

CREATING ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES TO SUPPORT THE PROGRESSION OF WOMEN COACHES AND COACH EDUCATORS

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Introduction

The aim of this study was to understand the experiences of women coaches and coach educators in progressing through the licensed coaching and tutoring system within an English National Sporting Governing Body, The English Football Association. Statistics show that there is an average 75% drop-off in the number of women at each stage of the coaching pathway and an average 97% drop-off in the number of women progressing through the coach education (tutor) pathway from level 1 to 4. The focus of this paper centres specifically on examining the organisational structures and practices that influenced women's careers at critical points of their coaching development. Personal experiences were considered as an interplay of not only individual choices and circumstances, but also related to organisational contexts and relations with others within the system.

Method

26 semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of licensed women coaches and tutors, at different points of the respective pathways, within the English Football Association. Interviews focused on the participants' entry and progression into coaching and coach education, experiences of initial training and professional development, motivations for leadership / to progress, their experiences as a woman within their sport, and their experiences of the organisational context in which they work.

Results

For women to thrive and progress as coaches and coach educators, particular organisational values are key in supporting their career. Creating a culture that values and nurtures the contribution that women can make to the coaching and tutoring professions, creating a culture that accepts women in and associates women with, leadership, retaining frequent and meaningful relationships between organisations and staff, and rewarding and recognising women's experiences and achievements all serve to create organisational cultures that are welcoming and inclusive of diversity.

Discussion

Gender needs to be understood as a complex set of social relations enacted across a range of social practices, rather than merely as a biological status. An interrogation of the social order of sport is required, that is how structures, practices, relations and values maintain and enforce particular ways of relating and being, and result in unequal social relations.

Addressing the types of gendered social practices that exist within sporting organisations and ideologically reframing gender equality are avenues for change to the current status quo within sport. The challenge then, is to redefine this coaching culture rather than simply to operate within the constraints of the existing culture.

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