

Coach Education at Deakin University: Lessons from the past and a vision for the future.

Overview:

Deakin University (Melbourne, Australia) has been providing a specialized undergraduate and post graduate Coach Education programs for more than a decade. With changes in the Australian tertiary education sector that are focusing on vocational outcomes for graduates, the Coach Education faculty at Deakin faces major challenges in order to meet the vocational demands of this small and specialized occupation. This presentation examines the market research and course development process.

Aims:

- To map the transition and challenges for coach education in an Australian university as it seeks to place itself at the forefront of coach professional development.
- To propose a solution to coach education and professional development that meets the needs of a growing sport industry.
- To determine what other aspects of the coaching occupation educators need to consider when planning for the future.

The Process:

In 2005/06, two sport industry focus groups were conducted to answer two questions about the future of coach education:

1. What are employers looking for when hiring a coach?
2. How can we develop the coach to further enhance their career?

Participants in the two focus groups were representatives from the Australian sports industry including executive representatives, coaches and managers from professional, national, state and local sporting organisations.

What we found:

To answer the first question about what knowledge and skills employers require of an elite/professional coach, participants needed to reach a consensus. The educational components agreed upon were rated separately by a panel of coaches and coach educators in terms of importance from: 1 = least important, 2 = moderately important, to 3 = most important.

Knowledge	Importance
Pedagogy/learning	3
Coaching styles	3
Coaching/sport psychology	3
Leadership	3
Human resource management	2
Information management	2
Research (being up to date)	2
Business/marketing	2
Sport science	2
Governance of sport	1
IT	1

Skills	Importance
Coaching (sport & life-skills)	3
Communication	3
Leadership	3
Management	3
Mentoring	3
Time management	3
Multi-tasking	3
Strategic planning	3
Problem solving/research	3
Analysis of sport science	2
Business/marketing	2
Media	2
Group facilitation	2
IT	1

Andrew Dawson

Lecturer and Coach Education Coordinator
School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences
Deakin University - Australia



(Photo by Hamish Blair/Getty Images, 2007)

Coach Education @ Deakin

Past

Graduate Diploma of
Applied Science (Sports Science)
1992 – 1996

Bachelor of Applied Science Human Movement
(Sports Coaching and Administration)
1993 – 2003

Bachelor of Applied Science Human Movement
(Sports Coaching)
2004 – 2005

Present

Bachelor of Exercise and Sport Science
(Sports Coaching Major)
2006 – Present

Future

Short Courses in
Professional Sports Coaching
(2008 & beyond)

Graduate Certificate/Diploma and Master
of Professional Sports Coaching
(2009 & beyond)



(Photo by Sean Garnsworthy/Getty Images, 2007)

What we found (cont.):

To answer the second question about how to develop a coaches career, the participants reached consensus and made seven recommendations:

1. Universities should develop coach education programs that meet the needs of the sports industry especially at the elite/professional end of the market.
2. Coach education programs should be offered in a flexible delivery format (i.e. a blend of face to face, off-campus, on line, and on-site/situated learning modes).
3. The main focus of university-based coach education should be on the management of people, information and resources as well as strategic planning.
4. Pathways into university coach education need to be flexible and allow for coach experience as well as qualifications/accreditation.
5. Professional development short courses should be designed and delivered by universities for coaches who can't afford or don't want to do a full post-graduate degree.
6. Subjects covered in university-based coach education programs need to be different to, and beyond the scope of, the core knowledge and skills of National Coach Accreditation Scheme programs.
7. Courses offered by universities need to be developed with the unique socio-cultural aspects of sport and coaching in mind.

The Analysis:

Traditionally, coaches have not been trained in the management tasks that contemporary elite and professional coaching roles require which limits their career and their sports' development.

The results of this market research reveal that as coaches transition into higher positions within sport organisations they need to become more adept at managing people, resources and participate in, and often lead, the strategic development of their sport.

To get the training required coaches are faced with doing management training that is often not sport-based or relevant to coaching.

The Solution:

The coach education team at Deakin University has undertaken several professional development initiatives that will commence in 2008.

Short Courses:

1. The Coach as Leader
2. The Coach as Mentor
3. The Coach as Strategist
4. High Performance Management for Coaches

Postgraduate Study:

Scope for developing a postgraduate degree program in Professional Sport Coaching is currently under way.

Acknowledgements:

The author would like to thank David Parkin, Helen Brown, Dr Paul Gastlin, and Professor Shona Bass for their insights and assistance in producing this presentation.

Contact details:

Andrew Dawson
School of Exercise and Nutrition Science
Deakin University
221 Burwood Hwy
Burwood, VIC, 3125
Australia
Tel: +61 3 92517309
Email: andrew.dawson@deakin.edu.au