

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF FINNISH COACHES



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INTRODUCTION

In Finland 43 % (424 000) of children aged 3-18 years participate in sport activities organized by sport clubs. Educated and qualified coaches are thus needed to foster athletes' development at different age and performance level. The purpose of this presentation is to describe the educational background of Finnish sport coaches and instructors.

METHODS

A large web-based survey was conducted for Finnish coaches at recreational, developmental, and elite levels (N=5064) in different sports. A total of 2476 (49 %) coaches answered to the survey. The questionnaire contained the basic demographic and background information concerning age, gender, athletic and coaching experience, current coaching position etc. To explore the educational background coaches were asked to inform what kind of coach education they had attended during their coaching career, and if they had a professional qualification in physical activity, sport science or teaching.

RESULTS

General data description

- 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%)
- Competitive athletic background: 81%, mean 14.2 ± 7.3 years
- Coaching experience: mean 11.3 ± 8.2 years (<5y 27%, 6-10y 29%, 11-20y 30%, >20y 12%)

Educational background

94 % of the respondents have a coaching certificate

- Federation-based coach education
 - Level 1 49 %
 - Level 2 15 %
 - Level 3 9 %
- Public or private coaching education agencies
 - Level 4 9 %
- Higher education based coach education
 - Level 5 12 %

30 % of the respondents have a professional qualification in physical activity, sport science or teaching (figure 1).

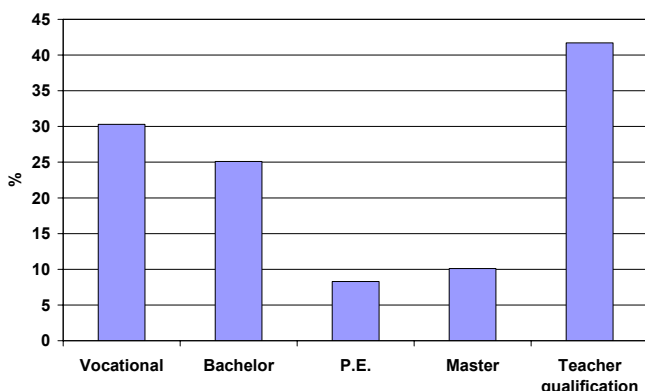


Figure 1. Coaches' professional qualifications (n=722).

Over half of the respondents with professional qualifications have either a Vocational or Bachelor's level qualification in physical activity or sports sciences. 10% have Master's degree in sport science and 7% are P.E. teachers. 42 % of the respondents have teacher's qualification in some other area than P.E. (figure 1).

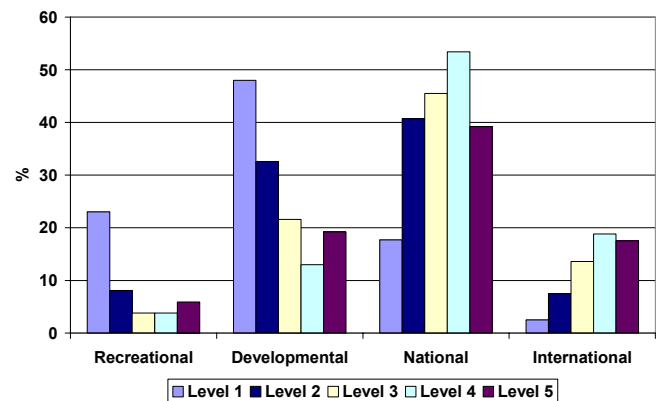


Figure 2. Coach education and the current coaching level.

Figures 2 and 3 present the percentages of coaches with different educational backgrounds currently coaching at different performance levels. Graphics show that higher percentage of highly educated coaches work currently with national or international level athletes whereas lower educated and coaches without professional qualification are responsible for coaching mostly at recreational or developmental levels.

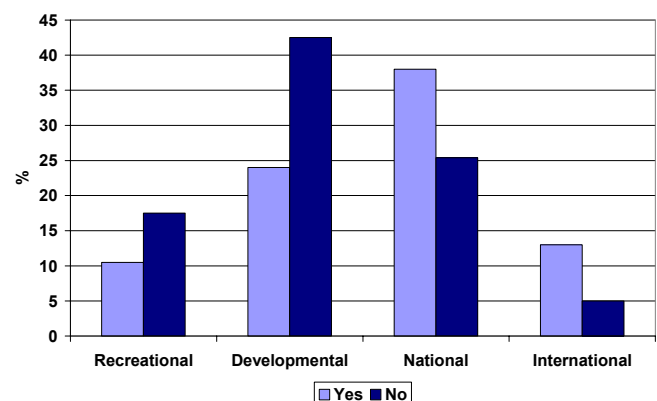


Figure 3. Professional qualification and the current coaching level.

CONCLUSIONS

- Finnish coaches are quite educated as only 6% of the coaches did not have any coaching certificate.
- Half of the coaches have only Level 1 coaching certificate.
- One third of the coaches have professional qualification in physical activity, sport science or teaching.
- Highly educated and qualified coaches tend to choose higher coaching positions instead of recreational or developmental level positions.
- The critical role of well educated and qualified coaches in fostering youth overall development through sport may not be achieved.