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**STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF CHOSEN SOCIAL VALUE INDICATORS
OF COACHES OF DIFFERENT SPORTS**

Key words: sports coaching, professional status, social value indicators.

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study was to examine chosen social indicators of professional status of people, who in the period between October 10, 1997 and February 15, 1998 held a position of full-time sports coaches in one of 64 sports in Slovenia. Each subject had previously held a coaching position for at least half a year and was listed in the register of Slovenian sports coaches. 3,032 coaches were invited to participate in the study and 1,418 (46.4%) questionnaires were returned. The topic of the research concerned selected social demographic characteristics of the subjects: age, sex and education. The results revealed that in the studied period 89.7% of Slovenian competitive sport coaches were men. Women worked as coaches mostly in typically feminine sports (dance, rhythmic gymnastics, figure skating, artistic roller skating). The coaches' average age was 38 years and the proportion of coaches, older than 45 years, was decreasing rapidly. The mean age of coaches in the mentioned feminine sports was lower than average. Only every fifth coach held a university degree or an equivalent professional coaching qualification. They were mainly coaches of sports that can also be practised in regular physical education programmes (ball games, athletics, swimming and gymnastics). The findings of the study indicate that more women should be encouraged to take up full-time coaching jobs. Professional work conditions of sports coaches need to be improved, and should be less strenuous and stressful. As a result, coaches would be able to carry on working after the age of 45. The system of education and training of professional coaches in Slovenia should focus more on university education and lifelong training of such graduates.

INTRODUCTION

Slovenian sports culture is displayed through a wide variety of different sports, mostly Olympic sports, in which Slovenian athletes have won medals. Every sport is manifested by its unique form of sports subculture, which can be demonstrated by different indicators. Some of these indicators are related to the professional work of coaches, who are managers of athletes, playing the most direct role in the development of competitive sport culture [3]. The coaching profession is supposed to have a bright future. Employment of

coaches and instructors will increase with the expansion of school and university sports programs and with the growing demand for private sports instruction. The development of sport-related jobs in education will be also driven by decisions of local school boards. Population growth dictates the construction of more schools, particularly in the expanding suburbs, but funding for sports programs is often cut first when budgets become tight. Still, the popularity of team sports often enables shortfalls to be offset with assistance from fundraisers, booster clubs and parents. The sports workforce market in Europe is increasingly

expanding and becoming at the same time highly diversified [11].

A rough estimate is that approximately 1 million people occupy different professional roles on the sports labor market (professional athletes, sports officials, sports animators, sports instructors, sports managers, sports medicine doctors, sports physiotherapists, sports promoters, sports marketing, sports administration, sports technology, sport facilities). Within this number, coaches represent approximately fifty thousand people or 5% of all professionals in competitive sport. In social environments with a highly developed sports culture the role of sports coach is becoming more and more important. In some sports the number of coaches is high, whereas in others there are only few of them. Most coaches work in different working conditions. They have become an important foundation for the development of an overall sports culture [4]. Their professional role requires adequate professional qualifications, which nowadays are often stipulated to be university degrees. Coaches, who have acquired a university education, possess the basic knowledge of a given sport as well as the basic scientific knowledge, which make the interdisciplinary study of competitive sports possible. On the road to acquisition of professional education the Slovenian society encounters the actual working situation of these coaches. Their professional roles are marked with some social demographic characteristics, subject to examination in the present study (age, gender, education).

Some sports that were traditionally a domain of men have in the last ten years opened their doors to women (e.g. football, ski jumping and boxing). The proportion of women in sports is thus increasing [1]; nevertheless, it is not even close to that of men. Undoubtedly the higher proportion of female athletes will also result in the participation of women in the coaching profession, where previously male coaches dominated the so-called "men's" sports. The coaching profession still remains a typical male profession in the majority of sports, and the proportion of female coaches in comparison to their male counterparts is equal or higher only in a handful of sport disciplines [8].

The coaching profession is technically demanding and strenuous. Coaches in competitive sports are constantly under pressure caused by the desire for high competitive achievements. A coach's work requires a high degree of motivation

and energy, and it is unquestionably difficult to perform the coaching job throughout the entire life. Therefore, it is hypothetically expected that coaches can function in their profession only for some time and thereafter replace this demanding profession with some other work.

The coaching work entails solid professional theoretical education and practical training in order to carry out required tasks. The need for a formal education of coaches has been progressively more emphasised in the last twenty years. Some sports are more demanding than others but insufficient professional knowledge prevents a modern coach to manage the transformation preparation and competition process of athletes in a quality manner. The Bologna education reform has also led to the formation of new university graduate and undergraduate programmes.

The professional work of competitive sport coaches is traditionally connected with financial problems. The majority of sports do not have sufficient financial resources to employ highly educated and qualified coaches. In practice it is often considered that competitive experience and social recognition of an individual in a chosen sport is all what it takes to work as a coach. In comparison, it is hard to imagine that an individual without a university education could work as a doctor. Unfortunately, in sport it is usually the opposite and sports organisations sometimes avoid professionals with a university degree.

The purpose of the present study is to determine selected social factors in people, who have carried out coaching work in chosen sports and to show potential differences between coaches of different sports.

METHODS

The sample included 1,369 Slovenian coaches, who took active part in one of the chosen 64 sports. At the time of study (October 1, 1997 to February 15, 1998) they had already previously coached for at least six months. For the purpose of the study, questionnaires were sent to 3,032 coaches and 1,369 questionnaires were returned, representing 41.5% of all contacted coaches. The number of coaches varied according to a chosen sport. The largest number of coaches in the sample were team games coaches: football ($n = 247$), volleyball ($n = 122$), basketball ($n = 113$) and

handball ($n = 95$). In some sports only a handful of individuals are represented in the sample (golf, sailing, rafting, rugby, tobogganing, squash, triathlon, artistic roller skating). The majority of coaches held Slovenian citizenship (97.3%). Full-time coaches represented 57.1% of the sample, 2.4% of subjects used coaching as a supplementary activity to their regular work, and 30.4% of coaches held a part time contractual position. The average length of the subjects' coaching period was 8.41 years. The proportion of coaches who worked for more than five years has been significantly decreasing and there were very few coaches with more than 20 years of coaching experience. The largest proportion of coaches worked in sports clubs (92%) and in the governing bodies of national sports (2.5%). The coaches mostly worked in youth and junior categories, approximately 10% of coaches worked with seniors. The study sample was a representative indicator of the widest population of Slovenian coaches.

RESULTS

The coaches' average age was 38 years. Approximately 66% of the coaches in the sample were between the ages of 25 and 50; the number of coaches older than 45 years decreased significantly (Table 1). The highest coach's average age was noted in 9-pin bowling (51.6 years), whereas the youngest coaches worked in artistic roller skating (23.6 years) and figure skating (24.7 years). Coaches of the average age worked mainly in some traditional combat sports (boxing, kick-boxing, fencing and shooting). In contrast, coaches at the age below average were active in sports commonly considered feminine (dancing, rhythmic gymnastics, figure skating and artistic roller skating). Thus the study confirmed the assumption about the strenuous nature of the coaching profession that many coaches cannot practice after the age of 45. This issue is particularly critical to women, who due to different reasons experience even more difficulties in their coaching profession (motherhood, family and household care, inadequate conditions for full-time coaching work, employment status problems etc.). The aspect of professional development of sport coaches is insufficiently resolved in comparison to other professions. In the majority of other professions progress and promotion are seen as corresponding to the length of employment as

Table 1. Structure of coaching workforce in chosen sports according to age

Sport	Age		
	n	M	SD
Rock climbing and competition climbing	28	26.6	6.2
Alpine skiing	57	34.5	9.7
Athletics	65	39.6	13.4
Badminton	15	36.4	13.8
Bocce - bowls	18	49.8	8.8
Baseball	11	30.5	6.9
Biathlon	5	38.8	12.8
Boxing	4	45.2	3.9
Weight lifting	5	40.8	18.5
Artistic gymnastics	30	36	15.8
Golf	1	26	0
Ice hockey	12	39.9	9.39
Field hockey	7	41.2	13.9
Sailing	2	40.5	0.7
Jiu-jitsu	17	31	8.5
Judo	24	35.9	11.1
Kayaking - canoeing	18	35.3	7.91
Karate	46	35.5	10.5
9-pin bowling	41	51.6	11.3
Kick-boxing	4	42	8.1
Cycling	19	33.3	7.5
Horse riding	13	40.2	12.1
Basketball	113	35.7	8.8
Archery	16	42	10.4
Table tennis	38	42.1	12.6
Football	247	43.4	8.28
Nordic combination	4	35.7	5.9
Volleyball	122	36.7	10.7
Swimming	39	30.7	10.5
Dance	26	29.4	6
Scuba diving	5	28.2	4.7
Rafting	2	34	15.5
Sports fishing	12	46.8	14.1
Wrestling	5	28	2.44
Handball	95	35.9	10
Rugby	3	37	5.5
Fencing	7	47.7	12.7
Tobogganing	1	44	0
Ski jumping	27	32.2	10
Cross-country skiing	10	30.6	8.2
Shooting	49	46.7	13.3
Squash	3	32.6	3.5
Chess	14	44.3	10.6
Rhythmic gymnastics	6	27.3	5.7
Taekwondo	15	31.4	8.13
Tennis	24	32.2	9.2
Triathlon and duathlon	3	30.6	7.37
Figure skating	7	24.7	6.6
Artistic roller figure skating	3	23.6	4.1
Water polo	11	34.6	8.8
Rowing	7	36.1	7.5
Other sports	13	38.4	14.1
TOTAL	1369	38.1	11.5

well as rewards for their professional achievements, whereas employment in the coaching profession [7] after a few years reveals crucial problems of unresolved professional and thus related social status (unclear professional and social status of the coach, nonsystematic wage system, poor material working conditions and competition system, faint possibilities for professional development).

The analysis of coaches' gender revealed a large disproportion between male and female coaches (Table 2). The majority of coaches (89.7%) were male, and similar results were attained in the study by Kajtna [8], where the proportion of male coaches was approximately 87%. In some sports only men were active as coaches (football, Nordic combination, cycling, kick-boxing, sailing, golf, ice hockey, boxing, biathlon, bocce), whereas in other sports only women were in the coaching profession (rhythmic gymnastics, figure skating, artistic roller skating). The equality of genders was most visible in dancing sports. Apart from the previously mentioned sports, women worked as coaches also in athletics, swimming, volleyball and handball. The study revealed a large deficiency of women in the coaching profession and in the future the effort should be made to improve this situation. Coaching work can be an interesting and attractive profession for women, particularly when working with younger athletes. Above all, many sports are attracting more and more women (football, basketball, ski jumping, biathlon, combat sports etc.).

The study showed that the participation of women in the coaching profession in Slovenia (10.3%) was even lower in comparison with the proportion of female participants in the 1988 Winter Olympic Games in Calgary (21%) and Summer Olympic Games (26%) in the same year in Seoul [2]. This disparity in participation in sports is indicative of gender inequality throughout the Olympic Movement, which is even more visible at the organisational and administrative levels. Exploration of gender and sexuality issues in sport identifies barriers to female participation that still remain despite the widely legislated equality of access to sport and physical activity. Various forms of sexual harassment, homophobia and abuse experienced by girls and women in sport and recreational contexts pose formidable barriers both to full female participation and to women's potential to develop and to define sport in woman-centred terms [5, 10]. The problem of deficiency of women in a number of sports is a serious issue also

in Scandinavian countries and several systematic measures to improve the status have been already suggested [9].

Table 2. Structure of coaching workforce in chosen sports according to gender

Sport	Women			Men		
	n	% of sport	% of gender	n	% of sport	% of gender
Rock climbing and competition climbing	7	23.3	5	23	76.7	1.9
Alpine skiing	8	14	5.7	49	86	4
Athletics	10	15.2	7.1	56	84.8	4.5
Badminton	1	6.7	0.7	14	93.3	1.1
Bocce - bowls				18	100	1.5
Baseball	1	9.1	0.7	10	9.9	0.8
Biathlon				5	100	0.4
Boxing				4	100	0.3
Weight lifting	1	20	0.7	4	80	0.3
Artistic gymnastics	9	30	6.4	21	70	1.7
Golf				1	100	0.1
Ice hockey				12	100	1
Field hockey	1	14.3	0.7	6	85.7	0.5
Sailing				2	100	0.2
Jiu-jitsu	1	5.9	0.7	16	94.1	1.3
Judo	2	8.3	1.4	22	91.7	1.8
Kayaking - canoeing	1	5.6	0.7	17	94.4	1.4
Karate	2	4.3	1.4	44	95.7	3.6
9-pin bowling	2	4.9	1.4	39	95.1	3.2
Kick-boxing				4	100	0.3
Cycling				19	100	1.5
Horse riding	2	15.4	1.4	11	84.6	0.9
Basketball	7	6.1	5	108	93.9	8.7
Archery	3	18.8	2.1	13	81.3	1.1
Table tennis	1	2.6	0.7	37	97.4	3
Football				250	100	20.2
Nordic combination				4	100	0.3
Volleyball	18	14.8	12.8	104	85.2	8.4
Swimming	13	33.3	9.2	26	66.7	2.1
Dance	14	53.8	9.9	12	46.2	1
Scuba diving	1	20	0.7	4	80	0.3
Rafting				2	100	0.2
Sports fishing				12	100	1
Wrestling				5	100	0.4
Handball	9	9.5	6.4	86	90.5	7
Rugby				3	100	0.2
Fencing				7	100	0.6
Tobogganing				1	100	0.1
Ski jumping				28	100	2.3
Cross-country skiing	2	20	1.4	8	80	0.6
Shooting	4	8.2	2.8	45	91.8	3.6
Squash				3	100	0.2
Chess				14	100	1.1
Rhythmic gymnastics	6	100	4.3			
Taekwondo				15	100	1.2
Tennis	2	8.3	1.4	22	91.7	1.8
Triathlon and duathlon				3	100	0.2
Figure skating	7	100	5			
Artistic roller figure skating	3	100	2.1			
Water polo				11	100	0.9
Rowing				7	100	0.6
Other sports	3	23.1	2.1	10	76.9	0.8
TOTAL	141	10.2	100	1237	89.8	100

Table 3. Structure of coaching workforce in chosen sports according to education

Sport	Unfinished or primary school		Vocational school		High school		Higher education		University		Masters, Ph.D.		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Rock climbing and competition climbing	1	3.4	2	6.9	19	65.5			7	24.1			29	2.1
Alpine skiing	2	3.5	1	1.8	31	54.4	8	14	14	24.6	1	1.8	57	4.1
Athletics			4	6.1	20	30.3	9	13.6	33	50.0			66	4.8
Badminton					7	46.7	1	6.7	6	40.0	1	6.7	15	1.1
Bocce - bowls			2	11.1	10	55.6	5	27.8	1	5.6			18	1.3
Baseball					6	54.5	2	18.2	3	27.3			11	0.8
Biathlon			1	20	2	40			2	40			5	0.4
Boxing					2	50	1	25	1	25			4	0.3
Weight lifting			1	20	4	80							5	0.4
Artistic gymnastics	2	7.1			17	60.7	3	10.7	5	17.9	1	3.6	28	2
Golf									1	100			1	0.1
Ice hockey	2	16.7	5	41.7	4	33.3	1	8.3					12	0.9
Field hockey			1	14.3	5	71.4	1	14.3					7	0.5
Sailing			1	50					1	50			2	0.1
Jiu-jitsu	2	11.8	1	5.9	6	35.3	5	29.4	3	17.6			17	1.2
Judo	1	4.2	4	16.7	8	33.3	6	25	5	20.9			24	1.7
Kayaking - canoeing	1	5.6	5	27.8	6	33.3	1	5.6	5	27.8			18	1.3
Karate	3	6.5	8	17.4	25	54.3	3	6.5	6	13	1	2.2	46	3.3
9-pin bowling	1	2.4	13	31.7	17	41.5	7	17.1	3	7.3			41	3
Kick-boxing					2	50	2	50					4	0.3
Cycling			7	35	6	30	5	25	2	10			20	1.5
Horse riding			1	7.7	8	61.5	2	15.4	2	15.4			13	0.9
Basketball			10	8.7	41	35.7	24	20.9	40	34.8			115	8.4
Archery			6	37.5	8	50	1	6.3	1	6.3			16	1.2
Table tennis	2	5.3	4	10.5	23	60.5	6	15.8	3	7.9			38	2.8
Football	8	3.2	60	24.1	120	48.2	37	14.9	22	8.8	2	0.8	249	18.1
Nordic combination			1	25	1	25			2	50			4	0.30
Volleyball	1	0.8	7	5.7	46	37.7	28	23	37	30.3	3	2.4	122	8.9
Swimming	3	7.7	1	2.6	20	51.3	6	15.4	9	23.1			39	2.8
Dancing			1	3.8	16	61.5	2	7.7	7	26.9			26	1.9
Scuba diving					4	80			1	20			5	0.4
Rafting	1	50			1	50							2	100
Sports fishing			1	8.3	6	50	5	41.7					12	0.9
Wrestling					2	40	3	60					5	0.4
Handball	2	2.1	10	10.5	45	47.4	16	16.8	21	22.1	1	1.1	95	6.9
Rugby	1	33.3					1	33.3	1	33.3			3	0.20
Fencing			1	14.3	3	42.9	1	14.3	2	28.6			7	0.5
Tobogganing			1	100									1	0.1
Ski jumping	4	14.3	12	42.9	9	32.1	1	3.6	2	7.1			28	2
Cross-country skiing			1	10	4	40	1	10	4	40			10	0.7
Shooting	2	4.1	13	26.5	22	44.9	8	16.3	4	8.2			49	3.6
Squash					1	33.3	1	33.3	1	33.3			3	0.2
Chess	2	14.3	2	14.3	2	14.3			7	50	1	7.1	14	1
Rhythmic gymnastics					2	33.3			4	66.7			6	0.4
Taekwondo	1	6.7	6	40	6	40	2	13.3					15	1.1
Tennis					8	33.3	4	16.7	11	45.8	1	4.2	24	1.7
Triathlon and duathlon					1	33.3			2	66.7			3	0.2
Figure skating					5	71.4			2	28.6			7	0.5
Artistic roller figure skating			1	33.3	1	33.3	1	33.3					3	0.2
Water polo			3	27.3	3	27.3	2	18.2	3	27.3			11	0.8
Rowing							3	42.9	4	57.1			7	0.5
Other sports			2	15.4	7	53.8	1	7.7	3	23.1			13	0.9
TOTAL	42	3.1	200	14.5	612	44.5	216	15.7	293	21.3	12	0.9	1375	100

The coaches' education status (Table 3) revealed that the majority of coaches were high school graduates (44.5%), followed by university undergraduates (19.4%). The proportion of coaches with master degrees or Ph.D. was low (0.9%). Coaches with a university degree came mostly from athletics, basketball, volleyball and handball. In some sports not a single coach was a university graduate (weightlifting, golf, ice hockey, kick-boxing, rafting, wrestling, sports fishing, tobogganing, taekwondo, artistic roller skating). Coaches who acquired a specialist coaching university degree represented 21.3% of coaches in the studied sample. On the basis of these results it could be concluded that only one out of five coaches under study had an adequate university qualification in order to work as a coach.

DISCUSSION

Slovenian competitive sport faces a growing problem of inadequately qualified coaches. Undoubtedly, the economic situation has been a contributing factor, as it is difficult to provide enough money in order to employ a full time coach with a university degree. Such coaches are simply too expensive for the employers. The largest number of coaches with a university qualification worked in football, volleyball, basketball and athletics. These are sports, which can be practiced also during physical education classes, which brings forward a conclusion that many physical education teachers can work as coaches in addition to their teaching and can also easily attract young people into sport.

In contrast, a significant number of sports did not have a single coach with a university education of a sports type (bocce, baseball, weightlifting, golf, field hockey, sailing, kick-boxing, rafting, rugby, tobogganing, squash, figure skating and artistic roller skating). These sports are not part of primary or high school curricula, and are not so widely popular as compared with football, basketball, volleyball, handball and artistic gymnastics.

The tendency of educational qualifications of sports coaches in Slovenia is gradually inclined to the direction of university education. The Bologna Process propagating specialist first-degree three-year study programmes and EU directives which emphasise university professional qualifications of sports coaches [6] are important factors contribu-

ting to this tendency. Within the context of the Copenhagen, Bologna and Lisbon Processes, the EU Heads of Government requested in March 2005 the creation of a European Qualification Framework (EQF), which is an eight-level meta-framework. The EQF is not intended to replace national qualification levels and take over any of the established roles of the national systems. It stipulates that university programmes should enable the acquisition of dual qualification (e.g. sports coach and health & fitness instructor). This should facilitate changes in the area of work for individuals, offering them wider employment possibilities.

Finally, on the basis of the present study results the following key conclusions can be made:

- In the observed study period the majority of Slovenian competitive sport coaches were men (89.7%). A higher proportion of women should be attracted to professional coaching.
- The mean age of studied coaches was 38 years. The proportion of coaches older than 45 years was sharply decreasing. The conditions of coaching work should be improved, thus offering less strenuous and stressful work. This would result in coaches working also after the age of 45.
- Only one out of five coaches under study held a university education or professional qualification. The system of education and training of professionals in Slovenia should be more directed at university education and lifelong training.

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