

# Describing and classifying coach development programmes: A synthesis of empirical research and applied practice

Jordan S Lefebvre<sup>1</sup>, M Blair Evans<sup>2</sup>, Jennifer Turnnidge<sup>1</sup>,  
Heather L Gainforth<sup>3</sup> and Jean Côté<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Coach development programmes are conducted to change coach behavior in a specific domain. To facilitate understanding of this growing field, the current synthesis review of coaching literature was conducted to generate classifications of coach development programme types. To identify coach development programmes described within academic research, a supplemental search of an earlier systematic review was conducted. In addition, a broad Internet search was used to identify publically available descriptions of coach development programmes. After extracting information describing the resulting 285 coach development programmes, the research team distinguished 16 coach development programme domains of focus, classified within professional, interpersonal, or intrapersonal domains. Five organizational contexts were also identified in relation to “where” and “why” coach development programmes were conducted, and the coaching context and mode of delivery were also classified. As an effort to bridge applied and empirical realms, the continued use and development of these classifications will facilitate the further progress and synthesis of coach development literature.

## Keywords

Coach education, professional knowledge, youth sport

## Introduction

Sport participation plays an essential role in young athletes’ development.<sup>1</sup> Although many of the health-related benefits of physical activity are well known, sport also involves personal experiences and relationships that provide athletes with opportunities to develop social skills and positive beliefs about the self (e.g. assertiveness, confidence, teamwork, and connectedness).<sup>2</sup> Among the social influences that promote personal development through sport, coaches have a profound effect because they are often responsible for shaping the sport environment.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, there is evidence that athletes who experience *good* coaching are more likely to continue sport throughout their lifespan,<sup>4</sup> and develop sport-specific and psychosocial competencies to a greater extent.<sup>5–7</sup> In contrast, when being coached by individuals who are uncaring, unfair, and who inadequately convey skills and tactics, athletes report negative outcomes such as being distracted, self-doubting, and being unenthusiastic about sport.<sup>8</sup>

Given that the quality of a coach can make the difference between having a positive or negative sport

experience, the process of defining effective coaching is a priority for researchers.<sup>3,9</sup> Using the understanding that an effective coach contributes to the comprehensive development of his or her athletes, Côté and Gilbert<sup>10</sup> grounded their definition of effective coaching within three domains of knowledge. While professional knowledge is indeed a vital coaching competency, effective coaches are also knowledgeable in interpersonal and intrapersonal domains. In particular, professional knowledge is a coach’s ability to teach

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Tiffanye Vargas (California State University, USA)

<sup>1</sup>School of Kinesiology and Health Studies, Queen’s University, ON, Canada

<sup>2</sup>Department of Kinesiology, Pennsylvania State University, PA, USA

<sup>3</sup>School of Health and Exercise Sciences, University of British Columbia, BC, Canada

## Corresponding author:

Jordan S Lefebvre, School of Kinesiology and Health Studies, Queen’s University, 28 Division St, Kingston, Ontario K7L 3N6, Canada.  
Email: 14jl64@queensu.ca