

# Career Paths of Finnish Sport Coaches

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# The Power of Networks – Continuous Learning in Sports Coaching



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# What do we know about coaches in Finland?

## Basic characteristics

- Age
- Years of coaching
- Workplace
- Working time
- Salary
- Employers



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# What do we know about coaches in Finland?

## Coach education and learning

- Coach education
  - Number of education
  - Highest level of education
- Reasons for participating in education and obstacles to participation
- The importance of further education
- Start and turning points in coaching careers
  - Reasons for continuing and quitting
- Learning situations that have taken place
- The most important learning situations
- Needs at this moment



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# What do we not know about coaches in Finland?

- Number of coaches
- General level of education
- Future needs
- Continuous learning in a sport coaches' career
- Order of education
- Order of the competence path
  - Dialogue between education and work
- .....



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# Globally there is lack of information as well

## A key finding:

- Many countries lack systematic national data collection on coaching and coaches, which limits the ability to gain an accurate overview of the field and to inform policy development.



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Moustakas, L., Lara-Bercial, S., North, J. &  
Calvo, G. 2021



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# Introduction - Conclusion



- We know "random" details about the coaches
  - The overall picture is maybe not so clear?
- > We should collect data systematically



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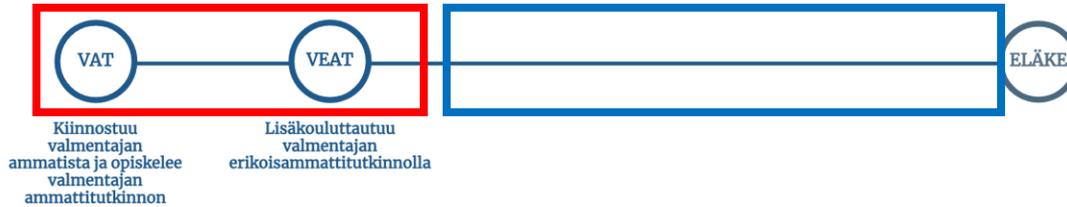
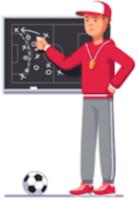


# Starting point

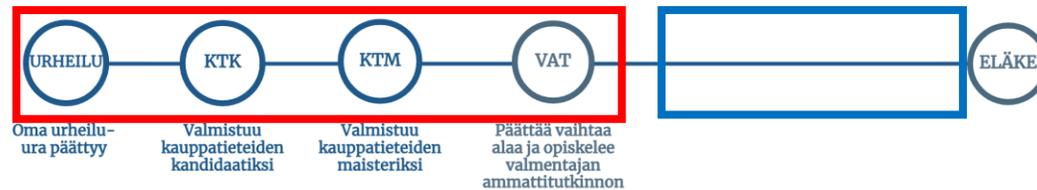
A.



B.



C.



## We wanted to know

- order of education
- order of education and work (dialogue)
- order of education, work and informal and non-formal learning (dialogue)



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Picture made by JOUVA-project



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# Hypothesis

- **There are as many paths as there are coaches**



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# Methods

- In Finland we are used to use quantitative data collection
  - easy and quick to analyze
    - have to remember they do not necessarily give an accurate picture
- Collecting qualitative data is rare
  - requires more time to analyze
  - requires person who has the competence to analyze
  - but even then, they may not reveal the whole truth, as they only cover issues that are known to exist
- Mixed data collection might be the solution?



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# Methods - Data collection: 6 different workshops in 5 different Sport Academies



STEP 1: WRITE DOWN THEIR BACKGROUND INFORMATION



STEP 2: WRITE DOWN THE FORMAL EDUCATION THEY HAVE COMPLETED



STEP 3: WRITE DOWN THEIR WORK HISTORY ON THE SAME TIMELINE



STEP 4: WRITE DOWN INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING ON THE SAME TIMELINE



STEP 5: DISCUSSION IN SMALL GROUPS AND OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPLEMENT ANSWERS



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# Methods - Example path

- - 2013 Athlete
- **2008 - 2011 High school**
- 2011 - 2012 Working as salesperson
- **2011 - 2012 Massage therapist degree**
- 2012 - 2015 Working as a massage therapist
- **2013 - 2017 University, lower degree**
- 2013- Seminars and webinars
- 2014 - 2017 Youth athletics coach
- 2014 - 2017 Mentor
- 2017 - 2022 National team coach for youth and adult athletics
- **2017 - 2020 University, higher degree**
- 2020 - 2022 Physical coach for young football players
- 2020 – Mentor
- **2022 - Expert at a university of applied sciences**
- 2022 - Lunch conversations with coworkers

## Colours

- Black: Formal education
- Red: Work history
- Green: Informal and non-formal learning



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# Results - Participants

- **How many:** 72 finnish Sports Academy Coaches
- **Gender distribution:** 15 women and 57 men
- **Age:** 38,0 ± 11,0 years
- **Sports:** Coaches for individual and team sports, summer and winter sports
- **Coaching years:** 15,2 ± 10,6 years
  
- **Working time:**
  - 63 % full time
  - 15 % part time
  - 22 % other / volunteers



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# Results - career paths

- Coaches have become full-time coaches **approximately**
  - 6 years after their first coaching education (range 0-34)
  - 5 years after their first coaching assignment (range 0-25)
- Estimated difference between coach education courses **approximately**
  - Difference between the first and second courses: 3 years (range 0–27 years)
  - Difference between the second and third courses: 4 years (range 0–15 years)

Notice individual variations



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Unpublished data



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# Results – career paths of Sport Academy Coaches

- |   |      |
|---|------|
| • Education -> coaching -> education -> coaching                      | 22 % |
| • Education and coaching started at the same time                     | 21 % |
| • Coaching -> education -> coaching -> education                      | 17 % |
| • Own sport career -> education -> coaching ->                        | 10 % |
| • Own sport career -> coaching -> education ->                        | 8 %  |
| • Own sport career -> coaching and education started at the same time | 7 %  |
| • Only coaching   | 6 %  |
| • Coaching -> education (not finished) -> coaching                    | 1 %  |



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# Results – informal and non-formal learning

There were about 25-30 different

- Open university courses
- Benchmarking
- International cooperation
- Seminars and meetings
- Lunch and coffee discussions
- Mentoring
- Own sports background
- Parring with fellow students
- Workplace workshops/meetings
- Webinars
- ...

Most mentioned

Cooperation/discussions etc. with other coaches and experts, including organized meetings within the work community as well as informal encounters	71 %
Mentoring	42 %
Networking meetings organized by the federation and other organizations	35 %
Seminars	25 %
Written and electronic materials and social media	19 %
Education	17 %
Acting as an educator	15 %
Group and work supervision	13 %



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# Take home message

- **We identified 8 different paths of Sport Academy Coaches**
  - The paths differ in terms of education, career and informal and non-formal learning
- > **There are as many paths as there are coaches**
- **Workshops also serve an educational purpose**
  - Stop and reflect own path by yourself and with others
  - Recognize needs at this moment and needs in the future
  - At the same you can update your CV



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