

Description of the first years of experiences of novice female coaches¹

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Background of the study

- Conclusions of previous studies have shown an under-representation in the last 30 years as well as a decreasing number of female coaches in the last 10 years.
- Not only are there less female coaches, those who choose this profession stay in it for approximately 4 years, in comparison to their male counterparts who remain in coaching for 11 years.



Specific objectives

- Describe the profile of women entering the coaching profession
- Identify the different successes and difficulties they experience in their first two years of coaching



Methodology

- We have chosen a multiple case study in order to better understand the experiences of novice female coaches by describing their first two years of coaching experience



Recruiting the female coaches

- Recruit through the Quebec school sport system and sport clubs
- 12 novice female coaches participated:
 - gymnastics (6)
 - basketball (1)
 - soccer (2)
 - taekwondo (1)
 - curling (1)
 - cheerleading (1)



Data collection on career choice

- We used Doherty and Johnson's scales to measure cognitive and contextual influences on coaching entry (based on the social cognitive career theory from Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994)
- The scales are divided in 4 sections:
 - Self-efficacy perception = 42 items
 - Expectations about coaching = 43 items
 - Factors that may affect your decision to become involved = 11 items
 - Women specific factors = 13 items



Data collection on problems and successes

- Critical incident technique as described by Brunelle et al. (1988)
- Each coach reported a minimum of two incidents per week (one linked to a problem, one linked to a success) for a period of time varying from 16 to 20 weeks.
- We collected between 32 and 40 incidents for each coach for a total of 462 incidents for the project.



Data analysis-problems and successes

- Content analysis was based on L'Écuyer's (1990) model. This is a mixed qualitative data analysis that combines an open model with no categories previously identified with a model with predetermined categories. We used Gilbert and Trudel model of *Components of reflection* (2001).



Results –Choice of a coaching career

- The career-choice questionnaire clearly showed that the coaches involved in this research had had highly positive experiences as athletes. However, they reported that their level of competitive success was average. It thus appears that the quality of their experiences (generally very positive) was more important than winning in motivating them to become coaches.



Results – Level of confidence

- Coaches level of confidence when we considered one coaching ability at a time varied from low to very high.
- Areas of less confidence were:
 - planning training sessions
 - stress management
 - first-aid and injuries
- On a scale of 1 to 9, they assessed their overall confidence at 7, which is fairly high. Therefore, they seem to be reasonably confident in their coaching skills as a whole



Results – Influences

- When the women were asked what most influenced their decision to become coaches, three factors stood out. In order of importance, these factors are:
 1. The club's director/athletic director specifically asked me to become a coach.
 2. My family encouraged me to become a coach.
 3. My friends encouraged me to become a coach.



Results – Successes (♦ community, ♦ competition, ♦ both)

Athlete behavior

- Athletes having fun
- Athletes having a positive influence on each other

Athlete performance

- Motor and technical development (athlete succeed for 1st time)
- Athletes affective response (no fear)

Coach profile

- Pedagogical skills (teaching difficult technical elements)
- Organizational skills (no waist of time)
- Feeling competent

Parental influence

- Positive interaction with parents

Team/Club organization

- Mentor support
- Club's management decisions (e.g. having an assistant coach)

Results – Problems (♦ community, ♦ competition, ♦ both)
Athlete behavior <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Athletes off-task •Negative social climate
Athlete performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Athletes that do not understand the task to perform •Athletes affective response (no fear)
Coach profile <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pedagogical skills (teaching difficult technical elements) •Organization of the training session (not efficient) •Not feeling competent •Feeling a lack of formal training and experiences
Parental influence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Negative interaction with parents
Team/Club organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Club's management decisions (e.g. no mentorship \$\$\$)

Conclusion

- Although this research is an exploratory one, identifying successes and especially problems has provided excellent leads in terms of the training of female beginner coaches. It appears, in fact, that their training should include a component on handling discipline. This is not surprising in and of itself, because young coaches often work with younger groups of athletes.



Conclusion cont'd

- The need for teaching strategies and access to a varied exercise bank appears critical to training women beginner coaches.



Conclusion cont'd

- This study confirms that mentorship support should be available to beginners as it is for experienced coaches. The differences appear to relate to the objectives of the mentoring. Experienced coaches need more support to overcome obstacles having to do with the fact that they are women, while beginners seem to need more technical support, such as educational strategies or examples of exercises to apply.



Conclusion cont'd

- In closing, we can state that the coaches appreciated, and continue to appreciate, opportunities to record their successes and problems. As one said, "It feels funny describing negative events; it gets them out of your system." They are increasingly sensitive to their experiences, and their descriptions are becoming more refined over time. This approach seems to hold potential for working with female beginner coaches.



Personal next steps

- Design women-only training workshops including the new findings (e.g. how to deal with discipline issues, how to deal with parents)
- Develop a mentorship program linked with the workshops; make that process automatic
- Develop a network to let the local sport organizations know about who are the trained women available to coach in their sport



Personal next steps

- Work with the NSO so they would develop drills and exercises «handbook» for their sport (develop a template to help them)
- Write a chapter to add to the material that is used to train NCCP Learning Facilitators about women learners in a coaching workshop

Questions



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