. First, he worked as an administrator at the institution, and second he was the chairman of the local sports club, VAIS.
interview guides were designed considering the participant’s involvement in the program (see Appendix 1 for an overview of topics covered in the conducted interviews and Appendix 2 for the interview guides used in the study).

All interview guides were therefore designed with an aim to facilitate descriptions and possible follow-up on pedagogical aspects and objectives/outcomes that were relevant to the respondent’s perspective. Generally, interviews with the educators explored the forms and acts of pedagogy, whereas interviews with students explored perceptions and experiences of sports and learning. Stakeholders included administrators and key witnesses that were involved in the program. The perspectives of this group were valuable for providing insights into the various influences (values) and origins (background) of the program. Interviews with stakeholders and key witnesses were designed considering their professional role in the program and varied accordingly.

Data collection took place during a four-day field visit to SiS Stigby. The researcher relied heavily upon the head teacher as the primary gatekeeper – the person who formally or informally controls access to research (Bryman, 2012). As such, the head teacher helped to recruit respondents and schedule all of the interviews, and without this assistance and organization, this study would not have yielded similar quality of data.

Several qualitative studies that sample incarcerated youth have used “ice-breakers” or relationship-building activities with students prior to data collection as a way of encouraging participation and optimizing data collection (Richardson et al., 2013; Taylor, 2009; Van Hout & Phelan, 2014). The researcher intended at the outset of the study to use sport activities as a way to “break the ice” with potential respondents and encourage students to participate in interviews. On the first evening of the field visit, the researcher practiced football with the local club team at the institution’s sport hall. At the practice, the researcher was able to meet and chat with four of the student respondents who trained with the local club team. There were a number of other instances during the visit where the researcher had contact with students prior to interviews. These included meals, coffee breaks, and one training during school hours. Although it is unclear how these activities have impacted participation in the study, all respondents – students and adults – were positive and open toward the research.

All interviews took place during school hours and were scheduled at convenient times and locations for respondents. Each interview was recorded digitally with the permission of respondents. 14 interviews were conducted during the field visit totaling approximately 10-recorded hours. Two of these interviews, however, were not used in the study. They have been excluded from data analysis mainly due to time limitations.
One limitation with the interviews was that the researcher was not fully fluent in Swedish. To address this limitation, the researcher prepared and translated a generous number of questions and anticipated follow-ups prior to the interviews. Subsequently, some of the interviews conducted in Swedish were more structured than those in English, as the researcher was less able to spontaneously follow-up with or explore responses. During transcription and analysis it was apparent that a number of opportunities for follow-up questions were missed. For example, one student interviewed in Swedish mentioned that when participating in the sport program, “you feel better in your brain”. This could have been a chance to discuss perceived psychological benefits in greater depth, but the statement was not fully understood by the researcher. Another limitation, but only for a few of the interviews, was that the researcher had limited time to prepare questions in advance. In particular, the opportunity to interview the psychologist and the former national team coach arose unexpectedly. Nonetheless, these interviews were fruitful and yielded some significant data.

In addition to interviews, and to a much lesser extent, the study also uses observations and institutional data or documents as a supplementary source of data. These sources are mainly used to provide some background or description of the case and for providing examples to support findings. These data include photos taken at the institution, institutional follow-up data, and various documents provided by the head teacher and other administrators.

3.6 Grounded theory analysis

The study uses a “grounded theory” approach to data analysis. There are a number of definitions regarding grounded theory, some of which are conflicting, and the term is sometimes used without specification (Bryman, 2012; Gibson & Brown, 2009). Gibson and Brown (2009) suggest that grounded theory can be broadly defined as the generation of theory through the process of data analysis as opposed to being produced prior to. As such, concepts and theories produced by the grounded theory approach are “grounded” within, and not imposed upon, the data.

Charmaz (2006) describes grounded theory data analysis as an extensive and continuous process. As such, data analysis occurs during many phases of the research, from transcription to the writing and re-writing of drafts (Bryman, 2012; Charmaz, 2006; Gibson & Brown, 2009). Because there are many variations of grounded theory data analysis, and
this method can sometimes be illusive to convey, the author has created a diagram to illustrate the analytical procedure undertaken in this study (see Figure 3 below). The figure shows a methodical process of grappling with, narrowing and refining the initial data (recorded interviews).

![Figure 3: Analytical procedure in the study](Image)

All interviews in English were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Interviews in Swedish were translated with the help of a native Swedish speaker with high English proficiency. Swedish interviews were simultaneously transcribed and translated, so that the feel and essence of the conversation could be best captured (Filep, 2009). Translated interviews attempted to resemble verbatim transcriptions by including grammatical errors, false starts, and fillers.

After transcription, the researcher read through all interview transcripts several times before coding the data line by line. Coding can be understood as the process of naming or defining sections of data (Charmaz, 2006). Codes were generated in relation to the research questions. Next, codes were grouped into categories, which can be seen as sorting or grouping codes together. One expression from the interviews, “rings on the water” (the Swedish literal translation for “ripple effect”), inspired a model for understanding sports pedagogy in relation to objectives and outcomes (see Figure 4 in Findings). This impression was tested through a constant comparative method, during which emerging categories were continuously compared with the data (Charmaz, 2006; Gibson & Brown, 2009). The general model was validated after re-examining the data and finding an absence of contradictory or outlying codes and categories.
Through an ongoing process of constant comparison, the model was refined until all codes, categories and themes reached theoretical saturation, the point at which “an instance of a particular code comprises nothing new in the form of properties but simply reaffirms what is already known” (Gibson & Brown, 2009). This process was carried out until the submission of the final draft. Although some categories were re-named and moved around, the finalized model closely resembles the initial model.

The finalized model is a characterization of data using the metaphor of “rings on the water” that is grounded in the data of this study and induced through a grounded theory approach to data analysis. Charmaz (2006) states: “Diagrams can offer concrete images of our ideas. The advantage of diagrams is that they provide a visual representation of categories and their relationships” (p. 117). Likewise, comparative education scholars (see Eckstein, 1983 and Epstein, 2011) espouse the use of metaphor as a way of making complex social phenomena easily graspable. Epstein (2011) states that metaphors “allow us to make abstractions concrete so as to encourage us to see such meanings in familiar lights that clearly resonate with previously shared experiences” (p. 94).

Findings from the data analysis are structured around the key themes and corresponding categories of the finalized model and are exemplified by anonymized verbatim quotes from the interviews and in some cases photographs.
4. Findings

Participants described teaching and learning through sports in relation to program objectives as a form of cumulative development. In particular, it was discussed as a process set in motion with a number of intermediary and long-term objectives, strategies, and outcomes. The themes and categories that emerged from the case study were corroborated or “triangulated” by multiple participants, often by students, stakeholders and educators alike. It can therefore be said that participants’ representations had a high degree of trustworthiness or internal validity (Bryman, 2012).

The Swedish expression for the “ripple effect” translates literally to “rings on the water”. This expression was used by the head teacher when discussing getting students involved in training, and inspired a conceptual model for understanding pedagogical processes in relation to the objectives and outcomes of the program (see Figure 4 below). As such, the model illustrates how pedagogical values/principles and strategies/methods build upon each other within an expanding and cumulative process of development. In Figure 4, themes related to the model are indicated in bold, and key corresponding categories of pedagogical aspects are italicized.

![Figure 4: "Rings on the water" - Sports pedagogy in relation to objectives/outcomes](image-url)
The core theme that emerged from the data was a process of getting involved that encompassed the categories of using positive experiences, meeting the individual, and a respect or understanding for the student. This core theme and respective categories were traced back and consistently associated with other themes and key categories from the interviews. As such, getting involved through positive experiences, meeting the individual and having a respect or understanding for students was interpreted as both a point of departure that set a process of teaching and learning in motion, and a theme or value that continually guided or reinforced pedagogy. Getting involved had multiple meanings throughout other categories, or “rings”, in the model. For example, the concept of getting involved incorporates getting students interested or motivated to join the program, while also signifying the daily process of getting students engaged in a lesson. Additionally, getting involved reflects the mission the program: to help students find lasting pro-social leisure interests.

Data evoked and validated this model in a number of ways. “Rings on the water” signify a cumulative process set in motion, meaning that there is a point of departure that also has a continuing effect and presence in later stages or “rings on the water”. Getting involved reverberates throughout the interviews, and can be considered as the “core” category that emerged from the data. When viewing a ripple on the surface, it is possible to distinguish one ripple or concentric circle from another but beneath there is a degree of fluidity, inter-connectedness and depth that can be more difficult to discern. While it is possible to distinguish and separate subsequent categories within the data, themes should be viewed as permeable or inter-related.

Respondents discussed objectives and outcomes, such as pathways for students, in open, non-quantitative terms and without specification. As such, objectives and outcomes were discussed in terms of experiences, meaningfulness, and possibilities. These themes within the data evoked a more non-linear, fluid and open model rather than a linear and/or compartmentalized model. Therefore, the expanding and fluid nature of “rings on the water” can help to illustrate the way in which respondents described objectives and outcomes. For a contrasting conceptualization, see above Table 2: “The elements of a crime reduction program in sequence” (Nichols, 2007, p. 180).

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5 It is important to distinguish that the “rings on the water” model emphasizes the cumulative layers of pedagogy and development described in this study. It is therefore cautioned that viewing the model as “a drop in the water” can de-emphasize or over-simplify this aspect of the findings.
Respondents themselves ordered and connected the thematic categories in the model. Often, respondents would connect multiple categories in a similar sequence within the same thought or flow of conversation. A few times, the entire model was discussed in the same flow of conversation – from the starting point towards an undefined outcome, including intermediary steps and processes. The following interview excerpt provides an example:

Institution’s Chief: *I mean if you like to play soccer, and I do too, let’s say I’m the staff and you are the pupil, and I’m very good at playing soccer, and [it] is your best interest, so when we meet here, if you and I can do these things together, you like it and I like it, and I have a lot to learn [teach] you about it, we can go to VAIS and train together, and we in a way build a kind of relationship, in there you have a very important pedagogic point... So if you start listening to me as a staff about football and we build up a relationship. Of course sometimes we talk about soccer, but when we spend time together, many times, many hours every day, we probably talk about other things than just soccer. And we maybe talk about norms and morals and ethical, you know, whatever, drugs and so on. If you trust me you will probably listen to beside soccer. You see the point?*

Interviewer: *Absolutely*

Institution’s Chief: *There you have the pedagogic...(looking for word)*

Interviewer: *Foundation?*

Institution’s Chief: *Yes, the platform in a way. So this is a very important principle, that our head goal is not to, of course if you can produce a new Zlatan (star football player), it will be good.*

Interviewer: *Why not?*

Institution’s Chief: *But the head goal is maybe to get young people a new start in life so they can make themselves a good life – what you and I mean with a good life. This is our head point.*

4.1 Getting involved

Participants discussed the centrality of getting students involved in a learning or developmental process as both a long-term and daily objective. Providing a positive experience and meeting the individual emerged as the key strategies for getting students involved in the program and subsequently initiating a developmental process or trajectory. Similarly, these two strategies were used on a daily basis to get students involved in the lesson and facilitate learning. Furthermore, using positive experiences and students’ interests to encourage and engage students were inter-related, and somewhat inseparable as a starting point for getting students involved. Getting students involved, both on a daily basis and in a long-term perspective, was frequently connected to an understanding or awareness of
students’ situations. Thus, a guiding principle for getting students involved was to respect and understand the student.

**Positive experiences and meeting the individual**

Respondents acknowledged that many of the youth at Stigby were interested in football.

*It’s always football we’re talking about everyday. If you doesn’t talk about football, something is really wrong.* (Student 1)

*One point is to, as we have already talked about, just to find the matching point. It’s important that you find how it matches what the pupils are really interested in so they can go in a good progress.* (Institution’s chief)

*They want to play football, and that is a way to get through to them and to get them to want to be here and do something. And then maybe they will agree to go to a program.* (Research secretary)

Positive experiences and having fun were mentioned as both a long-term and daily objective.

*One of the goals is when they’re here at Stigby school during one year I’m going to try to make their time here as good as possible. That they have a little bit of fun, that it’s not only negatives, it’s a little fun, trust and understanding what has gone wrong.* (Head teacher)

*The goal as I said before is that we should have a nice day together. That’s the goal, that they can get out of bed and come up here, and that’s step one.* (Head teacher)

Likewise, the head teacher described getting students involved and meeting the student as part of a daily process.

*The guys come here 8:30 in the morning, often very tired. Some have just woken up and haven’t eaten breakfast. They are tired. Some go on medication that makes them sleepy and the medication hasn’t worn off, so they can sleep during the night. I normally start with that we take it easy and we watch some kind of training video on TV where I have a bunch of different small films. We brew coffee and just try to get it started (ease into the day). For those that haven’t eaten breakfast, I always try to make them some sandwiches so they get something in their system. Then we start to work.* (Head teacher)

Respondents described a number of short-term or immediate benefits of sports and training. The most commonly mentioned benefits were eating better, sleeping better, and feeling better. In this way, respondents associated training with feeling good.

*I sleep good, I eat good, do you understand? You feel happy and stuff.* (Student 2)

*I can come out 3 to 4 times per week, train a bit, get tired, and sleep well.* (Student 4)
These benefits - eating well, sleeping well, feeling well – were viewed as enabling students to function better in a number of domains at the institution. Additionally, they were associated with encouraging other students to take interest.

_The short term I think they will function better here because they moved a lot. They eat better. They think a lot about what they eat. I think that’s very important to study, to be, just to be in a good mood and not be angry._ (Research secretary)

_And something that I’ve noticed is if two guys start with it one week, then it’s four that trains next week, so it becomes rings on the water._ (Head teacher)

**Understanding students’ background and situations**

The process of getting involved was often connected to the background and situation of students. This included both prior experiences and circumstances at the institution.

_Some students are happy just being here and to be in school and train and have fun. And that’s also very important for these students to have fun because they haven’t had this much fun before. Like the kids say when they talk about fun, it’s connected to a crime, chased by the police. For them, that’s something fun. Here they get a chance to experience having fun and be happy._ (Head teacher)

Although sport, in particular football, was viewed as popular at the institution, respondents highlighted the importance of considering the interests, abilities and previous experiences of students in sports. Students enter the institution with a wide range of previous sports experiences, level of ability, and attachments to sport. Some may have been in clubs prior to coming to the institution, but not all students claimed experience with organized sports.

_I played some soccer when I was just a little kid, for a while. Then I played hockey for 14 years. I played, I played in the junior team for the town, so I played kind of high division… Yeah it was fun. It was, sometimes we had to like train two times in one day so it was very tough, you know? But it was fun. I lived for it._ (Student 1)

_I actually like to train. I’ve been training for a long time… from like when I was 8 to 9 years old, then I took a break, then I trained again, but I’ve always liked to train._ (Student 5)

_Before, I didn’t do sports that much. I only played soccer with friends, only a couple times during the week. Not seriously. It wasn’t more than that._ (Student 3)

_I didn’t like soccer at all before I came here, but when I came here I really liked it. You got to try it, and it was fun, and you wanted to do it more and more. And then I got to start with [the head teacher] and the program and then you did it even more and now you like it so much._ (Student 4)
It was also important to consider the student’s situation beyond his previous sport experiences or interests. One student described his and other students’ condition before arriving to the institution.

> What have we done before, some of us have been doing drugs and that kind of stuff for like four years and we have destroyed ourselves in a way people not can imagine or was even thought was possible to do. (Student 1)

Respondents frequently discussed the benefits of sports as a way focusing on the positives and diverting the negatives in students’ lives. Sport and exercise were perceived as a way for students to “clean your thoughts” or provide relief from psychological pressures. Similarly, sport was discussed as a way to escape the stresses and boredom of institutional life.

> I think also that many of our students say that they have trouble sleeping. They have anxiety. They are not exactly depressed but we call it (low-spirited). They are near depressed. They are a little low. So I think it’s the best medicine for them is that they move. They train at the daytime and they can sleep better at night. And anxiety when they sit and just think and think and they don’t have so much good things to think about, it’s only negative things. So that’s why I think training is very good. (Psychologist)

> It’s like, you know, if you don’t like do something you get restless, you know, if you know that what is. It’s like your body itches, you can’t sit still, you know, so when you play football or do sports you’re a little bit calmer. So, that’s what I like the most. You can do sports, get tired and a bit calmer. You can also, like, clean your thoughts. (Student 3)

> This kind of, how do you say, environment, it’s a lot of strains. You don’t [get] used to this, so it’s kind of hard to concentrate sometimes. So I think that sports, when we play football down in the hall, it’s I think those times when we play, most of the kids here, is just letting all the thoughts away. (Student 1)

> Just have something to do instead of sitting still. (Student 4)

> A lot of [students] have psychiatric problems. When they are in the department they think about that all the time, and then they come out and do something else... And they don’t need to relive everything. They need to do something positive and focus on something that they are good at. (Research secretary)

### 4.2 Foundations for teaching and learning

Developing positive relationships with students was viewed as a “platform” or “foundation” for teaching and learning. In this way, relationships were perceived as enabling or improving the quality of pedagogy. Respondents highlighted how sports settings enabled or assisted
with social bonding by dissipating barriers between people. Forming meaningful bonds with students was grounded in students’ positive experiences with the program and their (mutual) interests. Additionally, participants identified a number of qualities or attitudes in teachers that contributed or were connected to these relationships. The most common qualities discussed by participants were to listen, being positive or encouraging, non-judgmental or respectful, and having an authentic desire to work with youth. The following excerpts from one of the students and the head teacher illustrate the perceived importance of relationships and how these bonds increased the possibilities and quality of learning:

*He’s not just the teacher, or someone who is working here. You get to know someone and you obviously get to learn (teach) us in a whole other way. You see us from our best side when we play football because everyone loves and enjoys playing football so much they don’t think about anything else.* (Student 1)

*I think that that is the big key, that the guys can talk with me and feel safe that I listen and I don’t impose my values on them. We can discuss. I can think that maybe it was wrong of them, but I don’t get angry with them. We talk about why they did it, why he robbed that retired person. They’ve already had a lecture. That’s a lot of the foundation when you build a relationship, and then that relationship always goes towards the learning. Then they listen to me and they actually think that what I’m saying is kind of important, because they trust me, and they often like me, and then it's much easier to teach what you want them to learn.* (Head teacher)

**Dissipating barriers**

Many respondents described how sport helped dissipate perceived barriers between people and bring different groups together.

*It’s about soccer. When we’re going to play soccer, we don’t go to fight. We go to play soccer.* (Student 2)

*You have to accept everyone because it doesn’t matter if he’s black or white. I like that about sports, because everyone is the same in sports. As long as you play on the same team it doesn’t matter if you’re black or white or what kind of religion you have.* (Student 1)

Psychologist: I have heard our students say that we were there and some normal adults come... so how do you define normal? What is normal? These things make them take distance from those positive persons, positive, what do you call it?  
Interviewer: Peers  
Psychologist: *Yea, exactly. Exactly. Because they say that we can never be the same. They are they and we are we. But in this kind of situation they meet and they say that we are not so different. We can be friends. We can blend in.*
The dissipation of barriers between people was also discussed from the perspective of the sports club (VAIS).

_Stigby boys are [taken for granted] in VAIS. So the boys (non-students) that play in VAIS, they don’t sit and think about if his name is [Student 1] and what crime he has committed. That’s a question that doesn’t exist._ (Administrator/Chairman at VAIS)

One administrator attributed the ability to dissipate barriers and bring people together to the universality and widespread accessibility of football.

_Every little small society has a football club. I come from a tiny village with 100 people. We have a football club... I think it’s a very good way to bring the whole community together._ (Research secretary)

**Building relationships**

Student-teacher relationships were viewed as an important “ground” for teaching and learning. The institution’s chief used the idea of an “ordinary family with good relations” to describe the importance of relationships in guaranteeing a “good progress in life”.

_And then you have for themselves as we talked about before you... the most important. Build a relationship, not the relationship itself but what you can do with the relation as a ground. I will compare with, if you know, an ordinary family with good relations. There you have the same processes, mother and father and son and daughters. Good relations in a way guarantee your good progress in life._ (Institution’s Chief)

Several qualities related to good student-teacher relationships were mentioned. Respondents frequently cited that it was important for teachers or coaches to be positive and encouraging.

_[The head teacher] is not like stone hard [strict]. I don’t know the right word for it, but some coaches just scream at you, and some coaches are more like understanding and encouraging. [The head teacher] is like that. [He] is like that. He encourages you. That’s a good coach._ (Student 4)

_My philosophy, when it comes to soccer or leadership is, what should I say, I believe in this: are you happy then you can reach where you want to reach._ (Head teacher)

_“It’s ok you do the wrong pass but next time you’re going to do it better.” All the times it’s good feedback. Always._ (Coach)

Another quality that was important to respondents was being able to listen.

_Interviewer: What do you think makes a good coach? Coach: He listens._
So if you just listen I think that’s one and the only key to being a good coach. You have to listen. Of course, you’re the coach. Everyone has to listen to you. But you have to listen to other people to if you want to, yea, if it’s going to be good. (Student 1)

Students also perceived that a good coach or teacher needed to genuinely like their job and care about their students. Conversely, one student described a bad coach as someone who does not care.

*It is that [the head teacher] himself wants us to train. He wants the best for us.*
(Student 5)

*If you want to help kids, for example half here works with kids here because they’ve been in the same or friends, they want to stop kids from going through the same as they did and help them. To become a teacher, if you like it, if you like it, it’s no problem.*
(Student 5)

*A bad coach? They don’t care. They don’t care. They just come when they want to come just because they have to. They don’t like it, that’s a bad coach I think, if they don’t like their job and they don’t really want to do it. That’s not good I think.*
(Student 3)

Similarly, when asked, “what makes a good coach”, one administrator gave the following response:

*He has to want to do this, want to teach something and not just...I think you have to like people. You have to want to do something more than, just not being interested in football because then you can go to the game. You have to want to see young people grow and help them, yea, like a little prospect, almost like parenting in some ways.*
(Research secretary)

While relationships were perceived as an important foundation for teaching and learning, the head teacher also described the importance of keeping the relationship professional. Knowing about the tough circumstances facing former students could be difficult or stressful.

*Because you get so many students, you want to know how it goes for them. But if I know that it doesn’t go well, I don’t want to lie at home and think about them because you get eaten from the inside.* (Head teacher)

**Respect and credibility**

Building relationships with students was connected to respect and credibility. One student attributed his “good contact” with the coach and trainer to mutual “respect”: 
Student 2: I have a good contact. Respect and it’s about respect. We joke with each other. It’s a good contact, actually.
Interviewer: Why do you have respect for them?
Student 2: Because they have respect for me, and then I give them respect back. It’s all about respect.

The head teacher explained that it was important to have certain knowledge in order have credibility. This was separated as sport-specific knowledge and knowledge about the body and psyche.

You should have the knowledge because otherwise you don’t get credibility. You should know your thing. Theoretically put, you should know soccer. You should know positions, rules. You should think like a trainer... You should know drills... You should be able to tape. (Head teacher)

You need to know about the body to answer questions about the body. Be able to answer why does my knee hurt, what has happened? (Head teacher)

However, the head teacher also explained that respect for this knowledge had to be earned, and depended upon certain interactions with the students.

Head teacher: You should be able to do all of those things, but also if you can do all that but you are a tyrant...
Interviewer: tyrant?
Head teacher: yea, if you just yell and scream and point and shout and so on. Then everything else has disappeared and the respect for what he knows. But if you are warm, open, confident in yourself, you’re happy, talk, clap, then you earn that respect that you have that knowledge, I think.

4.3 Developing skills and knowledge

Respondents perceived that the program helped students to develop multiple skills and forms of knowledge. Those mentioned or described included social skills such as being able to work in a group; empathy or caring about others; and responsibility or learning to be autonomous. Respondents described a number of pedagogical strategies related to developing skills and knowledge within the sports program. These often drew upon relationships, positive experiences and individuals’ interests. Some key pedagogical aspects within the sport and health program were having fun, using a variety of activities, working in groups, “learning without knowing”, student-centered learning, and embedding learning or instruction within sports or training activities. Many of these strategies were discussed simultaneously and can be seen as interdependent and/or complementary.
**Having fun**

Having fun was represented as a strategy to keep students engaged in the program, motivated to continue training, and as a way to enhance the quality of learning. Having fun was connected to helping students learn or develop in “the long run”.

Don’t be too hard [strict] trainer, that’s not good, then you don’t want to go to the trainings. It’s like, now this guy is going to stand and shout at me. You should be more like encouraging. Like, come on, come on, you can do it! That makes it much more fun in the long run. (Student 4)

Because if they don’t have fun, they don’t learn. Happiness, have fun, feel comfortable with each other, then shot technique, condition, and everything else comes. (Head teacher)

[The coach and head teacher] are nice first of all and they are, its fun to be with them. It’s fun to train with the coach and it’s fun to be with [the head teacher] to get classes. Its pretty good actually, they’re not boring people. (Student 3)

While it was generally agreed upon that being “nice”, “positive” and “encouraging” were qualities needed for teaching, it was also important for the teacher and the coach to enforce the rules and be strict at times.

Don’t yell, but you have to sometimes, you have to like yell and scream and say, don’t do that, because we’re going to get a red card or yellow card. So you have to be hard sometimes. As long as you’re nice and fair it’s going to be okay I think. (Student 1)

I think you have to not be afraid to take responsibility if someone does something that they are not, you must dare to tell them that that is not allowed. So being firm, actually. (Research secretary)

Therefore, it was perceived that a sport teacher or coach needed to balance these two strategies when interacting with youth.

And I believe in being warm and safe and listen a lot at the same time as you are strict, at times, but then they really listen. Because you don’t shout all the time. But when you actually do, and become angry or annoyed, they understand that it’s serious. (Head teacher)

**A variety of activities**

Providing a “smorgasbord”, or variety, of activities was associated with greater chances of finding a leisure interest in the future. However, choosing appropriate activities was not discussed as a matter of random choice. This was connected to an awareness of students’
previous backgrounds and a general lack of opportunities in sports and leisure. At the same time, it was seen as a way of matching education with the interests of the student and part of the general objective that students have a positive and pro-social experience with sports and exercise. Thus, combining a variety of activities and positive experiences with those activities was viewed as a way to help students find an interest.

_I use all activities that I have because it’s very important that they get to test as much as they can instead of it just being only soccer. Because I think if they get to test, there is a bigger chance that they will find an interest that’s going to last. They have, for example, never played tennis. They have never played badminton._ (Head teacher)

_I usually say I want to give them a big smorgasbord with a lot of different things and hopefully maybe one thing fits them, maybe not soccer, maybe not innebandy, but badminton. And then maybe they can play badminton later with a friend, or in a club. But if you never get to test something, then they don’t have any interests._ (Head teacher)

The psychologist related access to a variety of activities to adolescent identity formation.

_Because in this period, adolescence, there is a period that you try everything. You try everything to find which one you can be._ (Psychologist)

A variety of activities were reflected in the sport and health curriculum (see Table 6 below). Although the program has a focus in football, the curriculum includes many units or activities besides football.

**Table 6: Units/activities in the sport and health curriculum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units/activities in the sport and health curriculum</th>
<th>* suggested activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Playing a sport or game (indoors)</td>
<td>• First aid, CPR, swim and ice safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Playing a sport or game (outdoors)</td>
<td>• Navigation with map and compass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strength training</td>
<td>• Outdoor recreation, public commons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With equipment</td>
<td>Hiking*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without equipment</td>
<td>• Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Aerobic training</td>
<td>• The ideal body/doping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mental training</td>
<td>• Injury prevention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness*</td>
<td>• Training diary with individual goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga*</td>
<td>Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dance or training program to music</td>
<td>Diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something in a group (VAIS)*</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zumba*</td>
<td>• Swimming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150 m freestyle/50 m backstroke</td>
<td>• First aid, CPR, swim and ice safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nutrition</td>
<td>• Navigation with map and compass</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The ideal body/doping</td>
<td>• Outdoor recreation, public commons</td>
</tr>
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<td>• Injury prevention</td>
<td>Hiking*</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Training diary with individual goals</td>
<td>• Nutrition</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Diet</td>
<td>• The ideal body/doping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluation</td>
<td>• Injury prevention</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Zumba</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
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</tbody>
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One of the more visible examples of intentional selection of sport activities was the decision to use functional training equipment for strength training and conditioning instead of free weights. Figure 5 shows two images of the sport hall and the training equipment used in the program and at the institution. Pictured below, functional training equipment included TRX suspension training, fitness ropes, and a climbing wall.

Figure 5: Functional training equipment at the institution

The traditional gym, or “old fashioned weight lifting”, was associated with a negative “gym code” which placed stress on students to be competitive or become body fixated. Functional training was seen as a way to “crack the gym code”. The decision to use functional training instead of free weights was also rationalized as a way to give students an appreciation of training as a way of “feeling good”.

*Because the students get so fixated with muscles and they compare with each other, how much do you lift? I lift this. That I don’t want to have because that builds a stress for them. You’re not as big as I am, and I only lift 80 kilos...That’s why I believe in this functional training, that combines badminton with soccer, or just go out to run with chins or dips and crossfit. Because then you take away this, that you train not to get big muscles, you train because you want to feel good... You just need to crack this gym code, the weights. There are other ways to train.* (Head teacher)

*I think it’s very, very good. But it’s not very popular just now because they see the old fashioned weight lifting and they say how much you lift, how much I lift. And they become body fixation, they think just about body... Because I think you start training for health, to have a healthy body, but if everything is just sports for winning, then you push over your limit, then you can hurt yourself.* (Psychologist)
In this way, sports activities were associated with personal well-being and enjoyment while competition was de-emphasized.

*What have I learned? It doesn’t have to be about winning, it can be about having fun.*
(Student 4)

**Working in groups**

Respondents illustrated the importance of being able to work in groups and building social skills. For the head teacher, it was important that students train together. Additionally, some of the students commented that they enjoyed the team atmosphere or teamwork.

*It’s always a lot of people there, when you train, you always deal with a lot of people, that’s a good training. Out in society it’s a lot of people, you deal with people at work, everywhere you know around us there is a lot of people. And they always want us to train on that, get better, you know, to make connections, and build relations. That you do within football.* (Student 3)

...the most important thing is that we can work in a group. We should have a joint goal. During this training we should train soccer for one hour, then we should run half an hour and everyone should be a part of all of that. (Head teacher)

Interviewer: *What do you like best in sports and football?*
Student 4: *Teamwork, that I like a lot.*

Working in groups, or “using the team”, was also discussed as a pedagogical strategy; not only for teaching students how to work in a group, but as a way to help lift up and support students and practice empathy and caring for others.

*It’s all, everything we talk about, it is the team. The team takes the players and lifts him. Even if you do something wrong in the game, it’s okay. It’s okay.* (Coach)

I’ve done it a few times with guys that have felt really bad that I have taken into the soccer group so they can get something else to think about. They have not been soccer players. You met one of them yesterday, that has not ever played soccer. And he’s only there so he can start enjoying life. That’s a challenge, that you can use the power of sport to feel better. And you can use the group. You don’t tell the group that he’s here to feel better, but everyone understands and he understands that everyone knows. And you see how the group is working with taking care of him. That’s exciting to see, and also a challenge. (Head teacher)
Empathy and caring

Several respondents cited a perceived improvement in empathy or ability to “respect” or “care about” other people.

*I see a huge benefit in how their empathy increases in them. You care about each other in a group.* (Head teacher)

*To care about other people. Think about my surroundings, those who exist around me, actually, because that’s what you do within sports, especially team sports. You think about your teammates. That’s one of the things I’ve learned.* (Student 3)

*I learn, how should I say. Respect others. If someone gets hurt you shouldn’t be aggressive. How should I say, be nice to each other. You shouldn’t kick him or spit on him.* (Student 2)

Learning empathy was related to the general background of some students and perceived lack of empathy prior to incarceration.

*How you should act towards a person. If you have tackled someone you go up to them and say I’m sorry, how are you doing. That they have never done before when they’ve beaten someone in the city.* (Head teacher)

Autonomy and responsibility

One of the most common skills that respondents identified as important for students was being autonomous, or “self-going”, and responsible. This ability was important to develop because students would eventually “have a life on their own out in the society”.

*You beat your own motor and not me. I can help you, in the beginning, but I cannot live your life. It’s you who have to do that. So you have to take response and take care of yourself and I will support you as long as I can. And I will see the progress you take more and more of your own motivation. I will not every day go and tell you what to do. You [yourself] have to see what you have to do and then you follow that and take more and more response.* (Institution’s chief)

*I think that [the students] need to trust themselves, what they are doing. I think so. Because we are trying to build them here (points to heart), to trust themselves, because they are going to have a life on their own out in the society.* (Coach)

One of the devices used to teach responsibility and autonomy was for students to sign a contract to care for their training clothes. Students were issued a set of the Swedish national team’s official warm-up gear, including a jacket, pants, shirt, shorts and socks. The school
also provided football shoes for the students. In turn, the students signed a contract and agreed to a set of rules for getting these items.

My demand is all clothes should be newly washed and they get one set of the national team’s training outfit: warm-ups, shorts and socks, t-shirt and shoes. And then they get to sign a contract that they’re going to take care of it in a good way; that they clean it and use it in training. You don’t use it during private time. Don’t walk around in it in the wards, absolutely not. You use it when you train soccer. And if you don’t fulfill those parts that I say that you should do, when it comes to clothes, time, training, and so on, then we take back the outfit. And if you’ve finished the program, you get to keep the outfit and use it however you want. (Head teacher)

This device was also used to unite students, or build “togetherness”, and to create excitement around the program and getting more students interested.

It also makes them feel together. If everyone were wearing different clothes, we wouldn’t get the same togetherness that we have now. And the other guys at Stigbyskolan see that it’s the soccer team that’s going to train now. And during spring, summer and fall, it’s very fun when we train out on the soccer field when everyone sees how good we look. (Head teacher)

“Learn without knowing”

One way in which respondents described learning through sport was by “learning without knowing”. This strategy was associated with having fun and keeping students engaged.

And if we together make it fun they come back every day and they learn without knowing that they’re learning. (Head teacher)

So yeah it’s so much more than just playing. Yea it’s so much more. For me, especially, it’s so much more than just playing, it’s getting social skills that I can use when I’m moving to my own place. Yeah I think that’s important to see all, the whole thing, to look at the whole thing in another view. So at first I just thought we’re just playing and it doesn’t, it has nothing to do with social skills. But now when I’ve been here for [a long time], it’s almost not playing, it’s just social skills training. (Student 1)

Student-directed learning

A related teaching strategy was using student-directed learning. It was perceived that students learn best when interested or involved, and therefore the students were empowered to steer the direction of lessons. This strategy required the teacher to be flexible or adaptable in order to make use of teachable moments.
What is positive is that one day is not like another day. They ask so many questions, so it’s very easy to start talking about another kind of subject that they are interested in. Then you go on that subject for a while, because when they are positive and they want to learn, it is important to offer them that. That’s when they learn. (Head teacher)

Similarly, being flexible was seen as necessary in order to provide support to students in stressful or difficult situations. These situations required the teacher to be a sort of counselor as well.

And some days you have to throw away all the books that you have because they have had a bad night, maybe they have had a talk with their parents the day before, maybe they are going to have a meeting with the social service on the afternoon, it’s a lot of things going through their mind. Then I think that that day you should just sit down and drink coffee and talk some shit. (Head teacher)

It was viewed as important that students see for themselves their own progress and arrive at their own conclusions. Achievements and improvements, such as improved fitness in school, were described as a meaningful experience for students, particularly because they might not have achieved so much in school prior to their incarceration.

Then I do these fitness tests. I weigh them regularly and they do this health profile once a month so they can themselves see that they actually feel better. And also that they get a number that they have improved fitness, maybe the most positive they’ve got when it comes to tests, exams, that they actually become better in something. (Head teacher)

I usually tell [the head teacher] that the best way to find the solution is [to allow] the person to find it themselves. If you come with the answer, nobody takes it. Exactly, exactly. So if I tell them that smoking is not good for you, nobody listen. But make them run, when they run, and you do the test, and they say oh, I can’t. Then can you say, “What do you think it is that you cannot run? You are young, you’re healthy, what’s up?” Many of them say themselves that it’s because of “I smoke”. Many of them say, “So what do you want to do about it?” It’s the best way, not sitting and talking but make them “ok, you want to run, you want to play in the team, so what do you need to do?” (Psychologist)

Several students expressed an interest for wanting to learn more in sport and health.

What I want to learn? Everything. That I have figured out now. Everything. (Student 5)

I want to learn how to take care of your body, do you understand? How you feel better and stuff like that. How you feel good. (Student 2)
Embedded learning

The use of embedded learning to build in subject knowledge and academic skills around sports activities was observed and discussed by the head teacher. One embedded learning strategy was to use fitness tests with students to engage them in math problems and build skills in numeracy. Figure 6 shows pictures of two of these fitness tests on whiteboards in the classroom (left images) and their corresponding formulas within a textbook (right images). Students themselves performed fitness tests and then calculated and compared their results.

Figure 6: Using fitness tests to embed learning

The bottom left image in Figure 6 also illustrates that lessons built in opportunities to talk about wider issues related to sports and health. In this image, a lesson on “mental strength” (mental stryka) is pictured.
4.4 Gradual steps and opportunities for practice

Interviews show that students had opportunities to practice or apply their skills, knowledge and interests in gradually complex or challenging steps. The objective of these gradual steps was to build interest, confidence and ability to take future steps at various levels, such as joining a club after release from the institution, or as a strategy for students to get comfortable with a new kind of drill or exercise. Thus, the use of gradual steps was evident in all stages of the program, including daily sports activities, the sport and health curriculum, and collaboration with the local sports club. Another gradual step towards positive futures was overcoming addictions. Taking these steps and overcoming challenges was viewed as rewarding for students.

“Layering” and curriculum progression

The use of gradual steps was described in the daily sport activities during both school and trainings at the club. In their descriptions, the head teacher and coach evoked the sport concept of “layering” in activities. In some ways, this concept also reflected the head teacher’s approach to “easing into the day” during lessons generally (mentioned above). Likewise, the curriculum for the sports and health program also indicates progressively complex or difficult tasks (see Table 5 above).

"That I think is important you start with a simple drill and then you add more difficult layers on the same drill. That I think is very important for the students that they get comfortable in a drill and then you add on another pass, and then they get comfortable in that. You work with the same drill, but you add on to it. (Head teacher)"

Collaboration with the local sports club (VAIS)

The collaboration with VAIS was viewed as a gradual step and an opportunity to allow students to find an interest and “get comfortable” within a club environment. Getting comfortable in a club environment was subsequently connected to “daring” to be part of a club in the future.

"The collaboration with VAIS is about increasing the knowledge and also security and to dare to be in the team; and to dare to go out to the real society; and to get comfortable in a club. (Administrator/Chairman at VAIS)"
One administrator described how the club was intentionally used as a “tool” for students’ development.

*VAIS is a tool, like an instrument, arena to grow socially.* (Administrator/Chairman at VAIS)

Sport at the club and sport during school were viewed as two different but complementary “social arenas”. This was apparent in the different but complementary styles of sport instruction by the head teacher and coach. The perceived difference between these two styles was that the coach, in the context of competitive sports, pushed students and players harder. Similarly, the club setting was considered as more physically and mentally demanding for students. Having tough trainings and pushing the students was viewed as helping the team become stronger.

*The coach, the most is that, you should do what you should do at practice. He always wants his players to become better. [The head teacher] wants that too, but the coach nags a bit more, and tells you more, that’s the difference really. Otherwise it’s not a huge difference.* (Student 3)

*You have take a fight on the training but in the locker room you are friends. You have to get a fight and I think the most important thing in the training and this is to have a group who is strong.* (Coach)

Respondents cited several challenges and possible risks for joining the club and entering a new environment. However, meeting these challenges was ultimately perceived as a rewarding accomplishment that helped strengthen students. The administrator/chairman at VAIS discussed the anxiety of entering another social environment.

*And then you have to meet with 20 other guys and the first time it’s like when you are meeting a new group. There is some tension, and sometimes a little bit of fear the first practices.* (Administrator/Chairman at VAIS)

Some of the students acknowledged that the level of football in the club was not easy.

*It’s more pressure and, yea, you have to think fast, react, and stuff like that.* (Student 5)

*Before I started playing with VAIS I haven’t played [football] for like 10 years. So it was like, oh my god, it was very hard to hang out with the tempo. Those guys, they have played for all their life, they have never stopped. So it was very tough in the beginning, but you keep up.* (Student 1)
Likewise, the level of football in the men’s A-team involved some physical risks for students.

*You see here sometimes at the training that the local boys they smash the [Stigby students] sometimes when they [have their heads in the clouds]. But it’s a fair tackle. And then they have [taught] the boys I have to [play] the ball and watch my back. They have learned that.* (Coach)

The coach mentioned some possible social risks of interacting with other youth and adults on the team.

*These guys (non-students) who is in VAIS is 25. They drink beers. They are talking about parties.* (Coach)

During the practice, it was observed that the coaches called out the students in front of the team and pointed out their mistakes. When raised during the interview, criticism or feedback during trainings was perceived as a possible threat to the student’s confidence, but more so as an opportunity for learning.

Interviewer: *I noticed one thing; you called them out, the students from Stigby, in front of everybody else.*
Coach: *I think it’s time for them to grow. Of course, I can sink them. But then I talk to them. I talk to them after the training. I talk to them here. And I tell them, if you want to, you have to. I want them to be better. Sometimes in the world and in the life, sometimes you say why did you do that? Now I don’t (didn’t) think, because I had this mind instead. Then we have a dialogue and we can talk about it. So, it’s learning. All the time it’s learning.*

However, despite a number of perceived risks or challenges, respondents described the club as a “welcoming” “social environment” for students. The welcoming environment at the club was considered important for helping students integrate into a new social group or setting.

*The Stigby boys feel welcome and accepted. I don’t think it’s more complicated than that. The social environment is very welcoming. And that’s the winning concept. I don’t want to be in groups if I don’t feel welcome, and neither do you. And they work in the same way. The boys are feeling welcome pretty quickly.* (Administrator/Chairman at VAIS)

*[The students] think that they are very kind, the other adults and teenagers that play [at VAIS]. So they feel that they get, what do you call it, good reception. They get good reception when they are there. Many of them get surprised that even though I come from Stigby, they know here but they take me, they receive me like anyone else.* (Psychologist)

*I didn’t know the people, you know, before I started in VAIS. Now, you know, I talk, you know, I know the most of them. Its good training I think.* (Student 3)
They’re letting us play from Stigby in VAIS and I think that’s cool because then you feel you belong somewhere and that’s kind of important for us who live here. (Student 1)

I think they are feeling [belonging]. That they feel welcome, that is the most important. (Coach)

Becoming a member or playing on the club team was associated with an increased status and a strong identity at the institution.

They get a status here and they become something. A strong identity for the boys, and that you noticed yesterday. “I go to this football program.” That also contributes a status, to be in the club VAIS. I think that it raises your status. (Administrator/Chairman at VAIS)

One student discussed the rewarding nature of being “pushed” in sports.

If you push someone that’s a little bit insecure in themselves it’s like that boy or girl, it can be a grown up too, if you push someone almost to the edge he learns that he can do that. He learns that I can do that and it makes you feel so good. (Student 1)

Selecting and preparing students for the club

Not every student was able to train with VAIS. Before students were declared ready to join the practices with the A-team, several respondents described a process of selection, preparation, and evaluation. While it was recognized that a certain level of football ability was necessary, respondents emphasized motivation and other qualities as being more important for students to be able to train with VAIS.

One important thing is that they have this engine that they want. The guys that are really good in soccer but are the ones that say, “no, I’m too tired to train today with the wards,” I’m not interested in them. The ones that are like, “I don’t want to do it. I’m tired. I want to watch TV.” That’s their choice. But then maybe it’s this guy that’s not good in soccer but has the heart and want. Then we take that guy over the guy who’s a good soccer player. (Head teacher)

You can always work on the feet, and the passes. But you need the fighting and some thinking about football, of course. I always say if you want to play football there is a team for you everywhere. Low, middle, it’s always a football team. (Coach)

It was viewed as the head teacher’s responsibility to “prepare” students in order to give them an opportunity with the club team and help them to meet these challenges.

It’s my responsibility with, for example (Student 2), to prepare him as much as I can what’s going to happen at VAIS. (Head teacher)
So they need a basic foundation in soccer, but they don’t need to be the best in the team. But they need to know the basics in soccer, and that I train with them. (Head teacher)

The head teacher felt a responsibility to provide this opportunity to as many students as possible by motivating students who did not want to be in the club. However, at the same time it was viewed as important to give space and allow students to make their own decision.

Some of them don’t want to go, some just want to play around when it comes to sports, and train and feel good. Then of course I want as many from my group to want to train with VAIS but here you have this bad self-esteem that also comes in and that’s something you always work on with them. That they are good, and that they can. But some of them decide not to train, and that’s also ok. We can never make someone train. (Head teacher)

The head teacher described the importance of supporting students who joined the club and started going to practices.

... someone has a bad self esteem, because he wasn’t good yesterday on the VAIS training. Then maybe I can take a walk with him and talk with him about how good he is so he can grow and go to the next training. (Head teacher)

Several respondents considered that increased collaboration between the institution and the sport club strengthened the process of joining and becoming a member of the team.

The coach and [head teacher’s] collaboration, it makes the belonging more secure. (Administrator/Chairman at VAIS)

...the connection with the trainer at VAIS, [coach], and the staff that works here, but also when the trainer at VAIS comes inform me that [Student’s name] is a bit cranky today, he dropped the ball a lot today, can you work with him on that? Then I train 2 hours with him on that… So the collaboration is like an accordion. (Head teacher)

It’s more integrated because the [head teacher] in his profession or teacher role, he is very near connected to the people or leaders in VAIS personally and what they’re doing, more in sync. (Institution’s chief)

Overcoming addictions

Another significant gradual step towards positive futures was overcoming addictions. One student described the process of building up his physical and mental strength and becoming drug free:
It was like many times I felt like just shoot me in the head, I can’t take this anymore this is so hard I don’t want to be here. Just take me away, I don’t care if it’s jail or Disneyland, just take me away, I don’t want to be here. But I think that process made me the strongest person you ever can be. I’ve never been this strong and confident in my life. (Student 1)

Another student described how he quit smoking cigarettes after he started to train.

When I started to train now, I had to stop smoking. That was good for me. Smoke and play, cigarettes, it’s not good. (Student 2)

The same student described “cravings” to continue training.

Student 2: When I came here to Stigby, my fitness was bad. Now I’ve been training a lot here at Stigby so my fitness is better.
Interviewer: Did it take a long time for you to build up your fitness?
Student 2: No, I mean, in the beginning it’s a bit boring. You feel tired, but then you get a craving from training like you can get cravings for cigarettes. The same cravings you get for cigarette you get for training.

This step could also be linked to a pro-healthy and anti-drug attitude. The same student summarized his learning experience from playing football:

You learn from training and soccer. In community, you go and do drugs. It’s better here. You go and play soccer and do something else, instead of sitting on drugs. It’s not good. It’s better to go and train. You train and you feel better in your body and health and physically. From drugs you feel bad. It’s better to train and feel good. (Student 2)

4.5 Positive futures

Respondents perceived that finding a new leisure interest could lead to new lifestyles and prevent involvement with crime and drugs in the future. Helping students find an interest at the institution and connecting that interest to community structures, such as sports clubs, could accomplish this. New or re-discovered interests in sports were connected with positive/anti-criminal identity formation, structured leisure time and new pro-social networks.

When you leave the institution, it’s very important you have a kind of education, job, what do you do in your spare time. If you don’t fill up this you’re exposed to a lot of bad things. It’s in grand view, you have to work with that. In best of case you find a guy here who started educate in some programs here and find his interest and also find for instance if he likes to play soccer. When I leave here I connect you to a club at my home address, and there I hopefully get some friends, where I can share this interest, and in this way leave my other life with drugs and criminals and you know. (Institution’s Chief)
If they don’t have any positive friends or anybody they know they are high risk to go back to criminality. So this one helps them to find another positive social contact with other people and feeling that they are members of something. And that is very important, because at this age, adolescence, that they are, is the time that they find an identity. They want to be members of group. They want to say who I am. (Psychologist)

**A balanced lifestyle and continuing with sport**

All students stated that they intended to continue with sports in the future, but in a variety of ways and with different expectations, goals or meanings. Nonetheless, students’ future plans all possessed a degree of balance with other ambitions, such as work, school, and having a family.

*In 5 years maybe I can become a player, train a lot, and maybe you can become something. But I’m going to also work and earn money, have my own apartment, and take care of myself. If I’m off on my free time, I’m not going to watch TV. I’m going to train soccer.* (Student 2)

*I don’t think I’m going to be like, big within football. Now I just do it because its fun and I like to do it. Other sports I would probably keep on doing.* (Student 4)

*I’m always going to do sports. I’m never going to stop doing it, that’s my thought when I’m 30 and 40. I’m not thinking I’m going to become Ronaldo (star football player). I want to be better at least.* (Student 3)

*In some way sports is going to stay connected with me. Even if I don’t play, it can be a friend who plays, it can be my own kids if I have some, I can just be going to watch some game. I’m always going to enjoy sports no matter how old I get.* (Student 1)

While one student’s long-term goal with sports was to:

*Play in the national team. That’s my goal.* (Student 5)

The same student also discussed his short-term goals for reentry in the following way:

*I’m going to go to gymnasium and study, work, train. I want to of course train soccer.* (Student 5)

**Using positive experiences later in life**

Another way in which sport was connected to future outcomes was as an experience of success that students could draw upon later in life. In this way, even if former students had experienced a relapse or recidivated, positive sport experiences could be re-visited in the future.
It’s something that they can use when they are 25, even if they get a relapse, when they are 25 they can think about, “I did this and I know how I’m going to do it, and I can do it again.” (Research secretary)

The same administrator provided an example of a former student using previous experiences later in life:

I have an old contact student that I had 10 years ago had a very difficult life. We had contact all the time, and now he remembers, “I know. I know how to do this because I have done this before.” And this was a good period in his life, and then he can use it again. (Research secretary)

Students described how positive experiences in the program helped to provide a second chance and empower positive futures.

This program helps us think that we can go so far, we can do all kinds of stuff, and those thoughts is very important for us. (Student 1)

Before I came and now, it’s a big difference. With everything, you know, they help you with school, whatever you want. Above all come back to life and give you a chance. When I was home, I was mischievous. I didn’t want to go to school. I was home, drove my moped, a lot of stuff like that. (Student 5)

**Future roles and transitions**

Respondents identified a number of future roles or transitions connected to sport besides playing sports. These were transitions from a player to another role, such as a coach, parent, or youth worker. Respondents discussed these future roles without specification, highlighting the importance of the students’ freedom to choose their paths. Development and positive experiences in sport had a perceived importance beyond the individual. Future roles or transitions connected to sport also suggest some kind of impact on future generations.

Yea, 20 years, then I probably have some kids. And then they are going to play so I have to go to see their games. (Student 1)

If [student’s name] plays football he maybe becomes a youth leader or assistant leader to someone else. He maybe cuts the grass on the football field or something else. It doesn’t matter what they do… (Administrator/Chairman at VAIS)

And now [my former student] has a little girl, and she plays football, and maybe he wants to coach the team. And I think that this could be an area that would fit him much better. But just to have the possibility, as you say, to choose this, that’s something important. (Research secretary)
4.6 Defining success

Interestingly, personnel and administrators did not discuss program objectives or outcomes in terms of recidivism. Rather, they focused on more immediate and intermediate goals and outcomes. These tended to be more qualitative measures, and defining success was rarely discussed in quantitative terms. Furthermore, expectations for students were hardly specified, and long-term outcomes were always left open-ended.

The long term goal is that they can take this with them from here when they get released, and that they can understand that there are other things in their life than only crime and drugs and soccer, and other clubs, innebandy, badminton, whatever. (Head teacher)

Measuring success was discussed in terms of experiences, meanings, and attitudes towards sport.

Interviewer: How do you define if this program is successful?
Administrator/Chairman at VAIS: You can measure that partially how the boys experience, how they feel welcome, if they feel that they get acknowledged, welcomed, then we have reached success. Then how we should measure that? And today we have 5 guys that are in VAIS, I think so, then we have a measure that what I’m saying is right. Hopefully they feel welcome, and then what I’m saying here is right. That they want to be there and think it’s fun. That it stimulates them to continue with sports and health when they are here. That’s a measure of success.

Success for the program was commonly defined as inspiring or motivating students to continue with pro-social pursuits after their release. This was often phrased as “daring” to be a part of a club or new social group in the community.

I don’t care if they want to play football or anything else, but that they want to and that they dare to go to some places they have never been before. (Research secretary)

4.7 Support and influences of pedagogy

Interviews provided several insights into the supports and influences of sport pedagogy in the context of this case study. Many of the staff and administrators acknowledged that the institution possessed a number of resources or attributes. These supports and influences were perceived as factors that enabled, encouraged and added legitimacy to this model of pedagogy. At the institutional level, this included support from administrators, an availability of practical resources, tradition or culture of sport at the institution, and dual experience with
sports and youth work. Additionally, wider values within football and the involvement of well-known and respected football coaches, such as the former Swedish national team coach, helped to strengthen and legitimize the program.

**Administrative support**

One of the perceived challenges of sports education at the institution was that the program was not taken seriously, and that sports education was underappreciated. The head teacher discussed how this challenge was alleviated by institutional support, especially from the administrators.

> I think that a lot of institutions are a little bit too serious and consider this as not serious. And that’s wrong... When people talk about football they say it’s like, you know, kicking around but nothing else. And they don’t see all the other things.
> (Research secretary)

> When you start, especially within soccer, it doesn’t get taken seriously. It’s just fun and games. Other people think this. Should we go to the gymnastics class now, they’ve said. Staff I mean. They think this is nothing. Train soccer during school, what is that? But if you then have the highest bosses behind you, like we go for it. We put down time and money on this.
> (Head teacher)

Support from the administrators gave space and support for the head teacher to develop his own pedagogical philosophies and methods within sports and health.

> And then it’s another thing [the head teacher], he’s new in his job. He learns everyday. Soon he is done 1 year. He goes into year 2. He takes with him a lot of knowledge and experiences with the training and planning. So in the short-term, it is a lot about [the head teacher] evolving.
> (Administrator/Chairman at VAIS)

**Influence of Swedish sport**

One oft-mentioned influence of sport pedagogy in the program was the former coach of the men’s national football team, whose philosophy and style were represented as a model for the program. The former national team coach described his coaching philosophy:

> I have always thought that football players should grow as people on the first hand, and on the second hand as players. We have a very good hockey coach in Sweden, he’s dead today for about 5, 6 years, Tommy Sundin, he was national coach, he was always talking about developing the players as a human being, not as a hockey player. And it’s the same for me.
> (Former national team coach)
The perceived influence of positive community values within football was also discussed.

Yea, [the former national team coach] does not do this to make a lot of money and play football. It's much more. He wants to help young kids get a good perspective in life and do something for humankind, almost. So they have a lot of values in football. (Research secretary)

Football players are just living in this sector, but all the other sectors, I want them to get, I want them to create as a human being to take interest. Because I think all of us, if we want to have a positive community, we all have to help. (Former national team coach)

This philosophy can be seen throughout participants’ descriptions and experiences of pedagogy. Furthermore, the involvement and interest of the former national team coach added a perceived level of status or legitimacy to the program and its methods.

So I think [the former national team coach] has helped us, as you know, in the beginning. Both in a marketing perspective, but also to coach and help [the head teacher]. That I think is important that we continue with. Because [the former national team coach’s] participation has made, even from VAIS’ perspective, it has strengthened the status of the project. You’re visit here, media, that also strengthens this. It raises the status, gives it the legitimacy. (Administrator/Chairman at VAIS)

We have very good support from very competent and experienced people from the Swedish Football Association. (Institution’s chief)

**Dual experience – backgrounds with sport and youth work**

Another influence of sports pedagogy was a dual experience in sports and working with youth at the institution. Both the head teacher and the coach at VAIS had extensive experience within sports and football leadership. On the other hand, they also had “pedagogical” experience, in the Swedish sense of the word that they worked with youth in the wards. This dual experience was viewed as contributing towards collaboration between the club and the school as well as providing an understanding of the students.

First, [the coach] is a professional, and then he is on both sides. He is a treatment assistant, and also a football coach. So his level of knowledge of the students becomes really high. And of course he has to communicate with [the head teacher]. [The head teach and coach] speak the same language, and there’s nothing weird there. It would have been in a different way if we had other coaches, someone who worked with something totally different. (Administrator/Chairman at VAIS)

Having youth work experience and an awareness or knowledge of the students and their circumstances was viewed as critical for working in this context. This was illustrated through
an anecdote regarding a new coach with no experience with working with youth at the institution.

*I know a practice, now you get to hear, this was in the end of the 80’s, 89 or something, VAIS had a practice in Gränna (nearby town). A new coach from Jönköping (nearby city) split the group in two teams that were going to meet and play a game during the practice. In one team it was three Stigby boys, and suddenly we just saw three guys running. So they tried to run away during practice. That’s the only time that I can think of where they disappeared (laughter). At the same time, you know, that’s a thing that happens in this type of environment.* (Administrator/Chairman at VAIS)

**Research and evaluation**

Several administrators described how the program was conceived by considering advice from an external researcher, Martin Hugo (see Section 2.3 and Table 1) and an internal evaluation at the institution (see Figure 2 in Section 3.2).

*So we start thinking, how can we progress in this area? Martin Hugo has been here and we have reflected on his thoughts for us, and we have brainstormed what can we do better, how can we do better. So we had an idea in mind, think if we can build up a more structured in this program with sports and in this case soccer.* (Institution’s chief)

As mentioned above in section 3.2, one significant statistic or research finding that sparked the program was a follow-up with students released from the institution indicating that no former students belonged to an organization or club (see Figure 2). Moreover, it was noted that many of those who answered that they had a leisure interest were not engaged in “pro-social” activities.

*They say that they have an interest but they also say that is to go alone to the gym, and that is not enough.* (Research secretary)

**Other resources**

Administrators also identified that a number of other resources enabled or supported the program. This included a number of “practical resources” such as a sports hall, green areas for outdoor trainings, and the proximity of the local sport club. Additionally, administrators described an established tradition and culture of sports at the institution. Within this tradition, it was common for students to be in the same football team as staff. Likewise, two of the administrators at Stigby were active members of VAIS.
We have near. You can bike. You have green areas here, a smaller one but anyway. We have the sport hall. We have staff. Many of them have in their private life, spare time, spend their time, if they don’t are soccer players they have been in clubs. They can be a kind of leader, in a way. So what we see, there are many things together. (Institution’s chief)

And then we shouldn’t forget that we have nice facilities. Soccer fields, sport hall, and so on. So we also have these facilities possibilities. And that we shouldn’t forget. Above all, the relationships, the club and Stigby, and it has to do with people. (Administrator/Chairman at VAIS)

The institution’s chief summarized that these supports and resources helped ensure success:

Institution’s Chief: So with these circumstances you have, you [cannot] fail.
Interviewer: You have many resources.
Institution’s Chief: Yea, very many resources. I don’t know what can go wrong.

4.8 Summary

Through a grounded theory approach, data from this case study inspired a model – “Rings on the water” (see figure 4 above) – to illustrate the relationship between sport pedagogy and objectives/outcomes described by respondents. “Rings on the water” is the Swedish literal translation for the ripple effect. As a metaphor, this concept captures the following collective aspects of findings from this case study:

- Sport-based learning as a developmental process set in motion
- Cumulative, inter-connectedness of pedagogy and objectives/outcomes
- Diversity and flexibility of sport pedagogy
- Objectives and outcomes described in terms of meaningfulness, experiences, and possibilities (open, non-quantified and unspecified)

Findings from this study have been presented thematically. The first 5 themes (sub-sections 4.1 – 4.5) are rings in the model. The last two themes, defining success (4.6) and support and influences of pedagogy (4.7), add perspective to the model.

Findings show several experienced benefits and outcomes of sport-based learning. Some examples include:

- Having fun
- Sleeping, eating, and feeling better from sport and exercise
• Relief from stress/boredom of institutional life
• Increased “soft skills” (empathy, working in groups)
• Discovering or re-discovering leisure interests
• Motivation for learning
• Quitting cigarettes

Some possible future outcomes suggested in the findings:
• Students predict continuation in sport within a balanced lifestyle (school, work, family)
• Respondents suggest several future roles or transitions associated with sport, such as youth work and parenting.
• Even in the event of possible relapses, students can re-visit and draw upon these positive experiences later in life

Some key pedagogical aspects suggested in the findings:
• Understanding and respect for students (listening, being non-judgmental)
• Meeting the student (flexible teaching)
• Providing a foundation for teaching and learning through relationships
• Creating positive experiences (i.e. having fun) can be seen as an intentional strategy. These positive experiences can be re-visited later in life.
• Using a variety of activities
• Developing skills, knowledge and interests through student-centered learning (“learn with knowing”, student-directed learning, embedded learning)
• Using gradual steps (layering) and providing opportunities for students to practice skills and knowledge

Findings revealed some possible factors that influenced/supported the “rings on the water” model:
• Administrative support
• Positive values of Swedish sport
• Dual experiences of working with youth and sport experience/leadership
• A collaborative tradition with the local sport club (VAIS)
• Available practical resources (sport hall, green spaces)
5. Discussion

Previous studies suggest that using sports for broader outcomes in juvenile justice settings requires a certain understanding of pedagogy (Haudenhuyse et al., 2012; Van Hout & Phelan, 2014). This study uses grounded theory to generate a model and concepts for describing and understanding sport pedagogy in relation to the objectives and perceived outcomes of an educational sport and health program at a Swedish youth detention home. While it is noted that findings are grounded in the contexts of the case study and may therefore have limited generalizability (Bryman, 2012; Charmaz, 2006), this exploration of sports pedagogy adds perspective to various outcomes and aspects of sports-based interventions put forth in other studies.

The aim of this study has been to investigate sports-based pedagogy in the context of youth detention/compulsory care. Findings collectively demonstrate a holistic, positive, and perceptive approach for sport pedagogy. These characteristics are unique and refreshing in contrast to the difficulties and complexities often portrayed in correctional education literature. Similar to Meek (2014), this case illustrates that sport can be a meaningful and diverse platform for teaching and learning in juvenile justice settings. Consequently, this study has described a range of pedagogical aspects and outcomes (benefits) that merit further discussion.

Harnessing the vast potential of sports-based approaches for broader outcomes in such settings requires an understanding and perceptibility of sports pedagogy. Put somewhat differently, in order to implement sports activities to reduce recidivism, develop “soft skills”, and achieve other long-term objectives, educators should be able to grasp the wider value of sports beyond recreation, performance, managing students or inmates, and providing an alternative to antisocial behavior. Although such functions and related health benefits can be valuable, an appreciation of developmental and pedagogical processes can help educators to empower youth through sports and to open up a variety of positive pathways into adulthood.

The model and concepts presented in this study seek to convey this understanding through metaphor, an analytical device that may help to “elucidate or clarify meanings that are common-sensical or taken for granted, compelling us to re-examine unchallenged assumptions, or they can force us to extend ourselves so as to synthesize familiar elements into a new whole” (Epstein, 2011). “Rings on the water” is an accessible and widely understood metaphor, and thus is helpful in conveying the intricate relationship between sport pedagogy and youth development described in this case study. Furthermore, this model may
enable practitioners to grasp the fluidity or flexibility of sport as an educational tool for working with adjudicated youth and by doing so generate knowledge and understanding.

Charmaz (2006) draws attention to grounded theory’s ability to challenge or build upon existing frameworks and ways of understanding phenomena. Likewise, Epstein (2011) notes that metaphors can facilitate new ways of thinking, and thus generate future knowledge. “Rings on the water” signifies a process set in motion and illustrates the cumulative developmental trajectory described by respondents involved in the sport and health program. The expanding nature of rings on the water indicates a broadening or opening of opportunity, and contrasts to linear notions of sports-oriented youth development. Furthermore, the fluidity and inter-connectedness of categories illustrates how this process set in motion is both initiated and guided by pedagogy. Stated somewhat differently, the processes described by respondents such as getting involved, building relationships, and developing skills and knowledge can be thought of as an intentional set of educational methodologies.

As in other research (Meek, 2014; Nichols, 2007; Perkins & Noam, 2007), this study demonstrates the significance of sport as a “hook” for engaging an often-reluctant group of learners. It is likely that using sport as a catalyst for learning is related to the active or participatory nature of sport, as well as a probability of positive experiences or associations (Meek, 2014; Van Hout & Phelan, 2014). These aspects may arguably separate effective sports-based learning from traditional approaches to learning, in which students are likely to have had negative experiences (Hugo, 2013; Meek et al., 2012). Hugo (2013) describes that many students in Swedish youth institutions have a resistance to education stemming from previous school failure, and thus may have “a weak educational identity” (p. 128). The positive experiences and associations with sport that have been described in this study may help to address school resistance and, in turn, foster meaningful learning and positive school identities for students.

This thesis draws attention to sport as both an available resource and commonly held student interest for educators to cultivate in juvenile justice settings. Although the institution in this study possessed many practical resources that other institutions may not have, it is likely that sport facilities and sport structures (i.e. organizations, clubs, recreation centers) exist within and nearby practically any youth institution. Furthermore, as noted by Meek (2014), the prison gym is a “cornerstone” of institutional life and culture. The high level of interest in sport at Stigby is noted in other research (Meek, 2014; Nichols, 2007), and indicates that sport can be a common interest for young males involved in the juvenile justice system. This study suggests that creating positive and enjoyable experiences, or having fun,
can be thought of as a pedagogical strategy for nurturing and enhancing these interests for future well-being and possible desistance.

A core theme that reverberates throughout the findings is an understanding and respect for students. The adult respondents indicated an awareness of the complex circumstances, backgrounds, interests and learning needs of students. They were mindful of each student’s particular needs and strengths. This understanding enables the teacher to meet the student and can be seen can be seen as a central aspect of the pedagogical values and strategies described in the findings. It is consistent with the concept of individualized and appropriately matching treatment methods and learning plans (Andrews & Dowden, 2007; Mattson et al., 2012). Such understanding and respect might simply require a moment to listen to students, or to ask them about how they feel or what they would like to learn. These simple acts, however, are more likely to occur in an open climate that values youth and seeks to create learning opportunities, as opposed to one that seeks to limit rights and privileges.

Students and adult respondents discussed how sport helped to dissipate perceived barriers between people, provided a different setting for personnel and residents to interact, and contributed to a positive institutional culture. Sport is often heralded for its ability to unite diverse populations in a common interest (SDP IWG, 2008). In this manner, sport can bring youth into contact with and facilitate the formation of new peer groups and bonds with adult role models (Meek, 2014; Nichols, 2007). Some research (Meek & Parker, 2014; Meek, 2012; 2014) on sport in correctional settings has shown that sport activities can reduce tension and help create meaningful relationships between correctional personnel and youth. This is noteworthy as interactions between youth and personnel are sometimes described as antagonistic (see Hugo, 2013), with several studies noting a common attitude of guard or security officer instead of role model among youth treatment staff (Houchins et al., 2009; Meek & Lewis, 2014b). In this way, sport activities can nurture a more positive institutional environment or culture. Moreover, Meek (2014) observes that the social integration processes of sport can help reduce stigmatization within localized settings and help to “improve public attitudes towards prisoners” (p. 86). These functions were echoed in the study, particularly in the club environment wherein respondents expressed that Stigby students were accepted and welcomed as teammates, and not viewed as inmates. Such interactions through sport can foster understanding between people, and can go a long way in not only improving relations between youth and personnel, but can perhaps increase public awareness regarding youth in custody and the wider issues related to their incarceration. In this manner, partnerships and collaboration with professional sport clubs and respected sports figures, such as the former
national team coach in this case study, add a degree of visibility and legitimacy to such efforts.

Many of the respondents, both students and adults, described relationships as a “platform” for pedagogy. Hugo (2013) emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships in Swedish youth homes for creating meaningful learning experiences, and identifies students’ trust and confidence as a prerequisite for reaching curriculum objectives in these settings. Similarly, in this case study student-teacher relationships were perceived to enable a multitude of pedagogical strategies, as well as to improve the quality of learning.

It is likely that certain qualities or approaches better enable relationship building than others (Camire et al., 2011; Haudenhuyse et al., 2014). The important qualities identified by respondents can be summarized as being respectful and positive while also clearly articulating and maintaining rules. Likewise, certain styles of teaching or sports leadership are more likely to coincide with positive youth development (Camire et al., 2011; Haudenhuyse et al., 2014). Findings from this study emphasize a more democratic and open rather than authoritarian style of sport pedagogy, and indicate that a coach or teacher’s authority can be derived from mutual respect, enjoyment, and didactical proficiency in sport rather than a reliance on strictness or discipline (Haudenhuyse et al., 2012). By contrast, coercive approaches for using physical activity in correctional education, for example boot camps, have been shown as ineffective in building the skills or abilities – such as autonomy, interacting with others, and empathy – associated with crime desistance (Cullen et al., 2005; Kilgore & Mead, 2004). Instead, research suggests that a democratic or emancipatory style of sports leadership is more supportive of positive development for vulnerable youth (Haudenhuyse et al., 2012).

A related theme in this study was the use of a student-centered learning approach, in which students were invited rather than subjugated or coerced to learn. This theme included the related categories of “learning without knowing”, the use of embedded learning, and student-directed learning. The student-centered learning aspects described in this study resemble the concept of meaningful learning described by Hugo (2013). As such, this type of learning can be seen as relevant to both the students’ interests, such as wanting to play football, and circumstances (i.e. a relief from the boredom and stress of institutional life). Student-directed learning created the opportunity for students to steer the direction of lessons, and was perceived as increasing the quality of learning. This approach demanded a degree of flexibility – what Hugo (2013) describes as a pedagogical or didactical skill through which teachers can interpret and appropriately meet the situations and needs of students. These
pedagogical strategies provided students the space and ability to discover and actively participate in learning. It is likely that such an approach, particularly in the context of a youth institution, can initially support more meaningful learning experiences than traditional classroom approaches (i.e., “chalk and talk”) (Meek et al., 2012). Likewise, “learning without knowing” while having fun in sports can help students find a positive school identity through positive experiences.

A closely related finding is the concept of embedded learning, in which a variety of learning endeavors can be built in or around sport activities (see Meek et al., 2012). An example in this case study is the use of fitness tests to engage students in numeracy. In addition to building numeracy skills, other studies (Meek, 2014; Meek et al., 2012) recommend that embedded learning in sport can be used to build reading and language skills, as well as provide opportunities for non-native speakers to practice another language.

Comprehensively, the findings from this study exhibit a diverse range of pedagogical strategies with various connections to objectives or outcomes, supporting the argument that sport is a flexible tool for learning. Likewise, Meek (2014) considers that providing a variety of sport activities is a principle of best practice in correctional settings. The diversity and flexibility of sport as an educational tool, however, may not be readily appreciated in juvenile justice settings. Hugo (2013) ventures that a lack of “flexible thinking” in youth institutions may act as a barrier to utilizing available resources and opportunities to improve education.

Of note, therefore, is that adult respondents exhibited an open, holistic view of the possibilities of sport education. They described objectives and outcomes for the sport and health program in open and qualitative terms. Likewise, these descriptions centered on meanings and possibilities for students, rather than on perceptions of skill deficiencies. Although it was important to support youth in finding their own interest, adult respondents did not specify outcomes for youth – this was left up to them. This focus on meaning and opportunity underlines a more positive youth development approach as opposed to a skill deficiency approach to treatment (Abrams, 2013; Butts et al., 2010). The model of rings on the water likewise denotes respondents’ shared objective for widening opportunity, or life chances, through sport. Such descriptions coincide with Van Hout and Phelan’s (2014) position that the meanings of sport experiences are an important indicator of outcomes in sports-based programs. Therefore, this study maintains that creditable qualitative research can play an important role in understanding outcomes of sports-based education in correctional settings.
In order to understand impact on criminality or program success, this study supports the use of intermediary or dynamic indicators (see Andrews & Dowden, 2007), instead of relying on recidivism or re-offending data. Previous studies (Meek, 2014; Nichols, 2007; Van Hout & Phelan, 2014) have ventured a number of ways through which participating in sports can lead to desistance that have been identified and described in this study. These include social and emotional competencies (Meek et al., 2012), autonomy and following rules (Meek, 2014), structuring leisure time (Steketee, 2012), pro-social peers and/or role models, identity formation (Meek, 2014), linking institutional programming to community (Meek, 2012), and reducing the stigma surrounding youth in detention (Meek, 2014).

This study draws attention to the pedagogical processes that support and facilitate these changes. For example, working in groups is connected to building social skills and empathy. While working in groups may seem a rather simplistic and common-sensical way to build these skills, Hugo (2013) describes how at times group work can be quite difficult to facilitate in youth homes. Sport activities can be a great way for students to learn to work together “without knowing”, but should be supported by an effective pedagogical approach and proficiency in using group learning.

Correctional education needs to build in opportunities for students to practice or apply skills and knowledge (Kilgore & Meade, 2004; Tolbert, 2012). Likewise, Meek (2014) recommends using sport as a way of delivering and reflecting upon transferable learning opportunities. Findings from this study describe a number of gradual steps and opportunities to practice new or re-discovered skills, knowledge and interests. One of the more visible examples in this case study is the collaboration with the local club team, VAIS. Membership at the club simulated an outside scenario, but with a number of controls or safety mechanisms. In this new “social arena”, students could be challenged in a number of ways. Taking this step was accompanied by a number of benefits, such as an increased status and sense of accomplishment, which can contribute to increased confidence and a positive school identity. Acknowledging students’ previous educational backgrounds, Hugo (2013) asserts that it is “crucial that students feel they can succeed in school work. It might be impeding their learning if faced with situations where they feel like failures again” (p. 128). Of particular importance within this gradual step is a degree of safety and support that was perceived as ensuring success. Thus, the gradual step into club membership balances providing both a meaningful challenge and a supportive or “welcoming” environment to help students meet that challenge.
Similar to the theme of gradual steps, respondents described the necessity of connecting or continuing learning outcomes to the community. Recent literature (Daugherty et al., 2012; Tolbert, 2012) recommends that education and treatment support reentry through continuation and/or opportunities to utilize learning. In other words, to enable successful youth reentry, education in juvenile justice settings should be connected to the community and relevant to young people’s reentry needs. In the future, Stigby plans to use networks and contacts to help connect youth to sport clubs, and offer support for youth during reentry. Likewise, Nichols (1999) and Meek (2012; 2014) note that sport instructors are well positioned to offer resettlement support, perhaps more so than probation officers, because of their rapport with youth (see Meek, 2012). This study suggests that developing students’ interests and motivation to join sport communities or organizations can help them meet the immediate challenge of reentry, the period during which it is crucial for exiting youth to establish pro-social routines (Abrams, 2008; Bullis et al., 2002). Students in this study expressed a number of exit routes through sport. Of note is that all students communicated a degree of balance in their future plans, in which they were not singularly dependent on sport to reintegrate into society. Clinkinbeard and Zohra (2012) argue that this type of balance or realism in future plans is likely to correspond with successful reentry.

Beyond the immediate challenges of reentry, this study indicates possible sport-related future roles and transitions in adulthood. These include transitions from player to coach, or player to supportive parent. Meek et al. (2012) submit that various leadership roles in sports can reinforce desistance by providing an opportunity to give back. Moreover, future generations can benefit from the lived-experiences of formerly incarcerated individuals employed as mentors or role models (Kavanagh & Borriill, 2013). However, little is known about the role of sport in long-term reintegration, and additional research is needed to explore and map the role of sport in the adult lives of formerly incarcerated youth.

So far, “rings on the water” have been discussed mostly as a matter of individual development. Yet this model also can be seen as having a variety of inter-personal and community effects. Sports-based learning is accrued through student interactions with peers and adults, and is thus a highly socialized form of learning. Through these shared interactions and experiences, students and instructors learn together. In addition, several administrators noted how sport positively affected the institutional climate at Stigby.

It should not go unmentioned that findings in this study demonstrate the numerous health benefits of sport and physical activity for youth in compulsory care. Improved physical and mental health and changes in attitudes towards healthy lifestyles described by
respondents suggest the potential of sport to reduce negative health outcomes in a population that is at-risk for future health problems (Hjern & Vinnerljung, 2002; Vinnerljung & Sallnas, 2008). Overcoming addictions through sport participation, for example, is a noteworthy accomplishment, particularly because addictions are such a pivotal factor in criminal behavior and future health (Benson, 2013; Young et al., 2007). As in other studies (Meek, 2014), findings show how participating in sport is associated with eating, sleeping and feeling better. Similarly, respondents frequently described sport and physical activity as a relief from perceived negative aspects of institutional life such as stress, boredom and depression (Meek, 2014; Verdot, 2010). In such circumstances, where many students are haunted by traumas and regrets, is it possible to over-emphasize the value of having fun, getting a good night’s rest, and feeling good? Clearly, these are important benefits that merit further research.

One notable absence in the findings of this case study was reference to similar programs or literature on sport in correctional settings. Respondents were unaware this of body of literature and other initiatives, such as the Prisoners on the Move project and the 2014 European Year of Sport in Prison (see Prisoners on the Move, 2013). While this partly illustrates the point that youth detention homes are relatively closed settings, perhaps the greater significance of this absence is related to the importance of “bottom-up” or localized innovation. As concluded by Chamberlain (2013), “There is an urgent need for SBI advocates to pursue a ‘bottom-up’ rather than a ‘top-down’ view of how SBIs can and should operate” (p. 1289). In this study, educators and stakeholders demonstrated a depth of understanding regarding the issues discussed in the literature without having consulted it. Findings indicate that the program was not created from a top-down directive, but instead through collaboration and an institutional culture that supported innovation.

One of the key factors for enabling the pedagogical approaches identified in this study was having support from administrators and other key stakeholders, such as the former national team coach. This support helped the head teacher to deal with some of the challenges of starting a new program, including scorn from other personnel. Camire et al. (2011) find that “a crucial first step in establishing an effective coaching practice” for facilitating positive youth development is to carefully develop and reflect upon a coaching philosophy (p. 93). Likewise, the administrator/chairman at VAIS viewed the head teacher’s professional development as a key success of this first year of the Stigby sport and health program. It is therefore recommended that when planning or seeking to improve sports-based approaches in juvenile justice settings, leadership should consider how teachers might be supported and encouraged to develop their own pedagogies to facilitate positive youth development.
6. Concluding remarks and future research

This thesis has conducted an exploratory and descriptive case study of pedagogy in an educational sport program at a Swedish youth detention home. The study has yielded a model and thick description of pedagogical aspects in relation to program objectives and outcomes. The objective of the program can be considered to encourage youth to pursue pro-social leisure interests during reentry and long-term reintegration. While findings indicate strategies and outcomes that may accomplish this objective, further evaluative research is needed to assess the impact and effectiveness of the benefits and approaches described herein.

Previous studies suggest that sport-based interventions for detained youth have many potential developmental, health, and crime reduction benefits. However, social and learning processes are central to the success of such programs. In order to maximize potential outcomes, it is crucial to understand how the values/principles and strategies/methods of sport pedagogy can advance learning and empower youth through sport. Stated somewhat differently, the power and diversity of sport for educating youth is largely related to how it is perceived and, subsequently, implemented. If viewed narrowly, for example as a recreational activity and nothing more, then sport is likely to yield short-term and non-sustained outcomes. On the other hand, as illustrated in this case study, a holistic, positive, and perceptive view of sport pedagogy can not only open diverse options for teaching through sport, but may also support positive, lasting futures for youth. Therefore, when designing and implementing sports-based interventions in juvenile justice settings, practitioners and stakeholders should consider how pedagogical aspects correspond to objectives and outcomes.

This thesis has provided a substantial foundation for future research. To begin with, the “rings on the water” model should be re-visited. This model inspired through grounded theory analysis illustrates how sport pedagogy can initiate and support an expanding developmental trajectory for youth. This case study, however, was limited to institutional settings. Thus, the rings on the water stop at “positive futures”, a point at which youth are envisioning and preparing for life on the “outside”. Little is known about how sport processes and previous sport experiences enable or hinder youth reentry and long-term reintegration. Therefore, future studies could explore how sport-related processes and factors, such as the transition from player to coach, have impacted the lives of adults formerly in youth custody. It would be valuable to know, how can the positive learning experiences described in this study be supported later in life? Research along these lines could advance theories on reentry.
or “reintegration through sport” and help improve sport practice within both community and correctional settings.

Another possible direction for future research is for comparative studies of sport pedagogy in other contexts. A general question for such research is: how do perspectives and methodologies co-construct sport pedagogy in other correctional settings? Future studies should consider comparing cases in different nations. In particular, it is urged that such research investigate sport pedagogy in the United States, whose perspectives, as the world’s largest correctional arena, has implications for the rest of the world (Muncie, 2005; Serin et al., 2010). It is also paramount that comparative case studies consider sport pedagogies in other types of corrections, such as institutions for girls, adult prisons, and immigration detention centers. As this study has investigated sport pedagogy at an all-male institution, it is strongly recommended that similar research investigate sport pedagogy in all-girls or co-ed youth institutions.

Finally, Alexander (2001) proposes that comparing pedagogy “helps us to pinpoint those universals in teaching and learning to which, in any context, we need most closely to attend if we are to improve the quality of education” (p. 507). This raises another question for educators: What universals of teaching and learning can we derive from sport pedagogies, particularly in the challenging contexts of youth compulsory care education? Certainly, there is much that can be learned from the students, teachers and schools within the world’s juvenile justice systems, and educational research in these settings is crucial for improving the futures of vulnerable and marginalized youth.
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## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Overview of conducted interviews

| **Educators** (sport pedagogy) | • Background (previous sports experiences, teaching/coaching qualifications, working with youth in compulsory care)  
|                               | • Teaching methods (a typical day, planning, activities, objectives for lessons)  
|                               | • Comparing settings (school vs. club)  
|                               | • Pedagogical strategies (long-term objectives, coaching or teaching philosophy, what makes a good coach?)  
|                               | • Contact with students (relationships, setting boundaries)  
|                               | • Negative and positive aspects of sports (perceived benefits, challenges, and limitations)  
|                               | • Skills (sport-specific and life skills)  
|                               | • Recommendations for other teachers/coaches |
| **Students** (learning experiences) | • Background (experiences before and at institution, expectations)  
|                               | • Contact with coaches and teacher  
|                               | • Sports activities, learning in sports  
|                               | • What makes a good coach (or bad coach)  
|                               | • The meanings of sport in your life  
|                               | • Sports and future selves, exit strategies  
|                               | • Recommendations for teachers/coaches |
| **Stakeholders** (values, objectives and outcomes) | • History and background of institution/program  
|                               | • Short and long-term objectives, outcomes  
|                               | • Success factors, challenges and limitations  
|                               | • Comparing settings (school vs. club)  
|                               | • What makes a good coach?  
|                               | • Systematization of sports-based approach  
|                               | • Recommendations |
Appendix 2: Interview guides

Teachers/Coaches

Describe job and program

Experiences in sports and teaching
- Sports background?
- Teaching and coaching qualifications?
- Working with SiS youth?

Describe a typical day of training or teaching

Organization of activities and didactical principles
- What activities do you use?
- What activities are more effective? Why?
- How do you prepare for and structure these activities?
- How would you describe your teaching methods?

Personal aims during sports activities
- Objectives of lessons
- Long-term goals? Who makes the goals?
- How do you assess your program, students and lessons?

Coaching philosophy
- How would you describe your coaching philosophy?

Negative and positive aspects of sports
- How can students benefit from sports?
- Are there any challenges, limitations or negative aspects of sports that should be considered?
- How do you deal with those issues?

Sport-specific and other skills
- How do you build these skills?

Benefits of football compared to other sports (and other learning settings?)

The profile of a good coach/sports teacher
- What makes a good coach/sports teacher)?
- What are some of your strengths and weaknesses as a coach/sports teacher?

Compare settings (institution and club)

Contact with former students?

Summarizing question: If I am interested to teach in a similar program, what do you think is important for me to know?
Students
Sport participation previous to coming to institution
  • Before you came to Stigby, what sport experiences did you have?
  • How is it different here than other sport experiences?
  • Before you started this program, what were your expectations?

Describe contact with coaches/teacher

What makes a good coach?

What makes a good sports club?

What is the meaning of sports in your life?

What do you like about sports?

What have you learned from sports? What do you want to learn in this program?

What activities do you do in the sports program? Which activities do you like the most?

Which do you think you learn the most from?

In 5 years, what will sports mean in your life? How about in 10 or 20 years?

What goals do you have with sports?

How will you accomplish those goals?

This program wants to help students build social skills and provide support for you to reenter the community. How do you think it does that?

If I want to teach a program like the one here, what is important for me to know? Do you have any suggestions for me?
**Stakeholders**

History and background of the program
- How did it get started?
- Collaboration with VAIS?
- Theoretical foundations, rationales for the program. Practical and didactical foundations.

Learning or social objectives of sport

Sports and short-term or long-term development
- Perceived changes in youth and the role of sport
- What are the immediate or short-term benefits?
- Long-term benefits?

Critical success factors
- What has been successful with this program?
- How do you define if this program is successful?
- What have been some challenges or shortcomings?
- Are there any negative aspects of sports that should be mindful of?

Are there any limitations of the program?
- When things don’t go as planned, why?
- How are these issues resolved/overcome?

Benefits of specific sports
- Why football?

Key differences between club/community and institutional settings

What makes a good coach or sports teacher in this kind of setting (youth home)?

Systematization
- Why do you think other institutions, or even prisons, do not have this kind of program?

Advice to other correctional educators or institutions interested in a similar program
- Recommendations?
- Warnings?