

Chapter 16

Coach Education and Learning: Singapore's Story

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ABSTRACT

The vocation of sports coaching has seen a significant growth across the globe (Taylor & Garratt, 2013). Accordingly, the need to professionalise coaching and to establish a framework for the development of the coaching profession has also been advocated by many scholars (Cushion et al., 2010; Lyle, 2002). The International Sports Coaching Framework (ISCF) jointly proposed by the International Council for Coaching Excellence, the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations, and Leeds Metropolitan University in 2012 has provided directions and systems for global coach education and development. Coaches need to continually learn and develop their craft to remain relevant and competent. Learning can be formal or informal and can happen through many forms such as experiential learning, reflection, study, and workshops/clinics (Cushion & Neslon, 2013). These diverse learning formats cater to individual differences and hence should be encouraged to develop coaches. Coach education is explored in this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

Singapore is a relatively young but successful nation with only 49 years of short history. It is ranked fifth in the world in terms of gross domestic product per capita and has a significant amount of official reserves (Tan, 2010). It has a land area of 715.8km² and a population of 5.31 million (Department of Statistics, 2013). Since independent in 1965, the Singapore's government has always positioned sports as

an integral role in the development of social cohesion, teamwork and understanding among Singaporeans (Ministry of Community Development and Sports, 2008). Various initiatives introduced by the government have set the direction and foundation to raise the professional qualification and standards of coaching in order to benefit people involved in sports. Indeed, sport coaching has been identified as one of the key areas that require further development (Chew, 2010).

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In striving to achieve the desired outcomes to develop quality and competent coaches for sporting Singapore, four reviews of the formalised coach education programmes were conducted in 1976, 1995, 2007, and 2012 (Singapore Sports Council, 2012a). The purpose of the reviews was to ensure that coach education programmes are relevant, innovative and follow best practice (Chew, 2010). The first coach education syllabus was established in 1976. This syllabus focused on sports instructions and was delivered by the various National Sports Associations (NSAs). Due to the NSAs' different levels of maturity, the proficiency of delivering the syllabus was inconsistent. A review of coaching education conducted by Sport Singapore (SportSG), formerly known as Singapore Sports Council (SSC), was done in 1995 resulting in the launch of the National Coach Accreditation Programme (NCAP) with the purpose of standardising the delivery of coach education programmes. The NCAP consists of two components i.e., theory and technical. The theory component focuses on the fundamental principle of coaching and sports sciences delivered through a series of lectures. It is delivered by SportSG. The technical component typically includes practical sessions on sports specific skills, technical skills and strategies aim to build on coaches' technical knowledge of the sport. It is delivered by NSAs of the respective sports. There are three levels in NCAP that seek to provide coaches with the essential skills and knowledge from recreation coaching (Level One) to high performance coaching (Level Three). It is a popular coaching certificate programme among coaches and employers (Singapore Sports Council, 2012b). The NCAP framework is currently under review. The new coach education programme framework will be introduced to all NSAs in later part of 2014 (Koh, Foo, Sakamoto, & Low, 2014).

In an effort to improve the quality of coach education programme, SportSG together with some NSAs, have partnered with their respective

International Federations (e.g., International Rugby Union, International Table Tennis Association, International Tennis Federation, Asian Football Confederation) to develop and deliver certification courses. Under such partnership programme, participants will receive an international coaching certificate together with a NCAP certificate by attending a course co-developed and co-designed by the International Federation (IF), NSAs and SportSG. SportSG had also engaged higher education institutes in a consultative process on the development and delivery for quality coaching courses, guided by empirical findings and well established frameworks and theories in sports coaching (Koh et al., 2014).

There are many learning modes for coaches in Singapore that aim to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to delivery their duties. This chapter aims to provide:

1. A brief description on coach education and learning from sports coaching literature,
2. Describe the coach education programme (formal and informal learning) in Singapore and provide examples of less traditional coach education formats that are practice-driven, bottom-up initiatives from various stakeholders,
3. Draw conclusions from existing literature and provide suggestions on how coach education systems can be further developed.

While the ISCF provides some general directions for coach education and learning, we share practice-oriented coach development programmes and empirical research that we hope will demonstrate the value of practice-driven initiatives in contributing to the advancement of coach education and development.

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