

Evaluation of training and job situation for coaches in Switzerland

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Objectives/approach:

In Switzerland, coaches for performance and elite sports have since 1968 been trained in close cooperation between public and sports organizations. The professional qualification as a coach covers all forms of sport and has been officially recognised since 2003. The training is conducted by the Swiss Federal Institute of Sports in Magglingen, in cooperation with Swiss Olympic.

So far, little is known about the long-term effect of the training despite its long tradition. For example, there is no information on whether certified coaches continue to work in their profession in performance and elite sports over a longer period of time.

For the good of the basic and advanced training of coaches, it must be asked whether coaches can optimise their expertise by attending courses and seminars, and whether this would lead to an improvement in the quality of coaching.

Knowledge in relation to the job situation of elite sport coaches in Switzerland is also scarce. As recently as 2002, the study by Kersten/Stalder gave a systematic insight into the professional lives of elite sport coaches. The market for coaches in Switzerland is comparatively small, but diverse and complex. The question arises of who are working in sports clubs and associations as performance and elite sport coaches, how were they recruited, what are their background and professional qualifications, and what conditions of employment apply.

In their study on the evaluation of the training of coaches in Switzerland "Evaluation der Trainerausbildung in der Schweiz" from 2006, Lamprecht&Stamm firstly re-analysed the data of the study by Kersten/Stalder from 2002, and then integrated and summarised additional data sources (cf. bibliography) and expert interviews in their investigation. The following are the most important findings of the analysis:

Findings/discussion:

The analysis of the job situation of coaches in Switzerland provides the following information:

- At present, approximately 300 full-time coaches work in performance and elite sports in Switzerland. Additionally, there are approximately 300 coaches working on a part-time basis, most of whom also have another job. When the number of voluntary trainers is added, around 1,000 coaches for elite and performance sports work in the field of elite and young talents on regional and national level. About 200 foreign coaches work in Switzerland in a wide variety of sports, most of them in full-time jobs.
- The coaches working in elite and performance sports show a high level of job satisfaction. Their love of sport, the actual work as a coach as well as working with athletes and other coaching colleagues are seen as particularly positive factors. Less satisfying, however, are the income and career opportunities. The lack of professional prospects is another important reason for the giving up coaching work. In Switzerland coaching is a temporary occupation. Job security and career opportunities remain precarious despite the increase in professionalism.

In relation to the effect of coach training and advanced education the following conclusions may be reached:

- From 1970 to 2006, 811 persons completed the graduate course for coaches and 894 persons completed the basic course for coaches (since 1993). About 60 percent of all full and part-time coaches completed coach training in Switzerland.
- The sports associations and specialists interviewed rate the coach training as (very) important and (very) good.

- Coaches who have finished coach training feel better trained and more competent than the coaches without Swiss Olympic coach training. They feel especially well qualified in management and leadership as well as in professional competence. Certain deficits show in social and self-competence.
- Turning the coaching profession into an academic discipline is heavily criticised. Coaching training should remain practice-oriented.

Conclusion:

How can the efficiency of coach training in Switzerland be increased in the future?

- The training offered in social and self-competence must be optimised, as both are important key factors to successful coaching.
- Through intensified orientation towards the specific needs of sports associations, the training on offer can be better individualised and optimised to meet requirements. In particular, advanced training must be increasingly tailored to the requirements of the top coaches who are currently active.
- Efforts must be enhanced to improve working and income situation as well as career opportunities for coaches. Public recognition of the coaching profession is a first step which, however, must be significantly better established.

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