

## Study on Review of Literature on The professionalization of sports coaching in a specific country

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**Abstract:** The purpose of the chapter is to overview a positive view of professionalisation that contrasts with recent positions that place responsibility for the coaching change process on individuals and small groups. Our position focuses on coaching change as a broader systemic improvement process enabled by the mobilisation of resource, notably, through state intervention, linked to increasing understanding of the value of coaching.

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### Introduction:

The strategy of the International Council for Coach Education (ICCE) has placed the development of sport coaching as a profession at the core of the mission of the organisation. The authors examine the basis for this aspiration against criteria associated with established professions, taking into account the unique features of sport coaching. It is concluded that, at a global level, sport coaching does not meet a number of the traditional hallmarks of a profession, primarily due to its current position on key descriptors such as purpose, knowledge base, organisation and ethics. In addition, the lack of fit of traditional 'right to practice' provisions within the established professions is identified as problematic. Sport coaching status categories include volunteer coach, professional coach, and the preparatory category of pre-coach. It is suggested that sport coaching should define its future identity as a blended professional area, operating within the wider field of sport and physical activity. A series of actions is proposed to advance the international agenda, as part of an on-going process of professionalization. The implications for the future research and strategy of ICCE are also identified.

The trend to focus more strongly on the position of sport coaching as a profession had been prompted internationally with the creation of the International Council for Coach Education (ICCE) in 1997 and the adoption of the Magglingen Declaration at a general assembly meeting involving twenty nine countries (ICCE, 2000). This Declaration outlined the challenges facing coach education and development, highlighting the need to ensure that the vital role of coaching was recognised by governments, sport and the wider community. The Declaration emphasised the importance of coach education and stressed the need for clarity in the identification of coaching

competencies. The Declaration also highlighted the need to promote standards of ethical behaviour and the need for mechanisms for monitoring compliance. The final element of the Declaration advocated the need to work towards the establishment of coaching as a profession, with the clear implication that such status had not yet been achieved. Indeed, the Declaration highlighted one of the key dilemmas inherent to such an aspiration by stating that coach education and development should seek to be inclusive, engaging of all sectors of the community regardless of race, gender, culture, disability, sexual orientation or religious practice (ICCE, 2000). The extent to which such inclusivity, including the continued engagement of large numbers of volunteer coaches in varied social contexts, is congruent with the modus operandi required to establish coaching as a profession is an issue that remains to be addressed. Advocacy to move in the direction of coaching as a profession gathered new pace within Europe after the adoption of the Magglingen Declaration and in the context of the convergent policies of the European Union. Supported by a European Commission funded project, the European Coaching Council (2007) proposed the introduction of a licensing system for coaches as part of the move towards a regulated profession. Notably, this proposed development was positioned within the wider professional area of sport and physical activity. The need for further work on defining coaching as a professional area of activity was also highlighted, taking 'account of experiences in other relevant areas and the emerging legislative frameworks within the European Union' (European Coaching Council, 2007, p.24).

### **The current position**

Recent years have seen the emergence of a consensus on the sport coaching terminology employed in the European Framework for the Recognition of Coaching Competence and Qualifications (European Coaching Council, 2007). This fledgling consensus was first reflected in the Rio Maior Convention (European Coaching Council, 2007a) and has generated significant interest since that time. This interest has been translated into application in the case of a number of countries (Meuken, 2008; Nordmann, 2008; Portuguese Council of Ministers, 2008; sports coach UK, 2008), as well as international federations (Duffy et al., 2010a). The European Framework has also provided a key point of reference in the development of a global framework (ICCE, 2010), jointly led by ICCE and the Association for Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF). The principle features of the European Framework were derived from the application of a methodology to curriculum development as part of a project funded by the European Union (Petry et al., 2008) that included 'professional areas' of sport coaching; health and fitness; physical education and sport management. Within this project, known as AEHESIS (Aligning a European Higher Education Structure in Sport Science), a four year process of model curriculum development was undertaken which included literature reviews; expert input and consultative meetings, culminating in a report at the end of each year and a final process of dissemination (Petry et al., 2008). In the case of sport coaching, a formal review of the 1999 European Framework for Coaching Qualifications (European Network of Sport Science in Higher Education, 1999) was also undertaken, supported by a six-step methodology that was applied across each of the professional areas covered by the project. In the Review, the professional area of sport coaching was associated with 'coaching people within a sport', thus recognising the principle of sport specificity and reinforcing the pivotal role played by national and international federations in the education, deployment and regulation of coaches within their sport (European Coaching Council, 2007, p.15). Sport coaching was defined as 'the guided improvement, led by a coach, of sports participants and teams in a single sport and at identifiable stages of the athlete/sportsperson pathway' (European Coaching Council, 2007, p.5). Within this context, two standard occupations were identified: participation-oriented and performance-oriented. In each case, there were two further sub-divisions. Included within the participation-oriented standard occupation were coach of beginners (child, junior, adult) and coach of participation-oriented sportspeople (child, junior, adult). The performance-oriented standard occupation included coach of talent

identified/performance athletes (child, junior, adult) and coach of full-time/high performance athletes. While the sub-divisions within the standard occupations were not provided with a clear label at the time, more recent analysis has referred to four coaching domains (Duffy et al., 2010a). The identification of two standard occupations and four coaching domains marked a departure from a uni-dimensional view of sport coaching, which had aligned expertise and qualifications to a performance-oriented paradigm (European Network of Sport Science and Higher Education and Employment, 1999). The need for such a shift had first been signalled by Lyle (2002) and subsequently became a strong point of focus in the work of the European Coaching Council (2007) and the AEHESIS project (Petry et al., 2008). This shift in thinking was also reflected in academic work on the nature of coaching excellence and expertise. Trudel and Gilbert (2006) suggested that the education of coaches should be more strongly oriented towards the context in which coaches operate. Reflecting this more segmented approach, Côté, Young, North, and Duffy (2007, p.4) proposed that the definition of coaching excellence be multi-faceted in nature and 'should describe the competences that coaches require when interacting with athletes of various competitive levels and in various sporting contexts' as well as being referenced against the 'correlates of excellence' among teachers.

### **Review of Literature on The emergent concept of sport coaching as a profession**

Within a global context, sport plays a significant role in the generation of economic activity and in the provision of services to spectators, participants, communities, athletes, coaches, administrators and the corporate sector (Maguire, 1999, 2005; Maguire et al., 2002). Increasingly, Governments see sport as an important element of their policy frameworks (Australian Government, 2010; Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 2002; Government of Ireland, 1998; Green & Houlihan, 2005; Houlihan, 1997; President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition, 2011; Sport and Recreation South Africa, 2011). In some cases, legislative frameworks have been established regulating the operation of sport (Chaker, 1999; Government of France, 2000; Kikulis et al., 1992; Parrish, 2003; Republic of South Africa, 1998, 2007). More recently, the European Union has issued both a White Paper and an official communication on sport which sets out the proposed objectives for sport within a wider social, economic and cultural framework (European Commission, 2007, 2011). At a global level the influence of the Olympic movement gathers pace, while sport has also been identified as a vehicle to achieve the millennium goals of the United Nations

(Beutler, 2008). Within this context, sport coaching fulfils an important social function as part of the wider sport service sector across the globe (Lyle, 1999, 2002). Anecdotal evidence suggests that millions of adults deliver coaching sessions to sport participants on a regular basis, with up to 1.5 million people engaged in coaching in the UK every year (North, 2009). While the vast majority of these coaches are volunteers, a situation that is reflected in the majority of countries in the world, the existence of a substantial body of part-time or full-time paid coaches has been verified in a number of nations. For example, Australia has recently reported 27,900 full-time coaches, while the figure for the United States is 217,000 (Duffy, 2009). Within the UK, there are an estimated 36,537 full-time coaches and 230,765 part-time coaches (North, 2009). In Germany, there are more than 500,000 people with legal licenses at the German Olympic Sports Confederation (its membership consist of 27.5 million individual members in over 91,000 clubs). Over 7.5 million people are involved in assisting sporting activities on a voluntary basis. In the sport clubs alone some 2.1 million voluntary workers carry out 538 million hours of work per year without pay. This corresponds to a net domestic product of € 8.1 billion (German Olympic Sports Confederation 2010; Muckenhaupt, 2010). Within this context, there are approximately 260,000 licensed coaches in the fields of participation-oriented sport and performance-oriented sport (Breuer 2009; Digel & Thiel 2010; German Olympic Sports Confederation 2011). In the area of high performance there are approximately 1,000 employed coaches and more than 3,000 coaches working with emerging high performance athletes, employed within national federations and at the regional level (Nordmann & Sandner, 2009). The scale and social significance of sport coaching as a paid, part-time paid and full-time paid pursuit has led to the inevitable examination of its position as a professional area of activity (Campbell, 1993; Chelladurai, 1986; Duffy, 2010; Lyle, 1986, 2002; Lyle & Cushion, 2010; Taylor & Garret, 2010; Woodman, 1993). In the earlier years of these analyses, there was a strong degree of advocacy on the need for core coach education programmes that brought a stronger scientific and professional orientation to sport coaching. This perspective reflected the position of two of the authors (Campbell, 1993; Woodman, 1993), who were responsible for the creation of core coach education programmes in the UK and Australia respectively. The creation of such nationally led programmes has also been supported in a range of strategic and policy publications around the globe, reflecting a broad canvas of support for the proposition that sport coaching is meritorious of a position alongside other professions (Coaching Association of

Canada, 2011; European Coaching Council, 2007; National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2008; sports coach UK, 2008; UK Sport 2001). Following on from the pioneering work done in Canada, Australia and the UK, there has been an increasing trend to develop large scale programmes for the education and accreditation of coaches (Mallet, 2010; Trudel, Gilbert & Werthner, 2010). Some of these initiatives occurred within a context where there has been a stated need or intention for coaching to become more strongly established as a profession (Government of Canada, 2002; sports coach UK, 2008). In other cases, coaching was accorded a central place in the sport systems of, for example, Eastern Europe, Russia and China, with a strong emphasis on the scientific principles of athlete development and degree level education of coaches (Dasheva, 2011; Lyle, 2002). The potential impediments facing the emergent profession were highlighted by Chelladurai (1986) who questioned the feasibility of sport coaching following the path of more established professions such as law and medicine. Challenges were also highlighted by Lyle (2002), where the characteristics and boundaries of sport coaching were laid out in detail. More recently, Lyle and Cushion (2010) collated an insightful range of contributions from authors around the globe on professionalisation and practice, where a range of key issues and theoretical perspectives led the authors to conclude that ‘this academic field is beginning to look beyond cultural differences’ to a point where ‘findings are beginning to be aggregated within a set of conceptual understandings that suggests a more cohesive field’ (Lyle & Cushion, 2010, p.251-252). In the same publication, the lead author of this paper cited the adoption of the Rio Maior Convention (European Coaching Council, 2007a) as evidence of a greater activation of national and international organisations around a more common framework of understanding while ‘recognising sport specific variations, as well as diversity of need among paid and unpaid coaches in the different nations and continents of the world’ (Duffy, 2010, p.vii).

### **Traditional models of the professions**

To date, the primary focus in the debate on sport coaching as a profession has been positioned against traditional models of the professions, with a growing recognition that direct comparison may not be appropriate (Taylor & Garret, 2010). In the past, this has resulted in comparisons being made with medicine, law, teaching and other professional areas. Given the context outlined above, where it has been seen that sport coaching is primarily delivered on a volunteer basis around the globe, there is a need to recognise that traditional models of the professions may not be

appropriate for some sections of the diverse range of groups engaging in sport coaching in a global context. Such a re-examination provides the basis for a more rigorous analysis of how sport coaching might deliver high quality experiences at the front-line, underpinned by professional standards and recognising the unique features of an activity that at once engages enthusiastic parents and committed life-long paid professionals. This approach is built on the premise that sport coaching comprises an inter-related set of standard occupations, roles, domains and status categories that are linked through a common purpose and social function. In the section that follows, a synopsis of literature relating to the criteria associated with the professions is provided, which will provide the basis for assessing the indicative status of sport coaching. Key elements of this synopsis mirror a parallel analysis on sport development in which the second author of the current paper is involved, reflecting the common ground that needs to be addressed within the broader professional field of sport and physical activity (Hylton & Hartley, 2011).

### Challenges for sport coaching

From the consideration of the characteristics of the traditional professions in the previous section, it is apparent that there are a number of significant impediments to the positioning of sport coaching alongside such models. Is the professional model that is used in these other professions right for coaching? Does it best serve the coaches, the athletes and the sport community? Coaching has evolved in very different ways from the regulated professions. In many countries, there can be very early entry into coaching activities, with high school-aged youth assuming coaching roles in the introduction of young children into sport, and late entry by athletes who may continue to compete until their late 30s and 40s and then decide to coach, and by parents who assume volunteer coaching roles for their children's teams. A first, and fundamental, barrier to a direct comparison with other professions relates to the right to practice, as outlined by Findlay and Corbett (2002, p.25):

*As a profession, coaching has not established an exclusive "right to practice" and thus exists in a world far removed from professions such as accounting, medicine, engineering, law and nursing. In these professions, an individual must be a member of the professional body in order to practice the occupation* As has been illustrated in the previous section, the established professions fiercely protect and differentiate themselves from non-professionals, and in fact create a monopoly where only members of the profession can practice. This monopoly – the exclusive right to practice - allows the profession to set and enforce standards of practice, while preventing

anyone else from undertaking the functions of that profession. But is this a feasible or desirable approach in sport coaching, where many sport programmes rely on volunteer coaches to provide access to sport, especially for children? Volunteer coaches provide a workforce that allows communities and clubs to offer sport programmes at a low cost, and those coaches are often highly committed, undertake coach training, and may progress to working with advanced athletes. Their core education, however, may be in entirely different fields than sport, and they often do not have the university degree in coaching required for a profession. Also, former professional athletes have often sacrificed the opportunity to study at university in order to develop their expertise and achieve excellence in sport and are lacking in these professional qualifications, but they are often considered preferred candidates for paid coaching jobs. The balance between formal qualifications and practical experience in the field would seem to be significantly different in coaching than the other professions, that have neither volunteers nor the opportunity for the prime candidates for future jobs to spend ten plus years acquiring experience in the unique environment of elite sport instead of in academic study. In the regulated professions, practitioners usually complete a university degree as required by the professional body and then proceed with entry-level employment and completion of the other requirements of that profession (work experience/articling/medical residency etc, examinations, code of ethics and membership in the professional body). There is a need for additional research on how this compares to coaching, and how prevalent the exceptions are. There are no doubt, significant differences among countries and sports. The former eastern European socialist countries had followed a model very similar to the other professions, with university degrees leading to entry level coaching jobs, but in many cases are now turning to volunteer coaching as a larger proportion of the total coaching workforce. For example, in Bulgaria, it is estimated that 32 per cent of the coaches are full-time, 45 per cent part-time and 23 per cent volunteer (Dasheva, 2011), while France has made provision for compulsory qualifications in the case of paid coaches (Government of France, 2000).

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