

COACHES' NEEDS FOR FUTURE EDUCATION IN TERMS OF CONTENT AND DELIVERY

*Hämäläinen, K.,** Blomqvist M., **Häyrynen M., *** Côté, J.

*HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences, Finland ** Research Institute for Olympic Sports, Finland and ***Queens University, Canada.

In Finland 42 % (417 000) of children aged 3-18 years participate to sport activities organized by sport clubs. Regardless of the outcome of sport participation, high demands and responsibilities are always imposed on coaches. In order to respond to these increasing expectations and demands more qualified coaches for different levels must be educated. Objective research is needed to support the informal lifelong learning of coaching skills, develop formal coach education and to improve the effectiveness of current coach education programs at recreational, performance, and elite levels.

According to Trudel & Gilbert's (2006) review coaches learn to coach mainly through large-scale coach education programs (acquisition metaphor) and through experience (participation metaphor). Researchers have also proposed that formal programs are only one of the many ways to develop coaching expertise and that coaches spent less time in formal coach education than in other coaching activities when learning how to coach (Lemyre et al., 2007; Gilbert et al. 2006). Furthermore, it has been suggested that the content of formal coach education programs does not always meet the learning needs of coaches.

The general purpose of this three year research project is to describe how Finnish coaches learn to coach and develop their expertise during their coaching career. The goal is to gain information for developing the coach education system. The first phase of the project was a web-based survey which focused mainly on exploring the primary sources of coaches' learning via acquisition and participation and discovering possible needs for future education and development. Altogether 2476 coaches at recreational, developmental, and elite levels in different sports answered to the questionnaire.

The purpose of this presentation is to introduce the preliminary results of the web-based survey concerning the needs for future coach education in terms of content and delivery. Coaches were asked, using two open-ended questions, to identify the topics in which they would need further information/education and the mode of delivery they would prefer. The results showed that even though only 16% of the respondents rated organized coach education as a very important source of coaching knowledge and skills, 71% suggested topics for future education and seemed eager to participate. Coaches were interested to get more information about sport specific skills and teaching methods. Many of them hoped to get drill models for skill and condition training. There were also many coaches that welcomed any kind of information available. Although traditional contact education was still preferred other models of information delivery such as seminars, clinics and mentors were also suggested. Many coaches were also ready to take part to web-based courses or an education including a combination of several modes of instruction.