

Sources of knowledge acquisition: perspectives of the high school teacher/coach

Laurie M. Wilson, Gordon A. Bloom* and William J. Harvey

Kinesiology & PE, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

(Received 21 August 2008; final version received 9 June 2009)

Background: Research on coach development and knowledge acquisition has traditionally focused on those working at either university or Olympic levels. Despite the large body of research using these participants, there are relatively few empirical studies on the knowledge development of high school coaches, in particular, physical education teachers/coaches. This is unfortunate since it is equally important to examine aspects of high school coaches' knowledge and how these coaches acquired their knowledge given the impact a high school coach may have on young athletes' development and overall sport experience.

Purpose: To investigate sources of knowledge acquisition of Canadian high school team sport coaches.

Participants and setting: Six high school team sport coaches from the same school board, residing in a major urban Canadian city, participated in this study. Each participant was teaching full-time physical education and coaching at least two different sports and a minimum of two teams. Coaches represented a variety of team sports.

Research design: A qualitative research design using a semi-structured open-ended interview format was employed in the current study. Key questions were based on Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria and Russell's Coaching Model from 1995 and related coaching science literature.

Data collection: Two physical education consultants and a university physical education pedagogy Professor identified candidates for the current study. Participants were contacted by email or telephone, informed of the nature of the study and asked to participate. Following this, each participant was asked to complete a consent form in accordance with the university ethics policy, as well as a demographic questionnaire. The coaches were interviewed individually for a period of time varying from one to two hours at a mutually convenient location.

Data analysis: The main objective of the data analysis was to create a system of emerging categories that adequately described the sources of knowledge acquisition of high school team sport coaches. Three categories emerged with an inductive analysis of the data.

Findings: Results revealed that while each coach's journey was unique, their knowledge acquisition was similar in many ways. Initially, their formal education provided them with training in sport sciences and physical education pedagogy, as well as practical coaching experiences. Their knowledge base was further developed once they began working in high school, interacting with more experienced coaches, and acquiring additional information through coaching clinics, books, and the internet.

Conclusions: Given that knowledge was acquired from a variety of sources, it can be concluded that high school coaches learn from a combination of formal training,

*Corresponding author. Email: gordon.bloom@mcgill.ca