



## Coach Tracking Study

### Introduction

**sports coach UK** will be conducting a four year tracking study of coaches in the UK, including Community Sports Coaches (CSCs) in England, and other Home Country schemes, in order to examine their development as coaching professionals and to understand the impact of coaching interventions over time.

### Background

The role and importance of coaches in both inducing and sustaining participation at the community level, and developing performance and elite athletes is increasingly recognised. The current high profile of coaches in the media, the increased investment in coaching by the Government<sup>1</sup>, the increased use of coaching by the general public<sup>2</sup>, and the importance of high quality coaching to elite development<sup>3</sup>, especially in the run up to the 2012 Olympics, is testament to this.

However, this increased recognition is emerging from what is generally agreed to be a relatively low base. Research<sup>4</sup>, Government commissions (Coaching Task Force) and practitioners alike, have all reported that coaching remains undeveloped as a profession; that there is a shortage of appropriately trained, high quality coaches; that the systems for managing coaches have historically been inadequate; that existing coach education systems are patchy and inconsistent; that the philosophy and approach of existing coach education systems is overly-focused on 'what to coach' (technique and tactics) rather than 'how to coach' and consequently the importance of experience, of applying coaching knowledge and of decision making has been undervalued.

Though many effective coaches have developed under the existing systems, and sometimes in spite of them, the need for change has been acknowledged and acted upon. The reforms and investment resulting from the UK Vision for Coaching<sup>5</sup>, the DCMS Coaching Task Force and the Coaching Project<sup>6</sup>, amongst others will, it is hoped, contribute significantly to the development of coaches and coaching and there is already evidence to this effect<sup>7</sup>. In particular, improvements to the systems for the education, development and professionalisation of coaches, and the development of an established coaching career pathway, are central concerns for investment and policy interventions. At the UK level, this has resulted in the development and implementation of the United Kingdom Coaching Certificate (UKCC), a new system for the development of coaching qualifications. In England, a network of 45 Coach Development Officers (CDOs) has been established to facilitate coach education and continuous professional development (CPD) at the sub-regional level, whilst at the local level over 1,200 Community Sports

---

<sup>1</sup> See the Coaching Task Force/Coaching Project websites: <http://www.culture.gov.uk/sport/coaching.htm>

<sup>2</sup> National Statistics (2004) Sport and Leisure – Results from the Sport and Leisure Module of the 2002 General Household Survey, London.

<sup>3</sup> Oakley, B and Green, M (2001) 'The production of Olympic Champions: International perspectives on elite sport development systems', European Journal for Sport Management, Vol. 8, No. 1: pp. 83-105.

<sup>4</sup> See sports coach UK Coaching Research Web-Database – ref to follow

<sup>5</sup> UK Sport (2001) The UK Vision for Coaching, UK Sport, London.

<sup>6</sup> See the Coaching Task Force/Coaching Project websites: <http://www.culture.gov.uk/sport/coaching.htm>

<sup>7</sup> sports coach UK and Sport England (forthcoming) Coach Development Officer (CDO)/CSC Case Studies

Coaches (CSCs) provide professional coaching (the target is 3,000). Furthermore the Home Countries, **sports coach UK** and National Governing Sport Bodies (NGBs) have developed equivalent or bespoke approaches to facilitating coach education. At the elite level, UK Sport have developed a coach development programme and additionally a number of Regional English Institute of Sport Centres have also developed Coaching Excellence Programmes focusing on coach education and CDP.

However, despite the very important contributions of the aforementioned systems that have been put into place, it is also crucial to recognise that the pathways that facilitate individuals to further develop their coaching, often exist outside the scope of Government and sports agencies' reach. For example, before any of the current Government interventions, the 'Sports Coaching in the UK'<sup>8</sup> research indicated that around 1.2 million individuals were involved in some kind of coaching activity in the UK, and that around 19% (=230,000) of these were paid. Furthermore, around 5% (=60,000) coaches in the UK were full-time paid professionals. It is also important to note that the accumulation of coaching knowledge and refinement of coaching practice is not just shaped by formal coach education programmes and qualifications. Indeed, time and again research has shown the importance of participation, observation and experience in the development of coaching skills<sup>9</sup>.

Despite a growing knowledge regarding coaches, coaching and coach development a great deal remains unknown. **sports coach UK** intends to conduct a new research study tracking the development of a cohort of coaches in the UK over a four year period. The study will provide a detailed examination of the development of these coaches in terms of their education, qualifications and experience of coaching. It will examine the relationship between the types of interventions coaches' engage in, their experiences, and other relevant factors and coaching outcomes, such as the level they coach, the qualifications they achieve, their remuneration (if any) and the mode of delivery (part time Vs full time). It will also seek to investigate how their development (interventions/experience) improves their coaching knowledge and practice. In this regard the work will tie in closely with the proposed UKCC Impact Study<sup>10</sup>, which seeks to take a very detailed look at the impact of coach education systems on the development of coaching knowledge and practice.

Specific attention will focus on the impact associated with the Coaching Task Force. The study will track a minimum of 500 CSCs (though discussions are on-going to bolster this part of the sample). It will also be designed in such a way that will highlight the coaches' perspectives and experiences of the CDO network – for example, how they have used the network to facilitate their development – and, of course, it will inevitably look at the impact of the UKCC. However, the work will also consider any formal interventions across home countries, regions and sports that impact on the development of coaching knowledge and practice.

---

<sup>8</sup> MORI (2004) Sports Coaching in the UK, sports coach UK, Leeds, September.

<sup>9</sup> Cushion, C, Armour, K and Jones, R (2003) 'Coach Education and Continuing Professional Development: Experience and Learning to Coach', Quest, Vol. 55, No. 3, pp 215-230.

<sup>10</sup> There is a separate research brief for the development of this work that is available from scUK research on request.

## Central Research Aims

- To understand the professional, educational and experiential development of coaches over a four year period.
- To examine the impact of contributing factors such as experience, self-directed learning and development, as well as externally provided coaching interventions on the coaches' development, knowledge and practice; including an examination of the impact of the CDO network, UKCC endorsed qualifications, and wider CPD opportunities.
- To examine the changing career profile of coaches, and the development of coaching career pathways over a four-year period.
- To provide recommendations on the development of future coach education provision both in terms of content and delivery.

## Research Questions

The aforementioned research aims lead to following research questions. The following list will be used to aid the development of an appropriate interview schedule, but it is not strictly prescriptive; additional topics/issues that may be raised by participants can also be discussed.

What are coaches' background/personal characteristics? – How did they get into coaching?

- demographic
- intrapersonal (motivations for coaching, perceived rewards / attitudes to coaching)
- educational [sport-specific (SS) and non-sport-specific (nonSS)]
- sport experience (general and as an athlete – if applicable)
- coaching experience (athlete and sport specific)
- occupational (SS and nonSS)
- contextual/social (SS and nonSS)

How do these background characteristics influence the coaches' development, coaching knowledge and practice?

What learning experiences and opportunities have the coaches engaged in (deliberately or unintentionally) during the four-year period and what is the impact on their development, coaching knowledge and practice? – SS qualifications / Formal Education (SS & nonSS) / Informal-Experiential Education (SS & nonSS)

How do the coaches' occupational and coaching experiences (and characteristics) vary over time? What are the factors that drive these changes? – if not full time coaches: how has work varied and what has been the impact of this?

What support structures do coaches rely on/prefer (SS and nonSS)? How do these vary over time? What is the impact of these on coaches' development, knowledge and practice?

What pathways do voluntary community based coaches go through and how do these compare with those followed by professional and performance coaches?

What are the characteristics of paid and full-time paid coaches? In what areas do they work? How did they develop into full-time paid coaches under the existing systems? What can the understanding of these latter processes tell us about the wider agenda of professionalising coaching?

What are the most effective coach education interventions policy makers can provide to coaches to develop their knowledge and practice, for example, qualifications, workshops, observation, mentoring etc.?

What has been the impact of the Coaching Project (i.e. UKCC, CDOs, CSCs) related interventions on coaching systems and coach development? For example, what has been the impact of CDOs in facilitating coaching learning?

Is there any evidence of the development of a coaching career pathway for coaches in different sports and at different levels i.e. participation, development and elite? If so, what are the details of these pathways?

Why do individuals decide to stop coaching? What activities do they undertake after coaching? Do they still maintain contact with the sport/coaching community?

## **Proposed Research Methodology**

### **Phase One: Face-to-face in-depth interviews with 20 coaches**

In order to develop a 'grounded' understanding of the issues, themes and languages used by coaches of different backgrounds to articulate and construct their development and learning as a coach, a qualitative exploratory approach has been chosen. A two-series interview approach will be employed, as modified by Seidman (1998)<sup>11</sup>, as it will facilitate a greater flexibility of coverage. Such an approach, it is hoped, will allow coaches to freely discuss their own learning and development as well as concerns that are personally salient to them, by placing their coaching role, within a network of other issues (e.g., work/life balance). Each interview will be expected to last approximately one hour, with a maximum of a week lapsing between each interview.

Interview One: *How did the participant come to be a sports coach?* The first interview will be a focused life history, adopt a semi structured approach and will be conducted as a conversation so as to establish as relaxed and as natural a contact as possible with the participants. This interview will be participant-led and will focus on establishing their backgrounds, reviewing their progression from the beginning to the present day and exploring the principal factors that enabled (or hindered) their progression.

Interview Two: The second interview will adopt a semi-structured approach and will remain participant-led, focusing on a detailed reflexive examination of the coaches' development and all the factors that have interacted in their coach development, knowledge and practice.

The collected data will provide the background details on which to base the questionnaire development and qualitative material for integration into study reports. These interviews will be repeated for each year of the project, with the focus reflecting a particular topic for investigation as highlighted and determined by the progression and the needs of the study (e.g., level of participation Vs sport-specificity).

**A 'panel study'**<sup>12</sup> **with a minimum of 2,000 coaches** using a postal survey or web-based approach. The final sample for this element of the research has not yet been determined. Table One provides an illustration of the benefits of increasing the sample in terms of confidence limits for both all coaches and CSCs. Assuming a 50% response rate it is expected that 4,000 coaches will have to be contacted to get a panel of 2,000 coaches.

---

<sup>11</sup> Seidman, I (1998) Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences, New York: Teachers College Press

<sup>12</sup> Rose, E (Ed) (2000) Researching Social and Economic Change, Routledge, London.

<b>Table One</b> <b>Coach Tracking Study</b> <b>Confidence Limits for the Different Options</b>					
	Total response (assuming 50% Response rate)	All Coaches (1.2 m)	+/- (95% @ 50%)	CSCs (3,000)	+/- (95% @ 50%)
Option 1	2000	1500	2.5	500	4.0
Option 2	3000	2000	2.2	1000	2.5
Option 3	6000	2500	1.8	1500	1.8

A quota sample approach will be employed and the results weighted to reflect the coaching population as determined by the 'Sports Coaching in the UK' survey. Therefore, the following coaching categories will be represented in the sample: voluntary/paid, qualified/non qualified, part-time/full-time, community/elite as well as an appropriate demographic spread (gender, age, ethnicity, disability). **sports coach UK's 'Coach Manager'** (coaching database) system will be used to manage contacts and to assist in the longer term tracking of the coaches.

## Outputs

- (1) Annual summary report of findings – including longitudinal analysis of data in years 2, 3, and 4
- (2) Recommendations illustrating implications of the results for coach management, education and development for both policy and practice
- (3) A final full report from the four year project

## Timetable

The timetable for the work is as follows:

Action	Date
Phase 1 Qualitative Interviews	April / May 2006
Qualitative Data Analysis	May / June 2006
Phase 2 Panel Survey (1 <sup>st</sup> wave)	June 2006
1 <sup>st</sup> wave survey analysis	July 2006

## Management Arrangements

The project will be managed by Melina Timson-Katchis, Researcher, **sports coach UK**.

Melina Timson-Katchis  
 Research  
**sports coach UK**  
 114, Cardigan Road  
 Headingley  
 Leeds  
 LS6 3BJ

(T) 0113 204 3502  
 (M) 07904 234 850  
 (E) [mtimson-katchis@sportscoachuk.org](mailto:mtimson-katchis@sportscoachuk.org)