

Gaining Insight into Actual and Preferred Sources of Coaching Knowledge

Previous research (e.g., Abraham & Collins, 1998; Nelson & Cushion & Potrac, 2006; Trudel & Gilbert, 2006) has suggested that current formal coach education programs do not fully meet the learning needs of developing coaches. The purpose of the present study was to examine and contrast the actual and preferred sources of coaching knowledge for developmental-level coaches.

44 coaches (25 male, 19 female; mean age = 40.5 years, SD = 13.1) from a variety of sports were interviewed using a structured quantitative interview procedure. Two structured interviews were conducted with each coach to evaluate 1) actual and 2) preferred sources of coaching knowledge. Coaches first identified the top three sources from which they had gained coaching knowledge during their development. Coaches then identified the top three sources from which they would have preferred to learn.

Learning by doing, interaction with coaching peers, and formal coach education programs were the top three actual sources of coaching knowledge. Discrepancies were found between actual and preferred usage of learning by doing, formal coach education programs, and mentoring. Coaches indicated they would prefer more guided learning opportunities and less learning by doing. Further, differences in preferred sources of coaching knowledge were identified between coaches wishing to move to an elite competition level versus coaches wishing to stay at a developmental level. Findings highlight the importance of both experiential and formally guided sources of coaching knowledge and the context-specific nature of the coach learning.

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