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Research paper

The learning and mentoring experiences of Paralympic coaches

Katherine E. Fairhurst, M.A.^a, Gordon A. Bloom, Ph.D.^{b,*}, William J. Harvey, Ph.D.^b

^a College of Physical Activity and Sport Sciences, West Virginia University, 375 Birch Street, Morgantown, WV, 26505-6116, USA

^b Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education, McGill University, 475 Pine Avenue West, Montreal, Quebec, H2W 1S4, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Background: Participation in the Paralympic Games has grown substantially, yet the same growth and development has not occurred with empirical literature for coaching in disability sport.

Objective: The purpose of the current study was to explore Paralympic coaches' perceptions of their learning and educational experiences, including their formal and informal mentoring opportunities.

Methods: Six highly successful and experienced Paralympic coaches were individually interviewed in this qualitative study. The interview data were analyzed following Braun and Clarke's guidelines for thematic analysis.

Results: Results demonstrated that Paralympic coaches faced several challenges to acquire disability specific coaching knowledge and skills. These challenges led the participants to utilize an array of informal learning situations, such as actively seeking mentoring relationships when they first entered the field. After becoming expert coaches, they gave back to their sport by making mentoring opportunities available for aspiring coaches.

Conclusion: The results of the current study address the value and importance of mentoring as a structured source of education and career development for aspiring Paralympic coaches.

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