The educational system of coaching schools in tennis. The case of Greece.

ATHANAILIDIS IOANNIS¹, LAIOS. ATHANASIOS², ZAGGELIDIS GIOROS³

^{1,2} Department of Physical Education & Sport Science, Democritus University of Thrace, GREECE

³ Department of Physical Education and Sport Science, Aristotelis University of Thessaloniki, GREECE

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Abstract:

The role of the tennis coach requires a multidimensional education, which must be consistent with and develop according to the needs of modern-day tennis. The overall uncertainty surrounding the education of a tennis coach can be summed up in five fundamental questions: Why this education and what does the curriculum include? Who is it intended for? How can it be provided (methodology)? What are the results? How is it assessed? The results of the survey indicate that it is necessary to establish an educational organisation aiming to educate tennis coaches. However, the educational aspect must be guided by the relevant educational bodies (university physical education and sport science schools). The educational organisation will have to create a single curriculum that will be taught to coaches and will be in line with European standards (basics regarding technique, physiology, coaching, psychology, principles of learning, first aid and rehabilitation, new technologies in tennis, individuals with special needs, tennis management and marketing). Generally the 85,5 % of tennis coaches would like to have education and a small group of them 14,4 % didn't want any education. This educational system must make provision for a self-assessment method in order to allow one to improve.

Key words: tennis, education, schools, Greece.

Introduction

A great many of a coach's responsibilities and duties require a multidimensional education, as well as the special ability and willingness to plan and do a serious job (Kioumourtzoglou, 1987). The responsibilities and duties of modern-day coaches of group and individual sports should not focus exclusively on technical knowledge, coaching and game strategy, but should go further. This is why coaches should apply a specific behaviour and guidance method, so that they can control performance in the effort to achieve common goals, while at the same time solving any problems that may arise (Laios, 2015). Coaching is easy in theory, but not at all easy in practice (Sharon, Kennedy, 1992). According to Dubin (1990), coaches must work on three very important categories of tasks, which include: a) organisation, management and guidance of athletes at the workplace (court/field), b) organisation, management and guidance of athletes themselves, and c) organisation, management and guidance of daily activities (training). According to Mackenzie (2005), coaches, including tennis coaches, must in addition to their technical work as leaders also see to the planning of training sessions, the safety of athletes, effective communication by giving the right instructions and explanations, demonstration, wherever this is necessary, observation, analysis and, lastly, feedback.

The role of the tennis coach is intertwined with organisation, support, control, encouragement, coordination, calculation, planning, communication, choices and training (Crespo, M., et al., 2005).

From a pedagogical point of view, a tennis coach must aim to achieve the best possible personal performance, since training and harmonious education are two complementary concepts (Hehlmann, 1964). From a psychological point of view, tennis coaches must achieve the improvement of skills through the proper planning and structuring of actions (Ulich, 1973). Finally, from a physiological point of view, they should improve the performance of their athletes through a measurable change in the structure of the instruments and training (Stegemann, 1971).

The role of tennis coaches in improving the performance of their athletes is a highly significant factor and they should understand the importance of the physical condition, technique, psychological preparation, strength, and planning and match performance of athletes (Kioumourtzoglou, 1994).

The occupation of coaching can be practiced in Greece by:

- The graduates of the five departments of Physical Education and Sports Science, who hold a diploma in coaching in specific sport. These departments belong to the universities of Greece. The holders of such a coaching diploma belong automatically to the coaching category A and B, which are the highest ones. (Laios, 2005).

- The holders of certificates or diplomas awarded by coaching schools or institutions in foreign countries accredited by the Greek Centre of Sport Research and Technology, a special department of the General Secretariat for Sports.

• The holders of certificates or diplomas awarded by specialized schools set up by the General Secretariat for Sport. There are three categories of such certificates or diplomas: A, B and C (Pangiotopoulos, 1990).

Each one of the 29 sports federations in Greece is able to organize special coaching schools. These coaching schools are organized every two years in different cities in order to provide coaching diplomas in categories A, B and C. Depending on their level of training coaches can be:

• Category A coaches (for football UEFA Pro), who have the right and licence to train professional teams in all divisions.

• Category B coaches, who have the right and licence to train professional teams in all divisions (except the First Division), and teams in all amateur and semi-professional in all other local divisions.

• Category C coaches, who have the right and licence to train amateur teams and Academies.

However, the entire framework related to the development and establishment of professional rights for tennis coaches in Greece is vague. In Europe, and particularly in countries where the educational system for tennis coaches is developed, there are different levels into which coaches are classified. In Germany, for example, the lowest coaching level is that of the general teacher (fuch Übungsleiter), which is followed – in order of progression – by the higher coaching levels of C-licence, B-licence, A-licence and Diploma Trainer.

Purpose

The purpose and aim of this survey is to study tennis coaching schools in Greece and other European countries. To evaluate their intentions to attend tennis coaching schools and to investigate their intentions to participate in 100 hours educating program in category A, B and C level of diplomas.

Method

This survey is part of a doctoral thesis studying the curricula of schools for prospective tennis coaches in Greece. A questionnaire was handed out in order to study the stance and attitude of graduates of university departments of physical education and sport science (schools of physical education and sport science) and of athletes towards tennis coaching schools. The survey sample was made up of 90 coaches aged 18 to 52. The average age of the sample was 30 years. 63.4% were men and 36.6% were women. The majority of coaches (91.8%) coach tennis part time, as a second job, as a primary job but on a level considered as underemployment, and without an employment contract and insurance. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale with the following questions:

1. If coaching schools were set up for different categories, would you attend?
2. If schools for recreational tennis were set up, would you attend?
3. If you were required to train 100 hours for each category (A, B, C), would you attend?
4. How would you prefer to attend?
5. Would you attend if it involved examinations?
6. Would you attend if this diploma was not a necessary requirement in order to find a job?

Results

Cronbach's alpha was used in order to test the internal consistency of the unit. The results of the test showed high internal consistency of the variables (5 – five), $\alpha = 0.6488$. Furthermore, the test results indicated that there are two important classes. There is a group of 13 individuals who would not participate in any training programme. The second group (77 individuals) includes coaches from both classes of coaches with different sports characteristics (former athletes, graduates of physical education and sport science schools), which we came across in the results of the first unit concerning matters of technique. The second group (77 individuals) would generally participate in the coaching schools. We compared these groups and observed that – to a large degree – they included the same individuals. The results of the descriptive analysis are presented in charts 1 and 2 below.

Fig. 1. Results of the descriptive analysis of the intention to attend tennis coaching schools

Fig. 2. Results of the descriptive analysis of the intention of coaches to undergo 100 hours of training in each category

Discussion -Conclusions

The overall picture provided by the results showed that the measurement instruments and methodology used were correct, since they managed to record the opinions of coaches on coaching schools. The education and training systems differ from country to country; however an interesting fact is that the countries that are strongest in the field of tennis (Germany, Spain, France, England, Italy) have shown that they have one thing in common. They have all developed a well-designed educational programme (tennis coaching schools), which is under constant evaluation and improvement. In Germany, all three bodies, namely the German Tennis Federation (DTV), the Association of Coaches (VDT) and the universities, cooperate with one another in educating and training tennis coaches from the lowest to the highest level. Taking steps to cover all trends and interests (mass, competitive tennis) is typical of the German educational system for coaches. In addition to the regular educational process, provision has also been made for former top athletes who are interested in coaching tennis.

Graduates of physical education departments have been evaluated as B-Coaches. The education provided by the VDT (Association of Coaches) to its members is provided in collaboration with the Tennis Federation. Those who are interested and meet the requirements (technical training, competitive ranking, proven coaching experience) must attend the Trainer Academy of Cologne in order to obtain the highest-level diploma. In Greece, the Hellenic Tennis Federation (HTF) in collaboration with the General Secretariat for Sports occasionally organise category-C tennis coaching schools. Graduates of university departments of physical education and sport science are considered category-A coaches.

The survey results indicate that there are two tendencies and attitudes regarding coaching schools. There is a small tendency represented by a small group of 13 individuals who are not interested in coaching schools and would generally never attend any educational programme. These coaches usually provide individual or group lessons without being aware of the competition schedules of the tennis federation (HTF). The biggest tendency is represented by a large group of 77 individuals who would generally attend coaching schools. This tendency includes all empirical coaches (former athletes without a diploma) and graduates of university departments of physical education and sport science, who are interested in attending tennis coaching schools. A good example of this tendency can be found in the large number of graduates of university departments of physical education and sports science, who attended the tennis coaching schools recently launched by the tennis federation in collaboration with the General Secretariat for Sports in 2014.

Furthermore, the ever-changing social and economic conditions require all categories of professionals to constantly renew their knowledge and professional abilities (Mialaret 1996). The attendance of coaching schools by individuals who have already fulfilled their educational ambitions or are about to start is necessary in order for them to update and enrich their knowledge, or even to gain new, special knowledge in order to start, continue or change their professional careers and generally their productive life and activities (Karma 1995).

Proposals

It is necessary to create a new educational organisation for the purpose of educating tennis coaches. Administratively, this organisation must come under an administrative sports body. However, its educational aspect must be guided by the relevant educational bodies (university physical education and sport science schools). The educational organisation will have to create a single curriculum, which will be taught to coaches and will be in line with European standards (basics regarding technique, physiology, coaching, psychology, principles of learning, first aid and rehabilitation, new technologies in tennis, individuals with special needs, tennis management and marketing). This educational system must make provision for a self-assessment method in order to allow one to improve.

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