EDUCATING COACHES – DEVELOPING HUMAN CAPITAL

IN AN EMERGING INDUSTRY
Abstract

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) established that human capital development is one of the essential inputs that contribute significantly to the economic and human well-being of a nation. Investing in human capital is therefore a necessity for industry development and economic growth.

Sports is an emerging industry sector. In Asia-Pacific market alone, experts projected a 77% growth in the sports market from US$13.7 billion in 2006 to US$17.7 billion in 2011. As Singapore positions itself to capture this potential market through government’s support and investment in developing the sports sector mainly through infrastructure development and sports events programming, it is critical that ample attention be paid to the development of human capital. Industry development requires more competent manpower in various disciplines.

Sports coaching is an identified area for human capital to be developed. This paper examines the policy and structural changes that affect coach education in Singapore. Together with an environmental scan of coach education in a few leading countries, it explores ways to provide more avenues as well as relevant approaches for professional development of coaches. The paper concludes with a call for careful attention to be given to the following:

1. Leadership in national-level sports policy on coaching development and coach education;
2. Alignment and synergy in sports policy and educational policy in supporting further development of human capital in the sports coaching; and
3. The role of tertiary educational institutions in providing avenues for professional development of coaches
4. Further professional development of coaches at higher education level should pay attention to the approach to be adopted and be both relevant and contextualized to the coaching practice.
INTRODUCTION

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), investing in human capital is necessary for economic growth (Healy, 2001). Human capital development and social capital development are viewed as part of the essential inputs that contribute to the human and economic well-being of a nation. Human capital is defined as the knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being. The OECD’s review of studies on the effect of the impact of human capital on growth in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) suggests that a country’s commitment to devote resources to education, especially higher education, have a positive effect on the nation’s economic growth.

Sport is an emerging industry sector in Singapore. The sports industry contributed about 0.49% (or S$680m) to the GDP in 1998. In 2001, arising from the recommendations of Committee on Sporting Singapore Report, the government of Singapore set the direction for the GDP contribution of the sports industry to be doubled by 2010 (Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sport, 2001). The recent Sporting Culture Committee Report anticipates that the sports sector will contribute S$2 billion to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2015 (Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, 2008). To support this anticipated growth, ample attention needs to be paid to developing competent human capital.

This paper focuses on the development of human capital in the area of sports coaching in Singapore. It aims to provide background information on the nation’s policy and structural changes that have influenced the development of coach education. Together with an environment scan of the coach education framework in a few selected countries, it explores ways in which continual professional development of coaches can be achieved in Singapore; and further considers how the educational development of coaches can be made more relevant and beneficial for practicing coaches.

SPORTS – AN EMERGING INDUSTRY SECTOR IN SINGAPORE

According to industry figures, the growth in global sports market is expected to increase from US$96 billion in 2006 to US$124 billion by 2011. Asia-Pacific market alone, experts projected a 77% growth from US$13.7 billion in 2006 to US$17.7 billion in 2011 (Economic Development Board, 2008). Major cities in countries such as the United States of America, Australia, China, Korea, Japan, and middle-eastern cities such as Dubai, Doha, and Abu Dhabi
ITP Digital, 2007, February 7), are constantly transforming their sporting landscape to capture a piece of the global sports market. Singapore is doing likewise. The country recognizes the value of the sports market and has identified the sports industry as a sector that could contribute to the growth of the Singapore economy. The Singapore Sports Council (SSC) is working with the Economic Development Board to identify and promote potential growth areas in the sports sector (Singapore Sports Council, 2007).

In recent years, as a strategy to jumpstart the sports industry, the Singapore Sports Council has supported the staging of marquee events. Staging prominent international sports events in Singapore will also showcase Singapore as a vibrant, global city suitable for foreign business investments. This strategy is in line with the recommendations of the Committee on Sporting Singapore Report in utilizing sporting events to position Singapore as a global city (MCYS, 2001).

The Singapore government further fuels the growth in sports by hosting the Singtel FORMULA 1 (F1) Singapore Grand Prix in 2008, building a Grade 2 FIA-approved permanent race track at Changi capable of hosting races other than F1 (Singapore Sports Council, 2007, October 26), as well as hosting the inaugural Youth Olympic Games in 2010. Its commitment to sports development is apparent in its willingness to invest in sports over two consecutive periods of five years - S$500m from 2001 to 2005, and S$300m from 2006 to 2010 (Singapore Sports Council, 2005, 2006) In addition, at least another S$1.87b is committed to build the Singapore Sports Hub which is expected to be completed by 2011 (Singapore Sports Council, 2008, January 19). The recent Sporting Culture Committee Report estimated that an additional government investment of S$39.8m (2008-2010) and S$36.6m (2011-2015) should be made for implementing the recommendations contained therein (MCYS, 2008).

DEVELOPING SPORTS HUMAN CAPITAL IN SINGAPORE

While Singapore targets the sports sector as an area for economic growth, Singapore needs to seriously consider developing sufficient and effective human capital to support the potential growth in the sports industry. Having good quality and competent manpower, besides hardware or infrastructure (e.g. new sports hub, new race track at Changi, integrated resorts), should be given ample attention and priority. This is necessary to attract foreign sports investment, provide sports related product and services, and generate business activities in Singapore. This need for more competent manpower for Singapore to achieve the National
Sports Vision is also articulated in the Sporting Culture Committee Report. In response to the changing and anticipated demands of the sports industry sector, the Singapore Sports Council has also announced plans to enhance manpower capabilities. The upcoming new sports hub and more sizeable sports events and programmes are expected to require more and better trained manpower support (Singapore Sports Council, 2007, October 23). The Singapore Sports Council will work with tertiary educational institutions to increase the number of sport-related courses.

In an effort to provide strategic leadership in human capital development in the sports sector, the Singapore Sports Council collaborated with the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) in commissioning a study that will identify manpower needs in the sports industry and map out a manpower development plan (Singapore Sports Council & Singapore Workforce Development Agency, 2007). Sports coaching is identified by the SSC-WDA study as one of the key areas that needs further development.

Coaching is central to sports development. High quality of coaching at every level of sports involvement, from participation sports to competitive sports, will contribute to the enjoyment of sports as well as to the achievement of the sporting vision and objectives established by the Singapore government. Sports coaching services constitute an important touch point for consumers of sports.

**EDUCATING COACHES IN SINGAPORE**

Traditionally, coaches in Singapore were probably former athletes who gained their knowledge and experience from their own coaches, or individuals who have a background in physical education or have attained coaching certifications from the Singapore Sports Council and their National Sports Associations. Some would have a combination of these training and experiences.

**Coach education under the purview of the Singapore Sports Council**

Training and education of coaches has been undertaken by Singapore Sports Council together with the National Sports Associations of the various sports. Information from the Singapore Sports Council provided a sketch of the policy and structural development related to coaching that have influenced coach education in Singapore (Chew, 2000, 2001, 2002).

In 1976, a Coaching Committee was formed to look into the development of coaching courses under the Coaching Plan. These courses were conducted in conjunction with the National
Sports Associations (NSAs). In 1995, there was a revamp of the Coaching Plan and the Coaching Committee was discontinued. Instead, a Technical Committee was formed to look into the curriculum, content and administration of the coaching courses. Under the Technical Committee, the National Coaching Accreditation Programme (NCAP) adopted the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) of the Coaching Association of Canada with modifications to include four instead of five levels of certification. In 2000, a Steering Committee on Coach Education and Coaching Development was formed under the Singapore Sports Council to guide the development of coaching and coach education.

To drive coaching development to a higher level, the Singapore Sports Council felt that greater involvement and advocacy from the stakeholders were needed. While some countries (e.g. Canada, Australia) have coaching associations or councils to steer the professional growth in coaching, Singapore did not have such an equivalent body. In 2002, the Coaching Advisory Committee (CAC) was formed. This was in line with the recommendation of the Committee on Sporting Singapore Report to set up a Coaching Council. The CAC currently serves as an advisory board to the Singapore Sports Council and is not yet an autonomous body as was envisaged by the Report. The eventual development of the CAC into a autonomous “professional body managed by the professional (coaches) themselves, with the objective of enhancing the professionalism and standing of the coaching industry” (MCYS, 2001, p. 67) will be a significant milestone for coaching development in Singapore.

The Singapore Sports Council’s review of the NCAP was completed in 2007 for subsequent implementation of a competency-based curriculum. This development places coach education in Singapore in line with the competency-based approach undertaken by countries such as Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom. It sets the stage for the mobility, and employability of Singapore-trained coaches across these countries when recognition of the equivalent coaching competencies is established.

The establishment of the National Registry of Coaches (NROC) in 2002 enabled the NCAP certified and accredited coaches to maintain professional networking and support (Singapore Sports Council, 2003). Continuing coach education has also been established as part of the coach education framework for NROC coaches. Coaches are expected to maintain currency of their membership in the NROC through their participation in continuing coach education.
Coaching courses offered by educational institutions

A few educational institutions in Singapore offer sports related diploma or degree programmes. However, none of these institutions offers a programme that specifically specializes in sports coaching. Some of these programmes include a module on sports coaching. The National Institute of Education (NIE) provides diploma, degree, and higher degree programmes for the professional preparation of physical education teachers. At the moment it does not conduct a programme that specifically prepares one to be a coach. However, there exist a module on the theory and practice of coaching that is taught as part of the Masters of Science (Exercise & Sports Science) programme. This module is aimed at providing understanding of coaching at the elite performance level (National Institute of Education, 2008, June 23).

Republic Polytechnic offers three sports and leisure related diploma programmes. A module on sports coaching is conducted as part of the core discipline modules required for the Diploma in Sports & Exercise Sciences. Students are introduced to the principles of, and applications in, sports coaching (Republic Polytechnic, 2008).

The Nanyang Polytechnic conducts a third year module on the theory and principles of coaching as part of the Diploma in Sports & Wellness Management (Nanyang Polytechnic, 2008 May 4).

COACH EDUCATION IN OTHER COUNTRIES

To explore future directions for developing coaches in Singapore, information was gathered on a few countries that have similar coach education developmental path and structure. Table A1 shows a comparison of the main features of the coach education milieu.

EDUCATING COACHES – ASPECTS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

From the foregoing information, we can derive several lessons and venture to take bolder steps towards developing coaches. The role of a central agency in creating synergy among stakeholders can be facilitated by establishing an overarching coaching framework and a coach education pathway. This is of immense strategic value.

The need for national-level strategic directions and alignment

In the absence of a coaching association in Singapore, the Singapore Sports Council currently performs this role as the lead agency for coaching development. It is therefore critical
that the SSC works with the various government agencies and educational institutions to chart the direction and implement the relevant policies that would pave the way for better aligned human capital development in sports coaching. The government has already set the direction in recommending that the standards of the coaching industry be raised and that the NCAP qualification be made compulsory in the longer run (MCYS, 2008). There is room for the professional preparation of coaches to be made more vigorous and comprehensive. The upgrading of the coach development framework is necessary in lending support to the emerging sports industry and to meet the rising expectations of more sophisticated consumers of sports. It will need the support of all relevant agencies and stakeholders. While the SSC has announced that it will work with institutes of higher learning to provide more sport-related courses, it is crucial that dialogues and collaborations among these stakeholders take place.

The need for commitment through investing in sports coaching

Singapore needs to seal its commitment to raising the standards of the coaching industry by investing in capacity building. The areas of focus should not be very different from what the UK Coaching Framework (sports coach UK, 2008c) has identified for the building the coaching system. Government and private sector investment in sports should focus on building:

1. Capacity for the employment and deployment of coaches
2. Capacity of the National Sports Associations and relevant educational institutions in developing and delivering core foundational coach education courses (under the NCAP structure)
3. Capacity for tertiary educational institutions to cater to the professional development of coaches beyond the NCAP structure via higher education programmes at diploma, degree or masters levels.

Establishing tertiary education for coaching

Investment to increase the supply of well-trained professional coaches can be a bold, strategic policy. In other industry sectors (e.g. financial, biomedical sciences, life sciences), experts are either courted to come to Singapore with various incentives or vast amount of financial outlay are made to train local experts. The latter necessitates the provision of avenues for attaining professional qualifications. Quality formal qualifications and certification is important to establishing professional status. Lyle (2002) indicated that issues of professional
status of coaches “... rested on the nature of formal qualifications and the extent to which these are regulated” (p. 275).

Tertiary educational institutions can be in a unique position to offer continuing education for coaches as they may have the resources and expertise to offer programmes related to coaching. Additional expertise can be augmented through collaborations. For instance, in collaborating with the Australian Institute of Sports (AIS), the University of Queensland is able to tap into the rich coaching experiences and knowledge of the AIS coaches. The ability of the universities/polytechnics in catering for adult learning is another prime consideration in delivering quality continuing education programmes for coaches successfully. Remote access and online course delivery are features that will enable adults to pursue their educational goals whilst maintaining their work and family responsibilities. Resources and technological advances exist in universities or polytechnics. Some of these include internet access and web-based applications, online course delivery platforms (e.g. Blackboard), sports science laboratories, and well-stocked libraries with access to e-databases, e-journals, and e-books. Institutes of higher learning in Singapore such as the Nanyang Technological University and Ngee Ann Polytechnic, already possess such means for course delivery. Given its better economies of scale, universities/polytechnics can acquired new and more effective student/teacher friendly course delivery platforms that would facilitate better online access to lessons, discussions, assessments and student-teacher communications.

Universities pioneering higher education programmes for coaching, such as that offered by the University of Queensland, have found ways to make further education for coaches more accessible and relevant (Mallett & Rynne, 2005). E-learning and online course delivery allow students who most likely be holding coaching jobs access anywhere around the world. Learning is also made more relevant by integrating what is encountered in coaching practice into the programme structure. Lyle (2002) emphasized the need to match coach capabilities with the requirements of the practice. He indicated that the principles of coach education and training need to be informed by the coaching process. The approach to integrate coaching practice into the programme structure resonates well with the holistic approach to coaching advocated by Cassidy, Jones & Potrac (2004). They stressed the importance for coaching, and also coach education, to take into account the context of the coaching practice. Better learning is achieved when the teaching of multi-disciplinary coaching knowledge is contextualized to, and integrated
into, the coaching practice. Through quality coach education, the coach should acquire the
capacity and the necessary learning tools to become an expert and a professional.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The emerging sports industry is at a juncture where its growth trend needs to be
supported by several factors and parallel development areas. Human capital development is one
such area that cannot be ignored. To this end, our foregoing discussion on the advances in sports
coaching made by other countries, together with our understanding of the development in
Singapore, allows us to focus on a few things. Specifically, in the development of the sports
coaching and coach education, careful attention should be given to:

1. Leadership in national-level sports policy on coaching development and coach education;
2. Alignment and synergy in sports policy and educational policy in supporting further
development of human capital in the sports coaching; and
3. The role of tertiary educational institutions in providing avenues for professional
development of coaches
4. Further professional development of coaches at higher education level should pay
attention to the approach to be adopted, and be both relevant and contextualized to the
coaching practice. Such programmes should be accessible to practicing coaches via off-site means.

For Singapore, policy leadership in sports coaching, coaching expertise, and tertiary level
educational resources do not reside under one particular agency. The Singapore Sports Council is
the leading agency in sports coaching development. Coaching expertise are mainly under the
purview of the national sports associations while some tertiary educational institutions are
already running sport-related academic programmes and possess sports science expertise and
have staff with some coaching expertise. Collaboration among these organisations in charting the
future directions for educating coaches is a key factor to the eventual realization of greater
professionalism and quality in sports coaching that would support the emerging sports industry.
REFERENCES


# Appendix A

Table A1

Aspects of coach education development in selected countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Hong Kong</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lead agency for coach education</strong></td>
<td>Since 1974: Coaching Association of Canada (CAC)(^a)</td>
<td>Since 1978: National Coaching Council(^d) 1979: Australian Coaching Council(^e)</td>
<td>Prior to 2004: Hong Kong Coaching Committee (HKCC) under Hong Kong Sports Development Board</td>
<td>Since 1983: National Coaching Foundation (NCF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current: CAC</td>
<td>Current: Australian Sports Commission (ASC)</td>
<td>Current: HKCC(^g) under Hong Kong Sports Institute</td>
<td>Current: NCF(^h) (rebranded as “sports coach UK”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main opportunities for coach education (in collaboration with national sports governing bodies)</strong></td>
<td>CAC: National Coaching Certification Programme (NCCP) - 5 levels</td>
<td>ASC: National Coaching Accreditation Scheme (NCAS) – 3 levels</td>
<td>HKCC: Coaching Accreditation Programme (CAP) – 3 levels</td>
<td>NCF: Coaching courses – 3 levels(^i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CAC: 7 National Coaching Institutes across Canada</td>
<td>ASC: Continuing coach education</td>
<td>HKCC: Continuing coach education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tertiary education programme in coaching</strong></td>
<td>Degree-level &amp; Masters-level</td>
<td>Degree-level &amp; Masters-level</td>
<td>Degree-level</td>
<td>Higher Diploma-level, Degree-level &amp; Masters-level (at least 26 programmes in 2002)(^j)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborations with tertiary education</strong></td>
<td>Federal government recommends that universities be recognized as important part of coach education E.g. Programmes in University of Alberta(^b) &amp; York University(^c) had established linkage to the CAC framework</td>
<td>ASC collaborates with the universities to offer a formal education pathway to practicing coaches E.g. University of Queensland(^d) provides a bridging programme for practicing coaches</td>
<td>HKCC collaborates with Beijing University to enable coaches to gain access to tertiary education</td>
<td>NCF incorporated the National Vocational Qualifications/ National Occupational Standards approach(^k)</td>
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