

## Investigating the barriers and facilitators to achieving National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) certification

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In sport, certification for coaches is viewed as essential as it ensures a consistent, minimum level of knowledge and competency has been achieved (Cushion et al., 2010; Potrac & Gilbert & Denison, 2013). To become a fully certified coach in Canada, the NCCP involves progress through two phases: (i) a *training phase*, which requires completion of educational modules, as well as; (ii) an *evaluation phase*, which requires an “evaluator” to observe coaching practices. It is recommended that coaches complete the training to prepare them appropriately for evaluation although the training is not mandatory. In the 2014-2015 period alone, the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) reported only 10% of trained coaches became certified through the evaluation phase (CAC, 2015). Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate the barriers and facilitators that influence coaches’ decisions to pursue certification through evaluation.

In total, 1,518 coaches across Canada completed the survey including 742 certified coaches and 776 in training and trained coaches. Further, 38 coaches participated in a follow-up telephone interview. Most of the non-certified coaches believed in the value of acquiring certification but were not giving consideration to initiating the process. Barriers to pursuing certification included time, cost, tediousness of the process, and inaccessible evaluators. Facilitators for both certified and uncertified coaches included: certification contributes to increased knowledge and skills, certification improves a coach’s reputation and the material as a whole is perceived as valuable.

The findings of this study suggest several possible future directions for increasing participation rates in the certification process, including: clearly identifying and broadly disseminating the benefits of acquiring certification; clarifying the criteria for evaluation; streamlining the certification process and consider online models; enhancing accessibility of evaluators; and, incentivizing and rewarding certification.

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