



REASONS FOR COACHING IN FINNISH YOUTH SPORT COACHES

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this investigation was to explore reasons for coaching in Finnish youth sport coaches. Within the youth sport context, coaches strongly influence the nature and quality of sport experience. The goal priorities they promote, the attitudes and values they transmit, as well as the nature of their interactions with athletes can evidently influence the effects of sport participation on youth athletes (Smith, Smoll & Cumming, 2007). Adapting Ames' (1992) achievement goal theory, reasons for coaching can be classified as mastery (task) oriented or ego (result) oriented. In practice, the former emphasizes developing athlete's skills whereas the latter focuses on success compared to others. Coach's orientation is related to motivational climate in sport which in turn is related to other factors, such as athlete's enjoyment in sport (Vazou, Ntoumanis, & Duda, 2006).

This investigation is a part of three year research project which examines how Finnish coaches learn to coach and develop their expertise during their coaching career. The main goal is to gain objective information to support the reconstruction of the present coach education system and programs in Finland.

METHODS

This investigation was implemented as a web survey in spring 2009. 5064 participants were invited from national coach association called Suomen Valmentajat ry, national sport federations and nationally acknowledged sport clubs labeled as Sinettiseurat. A questionnaire was designed especially for this data collection. 2476 (49%) of them took part in survey. 2177 of them had been actively coaching during last 12 months. Following questions were included to the survey: 1) What was the main reason for you to engage to coaching? 2) What was the most important motivator for you when you began coaching? 3) What is the most important motivator for you to coach today? 4) Which one of the following is the most important thing in coaching for you? For each question, answers had to select one of 3 – 9 alternatives according to question (see Tables 1 – 4). Four subgroups (recreational, developmental, national and elite level coaches) were formed to present different levels of coaches.

RESULTS

Data description (N=2476)

- Gender: male 70%, female 30%
- Age: <30y 25%, 30-40y 25%, 40-50y 37%, >50y 13%
- Sports: 58 different sports, team 57% (football 21% and ice hockey 17%), individual 34% (athletics 8%)
- Highest coach education: 93% qualified, Level 0-1 49%, Level 2 15%, Level 3 9%, Level 4 9% and Level 5 12%
- Coaching experience: mean 11.3 ± 8.2 years
- (<5y 27%, 6-10y 29%, 11-20y 30%, >20y 12%)
- Competitive athletic background: 81%, mean 14.2 ± 7.3 years

As Table 1 indicates, in all subgroups coach's own involvement in sport as an athlete was the most common reason to get involved in coaching. In subgroups of recreational and developmental level coaches child's involvement in sport was the next frequent reason to engage coaching whereas among national and elite level coaches interests on coaching as a profession was the second common reason.

	Recreational n=378	Developmental n=906	National n=712	Elite n=181
1. Involvement as athlete	207 54,8%	330 36,4%	314 44,1%	71 39,2%
2. Child's involvement	76 20,1%	316 34,9%	86 12,1%	21 11,6%
3. Coaching as hobby	30 7,9%	111 12,3%	104 14,6%	18 9,9%
4. Coaching as profession	21 5,6%	65 7,2%	148 20,8%	45 24,9%
5. Requested by others	38 10,1%	73 8,1%	49 6,9%	18 9,9%
6. Other reasons	6 1,6%	11 1,2%	11 1,5%	8 4,4%

Table 1. What was the main reason for you to engage to coaching?

According to Table 2, coach's own interests on sport and on coaching as well developing athlete were the most common motivators in all groups except recreational coaches at beginning of coaching career. Interestingly, there are some trends. Proportion of developing athlete rises when shifting from recreational to elite level. Same type of trend can be noticed with athlete's success and interest on coaching. However, trends are to opposite direction on interests on sport, providing possibilities and participation in sports club.

	Recreational n=378	Developmental n=906	National n=712	Elite n=181
1. Develop athlete	40 10,6%	207 22,8%	190 26,7%	52 28,7%
2. Athletes success	2 0,5%	9 1,0%	15 2,1%	8 4,4%
3. Interests on sport	124 32,8%	239 26,4%	182 25,6%	45 24,9%
4. Interests on coaching	81 21,4%	208 23,0%	191 26,8%	49 27,1%
5. Developing as coach	21 5,6%	71 7,8%	65 9,1%	15 8,3%
6. Participation in sports club	65 17,2%	79 8,7%	34 4,8%	4 2,2%
7. Economical compensations	8 2,1%	3 0,3%	8 1,1%	0 0%
8. Providing possibilities	21 5,6%	52 5,7%	15 2,1%	3 1,7%
9. Other reasons	14 3,7%	36 4,0%	10 1,4%	5 2,8%

Table 2. What was the most important motivator for you when you began coaching?

Table 3 presents the motivators for coaching as experienced at the time of the investigation. Developing the athlete is clearly the most commonly reported motivator in all groups whereas subgroups are quite different by the proportions of other motivating factors. Trends between groups

are to same direction as in Table 2. When Tables 2 and 3 are compared, proportion of interest on sport has collapsed in all subgroups.

	Recreational n=378	Developmental n=906	National n=712	Elite n=181
1. Develop athlete	103 27,2%	518 57,2%	431 60,5%	111 61,3%
2. Athletes success	2 0,5%	20 2,2%	25 3,5%	13 7,2%
3. Interests on sport	64 16,9%	59 6,5%	48 6,7%	13 7,2%
4. Interests on coaching	35 9,3%	74 8,2%	63 8,8%	14 7,7%
5. Developing as coach	57 15,1%	99 10,9%	99 13,9%	19 10,5%
6. Participation in sports club	53 14,4%	62 6,8%	17 2,4%	3 1,7%
7. Economical compensations	5 1,3%	2 0,2%	7 1,0%	2 1,1%
8. Providing possibilities	34 9,0%	32 3,5%	9 1,3%	0 0%
9. Other reasons	23 6,1%	36 4,0%	11 1,5%	6 3,3%

Table 3. What is the most important motivator for you to coach today?

Table 4 shows what coaches considered as the most important factor in coaching. To develop athlete is the most commonly mentioned in almost all groups. Proportion of coaches who selected athlete's result is clearly higher in subgroups of national and elite level coaches.

	Recreational n=378	Developmental n=906	National n=712	Elite n=181
1. To develop athlete	165 43,7%	456 50,3%	341 47,9%	75 41,4%
2. Athlete's result	39 10,3%	111 12,3%	152 21,3%	45 24,9%
3. To raise athlete	170 45,0%	335 37,0%	212 29,8%	61 33,7%

Table 4. Which one of the following is the most important factor in coaching for you?

CONCLUSIONS

- More often than others, national and elite level coaches have orientation to professional coaching already at beginning of coaching career
- Recreational and developmental level coaches enter coaching because of their children's involvement more often other coaches
- To develop athlete is the most common motivating factor. Meaning of it increases by the level of the coach. Athlete's development is also viewed as the most important factor in coaching by most coaches. For recreational coaches, participation in sports club seems more important reason to coach than to others
- Developing the athlete and development as a coach are more common motives than to success or results. This applies to even elite level coaches. According these findings, Finnish coaches are more task than result oriented by their reasons to coach.

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