



STUDY OF NEWCOMER SPORT COACHES

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Background

In recent years, the integration of newcomer sport coaches into the Canadian sport system has emerged as a critical area of focus. Newcomers often face significant challenges as they transition into the sport system, including navigating cultural differences, understanding the structural and operational aspects of the Canadian sport system, and building networks within the community ([Participating in Arts, Sports, and Society \(PASS\) Research Project](#)). These barriers can impede their professional growth and limit their effectiveness.

Mentorship programs have been identified as a promising strategy to support newcomer sport coaches in overcoming these challenges. Through structured mentorship, newcomer sport coaches and competitive athletes who seek to pursue coaching in the future, the so-called coach-intended athletes, have the opportunity to work closely with experienced coaches, gaining valuable insights, guidance, and practical knowledge. This relationship can provide a supportive

environment where newcomer coaches can ask questions, receive feedback, and develop a deeper understanding of coaching practices in Canada.

The aim of this research study is to explore the opportunities and facilitators perceived by newcomer* sport coaches and coach-intended athletes who participate in a mentorship initiative called Newcomer Coach Mentorship Program (NCMP), a collaborative initiative between the Coaching Association of Canada and Action for Healthy Communities Society of Alberta. By capturing their experiences and perspectives, this study seeks to identify the key facilitators and enablers that support the integration of newcomer coaches and coach-intended athletes into the Canadian sport system and how such programs can be optimized to better support newcomers.

In addition to identifying opportunities, the research investigates the multifaceted barriers and challenges faced

by newcomer sport coaches and coach-intended athletes as they integrate into the Canadian sport system. Through in-depth interviews with high-performance sport coaches, recreational coaches, and coach-intended athletes, the study explores the organizational, social, and personal obstacles that hinder their full participation and advancement. This study also delves into the participants' perceptions of diversity and inclusion within the Canadian sport system, uncovering experiences of discrimination and biases, such as passive-aggressive racism and microaggressions.

The findings are intended to inform all sport stakeholders, including the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) and Action for Healthy Communities (AHC) in designing and implementing programs that facilitate the successful integration and settlement of newcomers into the Canadian sport ecosystem.

* For the purpose of this study, a “newcomer” is defined as an individual who has relocated to Canada and is actively involved in either coaching (at high-performance or recreational levels) or competing in sports within the Canadian sport system.

Research Objectives

The goals of this study included:

- Examine facilitators and support mechanisms, including investigating the factors and support systems that facilitate the successful integration of newcomer sport coaches and coach-intended athletes into the Canadian sport system.
- Explore and document the specific challenges and obstacles that newcomer sport coaches and coach-intended athletes encounter as they integrate into the Canadian sport system.
- Generate actionable insights and recommendations for sport and coaching organizations based on the experiences and perspectives of newcomer sport coaches and coach-intended athletes.
- Investigate the perceptions and experiences of newcomer sport coaches and coach-intended athletes regarding diversity and inclusion within the Canadian sport system.
- Explore the nature of discrimination or bias encountered by newcomer sport coaches and coach-intended athletes based on their background.



Research Methodology

To meet project objectives, AuthentiQ Research undertook a qualitative research methodology, including in-depth interview discussions that were exploratory in nature with the flexibility to uncover and examine topics and issues as they arise in the conversation.

The research was conducted with the following tiers:

- High-performance sport coaches* (n=3)
- Recreational sport coaches** (n=4)
- Coach-intended athletes*** (n=4)

This qualitative approach ensured that newcomers had the opportunity to share their opinions in a way that best meets their work schedule, while ensuring comfort, anonymity

and confidentiality in sharing their views. The analysis of in-depth interviews involved a peer review process, where multiple researchers independently reviewed, coded, and discussed the interview transcripts to identify recurring themes and ensure reliability and validity in the findings.

AuthentiQ Research was responsible for helping with guide development, hosting and moderating all sessions, analysis and reporting.

Date of Interviews:

March 19, 2024 - June 14, 2024

* High-performance sport coach: a certified coach who actively trains and leads athletes in organized, high-performance competitions.

** Recreational sport coach: a coach who provides training and guidance to athletes participating in non-professional, community-based sports activities, focusing on skill development, enjoyment, and participation rather than competitive success.

*** Coach-intended athletes: an individual who participates in organized sports at a level involving regular training and competition, who is also actively seeking out coaching opportunities in the future.

11 In-Depth Interviews:

- Mix of audience segments
- 10 different nationalities
- Age ranged from 15 to 45
- 6 different sport
- Up to 1 hour in length

The primary benefits of qualitative discussions are that they allow for in-depth probing with qualifying participants on their opinions, perceptions and attitudes on a specific subject matter. Qualitative research allows for more complete understanding of the subject matter in that the thoughts or feelings are expressed in the participants' "own language" and at their "own level of passion." Qualitative techniques are used in social science research as a means of developing insight and direction, rather than collecting quantitatively precise data or absolute measures. As such, results are directional only and cannot be projected to the overall population under study.



Basketball



Swimming



Soccer



Gymnastics



Canoeing/Kayaking



Snowboarding

Key Takeaways



Enablers & Support Systems

High-performance coach

- Learning resources
- Programs and initiatives

Recreational coach

- Community-based support
- Indirect monetary support
- Social support networks

Coach-intended athlete

- Personal support systems and resources

Barriers & Challenges



- Career advancement
- Post-certification employment
- Coaching style
- Leadership background and coach recognition

- Social barriers
- Time constraints and information barriers

- Language barriers
- Nuances of Canadian communication



Executive Summary

This executive summary presents findings from an in-depth interview research conducted with newcomer high-performance coaches, recreational coaches, and coach-intended athletes within the Canadian sport system.

The study aimed to explore various themes crucial to understanding their integration experiences, coping strategies, support systems, perceptions of diversity and inclusion, encountered discrimination and bias, and suggested changes for improvement.

Integration Challenges and Barriers. Participants highlighted numerous barriers hindering their integration into the Canadian sport system. These included organizational politics affecting career advancement, challenges transitioning from certification to employment, diverse coaching styles and approaches unique to Canada, and the impact of leadership backgrounds on coach development and recognition. Social barriers within recreational sport settings, time constraints, parental attitudes towards sports, language barriers in competitive settings, and nuances in Canadian communication were also identified as significant challenges.

Coping Strategies. Unique coaching styles emerged as a coping strategy for system integration. Participants emphasized the importance of exceptional work ethic and continuous professional development in overcoming barriers within the sport system.

Support Systems and Facilitators. Various support systems and facilitators were recognized as critical in aiding integration. These included webinars and online learning resources, programs initiated by sport governing bodies, indirect monetary supports, community-based resources, social and community support networks, and personal athlete integration networks.

Perceived Diversity and Inclusion. Participants expressed concerns regarding diversity and inclusion within higher levels of the Canadian sport system, highlighting challenges faced by immigrants and the need for greater representation in leadership roles.

Experienced Discrimination and Bias. Instances of passive aggressive racism and microaggressions were reported,

particularly within recreational coaching environments, underscoring the need for increased awareness and proactive measures to address such issues.

Suggested Changes. Participants offered recommendations for improving the inclusivity and support for newcomer coaches and coach-intended athletes. Suggestions included enhancing two-way communication with leadership, reducing barriers through financial support and education initiatives, developing specific programs for newcomer coach-intended athletes, and establishing associations dedicated to supporting their integration and development.

This research provides valuable insights into the experiences of newcomer coaches and coach-intended athletes within the Canadian sport system, highlighting both challenges and opportunities for improvement. The findings underscore the importance of targeted interventions to foster greater diversity, inclusion, and support within the sport community. These insights are crucial for informing policy and practice within different sport organizations of Canada of all levels, aiming to create a more welcoming and equitable environment for all participants in Canadian sports, including newcomer sport coaches and coach-intended athletes.





FINDINGS

FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS

Support Systems and Facilitators

High-Performance Coaches

Webinars and Online Learning Resources

High-performance coaches emphasized the importance of robust support systems and resources when integrating into the Canadian sport system. Many cited webinars hosted by various sport organizations and associations across Canada as invaluable tools. In their opinions, these webinars could provide essential knowledge on coaching techniques, athlete management, and regulatory updates. Additionally, mentorship programs and networking opportunities offered by national and provincial sports bodies were highlighted as critical for professional development and community building. In their view, access to these resources could not only enhance their skills but could ultimately contribute to the success of their athletes and teams.

Programs and Initiatives Offered by Sport Governing Bodies

Coaches also emphasized the importance of programs and initiatives offered by national and provincial sport governing bodies, which provide essential funding, training, and

development opportunities. Notable among these were organizations such as Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) offering comprehensive certification and professional development courses to enhance coaching effectiveness. These structured support mechanisms, in their view, are crucial for ensuring that high-performance coaches can seamlessly transition into the Canadian sport system, and can ultimately enhance the quality and competitiveness of athletes across the country.

Recreational Coaches

Indirect Monetary Supports and Community-Based Resources

Throughout in-depth interviews with recreational sport coaches, several support systems and resources were identified as pivotal for facilitating the integration of newcomers into the Canadian sport system. A prominent theme was the role of subsidies and grants, particularly those indirectly accessible due to the constraints of immigration permit status, which often preclude direct applications for

“...webinars about different subjects [in sport], I have done maybe around 500 in the last 5-6 years and those helped me a lot in understanding every single detail because I like the difference and every one of those presenters, they bring different vision of the same subject, from their own way, from their own strategy and their own transitions.”

High-performance coach

“...I think in the last 2-3 years, they’ve really taken that into hearts and with different provincial initiatives, now people understand that we have to be inclusive, but four years ago, five years ago, I couldn’t say that.”

High-performance coach

“Financially, they’re [newcomers without PR or citizenship status] always struggling, citizens and PR are not struggling that much, but subsidize all that stuff every time we get, it helps, they never have to pay, you know.”

Recreational coach

funding. Coaches also highlighted community partnerships as essential in bridging this gap, leveraging local organizations and networks to provide financial aid and resource access. Indirect monetary supports, such as discounted facility rentals and equipment donations, were frequently mentioned as instrumental in easing the financial burden on newcomers. Mentorship programs and volunteer-driven initiatives also emerged as critical resources, offering guidance and fostering a sense of belonging within the sporting community.

Social and Community Support Networks

Newcomer recreational sport coaches frequently highlighted the crucial role of personal and social connections with other coaches, which provided them with guidance, support, and a sense of belonging within the sporting community. Moreover, support from root community organizations sharing the same spoken language was also identified as instrumental in easing their transition and providing culturally relevant assistance. In their view, these organizations not only fostered a sense of belonging and familiarity but also served as vital sources of guidance on navigating cultural nuances within the local sports community. Participants consistently highlighted how these facilitators played a pivotal role in easing their transition and enhancing their effectiveness as coaches within the Canadian context.

Coach-Intended Athletes

Personal Support Networks and Coach-Intended Athletes Integration

In-depth interviews with newcomer coach-intended athletes highlighted the crucial role of personal support systems and resources in their integration into the Canadian sport system. These interviewees reported feeling largely on their own during their initial transition, with their primary sources of support coming from family members, teammates and social connections, which provided emotional encouragement, practical advice, and sometimes financial assistance. The sole reliance on these personal connections underscores the gaps in institutional support and the need for more comprehensive integration programs to assist newcomer coach-intended athletes in adapting to the Canadian sports landscape.

“ I met a lot of people [in the club] and I became a coach from knowing my head coach from when I was an athlete, which was great. You make a lot of connections that could help you if you want to go with that career specifically, and then because of my coaching certifications I gained from there, I was able to start coaching from Association of Alberta and that just created a stronger, tighter community, you know, created a safe environment.”

Recreational coach

“ I don't see a way through it without social support, I don't know if other people don't see the key in it, so having the social is important, all that I have learned from [was] just from previous coaches, but I do everything on my own...”

Coach-intended athlete

“ I feel like I was mostly on my own, especially because around that time [initial transition] it was covid, so everything was banned, so I really relied on just like social media, watching videos, going outside, I wouldn't say that there was a lot of external [social support].”

Coach-intended athlete

Integration Barriers and Challenges

Organizational Politics and Career Advancement

In the analysis of the in-depth interviews, it became evident that politics within sport organizations serve as a significant barrier and challenge for newcomer sport coaches in advancing their careers. Some interviewees highlighted that navigating the complex web of internal politics, including favoritism, entrenched hierarchies, and the influence of established networks, often hinders new coaches from showcasing their abilities and gaining recognition. The need to align with influential figures and the prevalence of non-meritocratic decision-making processes were recurrent themes. This environment not only stifles innovation and fresh perspectives but also creates a daunting landscape for newcomers, potentially deterring talented individuals from pursuing long-term careers within these organizations.

Transition from Certification to Employment

Interviews also revealed a significant disparity between the ease of obtaining coaching certifications and the subsequent difficulty in securing employment within the industry.

Participants consistently highlighted that while certification programs are readily accessible and often straightforward, transitioning from certification to employment poses considerable challenges. The primary barriers identified include limited job opportunities, high competition, and a preference for experienced coaches among hiring entities. Additionally, the lack of robust networking opportunities and mentorship programs further exacerbates the issue, leaving newly certified coaches struggling to gain a foothold in their careers. Also, despite often possessing higher levels of competency and diverse experience compared to their white Canadian counterparts, newcomer sport coaches stated that they face a job market that is biased against immigrants.

Different Styles and Approaches to Coaching in Canada

In-depth interviews with newcomer sport coaches revealed barriers related to the diverse styles and approaches to coaching in Canada. Some participants reported experiencing difficulties adapting to the distinct Canadian coaching philosophies. These coaches, coming from various cultural backgrounds with differing coaching norms and values, found

“... my biggest problem in the first place is that the person who was in charge of the coaching development was hiding [wasn't sharing] all the information.”

High-performance coach

“...with my experience and my degrees, I should be starting at Camp 2 or 3, but she downgraded me to Camp 1...[different levels or stages of training camps based on the experience and skill level of the gymnastic coaches]”

High-performance coach

“There's no problem to get certified, but that will guarantee your job? No.”

High-performance coach

“...you have to do way much more than a citizen that is born and raised here, you have to prove yourself way much more and work twice as much harder to be remarkable person [for a job].”

High-performance coach

it challenging to align their methods with local expectations. This misalignment often led to misunderstandings and conflicts with athletes, parents, and other coaches, impeding effective communication and teamwork. Additionally, the lack of standardized coaching protocols across different sports further complicated the integration process for newcomer coaches, leaving them feeling isolated and unsupported in their professional development.

Impact of Leadership Backgrounds on Coach Development and Recognition

The in-depth interviews revealed that newcomer high-performance coaches often face barriers to development and recognition when the leadership in Canadian sport organizations comes from backgrounds unrelated to the field, making it more challenging to communicate back due to language and social norm differences. Coaches reported feeling undervalued and misunderstood, as leaders without a sports background frequently lacked the necessary insight into the nuances of coaching and athlete development, which often makes the communication harder for coaches. This disconnect led to misaligned priorities and expectations, creating a challenging environment for coaches seeking to advance their careers. Participants emphasized that this mismatch hindered their professional growth, as their expertise and innovative approaches were not adequately

recognized or supported by leadership, resulting in missed opportunities for career progression.

Integration Challenges and Social Barriers in Recreational Sport

In-depth interviews with newcomer recreational sport coaches reveal that a primary issue is unfamiliarity with the environment, which encompasses not only the physical locations where sports activities occur but also the rules, norms, and expectations of the sporting community. This unfamiliarity often leads to a sense of disorientation and hesitation in participating fully. Additionally, interviewees expressed a lack of belonging to established groups, which can result in feelings of isolation and exclusion. This social barrier is particularly pronounced for those who are new to the region or the sport itself, as established groups may inadvertently create an unwelcoming atmosphere.

Parental Attitudes Towards Sport as a Non-Essential Activity

Another challenge identified from in-depth interviews with recreational sport coaches was the cultural perception of sport among parents of youth newcomers. Some parents, particularly those from backgrounds where academic achievement is highly prioritized, view participation in sports as a non-essential activity that detracts from their children's

“ Every country or every continent in the world has different style and vision of building scientific vision of the sports, [in terms of] planning, organizing, structuring. I come with European vision, [but] when I come to Canada, it was a lot different.”

High-performance coach

“ ...most of them [leadership] come from this and that [fields other than sport] and they don't really value the career of a [newcomer] coach, the effort, the energy, the time they put in developing themselves and bringing that knowledge, moving from country to country, from club to club, from training to training, and I couldn't do anything [to communicate that]?”

High-performance coach

“ If you are playing sports, somehow you are not doing so well in school. Some parents will hold back on letting you participate every time.”

Recreational coach

studies. This perception creates a substantial barrier for coaches trying to integrate into the Canadian sport system. Recreational coaches reported difficulties in gaining parental support for regular practice and participation in competitive events, which are crucial for the development and success of young athletes. In their view, players are torn between their passion for sport and the expectations of their families. This cultural divide not only limits the opportunities for youth to engage fully in sports but also hinders the overall inclusivity and diversity within the Canadian sport system.

Time Constraints and Information Barriers

In-depth interviews with newcomer recreational sport coaches also revealed that a prevalent challenge is the time constraints resulting from the necessity of maintaining other employment. Many newcomers juggle multiple jobs or demanding work schedules, limiting their availability for coaching or engaging in sports activities. This situation creates a substantial barrier to consistent involvement, leading to fragmented participation and reduced opportunities for skill development and team cohesion. Additionally, the lack of information about the sport system and events further complicates their engagement. Newcomers often face difficulties accessing clear, comprehensive information about local

leagues, training sessions, and sporting events, mostly due to information dissemination including lack of centralized platforms, language barriers and insufficient outreach. This information gap hampers their ability to integrate smoothly into the sport community, resulting in missed opportunities and a sense of isolation.

Overcoming Language Barriers in Coaching

Language barriers emerged as significant challenges for newcomer coach-intended athletes and their parents. Interviewees reported difficulties in understanding complex terminologies and strategies communicated by coaches, which hindered their ability to fully grasp essential concepts during coaching. Parents, on the other hand, often struggled to communicate effectively with coaching staff and other parents, limiting their involvement in their child's coaching development and support network. In their belief, these language barriers not only affected performance and learning curves but also contributed to feelings of isolation and frustration, potentially impacting the overall well-being and motivation of the coach-intended athletes.

Navigating the Nuances of Canadian Communication

Interviews with newcomer coach-intended athletes also

“ I remember when I started as well like integrating, this was one of the things my dad used to say, he was like, if we were in Europe, I would let you go, here there's no school [professional sport academies], there's no scope [no future] for you in playing.”

Recreational coach

“ ...every time we run football [soccer] sessions, there is always a problem, lack of participation due to different commitments such as work.”

Recreational coach

revealed that Canadian communication often employs a more indirect and nuanced approach than that seen in other English-speaking cultures. Participants noted that understanding the full intent and meaning behind Canadian interactions requires familiarity with a set of unwritten social norms and cultural subtleties. Even for native English speakers, these implicit rules can pose a barrier to clear communication. In their view, Canadians often prioritize conflict avoidance, which can lead to messages being conveyed in a more roundabout manner. This can create challenges for those unaccustomed to deciphering the subtext of conversations, potentially leading to misunderstandings or overlooked cues. In coaching scenarios, coaches may choose not to provide direct instructions or feedback, relying instead on subtle cues and questions to guide development.

“Honestly, it [language barrier] was a little hard, because it wasn’t just me, it was my parents as well. How were they supposed to communicate with other parents or other coaches...”

Coach-intended athlete

“I’d have to learn how to code-switch in a way where the way how we speak [in our country] is drastically different from how the language is spoken here.”

Coach-intended athlete

Coping Strategies

Unique Coaching Styles as a Coping Strategy for System Integration

When asked about their coping strategies to navigate through these challenges, a common approach among participants was the creation of a unique coaching style that blends their previous experiences with the expectations and norms of the Canadian sport environment. By integrating familiar techniques from their home countries with the new methods required in Canada, these coaches were able to maintain authenticity while meeting local standards. Additionally, some participants mentioned that they actively seek mentorship and build networks within the Canadian sports community to gain insights and support. They often participate in professional development opportunities to enhance their understanding of the system and improve their coaching credentials.

Overcoming Barriers through Exceptional Work Ethic and Professional Development

Through in-depth interviews, it was revealed that newcomer coaches frequently resort to working exceptionally hard, often doubling their efforts compared to their white Canadian

counterparts, to prove their competence and dedication. They adopt a range of coping strategies, including seeking additional qualifications, attending professional development workshops, and actively networking within the sporting community. These efforts are not only aimed at enhancing their coaching skills but also at gaining recognition and acceptance within the Canadian sport milieu. Furthermore, newcomer coaches often take on multiple roles and responsibilities within their teams to demonstrate their value and commitment, thereby gradually building trust and credibility among athletes, parents, and fellow coaches.

“When I came to Canada, there was no openness from evaluators or experts for all of sports in Canada toward that new approach or new vision, [therefore] I mastered my knowledge, I mastered the Canadian knowledge, and then started combining both and now I can make any expert or not expert understand that it is crucial [for coaches] to do it their way and coaching is like cooking, we give you few ingredients, tomato, oil, and eggs, you’re gonna make it flow free, and I’m gonna well cook it.”

High-performance coach

FINDINGS

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



Perceived Diversity and Inclusion

Challenges in Diversity and Immigrant Leader

During the in-depth interviews, a recurring theme emerged regarding perceived diversity and inclusion challenges. Many coaches expressed concerns over what they perceive as low levels of diversity and a notable absence of immigrant leadership within certain sports. Participants noted that while efforts to promote diversity exist, systemic barriers such as cultural biases and limited pathways for immigrant coaches hinder broader inclusivity.

These findings underscore a perceived gap between the stated commitment to diversity in Canadian sports and the lived experiences of newcomer coaches, pointing towards a need for targeted initiatives to foster greater representation and leadership opportunities within the sporting community.

Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Levels of the Canadian Sport System

In a similar vein, participants also expressed nuanced views on diversity and inclusion within the Canadian sport system, particularly at higher levels. Many newcomer

coaches acknowledged improvements in recent years but highlighted persistent challenges. A recurring theme was the perception that higher-level positions remain predominantly occupied by white Canadians, despite efforts to diversify leadership. Newcomer coaches noted feeling subjected to higher expectations compared to their white Canadian counterparts and often described being treated differently in professional settings. These insights underscore ongoing disparities in perceived opportunities and treatment within the Canadian sport hierarchy.

“ Quand on regarde les systèmes de gouvernance du sport, surtout dans les hautes sphères, la grande majorité des postes sont occupés par un groupe ethnique dominant, les personnes natives, qui ont grandi au pays.”

Entraîneur de haute performance

Experienced Discrimination and Bias

Passive Aggressive Racism and Microaggressions

Newcomer high-performance coaches who participated in this study shared their experiences of discrimination and bias within the Canadian sport system. A prevalent theme identified was the presence of passive aggressive racism, where coaches recounted instances of subtle but impactful forms of discrimination. Participants described feeling marginalized through microaggressions, such as being overlooked for leadership roles or experiencing dismissive attitudes towards their coaching strategies based on cultural stereotypes. In their view, these experiences often compounded the challenges of integrating into the sport community and hindered their professional advancement. The narratives highlighted a critical need for greater awareness and proactive measures to foster a more inclusive environment for all coaches, regardless of their background.

Experienced Microaggressions by Recreational Coaches

In a similar vein, recreational coaches frequently recounted instances of microaggressions experienced from other players

or coaches within the recreational sports environment. These microaggressions often manifested as subtle acts of exclusion, stereotyping, or invalidation based on characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, or accent. Several interviewees described feeling marginalized or overlooked during team activities, with remarks that subtly undermined their authority or competence as coaches. One participant recalled being repeatedly questioned about their coaching decisions in a manner that implied incompetence due to their immigrant background. Such experiences were noted to contribute to a sense of isolation and frustration among newcomer coaches striving to integrate into the Canadian sport system.

“...A lot of passive aggressive in this sports and there is no acceptance of development, except if you got authority to do that, you can make it happen sometimes, sometimes you could not, but there is a lot of disrespect to general human rights in general in the field of sports there is a lot of discrimination...”

High-performance coach

“...Every country or every continent in the world have different style and vision of building scientific vision of sports, which means planning, organizing, structuring. When I come to Canada, it was a lot different, the principles of sports are different, vision of planning is different and there was not an acceptance of differences, but there was no openness from evaluators or experts for all of sports in Canada toward that new approach or new vision...”

High-performance coach

Suggested Changes by Participants

Two-Way Communication with Leadership

Newcomer high-performance coaches emphasized the necessity of establishing a welcoming and supportive environment within the Canadian sport system. A key recommendation was the creation of two-way communication channels between coaches and leadership at top-level positions. This communication is essential for ensuring that the voices and concerns of newcomer coaches are heard and addressed. Additionally, they highlighted the importance of initiating change from the top of the pyramid, asserting that high-performance leaders must actively promote and model inclusivity and support for diversity. By embedding these values at the highest levels, the entire sport system can be influenced to embrace a more inclusive culture, thereby creating a more welcoming environment for all participants. This top-down approach is seen as crucial for fostering a sense of belonging and mitigating discrimination and bias.

Reducing Barriers through Financial Support and Education

Newcomer high-performance coaches articulated a clear need for systemic changes aimed at reducing barriers to entry into coaching roles. Key recommendations included advocating

for the elimination or reduction of fees associated with coaching certifications for immigrant coaches. Participants noted that such financial barriers disproportionately affect newcomers, limiting their ability to contribute fully to the Canadian sport system. Moreover, participants emphasized the importance of educational initiatives designed to foster mutual understanding between newcomers and Canadian athletes, coaches, and administrators.

Programs and Initiatives to Support Newcomer Coach-Intended Athletes

When asked about potential changes that could foster a welcoming and supportive environment in the Canadian sport system, newcomer coach-intended athletes have highlighted several key changes, including establishment of specialized programs designed to help newcomers not only start but also thrive in their chosen sports. These programs should provide targeted training, language support, and mentorship to bridge the gap between the newcomers' previous experiences and the Canadian sports context. Additionally, coach-intended athletes emphasized the necessity of instilling a mindset of diversity and inclusion among coaches. They suggested

“The major [top level] and the middle between both should create communication [channels], which means I can talk [with top level] and they can talk to the bottom. There should be some procedures in place. This is the pyramid, and the base is talking to the top, but the middle circle is not being taken care of, nothing happening there. There is nobody who's guiding that or opening the doors or opening the window, there is nothing of that at all.”

High-performance coach

mandatory diversity training sessions that educate coaches on cultural sensitivity, bias recognition, and inclusive coaching practices. Such measures, according to the coach-intended athletes, would foster a more welcoming environment, reduce instances of discrimination, and promote a sense of belonging within the sports community.

Establishment of an Association for Newcomer Coach-Intended Athletes

Participants have also suggested establishment of an association dedicated specifically to supporting newcomer coach-intended athletes. This proposed organization would focus on addressing the unique challenges these coach-intended athletes face, such as language barriers, cultural adaptation, and access to resources. Additionally, it would serve as a platform for advocating for their needs and ensuring their voices are heard within the broader sport community. By creating a supportive network and promoting diversity, this association can aim to enhance the integration and success of international coach-intended athletes in the Canadian sport system

“ I was just thinking about it, how cool that would be for just internationals to have [an association]? Because I feel like they can help in recruiting international coaches and players from across the world, that’s something that they should look for.”

Coach-intended athlete

A woman in a black swimsuit is kneeling on a blue and yellow pool deck, gesturing with her hands towards a swimmer in the water. The swimmer is wearing a blue swim cap and goggles, looking up at the woman. The background shows a swimming pool with lane lines and other people in the distance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

Based on the insights gained from our in-depth interview with newcomer high-performance coaches, recreational coaches, and coach-intended athletes within the Canadian sport system, several key challenges have emerged that warrant attention and action. The following recommendations could be considered to foster inclusivity, support integration, and enhance opportunities for all participants within Canadian sports:

Addressing Organizational Politics and Career Advancement

Clear and transparent pathways for career advancement should be developed to mitigate biases and ensure equitable opportunities for newcomer coaches and coach-intended athletes. Additionally, mentorship programs should be established, where experienced Canadian coaches can guide newcomers, helping them navigate organizational politics and advance in their careers.

Facilitating Transition from Certification to Employment

Simplifying and clarifying the employment process post-certification, such as the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) offered by the CAC, can ensure newcomers understand the steps required to secure positions within the Canadian sport system. Moreover, forming partnerships with educational

institutions to offer internship or placement programs can bridge the gap between certification and employment.

Harmonizing Coaching Styles and Approaches

Implementing workshops focused on harmonizing different coaching styles and approaches can foster an environment of mutual learning and respect among diverse coaching methodologies. Additionally, inclusion of various international coaching techniques within the Canadian sport curriculum should be encouraged to enhance the diversity and richness of training methods.

Leveraging Leadership Backgrounds

Creating initiatives with a focus on developing leadership skills tailored to the diverse backgrounds of newcomer coaches is required, promoting their recognition and development within the Canadian sport system. Also, diverse leadership





backgrounds of newcomer coaches should be recognized and celebrated, integrating their unique experiences into the mainstream coaching philosophy.

Easing Integration and Social Barriers in Recreational Sport

Community engagement activities that bring together newcomer and local recreational coaches and athletes is required, fostering social integration and reducing barriers. Additionally, designing recreational programs that are inclusive and welcoming to newcomers can ensure newcomers feel part of the community.

Shifting Parental Attitudes Towards Sport

Launching awareness campaigns that highlight the benefits of sports participation, targeting parents of newcomer athletes, can shift perceptions and encourage support. In addition, programs that actively engage parents in the sporting activities of their children should be developed, emphasizing the importance of sport as an essential activity for personal and professional development, while also establishing and managing active relationships with parents.

Navigating Canadian Communication Nuances

Organizing workshops and orientation programs with a focus on the nuances of Canadian communication can help newcomers understand and adapt to local communication styles, including modules on the feedback culture in Canadian sports, highlighting the expectations and common practices in giving and receiving feedback. Additionally, establishing peer support networks where newcomers can share experiences and strategies for effectively navigating Canadian communication norms can help newcomers navigate their ways through the Canadian communication nuances.



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