Coaches Outside the System

Research Report for sport coach UK

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Executive Summary

The University of Edinburgh was commissioned by sport coach UK to investigate coaches outside the system. The aims of this research were twofold:

1. To design a template for coaching organisations and NGBs to access the views of coaches who did not engage with the system.
2. To carry out a pilot study using the template to ascertain the usefulness of the proposed methods

The resulting template used a mixture of survey and interviews and concluded that an anonymous online survey, followed up by individual interviews was the best method for gaining the required information. The survey was cascaded using a variety of coaching organisations and individuals to access as many coaches outside the system as possible in the short timescale allowed. Interviews to gain deeper, richer data could be conducted from survey respondents who indicated they would be prepared to be further involved in the research process. These interviews should be carried out by non-involved individuals to maintain the anonymity of the participants.

The pilot study collected 204 survey completions from 34 different sports with the majority of responding coaches being either unqualified, Level 1 or Level 2 in their sports. From this nine individual and nine focus group interviews were carried out. Key messages from this pilot study included:

- 92% felt all coaches should continue to learn but then only 69% felt improving their coaching was important to them
- The internet now appears to be the most popular source of coaching information for this group of coaches
- 24% of these coaches did not or had not used any coaching organisation for support
- 55 governing bodies represented with 38.7% of coaches experiencing support as opposed to 61.3% who did not feel supported
- These coaches gave four main reasons for non-support
  - Little or no support offered
  - Feelings of isolation
  - Individuals, not NGBs, helpful
  - Political agendas
- According to these coaches the system consists of Level 3 coaches and above
- Student sport does not belong within the system
- Cynicism from coaches about coaching organisations and NGBs
- According to these coaches the system is concerned about collecting money not supporting these coaches

Introduction

Research suggests that despite the best efforts of sporting organisations coaches are still operating outside the strategic framework. Coaching is a very complex and dynamic task, often carried out in an ill-structured, constantly changing environment, which means that the coaching role can take many forms. Much of our research has accessed these coaches, examining their views on coach education, coach development and support as well as highlighting their philosophies and practices. We have found these coaches feel marginalised and therefore do not wish to join 'sport' organised activities and often actively opt out of the system. This research should help to reach some of these coaches and suggest an approach that is more inclusive.

Coaches in sport are given many opportunities to embrace new practice with the ultimate aim of developing team or individual performance. Problems arise as the coach attempts to make sense of all the available information or in some cases not to engage with coach education initiatives designed to help with coaching effectiveness. According to experienced coaches, learning from successful coaches is still considered an effective method of achieving the development of coaching knowledge. This would suggest that coaches need to be involved with the coaching system, whether that be a specific coaching organisation or national governing body.

Coaches need to be part of a larger community to construct solutions to coaching problems that they face (Gilbert and Trudel 2001) and this can be done on an informal basis. Exponents of situated learning argue that through social interaction, authentic activity, and participation within communities of practice, coaches are better able to construct meaning in practical ways so that knowledge can be applied outside of formal learning settings (Kirshner, & Whitson, 1997; Lave, & Wenger, 1990). Within some sports settings and club environments there are sufficient coaches for this to occur organically however Culver and Trudel (2006) advocated the importance of a facilitator in the process, to ensure a positive learning outcome. This facilitator should be an experienced individual with an in-depth understanding of the types of issues faced by coaches, methods for resolving these issues as well as providing a platform for discussion and learning. It is not always necessary that the facilitator is involved in the same sport as the coaches or in some cases, sport in general.

How some coaches access and construct their knowledge to suit their particular coaching context can be a determining factor in their development. Coaches need to be aware and have knowledge and understanding of a diverse range of disciplines, such as learning theory, self-reflection, motivational climate and knowledge construction as well as the technical detail of their sport. They also need to develop communication and decision-making skills along with management and analytical proficiency. This vast array of information is not always going to be available from the one source, whether a coaching organisation, national governing body or coaching community. Coaches need to develop the tools to make sense of all the information on offer and more specifically to develop it for use in their own particular coaching environment. For this to happen coaches need, not only, to be involved within the sporting system but also actively engaged with a number of organisations, in order for them to maximise their coaching development and learning.

Many coaches thrive inside the coaching system, accessing coach education courses, networking opportunities as well as other formal development processes. Other coaches

prefer non-formal learning sources such as contact with other coaches. King (1990) suggests that the process of constructing new knowledge or the process of transforming previous knowledge into new formats is actually enhanced through peer interaction. Additionally, Bleed (2000) reports on the importance of socialisation in the learning process. So, promoting learning partnerships and peer tutoring opportunities within coaching environments may be useful strategies to enhance greater academic understanding in adult learning environments. Another important aspect in the overall spectrum of knowledge acquisition is that informal learning which is deliberate and sustained. This learning can take place either alone or collectively, however support is necessary, whether from colleagues, coaching organisations, national governing bodies or other individuals. All of this evidence points to the importance of being involved within the coaching system to access development opportunities. A number of coaches actively opt out of this system whereas others drift out as a result of communication difficulties and limited engagement with coaching. However, given the number of coaches who could be operating outside the system, many organisations could benefit from further information as to who these coaches are and how to encourage them to engage or re-engage with the system.

Review and Analysis of Methods:

The difficulty posed by this research is access to the participants as they are outwith the system. There are a number of approaches that we would propose to develop and pilot. We realise that the majority of this target group are unqualified or at initial levels of qualification, however this is not always the case. Previous research has identified that sometimes the databases maintained by National Governing Bodies are neither accurate nor up-to-date so therefore more qualified and experienced coaches can exist outside the system (Nash& Sproule, 2011).

Other areas of research, often health interventions, political engagement and studies carried out in developing countries, have adopted methodologies to access non-traditional or disenfranchised participants. These approaches and our previous experiences in coaching research have shaped our thoughts and proposed methods for this study. We have had previous experience accessing coaches fitting the research brief, as well as previous experience with the main aims of the research.

1. Participatory research is an innovative approach to data collection which allows the researchers to acknowledge and appreciate that the research participants have the necessary skills and knowledge to be partners in the research process. Participatory action research emphasises the collaboration between researchers and the particular group under investigation, often disadvantaged in some way (Delman, 2012). Interest in this method has heightened as researchers realised its potential to enhance the quality and usefulness of research outcomes and the ability of these practice-based research networks to provide a bridge between the research intention and specific communities (Williams et al, 2009). Within sport settings this type of research has been used within physical activity interventions.

2. We approached community sports leaders in a variety of geographical areas, covering multisport activities. We anticipated that they would act as conduits to coaches outside the system and enable them to access the survey document. They would also be able to recruit suitable coaches for interview.

3. Communities of practice approach is a socio-cultural approach owing most of it principles to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (1978). Generally, the closer the participant, in this case the coach, is to the source of knowledge within their particular community of practice, the greater the effect. Many sports have identified communities of practice, or coach support networks, often with a coach developer organising the process. For example, in our work with the SRU, we know they utilise coaches on an adhoc basis and the coach developers know and access these coaches on a semi-regular basis. We would anticipate that others sports work on a similar basis and we could utilise these coach developers to access the coaches for both survey completion and interview.

4. Specific targeting of students. Many FE programmes prescribe coaching awards as part of HNC/HND sport coaching awards. Often courses are arranged for classes in some of the more popular sports (and cheaper awards). Again, from our research and links with FE colleges coaching programmes, we know that many of these coaching awards are not utilised and often these students are coaching in other sports, often with no coaching qualifications. We would be able

to target these courses with the online survey and follow up to interview selected individuals.

We used a mixed method approach for this research using surveys, interviews and focus groups to allow both breadth and depth of information gathering. For the quantitative aspect we used an online survey (Bristol) to access as many participants from as many sports as possible. Access to the questionnaire was open for approximately six weeks in order to target as many participants as possible. The number of questions asked was small but covered the key research questions below:

- What is the participant's awareness/experience of coaching support services?
- What is the participant's awareness/experience of coach education and development?
- What motivated you to start coaching?
- Why are you still coaching?
- What would help you develop as a coach?
- How do feel you access coaching knowledge at present?
- What are the aims of your coaching at present?
- Do you have a coaching philosophy?

A Bristol Online Survey was developed using a previous questionnaire as a template. The introduction to the survey covered the target group, coaches who have little or no contact with coaching organisations or national governing bodies, and issues relating to anonymity, confidentiality and consent. This survey was available online and was distributed to coaching groups using the following methods:

Twitter: the survey was posted on twitter by both the researchers and Sport coach UK using the hashtags (#) sport and coaching. There was a 140 character introduction highlighting the target group of coaches. This message was retweeted by individual coaches, coaching organisations and online coaching groups.

Email: The survey was sent to a number of sporting organisations and distributed throughout their databases of coaches and coaching personnel. Similar information about the intended target group of coaches was included with the initial information.

Word of Mouth: The survey was sent to contacts within NGBs and other sporting organisations with the request that they could distribute and encourage completion amongst their networks.

Coaching Organisations: Coaching organisations, such as sport coach UK and Coaching Family, were contacted and distributed the survey to their members and associated personnel.

LinkedIn: The survey link was sent using the message board on LinkedIn to all sporting contacts and coaching groups. These individuals and interest groups were asked to distribute the link to anyone they knew who may fit the criteria of 'outside the system'.

College/University Lecturer: Universities and colleges who offer coaching courses where sent the link to the survey and asked if they could distribute it to the target group of coaches.

Chart 1: How coaches accessed the online survey
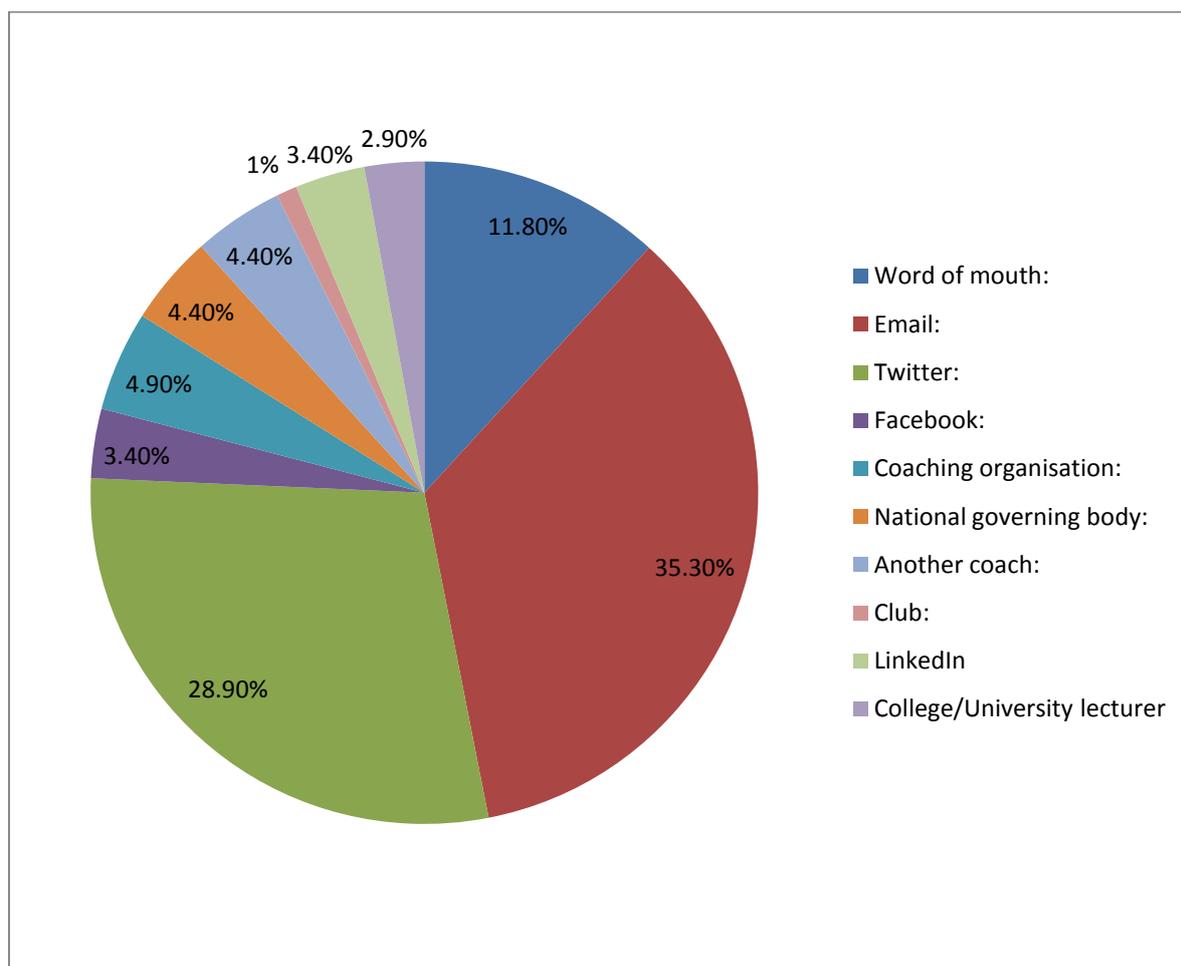
As can be seen from the pie chart above the coaches in the survey were asked where they had accessed the survey (See Chart 1 above). There are more responses given by the coaches than original distribution outlets. This is down to the messages being redistributed by both individuals and organisations from the original sources. Gathering a critical mass for secondary distribution of the survey to interested and relevant individuals is important to reach as many coaches outside the system as possible. This process takes time so the short timescale of this project perhaps limited the amount of responses collected. If organisations were to use this method then the suggested timescale for survey distribution and completion should be 2-3 months.

There were a number of coaches completing the online survey who did not fit the definition of coaches who have little or no contact with coaching organisations or national governing bodies. Some of the completing coaches stated that they worked for a NGB or coaching organisation so could be considered as part of the system. The online survey style encouraged the coaches to answer all the questions and did not differentiate between coaches outside or within the coaching system. The survey design could be adapted so that if a respondent answered a question related to their engagement with a NGB or coaching organisation positively, they could be precluded from the following questions. It could also be used as a vehicle to gain the views of these two disparate

groups, perhaps showing the extent of involvement or non-involvement within a particular sporting organisation.

The questions often listed options for the coaches to choose from, some questions only allowed one answer whereas other questions allowed the coaches to choose all options that applied to that particular answer. Within many of the questions there was also an 'other' option which allowed coaches to add an answer that was not part of the listed options. When analysing the data some of these 'other' answers were included within existing options but if appropriate another item was added to the given answers.

With this type of online survey and given the distribution methods mentioned above where coaches were participating in the research process and self-selecting of respondents, there are some difficulties with the open access. For example, coaches in countries other than the UK may be able to access and answer the online survey. With hindsight, it may have been circumspect to ask the country from which the coach was answering. The advantages of easy contact with a group of coaches who access information online is useful for an organisation seeking answers to quick and simple surveys however it needs to be remembered that not all coaches are online and familiar with the methods used to distribute the questionnaire mentioned above, e.g. twitter, LinkedIn. These methods of distribution could preclude some coaches from responding as they are not part of this digital environment. This may be especially applicable to some age groups and some sports.

Finally, the survey asked respondents to leave contact details should they wish to be contacted for further information in the next stage of the research. Coaches who felt they wished to contribute additional information could be asked to participate in either individual or focus group interviews to gain further depth of information as to why some coaches are outside the system.

An interview schedule was developed based upon the preliminary responses to the survey. This schedule was piloted with a group of coaches and also discussed at a research group meeting in an open forum (See appendix 1 for interview schedule).

There were a number of interviews conducted, either focus group or individual in nature. This was a deliberate decision to evaluate if there was any difference in the type and quality of information gathered, given the type of interview conducted. There were 9 individual interviews conducted with coaches of rugby union, football, athletics, cricket, swimming, judo and hockey. There were also 9 focus group interviews conducted with specific sports, as well as higher education students and mixed sports groups.

The interviewees were selected on a variety of criteria, firstly by the participatory nature of this research; access to coaches was negotiated by the collaboration between researchers and the particular group of coaches. Interviews with coaches in the sports of cricket, swimming, badminton, rugby and athletics were arranged in this manner. Active school coordinators were also approached, given the type of activities that tend to be offered within their programmes: multisports, volunteer and short-term in nature, we envisaged that there would be coaches in these settings who were outside the system.

We also engaged with coaching networks where there were a variety of coaches within one particular sport. Generally we carried out interviews with coaches identified as a result of methods detailed above. The reasons for this are twofold; firstly the coaches may be able to give more depth to their non-involvement with the system. Secondly, by talking to these coaches it may help them realise that there is support available and they do not need to be isolated.

Interviewed coaches reported that they were more comfortable expressing views to researchers who were unknown, not part of their coaching environment or their national governing body or coaching organisation. The type of interview setting was also important, as generally individual interviews produced more information. The focus groups allowed participants to listen to other views and then voice their own as well as discuss other opinions. This can be useful but focus groups can have issues with everyone trying to talk at once or one individual dominating the conversation. Focus groups held with coaches involved in different sports tended to be more successful than focus groups with coaches of one sport. It seemed that when the coaches did not know one another, had little in-depth knowledge of the other sports and were given the opportunity to share their experiences, the interview environment was more respectful and inclusive.

Summary

- Access to survey
    - Would have been better to leave open longer
    - May be better to revisit survey to preclude answers from non-target group coaches
    - Generated a lot of information
- Interviews
    - Individual interviews more effective than focus groups
    - Short timescale meant fewer interviews could be scheduled
- Mixed methods (Survey & Interviews) showed both breadth and depth of responses. Each method complemented the other.
- Useful template for organisations to gather information within their sports.

Coach Demographics

The coaches in this study represent a distinct percentage of the coaching population in the United Kingdom. There were only 204 completions and, as has been mentioned previously, some of the coaches did not fit the criteria of outside the system but still completed the survey. Their results are included here as it was impossible to separate their answers to all of the questions from those responding coaches who conformed to the criteria.

Table 1: Breakdown of respondents by sport

Sport	Number of Respondents	% of Total
American Football	1	0.4
Archery	2	0.8
Athletics	11	5
Badminton	4	2
Basketball	9	4.4
Boccia	1	0.4
Bowling	1	0.4
Cricket	3	1.4
Curling	1	0.4
Cycling	3	1.4
Dance	1	0.4
Fencing	1	0.4
Football	66	32
Golf	2	0.8
Gymnastics	4	2
Handball	3	1.4
Hillwalking	1	0.4
Hockey	8	4
Judo	3	1.4
Karate	3	1.4
Kayaking	1	0.4
Korfball	1	0.4
Lacrosse	2	0.8
Multisports	14	7
Netball	5	2.4
Orienteering	4	2
Rowing	5	2.4
Rugby League	2	0.8
Rugby Union	10	5
Scuba	2	0.8
Shinty	1	0.4
Softball	1	0.4
Squash	1	0.4
Swimming	11	5.4
Table Tennis	3	1.4
Tennis	5	2.4

| Ultimate Frisbee | 1 | 0.4 |
| Volleyball | 7 | 3.4 |

There was a wide range (38) of sports coached by responding coaches (see Table 1 above). Some of these completions were by small numbers of coaches in their sport (boccia = 1; shinty = 1) whereas others sports had a significant number of completions (football = 66), 32% of total completions. The completions came from all four countries within the UK; Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales.

There were completions by unqualified coaches (30%) and qualified (70%). The qualifications of participating sport coaches ranged as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Coaching Level of Responding Coaches

Reported Coaching Level	% of Responding Coaches
Level 1	32
Level 2	34.5
Level 3	23
Level 4	5
Other	4

Qualifications ranged from UKCC endorsed qualifications in various sports, NGB endorsed qualifications from specific NGBs, European qualifications, such as UEFA A Licence, and other qualifications from sports organisations, such as Sports Leaders.

There was considerable variation in the amount of experience of these coaches, ranging from 3 months to 38 years. These coaches reported an equally wide range of average hours coached per week, from 1 hour per week to over 30 hours per week. The average hours coached per week by this group of coaches was just under six and a half (6.48). The coaching environments were mainly clubs (41%) as can be seen by the chart below. The coaches were asked to state their usual coaching environment, although some did state that they coached within a number of different organisations but for the purposes of this study they were asked to record their main environment (See Chart 2 below). It may be of interest to NGBs and coaching organisations to discover the numbers of different environments that coaching are currently working in.

Chart 2: Coaching Environments of responding coaches
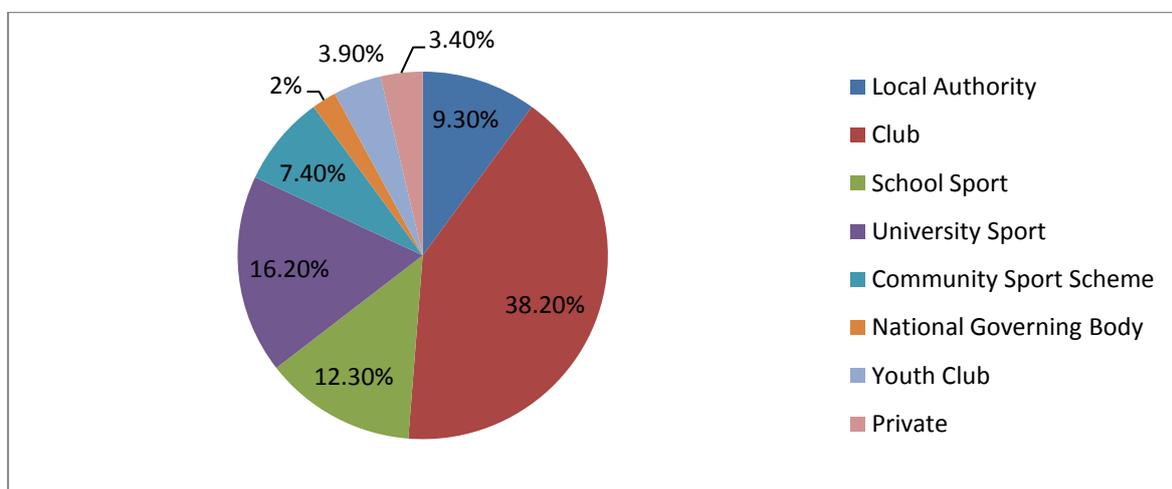
There were a number of reasons given as to why these individuals were coaching (See Table 3 below). As above some of the coaches mentioned that they had multiple reasons for coaching, quite often a complex mix of reasons.

Table 3: Reason given by coaches for continuing to coach

Reasons for Coaching	% of Total	No. Of Respondents
Enjoyment:	26.00%	53
Challenge:	7.80%	16
No-one else available:	6.40%	13
Recognition:	2.50%	5
Want to give something back to sport:	12.30%	25
Competition:	4.40%	9
Like passing on skills:	8.80%	18
My children participate:	15.20%	31
Like being part of a team:	3.90%	8
Money	5.80%	12
Looks good on CV	3.90%	8
Injury	2.90%	6

There were similar reasons for coaches initially becoming involved (See Table 4 below) although the main reason given by these coaches was a shortage of coaches at their particular organisation (34.30%). This may be a reason for coaches starting but as can be seen by the table above, it is not a reason to continue coaching, as enjoyment is the main motivator for this group of coaches.

Table 4: Reasons given by coaches for starting to coach

Reasons for Starting Coaching	% of Total	No. Of Respondents
Shortage of coaches at organisation:	34.30%	70
I wanted to give something back to the sport:	23.00%	47
I wanted to earn some money:	15.20%	31
It was something to do when I stopped playing:	13.70%	28
Olympic legacy	5.30%	11
Children taking part	8.33%	17

Summary

- There were 204 completions from 34 different sports.
- Majority of responding coaches were either unqualified, Level 1 or Level 2 in their sports.
- These coaches were mostly working within club environments, had started coaching as there was a shortage of coaches at their organisation and they kept coaching for enjoyment.

Coach Learning and Development

Similar to the results found in the Coach Tracking Study (sportscoach UK, 2012) 69.6% of these coaches felt that improving their coaching was important to them, saying:

'Always like to see new ways to coach and listening to new ideas'

'The day I stop developing myself is the day I stop developing my players'

'I always want to learn and develop and I feel every coach, no matter age or experience, should feel the same. In as much as players want to be the best they can be, I also wish to be the best coach I can and go as high as I can in the game.'

'I am always looking for ways to integrate others sports into my coaching practice. I feel other sports can be invaluable to child's growth. For selfish reasons I would like to be the best possible coach I can be and will always have an ambition to be the best, not in winning or losing, in terms of what I can give young individuals that can support them through their life.'

There were issues raised in follow-up questions from a number of coaches:

'In the present circumstances I want to quit'

'But this depends on the opportunities for coaching. I found that already too much administrative burden was being placed on me...and this detracted from the coaching...so if developing my coaching leads to more administration, then no, I will not develop further. If I can develop my coaching without taking on administration, then yes, that would be of interest to me.'

'Don't have any ambition to coach once my children move to secondary school'

'Happy doing what I'm doing - coaching qualifications too expensive/time consuming - too much politics with NGB.'

The majority of the comments related to time and expense being major factors in development although over 30% of these coaches did not feel that they needed to develop their coaching, often citing lack of time and expense as factors. Worryingly some coaches did not perceive a need to develop:

'Don't have time or inclination'

'I have no ambitions beyond coaching at a youth recreational level. It is just a hobby for me.'

'Can't be bothered'

There were some coaches who also wanted to learn and develop but expressed misgivings – they did not know how to go about this, who they could approach and the reception that they would get. However, more coaches (92.2%) felt that all coaches should continue to learn and develop rather than the 69.6% mentioned above who felt a personal need to develop their skills. Comments were generally positive with coaches saying:

'As a coach you never stop, or should never stop learning. Every match, coaching session, meeting and event you learn something different. The little things you

learn are normally the most important and effective ones. It's all about getting out there and experiencing it.'

'Coaches should continue to learn and develop as they need to be adaptable to changes. Changes in the sport or society/culture requires coaches to adapt to overcome certain issues. Coaches can also learn new ideas to keep their coaching new and interesting, to prevent it becoming repetitive or boring for the team.'

'Coaches should have an open mindset. No matter how long you have been coaching you can always learn and develop further. Coaches with closed mindsets generally think that what they are doing is bang on when in fact nothing is perfect.'

There were those who thought that development was extremely important but the delivery and content of some available options was not at the level they needed, saying:

'Yes, this is important, but current requirements seem stilted, forced, and not really aware of gender differences, even at young ages. They also don't actually help with the practical sides of coaching or the details much...so it is altogether too superficial and too hands off.'

'A sport is often always changing. Old coaching methods may not be as useful in the modern day. My NGB hasn't quite got to grips with that yet.'

How coaches access knowledge and the sources of coaching information have grown considerably in recent years. As can be seen in Graph 1 below, there is reliance by 74.5% of these coaches upon the internet as a source of coaching knowledge. This can be a source of helpful and developmental information but the key to learning from the internet is applying certain filters or evaluative processes before accepting everything on the internet at face value.

Graph 1: How Coaches Feel They Gain Coaching Knowledge (% contained in Appendix 3)
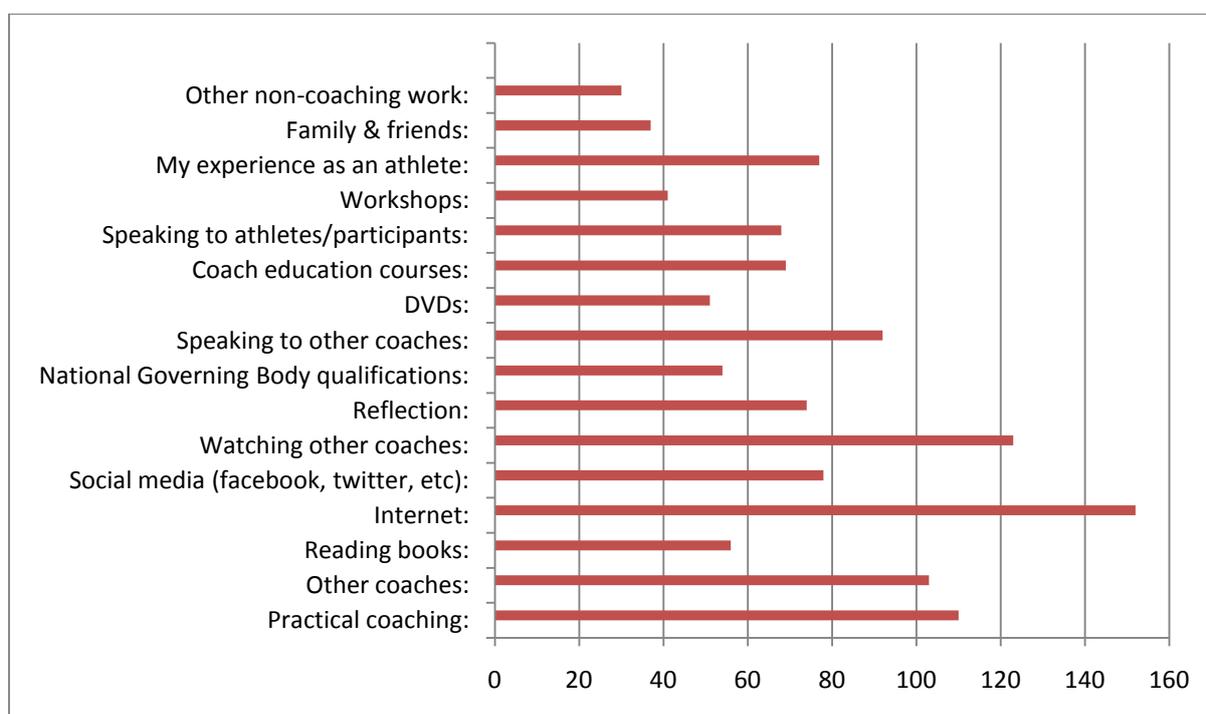
When asked what would help them develop as coaches there was a wide variety of answers, ranging from access to facilities and perceived experts, more readily available information and again, time and money issues. For example, mentors were mentioned by 24% of the coaches, as below:

'A mentor who has a similar personality and style to give perspective and guidance...and having a same gender mentor would help too since the gender dynamics in girls sport are particularly pronounced.'

'mentors for higher level coaches - I currently mentor but have nobody mentor me.'

National governing bodies were equally highlighted as having a key role to play in development, with coaches mentioning:

'Further opportunities to increase my knowledge and keep up with changes in the sport. Continuous professional development within the sport. Infrastructure within the governing body that individuals can feel comfortable and have the support whilst coaching.'

'Being more supported. I don't have a specific sport hence why I am not under an NGB. Dance is a huge grey area and as both a coach and commissioner I find that area the most dangerous as no-one seems qualified. I have had to let a number of dance coaches go as they have degrees in dance not dance coaching! As a sports coach Ii tend to work with younger children doing games, multi skills and fitkids so not a specific sport. I would never coach a sport specific session.'

Networking or communities of practice was also mentioned by a number of coaches, often in conjunction with other aspects of development. For example, technical and tactical developments, were areas that coaches felt would benefit from discussion with other coaches, as below:

'Information exchange, seeing if other coaches have had the same or similar issues and how they solved them. Not as formal or rigid as 'best practice' but avoiding re-inventing the wheel.'

'Mentorship, experience working within elite environments, communities of practice to discuss literature.'

'Workshop days are the best way for me to develop as a coach, short packed days where you work with a facilitator to go through the sports different elements and to try lots of different adaptations for the game. You share your knowledge and experience with fellow coaches and all learn from each other. Sport is all about taking what you know and adapting it to fit with what you teach.'

There were areas of current coach education highlighted as well as some suggestions for future developments of interest to coaches, some stating:

'Better CPD delivery. CPD seems to have become a business in its own right; this can severely limit access and increase costs.'

'Certainly developing a social qualification for coaching so coach/child/youth interaction is more manageable. Some have a natural ability and others can't or don't. Breaking through or understanding young footballer's emotions, behaviour

etc can be more difficult than actual football coaching. At the moment you really just go with the flow and are restricted due to child protection issues.'

'Access to more coach education, better more accessible facilities and above all more coaches at grassroots levels. Developing them is key. Thus as a coach, once they get to me they will have the fundamentals to be even better. But again, that is down up facilities so it goes full circle.'

'Better standard of coaches in the area unfortunately the majority of coaches in the girls' league are from the dinosaur age!!!'

Summary

- The majority of these coaches wanted to develop their coaching
- 92% felt all coaches should continue to learn but then only 69% felt improving their coaching was important to them
- The internet now appears to be the most popular source of coaching information for this group of coaches
- Mentors, NGBs and communities of practice were highlighted as key methods for coach development
- Accessibility seems to be an issue between coaches and development opportunities.

Coach Support

Following on from coach learning and development the aspect of coach support was further investigated. Coaches were asked to indicate what organisations that they had used to support them during their time in coaching. As can be seen from Chart 3 below, the highest percentage of coaches had used their NGB for this support. However a worrying statistic is that over 24% of these coaches did not or had not used any coaching organisation for support.

Chart 3: Organisations used for coaching support
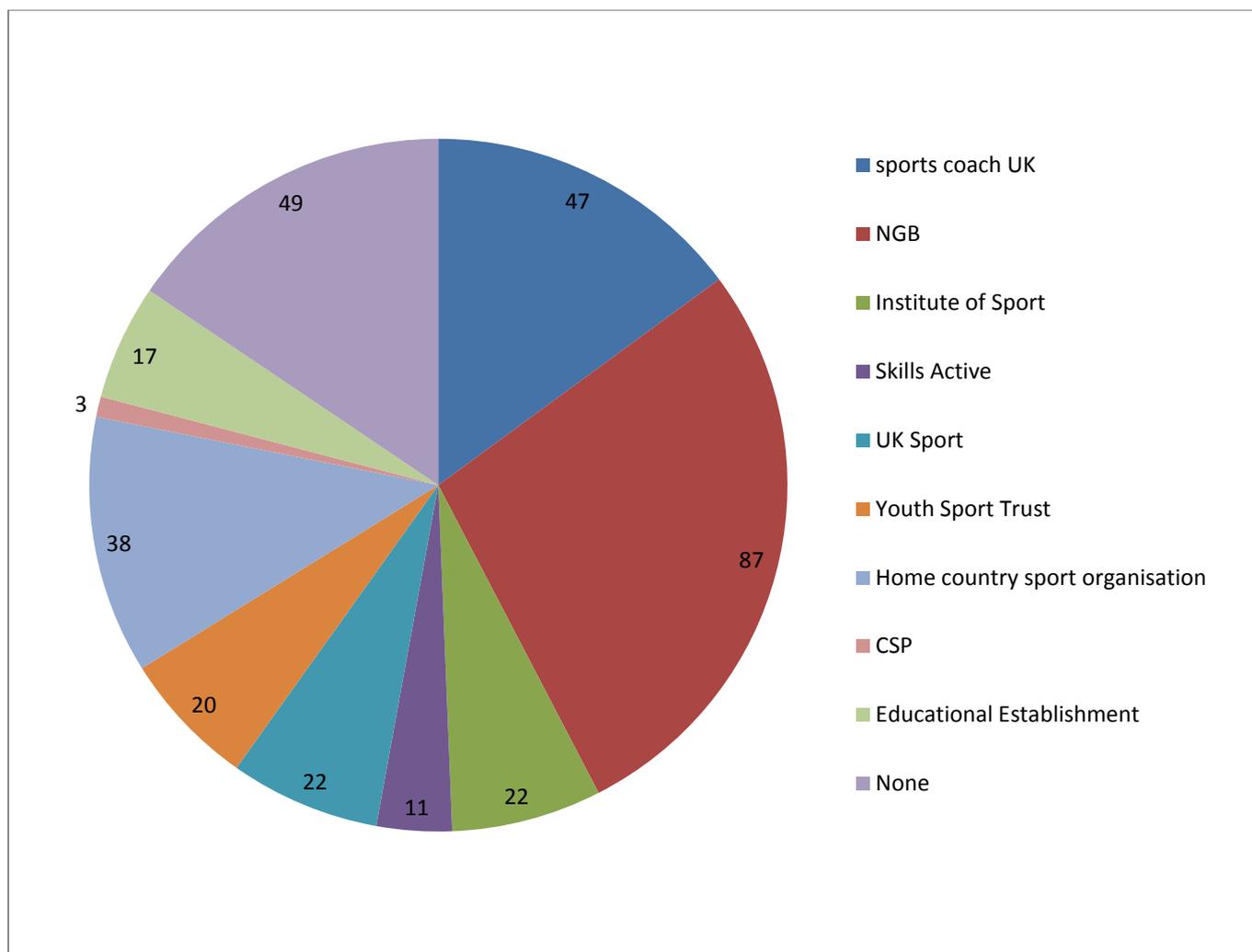
When this was followed up by asking coaches how helpful they had found these organisations there were mixed responses. A lot of the coaches had found one or more of these organisations to be supportive and able to give the necessary assistance however some coaches found all the organisations to be not as they hoped. For example:

> 'Sports Coach Uk are useless - if you request a course 6 months in advance for your organisation they don't start looking for a tutor until a month before so it fall flat on its face. They're good at talk, not at actions. Sports Leaders UK - very good we are now using their Energy Club in our area and awards for our young people.'

'Sport Coack UK do pretty well in getting you to think all the time about your sessions, planning, information etc. making that become a good habit.'

'Varies. NGB very limitting with strict rules and regulations. SCUK keep totally changing things instead of making gradual updates (seemingly to force you to repeat workshops).'

'They provide workshops, certification and online sources to read. Quite helpful. Shame it's so expensive.'

'SportscoachUK provided Child Protection Training required for insurance purposes, etc. The course was useful but I had already undertaken several other course so I was really just repeating things I already knew.'

'NGB - I have found the coaching qualifications mostly drawn out and patronising. I have enjoyed being coached by and observing top coaches. Sport Coach UK courses can often be dated and I think some of the course content could be covered in under an hour yet they seem to drag it out for 2-3hours.... this often puts me off attending. I've attended both Coaching Matters & Coaching Talent Programme workshops and found these relevant and interesting.'

'BASIC, limited by the political tidings of the organisations.'

Initially it appeared that some coaches were not aware of the extent of support offered by these coaching organisations as 37.7% of coaches admitted they did not know what support was offered and another 38.2% said they were unsure. Of the 24% who said that they knew what these organisations offered, the majority listed coach education courses, disability awareness seminars and child protection workshops as the main sources of support. Some others mentioned the availability of these organisations via a number of sources:

'I follow SportscoachUK on Twitter so can be selective on what I read. The NGB could be more helpful.'

'Available on telephone/web site/social media sites for advice.'

'Support such as financial support and legal support.'

There did appear to be aspects of accessibility with a number of coaches complaining that information was not easily available and the perception was that it took a lot of time and effort on the part of the coach to get support.

'I find dealing with them to be more burden than it is worth.'

'I have tried to contact the person that took my NGB course but they kept giving me the run around. Why are they so inaccessible - just to make it difficult!'

'The big organisations seem to be more strategic rather than helping at grass roots / individuals. Every time you call these organisations they're not that helpful, they just sound good.'

'They are out of touch and are trying to steer the sport in a direction that is antiquated.'

'They view coaches as potential consumers. The cost of qualifications is exorbitant. Officers have work programmes which you must fit within or they will not help you.'

Many coaches thought that dealing with some organisations at a local level was more likely to be of benefit. That way they were able to speak to a specific individual and that made future inquiries easier, less time-consuming and frustrating. When asked what these organisations could do to better support coaches, many responses indicated that these organisations should be more interested in the coaches, care more about them, be more inclusive in their practices and most importantly, realise that as many coaches are volunteers it must be made as easy as possible for coaches to access support. Other concerns were:

'Help me, not their bottom line or their work programme completion rates.'

'Be more organised and communicate more effectively with coaches. Also be more approachable to coaches contacting them – we don't work office hours!'

'Simplify themselves why do we need others such as sports coach uk/skillsactive and the ngb?'

Summary

- 24% of these coaches did not or had not used any coaching organisation for support
- The most accessed organisations were NGBs, sport coach UK and the home countries institutes of sport.
- 37.7% of these coaches did not know what support was available, 38.2% were unsure and 24% said there were aware of the available support.
- Information was not easily available and it took a lot of time and effort to get support

Coaches Outside the System

The aim of this research project was to target coaches who were considered to be outside the system with the view to enabling coaching organisations and NGBs to put strategies in place to involve these disenfranchised coaches back into the system. As has been mentioned earlier, there were coaches completing the survey who were very much inside the system. Therefore in the interviews, coaches were asked what they thought the system was. Given the broad range of sporting backgrounds of the coaches, there was considerable agreement on the definition. These coaches considered that the system only existed for coaches at Level 3 and above.

A cricket coach explained his reasons for being outside the system, saying:

> 'I guess I don't really want to get involved, I don't think it is necessary, for me anyway, because I just don't want to progress my coaching in that way. If it were necessary for me to continue coaching then I would do it, but it isn't, so I don't.'

A swimming coach, qualified at Level 2, reported his last interaction with his NGB was over 5 years ago and that was only to book a child protection course, which he needed to have. He admitted to being cynical about the NGB motives, saying:

> 'I've been on this course before but with another organisation but my NGB won't accept this. I have to go on theirs because they don't trust any other organisation to deliver it properly. Cynically, I think it is about money so I don't really deal with them.'

A Level 3 badminton coach thought:

> 'In terms of the system, the NGB is an important one and from that I get zero. Every 3 months I get a magazine that is promoting everything that Badminton England does that I'm not interested in. They were doing a coaching magazine for badminton but that's disappeared. So I don't really get anything from the NGB apart from every 12 months I have to pay subscriptions to get insurance. And that's pretty much the extent of it. No CPD or workshops on offer. There's very little coming from them, they're not offering anything of any worth.'

A Level 1 football coach, spoke about his experiences in the United States and how his interaction with the coaching system there was very different to his experiences in England. He felt:

> 'It's up to me to go onto the FA website and have a look. No one has told us you can go and get help. I think it is more your own incentive to go and look. Maybe I've been lazy and I could have gone to more. Maybe they could make it a bit easier for people but at the moment timing. I'm being quite successful at the moment so I don't think I need to look. When I did my Level 1 it was a case of 'do it and that's all you need to do'. There was no mention of any other support.'

Another cricket coach explained:

> 'In terms of a qualification I only have a Level 1, which allows me to coach. I don't feel I need to develop this side of my coaching because I don't want to progress in the world of coaching. I just want to do what I am doing. You could say the rest of my coaching comes from experience as I have played the game

for over 20 years now and feel I understand it enough to help our kids at the U13 and U15 age group.'

One of the most disenfranchised groups were coaches involved in student sport. There was a strong feeling that not only the coaches but also the student athletes were ignored by coaching organisation and NGBs despite successes at UK level in BUCS competitions. There was considerable difference between institutions regarding the organisation and support offered to student sport. University sport tended to be better organised, better resourced and offer a more extensive competition structure but within University sport some sports were more high profile than others. One University sport manager could boast:

'If our alumni and current athletes' medals were counted we would have finished 20th in the medal table at London 2012.'

Many coaches within student sport come from within the student body, although some universities had well developed support structures for individuals, teams and coaching personnel. Some of the sports had very healthy club numbers and entered into local competitions as well as student sport competitions. Within the college system there appeared to be less formal organisation and less organised competition. The coaching appeared to be more ad hoc than organised, and, although some colleges did offer academies for specific sports or teams, the players did not usually represent the college in competitions.

The interviewed coaches tended to have very little contact with the NGB or other coaching organisations. One coach thought:

'It would be nice to know how to do things, to become more involved. Once a year we get a letter saying 'thanks for the money'. Perhaps a student component within the NGB would help.'

A shooting coach explained:

'I have no idea how the system works. It seems if you are in a university team they ignore talent. I won BUCS, got better scores than people in the Commonwealth team but I don't belong so I'm ignored.'

A basketball coach thought:

'There is a lack of information and communication – I'm not sure where it breaks down. We have a good set up here, good players and a lot of support and backing from the university. Why would be bother with the NGB – it would be nice but the uni are more helpful and accessible.'

The badminton coach thought that there were a lot of players within the university badminton club who were there for social reasons, which was good for numbers and club viability but presented financial difficulties for organising coaches and team training sessions. He said:

'At present we rely on people who have cars because going to competitions is so expensive.'

He continued:

'We have teams competing within local leagues and also with BUCS. We want to double the number of teams but don't have the resources at present. Badminton Scotland runs a student competition once a year which is very popular but the standard of competition in Scottish Student Sport is just not high enough.'

Summary

- According to these coaches the system consists of Level 3 coaches and above
- Student sport does not belong within the system
- Cynicism from coaches about coaching organisations and NGBs
- The system is concerned about collecting money not supporting these coaches

Coaches Views of NGB Support

As most of the coaches in the survey identified their NGB as their most common organisation to try to access information, more information was collected about these coaches' perceptions of the support offered by their NGB. The coaches came from 34 sports but they identified 55 different NGBs and there were some coaches who did not know who their NGB was (See Appendix 2 for detailed breakdown).

As can be seen in the chart below, 38.7% of coaches felt supported by their NGB as opposed to 61.3% who did not feel supported.

Chart 4: Coaches perceptions of NGB support
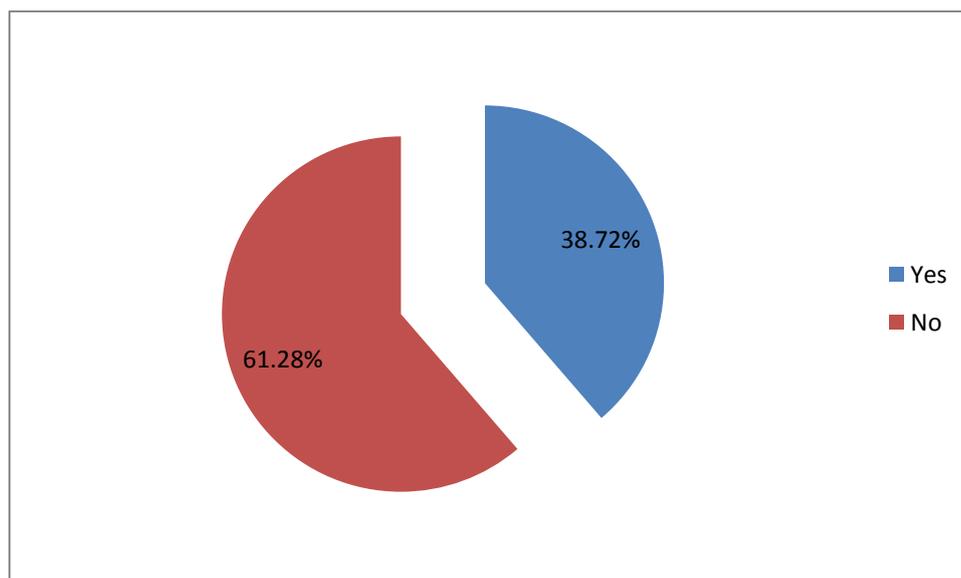
The majority of reasons given fell into 4 categories:

1. Little or no support offered

2. Feelings of isolation

3. Individuals, not NGBs, helpful

4. Political agendas

A number of the coaches had considered their answer very carefully, saying:

'I have answered yes although without much enthusiasm. I acknowledge that there is a national stepped coaching structure and there is a programme of coach-related events. There are also regional coach development officers -- there is no lack of resource. But coaching is only part of a bigger picture, and it is really hard to see the visible effects of the NGB's influence on standards across the game in Scotland, which appears to be in rapid decline. In short, I'm not convinced they are getting things right, but that may have more to with the way the sport is organised. If something is badly organised to start with no amount of support, no matter how good that support is, will make it work.'

'They offer many courses related to coaching and getting people started in coaching however, I feel that the after support for coaches isn't the best. I feel I'm on my own.'

'I have only been a coach for a short period of time however I have met, through a variety of different courses a number of different coaches, ex players, ex managers and each of them have the same belief, to see our national sport progress. They are always willing to talk or make themselves available at a later date to chat. They've been great! The system is not always as helpful.'

'I've been an elite coach for 6years and due to lack of support from staff dealing with logistics and coaching; I'm taking time out this season or for the foreseeable future. My squad were given some funding to develop coaching but it was a measly amount and we were restricted with what we could use it for. What I really wanted to use it for, purchase a video camera I was told I couldn't. We were also told we would be getting it towards the end of the season, when it would have been used if we'd received it at the start of our programme. We didn't use 1 penny of it.'

'Neither yes or no. When I have undertaken coach education then yes for sure I was supported however I do not think that their current CPD actually helps me as an individual so at this point in my coaching career I do not feel that well supported. Although I should point out that it is not entirely the NGB's fault. The CPD offered would be great for a newly qualified coach who has little knowledge of training etc but I have got to a level with coach education I cannot go past and I have a degree in applied sport sciences as well as a PGDE in physical education. Therefore I am my own victim of circumstance.'

A number of coaches were quite dismissive of their NGB accusing them of not caring, not being interested in the coaches and always expressing the NGB views, saying:

'Just poorly set-up, Seem to be un-interested in development and more interested in fining clubs.'

'Maybe I'm not the type of coach they want to encourage - I'm a parent. Not high profile.'

'Netball played in primary school does not seem important to them. They want everyone to join one of their clubs.'

'Not enough money comes back to grassroots unless it is seen to support those employed by the NGB.'

'NGB is not interested in meeting the needs of the members and is a completely self serving entity for promotion of its directors and insular volunteers who all come from one or two clubs.'

'Qualified as a Level 2 coach in 1998 - they have never contacted me - doubt they know I exist.'

'They don't want to listen - they are too busy fighting with each other and scoring points.'

'They seem completely unaware of the realities of coaching.'

Coaches were asked to rate their NGBs on some of the support that they might offer (See Graph 2 below).

Graph 2: Coaches perceptions of NGB support services (Stem – How good is your NGB at….)
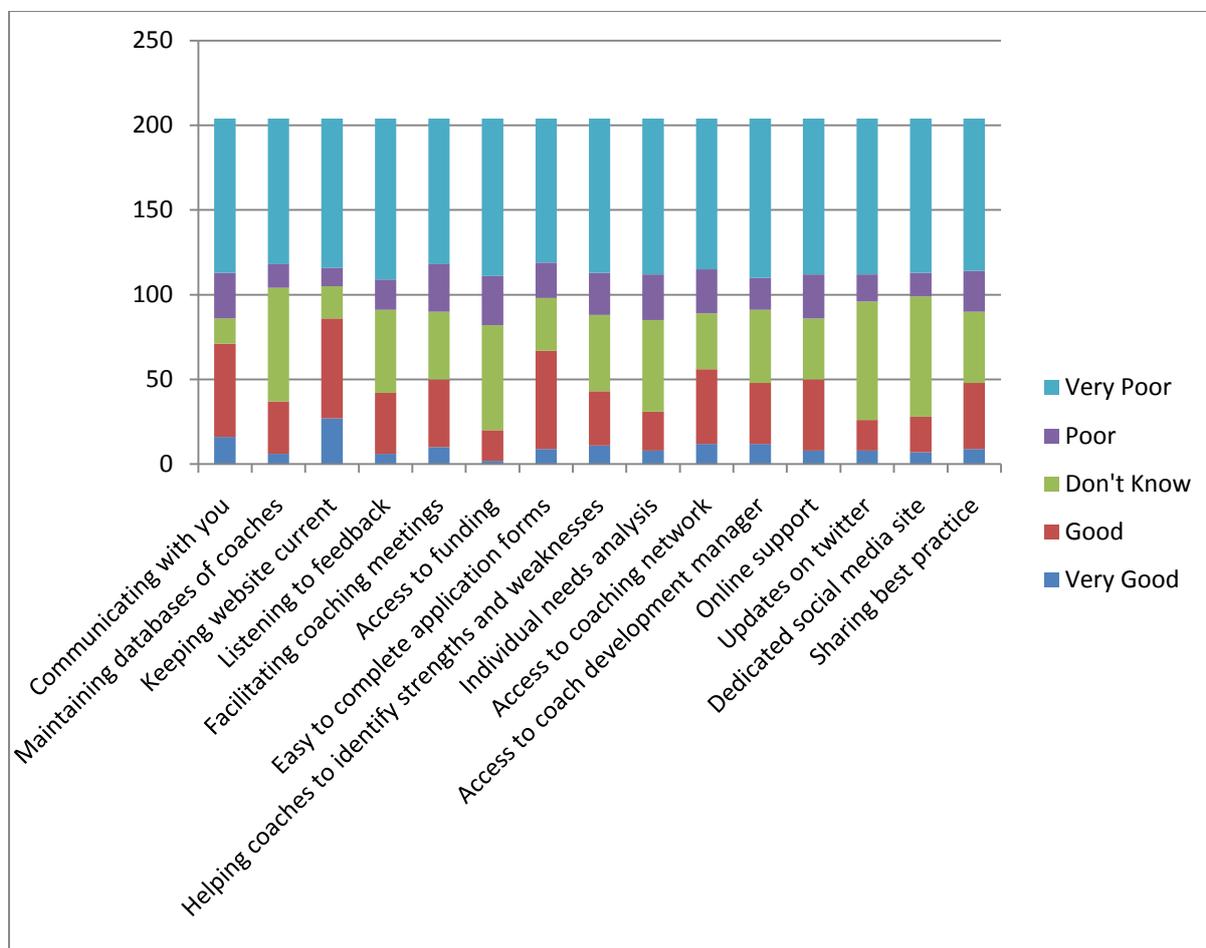
NGBs were rated best by these coaches at keeping their websites current and not good at helping coaches to access funding. Communication was still seen to be a problem by some coaches (57.6%0 but not an issue by others (34.8%). As these coaches were meant to be outside the system, communication would be expected to be more of a problem area than it appears to be from their responses.

Coaches were asked what would encourage them to have more regular contact with their NGB, in effect, what could persuade them to come into the system. There were a wide range of answers with coaches saying:

> 'A specific person who deals with the needs of coaches who is easily identifiable on the website.'

> 'Bringing in experts in sports development and delivery rather than working only with those who were previously participants or performers in sport but who lack specific knowledge of NGB support systems, delivery and development issues.'

> 'More of a online chat forum or database for coaching information and ideas.'

'People who were more available, welcoming, friendly, and efficient. Having a system that was clearly focused on the right things and not paper work and wasting time and creating inefficiencies for someone to manage.'

'More direct contact. Not always asking for money'

'More evidence that they were interested in me, my players and our goals.'

'I need to finish my qualification but it was so bad I don't want to.'

'A facebook or twitter feed with open access to coaching information and a forum.'

'A better outreach to local/university club coaches/committees.'

I do feel sometimes that things could be more easily accessible. It is hard to go to a venue and take part for one or two hours in an evening, maybe that is something they could think of, some way of accessing these courses on-line or something. It just takes up so much time.'

Some of these ideas are easier to implement than others, requiring time and resources. Others actually already exist but it would appear that these coaches are either unaware of this or not able to access these resources easily. Given the slightly negative feedback from these coaches about the support services offered by the NGBs these coaches were then asked what support they would like the NGBs to offer.

Graph 3: What coaches would like from NGBs
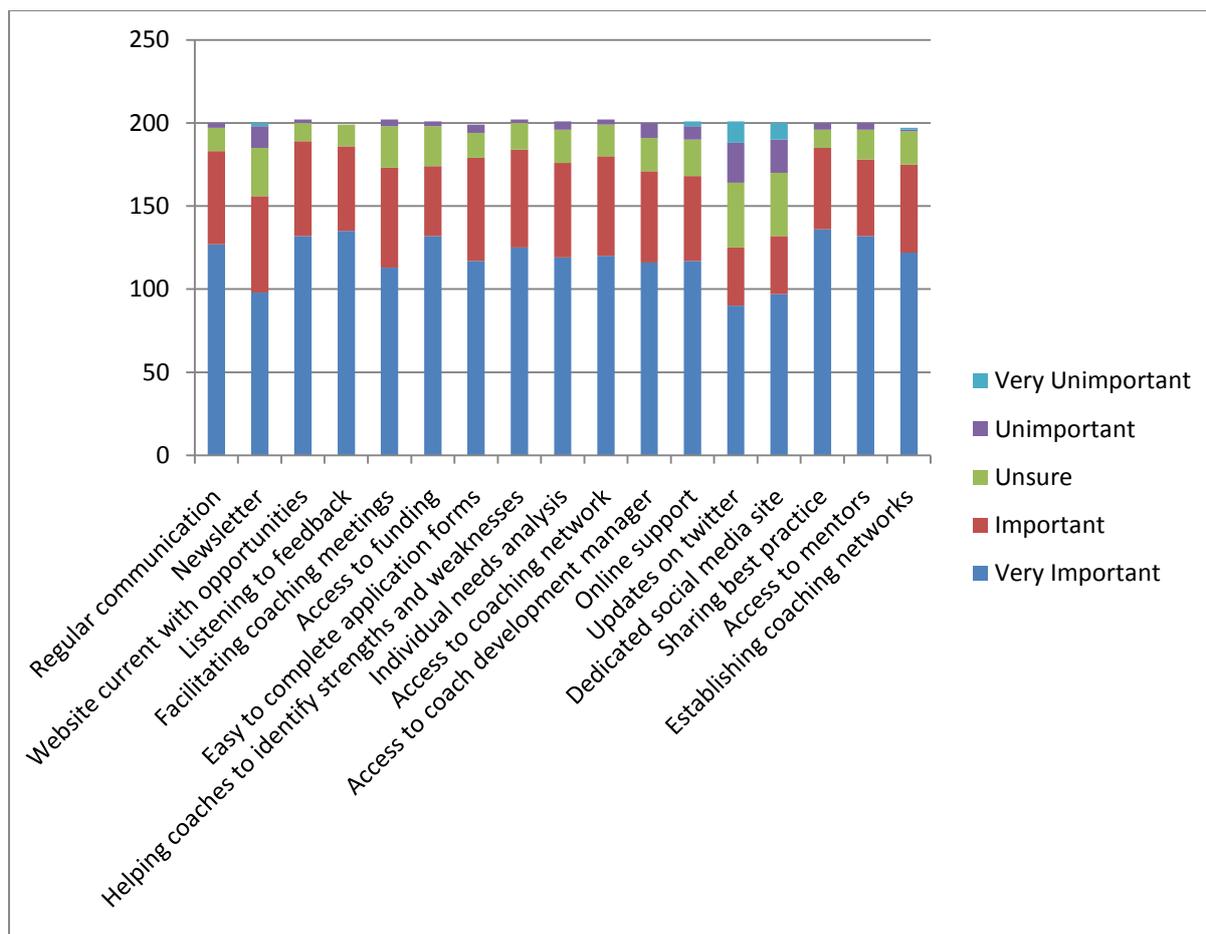
Listening to feedback appears to be a key concern of these coaches and this was made evident through the responses to the final survey question. The coaches were asked

'what could your National Governing Body do to help you coach' and this question seemed to provoke some quite inflammatory responses from these coaches. Responses included:

'Be interested in me and my coaching. Listen to my needs. Stop trying to pigeon hole me into something that suits them.'

'Coaching network would be excellent, if there is one - then advertise it more so that I know about it! I've had 1 meeting with the coaches from my club and it was very interesting to hear from others who have had or are having similar issues and how they have or propose to overcome them, I'd like more of this, to share the knowledge for the good of the sport.'

'One thing they could do is alleviate the HUGE and completely unnecessary administrative burdens on youth coaches. There is no reason why I should have to call a referee to remind them when to show up at what is a paying job. I should not have to take out money to pay them and then claim it back from the club. I should not have to fill in a register of my players every single week, indicating who is starting and who is a substitute, sign it, sign the other team's, sign regarding the field quality, etc., and then confirm the referee report by emailing in the score. I should not have to confirm my home team colours every home game or remind the opposing team that they need to show up and not be in our colours. Seriously. This is a huge waste of my time and life and is a huge barrier to staying involved in coaching. Teams who join a league should honour their commitment to show up to games. Referees who are being paid should show up to their jobs...and the NGB should set up a system to administer referee payments. Each season, the clubs can pay the NGB an amount equivalent to what they would pay refs in the season, and then the NGB can transfer that money to referees each week AFTER those referees send in the paperwork about the game that they are required to. Team home and away colors should be registered with the NGB at the beginning of the season and posted online, with the rule that when any club colours overlap, the away team for any week is responsible for being different. There. Problem solved.

'More localised coach development days. Say you become a qualified coach and you go away and start coaching that sport weekly. Then I feel every 4 months there could be a development day where coaches could attend an event where:- Best practice :- Coaching specific skills :- Adapted sessions workshops could take place. That way you're always learning and developing your skills, you network with other local coaches and you keep in contact with NGB's.'

'Provide the necessary framework and expertise to filter new concepts and best practice down to all levels.'

'Stop ensuring that all decent coaching jobs go to their own employees. In cycling all coach education is carried out by volunteers, in rugby almost all is carried out by paid staff as an addition to their salaries.'

'Release more information, speed up development and offer more training.'

'Find a way to make me feel part of the system…..'

Summary

- 55 governing bodies represented with 38.7% of coaches experiencing support as opposed to 61.3% who did not feel supported
- Four main reasons for non-support
    - Little or no support offered
    - Feelings of isolation
    - Individuals, not NGBs, helpful
    - Political agendas

Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was twofold; firstly it was to design a template for coaching organisations and NGBs to access the views of coaches who did not engage with the system. Secondly, it was to carry out a pilot study using the template as a test to ascertain the usefulness of said template. Given the current coaching environment that coaches operate within, accessing coaches who do not wish to participate in organised activities can be a time consuming and difficult task. However, coaching development and effectiveness can be affected by separation and lack of engagement with a vibrant group of similar-minded individuals.

The online survey was developed and distributed using a number of methods. The most popular were internet based; email and twitter. This was then followed by word of mouth. All of these methods made use of respondents or individuals within sports organisation passing on the survey, thus creating snowball effect. The responses from the surveys helped the next stage, the interview process, in two ways. First, the initial survey responses were used to design the interview schedule and second, the last question of the survey allowed coaches to leave their details should they wish to participate in the interview process. Although this is a robust design the type of questions being asked and the potential responses would make this best administered by a non-involved individual or team.

Recommendations for Methodology

- Distribution using coaching networks and social media sites
- Stricter monitoring of respondents
- Survey to remain open for 2-3 months to enable snowball effect
- Individual interviews as follow up from survey to be carried out by non-involved interviewer.

The pilot study gathered 204 survey responses and carried out nine focus group and nine individual interviews. The majority of participants in the survey and interviews were either unqualified coaches or those qualified at Level 1 or Level 2. Key findings from the interviews included:

- 92% felt all coaches should continue to learn but then only 69% felt improving their coaching was important to them
- The internet now appears to be the most popular source of coaching information for this group of coaches
- 24% of these coaches did not or had not used any coaching organisation for support
- 55 governing bodies were represented with 38.7% of coaches experiencing support as opposed to 61.3% who did not feel supported
- These coaches gave four main reasons for their perceptions of non-support
  - Little or no support offered
  - Feelings of isolation
  - Individuals were helpful, not NGBs
  - Political agendas
- According to these coaches the system consists of Level 3 coaches and above
- Student sport does not belong within the system
- Cynicism from these coaches about coaching organisations and NGBs
- According to these coaches the system is concerned about collecting money not supporting coaches

It is anticipated that the results of this pilot study will give all involved sports organisations basic information about the perceptions of this group of coaches. It is hoped that these sports organisations will be able to use the template to gather more information from their coaches. As there were 204 responses from 34 sports the data collected cannot be generalised to any specific sport or organisation. Sports organisation should understand the needs of their participants so should be able to adapt the template to suit their needs more appropriately.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Questions	Probes	
Give me an overview of your current coaching environment	Sport Age group Environment Aims/objectives	
Your background	Coaching qualifications Experience Length of time coaching	
Why did you start coaching	Key motivators May be more than one	
Why are you still coaching	Still motivated Anything changed	
Could you tell me a little about your coaching philosophy	How did you decide on this	Examples?
What do you think you need to improve in your coaching?	How can you tell?	Examples?
What is your memory of your last interaction with NGB?	When What – coach ed course/update/meeting Positive/negative	Need to be very careful not to lead here
This survey is about coaches outside the system – what links/connections do you have with the system	Why is it this way Why are you not involved	I'm trying to get a sense of what 'outside the system' means to these coaches
What has been your experience of coach education courses	How long ago Level Coach educators	It may be that their last interaction with NGB was Coach ed so we need to play this one by ear
How do feel you access coaching knowledge at present?		
What coach support services are you aware of	What is your experience of them	Positive or negative experience but try to ascertain how easy/difficult they found accessing services

Appendix 2

Coaches Reported National Governing Body

NGB	Number of Coaches
Archery GB	2
ASA	8
BADMINTON England	3
Badminton Scotland	1
Basketball England	2
Basketball Scotland	3
Basketball Wales	1
BCU	1
Boccia	1
BOF	4
Bowling	1
British Cycling	2
British Gymnastics	2
British Judo	3
British Rowing	2
British Sub Aqua	2
CONI	1
Cricket Scotland	1
CSLA	6
Don't Know	18
ECB	2
England Netball	8
English Volleyball	4
ESSDA	1
ETTA	4
FA	10
FAW	2
Hockey England	2
Irish rugby	1
Lacrosse England	2
LTA	5
MLTUK	1
Netball Scotland	1
NFL	1
PGA	2
RCS	1
RFL	1
RFU	7
Royal Caledonian Curling Club (RCCC)	1
SASA	3
SFA	37

Scottish Fencing Ltd	1
Scottish Gymnastics Association	2
Scottish Hockey Union	2
Scottish Karate	2
Scottish Korfball	1
Scottish Rowing	3
SRU	4
Scottish Youth Football Association	12
Squash Rackets	1
SVA	1
UK Athletics	8
UKSCA	1
Welsh Athletics	4
Welsh Hockey Union	1
WLSS	1

Appendix 3

Raw Data from Graph 1: How Coaches Feel They Gain Coaching Knowledge

Practical coaching:	110
Other coaches:	103
Reading books:	56
Internet:	152
Social media (facebook, twitter, etc):	78
Watching other coaches:	123
Reflection:	74
National Governing Body qualifications:	54
Speaking to other coaches:	92
DVDs:	51
Coach education courses:	69
Speaking to athletes/participants:	68
Workshops:	41
My experience as an athlete:	77
Family & friends:	37
Other non-coaching work:	30

% Data from Graph 2: Coaches perceptions of NGB support services

Categories	Very Poor	Poor	Don't Know	Good	Very Good
Communicating with you	44.6%	13.2%	7.4%	27%	7.8%
Maintaining databases of coaches	42.2%	6.9%	32.8%	15.8%	2.9%
Keeping website current	43.1%	5.4%	9.3%	28.9%	13.2%
Listening to feedback	46.6%	8.8%	24%	17.6%	2.9%
Facilitating coaching meetings	42.2%	13.7%	19.6%	19.6%	4.9%
Access to funding	45.6%	14.2%	30.4%	8.8%	1%
Easy to complete application forms	41.7%	10.3%	15.2%	28.4%	4.4%
Helping coaches to identify strengths and weaknesses	44.6%	12.3%	22.1%	15.7%	5.4%
Individual needs analysis	45.1%	13.2%	26.5%	11.3%	3.9%
Access to coaching network	43.6%	12.7%	16.2%	21.6%	5.9%
Access to coach development manager	46.1%	9.3%	21.1%	17.6%	5.9%
Online support	45.1%	12.7%	17.6%	20.6%	3.9%
Updates on twitter	45.1%	7.8%	34.3%	8.8%	3.9%
Dedicated social media site	44.6%	6.9%	34.8%	10.3%	3.4%
Sharing best practice	44.1%	11.8%	20.6%	19.1%	4.4%

% Data from Graph 3: What coaches would like from NGBs

Choices	Very Important	Important	Unsure	Unimportant	Very Unimportant
Regular communication	63.5%	28%	7%	1.5%	0%
Newsletter	49%	29%	14.5%	6.5%	1%
Website current with opportunities	65.3%	28.2%	5.4%	1%	0%
Listening to feedback	67.8%	25.6%	6.5%	0%	0%
Facilitating coaching meetings	55.9%	29.7%	12.4%	2%	0%
Access to funding	65.7%	20.9%	11.9%	1.5%	0%
Easy to complete application forms	58.8%	31.2%	7.5%	2.5%	0%
Helping coaches to identify strengths and weaknesses	61.9%	29.2%	7.9%	1%	0%
Individual needs analysis	59.2%	28.4%	10%	2.5%	0%
Access to coaching network	59.4%	29.7%	9.4%	1.5%	0%
Access to coach development manager	58%	27.5%	10%	4.5%	0%
Online support	58.2%	25.4%	10.9%	4%	1.5%
Updates on twitter	44.8%	17.4%	19.4%	11.9%	6.5%
Dedicated social media site	48.5%	17.5%	19%	10%	5%
Sharing best practice	68%	24.5%	5.5%	2%	0%
Access to mentors	66%	23%	9%	2%	0%
Establishing coaching networks	61.9%	26.9%	10.2%	05%	0.5%