

The Swedish Sport Movement's Cultural Conditions Limits The Developmental Opportunities For The Athletes

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Aim of the research/project

The aim of the study is to increase the knowledge about coaches' experienced competence and development of competence on different levels, and how that can be understood out of a new institutional perspective.

Theoretical background or literature review

Within sport, the coach is central. The coach is the one that decides the content and form of training within sport (Stoszowski & Collins, 2014). The athletes are therefore dependent that the coaches have competence and skills that guarantees that the chosen content and form creates good conditions for the athletes to develop and reach their goals (ICCE, 2013).

An organization and its' practice is built on regulative, normative and cultural conditions that, if an organization functions well, harmonize with each other (Scott, 2008). Scott's (2008) theoretical perspective is applied to understand the coaches' preconditions to choose content and form of the practice.

Methodology, research design, and data analysis

The data was collected through an electronic survey that was distributed by the Swedish Sport Federation by an email being sent out to approx. 11,000 clubs, where the recipients of the email was urged to forward the survey to all coaches in their clubs. The survey was answered by 3,030 coaches.

The survey asked the coaches about their background, roles and tasks, knowledge and skills. The parts dealing with the roles and tasks is mainly built on Gilbert and Trudel (2004) and the part dealing with knowledge and skills are essentially based on Coté and Gilberts' (2009) categorization of the trainer's knowledge and skills.

The collected data was exported to IBM Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS v. 22) where descriptive analyses was carried out, mainly in the form of frequency- and cross- tables. In the analysing process, the coaches was divided into groups based on which age and sporting level they were coaching on.

Results, discussion, and implications/conclusions

The coaches' perceived competence varies depending on what level they are coaching on. For example, coaches for younger athletes, and on lower sporting levels, are experiencing lower perceived competence than coaches for older athletes and on higher sporting levels.

The explanation for this variation can be found in the organizational conditions for coaches and their development of competence. Within sport, there are no regulative conditions that regulate the practice. On the normative level, there are certain steering documents but they only affect vaguely. The conditions that mainly affect the outcome, are the cultural conditions concerning the organization of the coaches and their development of competence.

The cultural conditions testifies that a Swedish coach journey within sport, starts by he/she is asked by a leader in the club to be a coach. Usually they coach the group where their own children are active and follow that group up through the age and sporting levels. With time and experience the coaches knowledge and skills increase.

The consequences of the prevailing cultural conditions is that experience, knowledge and skills that the coaches achieve from coaching a certain age group, on a specific sporting level, gets lost when they follows their child through age and sporting levels. On these higher/"new" levels, the coaches will likely need other or "new" knowledge and skills, why they become beginners again. The knowledge and skills that is built through experience on specific age and sporting levels thus gets lost.

The educational system in sport starts by an introductory course for coaching children. The next step is a course for coaching youngsters and after that juniors. The system is built so that a coach goes from coaching younger to older athletes, instead of extending knowledge/skills within a specific age group. That the coaches by time tends to move upwards in the system, means by extension that the coaches continuously gets competence and skills that relatively soon gets irrelevant. The pay off that they can get on investing in

coach education on lower age/sporting levels tends as a consequence to be low. Therefore, the incentive to those investments are also low.

The implications are that athletes, especially young ones, have coaches with less experienced competence and skills, and don't get the preconditions to develop and reach their goals as they could have (ICCE, 2013). If sport wants to change that, it needs to change the organizational conditions. One way of achieving this is by formulating clear regulative conditions that stipulates what competence a coach should have as well as normative conditions regarding how a practice ought to work with development of coaches competence.

References

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