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Educational Histories and Formal Leadership Experiences of Program Directors in CAATE Accredited Athletic Training Programs

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Objective: The demand for qualified educators to lead Athletic Training Programs (ATPs) has increased dramatically in recent years. It is imperative that Athletic Training Program Directors (ATPDs) have the necessary leadership skills to facilitate change and use influence to positively impact peers, students, and program performance¹⁻³. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate ATPDs' development by exploring their leadership development, including formal and informal leadership education.

Design: Descriptive study, non-experimental

Setting: Educational history and leadership development of undergraduate and graduate ATPDs

Participants: A leadership history questionnaire was distributed to 336 ATPDs of CAATE accredited ATPs.

Main Outcome Measures: Items were analyzed using descriptive statistics and measures of central tendency.

Results: Forty-seven (13%) ATPD's surveys were eligible for data analysis. A majority (85%) of respondents reported that having a formal degree in leadership would have been beneficial to their career in AT education. A one-way between subjects ANOVA examined a significant difference was present between types of degrees reported by ATPDs and how their formal degree versus personal experiences influenced administrative and leadership preparedness. The one-way ANOVA reported significance among the degrees. A Bonferroni

post hoc analysis determined ATPDs with a PhD or EdD reported their highest degree earned significantly impacted their administrative preparedness while personal experience significantly impacted leadership preparedness [$F(2, 44) = 4.15, p = 0.02$; $F(2, 44) = 3.84, p = 0.03$]. No significant difference was present between ATPDs with a terminal degree (PhD or EdD) compared to those with a master's degree.

Conclusions: ATPDs reported they would have benefited from a formal education in leadership. Therefore, future ATPDs may want to consider enrolling in formal leadership courses during their educational preparation. However, most ATPDs claim to have exposure to leadership development through workshops/seminars. Program directors with a terminal degree (PhD or EdD) believed personal experiences best prepared them for their leadership responsibilities while their formal education (i.e., doctoral program) best prepared them for their administrative duties. It is recommended that future ATPDs consider degrees that focus on formal leadership and purposefully seek out experiences that put them in leadership positions before accepting ATPD roles. Additionally, institutions hiring ATPDs should consider the amount of personal experience of prospective ATPD prior to hiring.

Key Words: education history, athletic training program directors, leadership

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