Title
Supporting the Professional Development Needs of High School Athletic Coaches: an Action Research Project to Create a Coaching Resource Guide

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5p36x78z

Author
Pelikhova, Julia

Publication Date
2014

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation
Supporting the Professional Development Needs of High School Athletic Coaches:
an Action Research Project to Create a Coaching Resource Guide

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Julia Pelikhova

2014
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Supporting the Professional Development Needs of High School Athletic Coaches:
an Action Research Project to Create a Coaching Resource Guide

by

Julia Pelikhova

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Eugene Tucker, Co-Chair
Professor Wellford W. Wilms, Co-Chair

Nearly eight million high school students participate in sports in the United States annually. High school athletic coaches have a unique position to impact students athletically and personally. While coaches play a critical role in the lives of student-athletes, there is no mandated professional development or certification required by most states and school districts (Collins, Barber, Moore, & Laws, 2011; Winchester, Culver, & Camiré, 2012a, 2012b). The problem is that there is a major disconnect from the coaches on school campuses and the
available resources. There is little in place to encourage, reinforce, or connect coaches to resources and professional development opportunities.

The purpose of this study was to explore and support the professional development needs of high school athletic coaches in Large Unified School District in Southern California. This action research project sought to gather coaches’ perceptions on what they reported to need to succeed in their roles. The objective was to utilize the experiential knowledge of veteran coaches and the professional needs of novice coaches to find a general consensus as to what coaches perceive are the essential knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports.

The findings from this study have confirmed the necessity for supporting all coaches in their daily jobs in order to improve retention rates and success of athletic coaches. The responsibilities of coaches have been exponentially increasing while the compensation and support has been gradually been cut. Coaches are feeling this pressure and desire for help, a veteran coach shared, “Since they are now cracking down and enforcing policies, they also have to spend the same amount of energy to teach it”.

Key findings included the need for coaches to have teaching skills, knowledge of academic preparation of student-athletes for college, knowledge of rules, protocols, and procedures. Coaches asked that there be an online resource guide that includes links to useful resources and references. The action research process successfully gathered perceptions from a variety of coaches which helped produce a resource guide that will be provided and presented at the annual coaches meeting.
The dissertation of Julia Pelikhova is approved.

Mark Kevin Eagan

Beverly P. Lynch

Eugene Tucker, Committee Co-Chair

Wellford W. Wilms, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2014
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION .................................................................................. II
TABLE OF CONTENTS ...................................................................................................... IV
LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................................... VIII
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................................. IX
VITA .................................................................................................................................... X

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................... 1

INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................... 1

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM .................................................................................. 2

Local Context ..................................................................................................................... 2

National Context ............................................................................................................... 4

RESEARCH QUESTIONS ................................................................................................. 5

RESEARCH DESIGN ........................................................................................................ 6

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH ............................................................................. 7

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .......................................................................... 9

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ......................................................................................... 10

COACH DEVELOPMENT ................................................................................................. 11

Coach Education ............................................................................................................. 15

THE COACHING PROFESSION ...................................................................................... 20

Teacher-Coach Role ........................................................................................................ 21

Academics and Athletics ................................................................................................. 22
Teaching Life Skills Through Sport ................................................................. 23
Medical and Legal Responsibilities of Coaches .............................................. 24
SUMMARY AND RATIONALE FOR STUDY ..................................................... 25

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY ............................................................... 27
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .................................................................................. 28
RESEARCH DESIGN ....................................................................................... 29
STRATEGIES OF INQUIRY (DATA COLLECTION METHODS) ......................... 30
Site and Population ....................................................................................... 30
Sampling Frame and Selection Procedures .................................................. 32
DATA COLLECTION METHODS ..................................................................... 34
Interviews ....................................................................................................... 34
Focus Groups ................................................................................................ 35
Data Analysis Methods ............................................................................... 36
ETHICAL ISSUES ......................................................................................... 36
RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY ...................................................................... 38
SUMMARY ..................................................................................................... 39

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS .......................................................................... 40
INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................... 40
INTRODUCTION TO FINDINGS ...................................................................... 42
Teaching & Motivation Skills ......................................................................... 44
Supporting the Student-Athlete .................................................................... 45
Logistic, protocols, procedures, and rules ..................................................... 47
Willingness to Learn ..................................................................................... 48
Character Development ............................................................................... 49
Financial Resources ..................................................................................... 50
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Research Participants .................................................................43
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to show my appreciation to my committee members, Dr. Eagan and Dr. Lynch for your time and support throughout this process. I want to give special thanks to my marvelous co-chairs Dr. Tucker and Dr. Wilms, better known as Gene and Buzz, who were my coaches, cheerleaders, and fans every step of the way. I would also like to thank the coaches who participated in this study; they are truly making a difference in the lives of students everyday. I also can’t forget all the cheerleaders and students I have coached throughout the years, you are the reason I discovered this passion.

I have to thank my ELP family, the one and only Cohort 19! This ride would have never been the same with a different group of people and no one will ever understand our inside jokes, testing the UCLA parking system, drinking (before, during, and after class), and the limitless googledocs for everything from exams to potlucks! I couldn’t do this without you, especially my girls and future fellow doctors of education, through weekend study dates, happy hours, celebrations, and the lifelong friendship we have created. Thank you Linsey for being my true teammate throughout this process!

I want to give thanks to all my friends and family who stood by while I was always in class on Thursdays and Saturdays, had to read, write, and study every waking moment. I promise this is the LAST degree and I am permanently returning to the real world! Thank you for the support, encouragement and believing in me.

Most importantly I thank my mom and sister for their support throughout this journey. I appreciate every way you helped me out, with Coffee Bean gift cards, free labor, and the occasional tuition payment. You officially own a part of this degree! Spasibo Galya!
VITA

2004  B.A. Sociology
       University of California, Los Angeles
       Los Angeles, California

2005-2007  Social Studies Teacher
           West Hollywood College Preparatory School
           West Hollywood, California

2007  M.A. Counseling
       Loyola Marymount University
       Los Angeles, California

2007  Pupil Personnel Services Credential
       Loyola Marymount University
       Los Angeles, California

2008-2012  Professor
           Counseling Department
           West Los Angeles College
           Culver City, California

2007-2014  College Counselor
           Los Angeles Unified School District
           Los Angeles, California
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

In the 2012-2013 school year, a total of 7,713,577 students participated in high school sports in United States; 777,545 in California; and about 35,000 in the Large Unified School District (National Federation of State High School Associations, 2013). These students have an exceptional opportunity outside of the classroom to work with their coaches to not only play sports, but also learn life skills. Sports participation increases students’ motivation and teaches teamwork and self-discipline, resulting in positive academic spillovers (Rees & Sabia, 2010, p. 751). There is also a positive correlation between athletics and academic achievement (Stegman & Stephens, 2000). Coaches have a unique position to impact student-athletes inside and outside of the classroom. While coaches play a critical role in the lives of student-athletes, there is no mandated coach training or certification required by most states and school districts (Collins, Barber, Moore, & Laws, 2011; Winchester, Culver, & Camiré, 2012a, 2012b). While, some high school athletic coaches still choose to participate in various formal and informal training, most coaches do not engage in any coaching professional development beyond the basic requirements. There is also a professional difference between teacher-coaches, those who are credentialed teachers, and walk-on coaches, who are not school employees or professional educators. While coaches often do have great philosophies and intentions through their work with student-athletes, they do not always have the tools, access, and strategies to employ them (Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2012; Wilson, Bloom, & Harvey, 2010). Having more structured preparation, training, resource, and support for coaches can help with retaining high school coaches for longer periods of time; help improve athletics programs; increase student academic achievement and
preparation for college; enhance the student-athlete experience, and potentially affect recruitment of more student athletes.

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the high school athletic programs in the Large Unified School District (LUSD). The study was an action research project that developed a coaching resource guide. The objective was to utilize the experiential knowledge of veteran coaches and the professional needs of novice coaches to find a general consensus as to what coaches perceive are the essential knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports. The goal of this research was to create a universal reference and resource guide for high school athletic coaches based on their needs as well as academic research from the field of sports science.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Local Context

The condition of high school athletics in the Large Unified School District (LUSD) in 2014 is distinctly different than it was 20-30 year ago. LUSD is comprised of over 80 high schools with athletic programs in an urban city in Southern California. The prominence of sports in high school has not changed much, but the programs have become very different due to economic and demographic changes in the district. One of the most relevant changes in high school athletics in LUSD has been the major shift from coaches who are predominantly teachers, to walk-on coaches who do not work at the high school otherwise. Currently, in LUSD, about 51% of all coaches are not teachers and come from a variety of other professional fields and levels of education and training. While coaches vary in their level of expertise, all teacher-coaches have teaching credentials and direct access to the students they coach during the school
day, whereas walk-on coaches are not as accessible and may not have skills or training working with students.

Coaches working in LUSD are required to have a Department of Justice background check, Tuberculosis Test (TB), Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification, and complete a short online coaching certification on coaching basics created by the National Federation of High School Associations (NFHS). According to California Education Code, “Definition of a coach, paid or unpaid: Any individual that the school/district is required to approve under California Education Code 33190-33192, 45125.01 and 45125.1.” Therefore, most school districts in California set their own standards for hiring coaches, usually the minimum requirements possible. Consequently, this means that coaches have basic screening, no professional prerequisites, and are thrown into the field after a short paperwork process.

The requirements for coaches are minimal, but the responsibilities and expectations are great. In order to lead a group of student athletes as a coach, mentor, and role model, a person simply needs to meet nominal legal requirements without any professional development obligations or training. Yet, there is so much more that is needed in order for someone to be a successful and effective coach. Unfortunately, schools cannot increase the requirements for coaches because of the lack of resources and funding. Budget cuts that have impacted stipends for coaches have discouraged teachers from coaching outside of their teaching duties, and countless young passionate teacher-coaches have been laid off in many schools. This has also impacted the increase of the number of high school athletic coaches who are not employees of school, or walk-on coaches. While walk-on coaches are not necessarily worse than teacher-coaches, they do lack professional experience and formal education working with students, and are also not campus employees who are accessible during the school day for student-athletes.
Both teacher-coaches and walk-on coaches are barely hanging on to their roles as coaches because stipends have decreased and for some sports, eliminated in the last five years. In LUSD, both teacher-coaches and walk-on coaches lack support financially and professionally. With very little monetary and professional development assistance, the future of athletics in the Large Unified School District is unpredictable.

There are multiple reasons to have quality athletic coaches. Student safety, academic achievement, athletic success, psychological support, and many other student needs are in the hands of coaches. Having a trained and educated coach can assure that these needs are being met and programs are being run properly. Unfortunately, it isn’t until a problem occurs, that there is an appropriate reaction.

Due to recent overwhelming cases of concussions that have been publicized, LUSD has begun to require a concussion diagnosis workshop for all head football coaches. According to Bonnie Fuller, currently retired director of the California Interscholastic Foundation (CIF) Los Angeles City Section/LUSD Athletics Office, this is the first mandated district wide training in the last 25 years (Interview July 10, 2012). Ms. Fuller recommends that more professional development workshops like this be held to draw attention to the problem and prevent it as opposed to enforce proper practices after the fact. Offering more accessible and effective training in a variety of areas and sports could prevent many legal and medical accidents from occurring in high school sports.

National Context

Nearly eight million high school students participate in sports in the United States annually. Currently, there is one major national association that provides profession resources for athletic coaches, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS). This
association offers links to resources and several online training courses offered through two different agencies. More specifically in California, the governing agency that oversees athletics is the California Interscholastic Foundation, which also links coaches and schools to professional development opportunities. The problem is that there is a major disconnect from the coaches on school campuses and the available resources. There is also nothing to encourage, reinforce, or connect coaches to these resources for professional development.

Studies have concluded that, “coach educators should work to more easily provide formal coach learning opportunities to all prospective secondary school teacher while completing Teachers College” (Winchester et al., 2012a). In Canada, a specific program is dedicated for teachers who plan to coach and three tiers of a coaching certification is available from the Physical Education Teacher Program (PETE) (Wilson et al., 2010).

Some states and Canada have seen that a pre-service training or coursework in a credential program for teachers (who also coach) has helped to support the coach and also increase the quality of the athletic program. A study of award winning coaches found that all participants who have level one to three coaching certifications, credit their coaching success to their professional training (Gould, Collins, Lauer, & Chung, 2007).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What do veteran (five or more years) high school athletic coaches and athletic directors perceive to be the essential knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports?

2. What do novice (two or less years) high school athletic coaches perceive to be the essential knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports?
3. What do veteran and novice high school athletic coaches and athletic directors perceive to be the most effective and preferred methods of coach education and access to resources.

4. How do veteran and novice high school athletic coaches and athletic directors view effective implementation and use of a coaching resource guide based on their perceptions of what should be included in it.

RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to support the needs and improve effectiveness of coaches, it is necessary to provide access to professional development resources that accommodate their schedules and levels of experience. There have been well-studied coaching strategies that work and suggestions for future research and implementation suggestions (Gilbert, Nater, Siwik, & Gallimore, 2010). I gathered information from literature, resources, and research and tailored the findings to fit the current needs of high school coaches in the local context. I worked with the LUSD Athletics Office to create a coaching resource guide, as part of an action research project with a variety of experts in the field, including veteran and novice coaches, athletic directors, and the LUSD Athletics Office coordinator. I gathered data and completed a coaching resource guide, tested it with the action research team, finalized and presented it to the LUSD Athletics Office coordinator for final approval and implementation within the district.

The coaching resource guide was created based on the perceptions of experienced individuals in the field and has been regarded to be effective, informative, and support the needs of all high school athletic coaches in LUSD. The resource guide was developed with respect to California and district laws and regulation, as well as the Orangebook, which includes all rules.
and regulations of the CIF Los Angeles City Section and the Large Unified School District. (http://www.cif-la.org/) The handbook also took into consideration and included research on best practices and coaching strategies that work from scholarly articles in the field of sports science. Interviews and focus groups where conducted with coaches from a variety of sports and athletic directors working in LUSD. After the initial interviews, I met with a small leadership group of these experts and engaged in an action research cycle and got ongoing feedback on the resource guide through the entire process in order to have validity of the quality and effectiveness of the material. The LUSD Athletics Office administration supported my research and plans. Ms. Fuller, retired director of the LUSD Athletics Office provided data from the district for my research and gave me access to all coaches and athletic directors in LUSD in order to recruit for interviews and a team of experts that will help guide the action research process. She has been supportive and excited about this study and future district wide implementation of the findings. Per Ms. Fuller’s retirement in June 2013, Thomas Carter became the coordinator of the LUSD Athletics Office and has been the lead administrator backing this research. The results of this action research study have helped to discover the needs of coaches and create tools that will support their professional development in LUSD in the future.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

There is a lack of coach education and support according to research, athletic publications, and experts in the field. LUSD is simply one of the many districts facing budget cuts and a need to focus on academic issues before athletics. Nevertheless, data and research shows that sports participation increases student academic achievement, therefore, supporting
athletic programs could help increase an array of other issues facing our schools and students today. In the 2011-2012 school year, LUSD published data on academic achievement and attendance for student-athletes versus non-athletes. Grade point average for athletes is .64 points higher than non-athletes for fall, winter, and spring seasons. That is over half a grade point on a 4.0 scale. Attendance data shows athletes with an average of 3% higher attendance during the school year than non-athletes. This data shows that athletes are committed to school and academic achievement. Involvement in sports has positive effects on young people in many different facets. Having qualified coaches supports the success of these students. Providing professional support for coaches can help with coach effectiveness, retention and ultimately improve athletic programs and student success outcomes.

The fact that in the last couple of decades athletics programs have drastically changed and coaching staff is composed of considerably different types of individuals has gone unnoticed. Whereas coaches were general physical education teachers, nowadays, coaches can be of any background, age, and expertise. The lack of formal guidelines and professional support for this diverse group is a problem. Coaches have an immense influence on students and proper support materials and access to professional coaching information is a major need. Attention must be brought to this situation and an intervention to support the major changes needs to be created. An effective coaching resource guide with pertinent information and accessibility can fulfill a major need for all types of athletic coaches and help address the problems and ongoing changes in high school athletics.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Athletic coaches have a unique opportunity to impact student-athletes inside and outside of the classroom. While coaches play a critical role in the lives of student-athletes, there is no mandated coach education or certification required by most states and school districts (Collins, Barber, Moore, & Laws, 2011; Winchester, Culver, & Camiré, 2012a, 2012b). Having clear preparation, training, resources, and support for coaches can help with retaining high school coaches for longer periods of time; help improve athletics programs; increase student academic achievement and preparation for college; enhance the student-athlete experience, and potentially affect recruitment of more student athletes. The first step to improving effectiveness of a field is gathering an understanding of how the profession is developed, maintained, and can be improved.

I have examined research from empirical studies, research articles, athletic coaching journals, and state and local district publications and policies on coaching. The research has shown that coach education and professional development improves coaching effectiveness (W. Gilbert, Nater, Siwik, & Gallimore, 2010). Unfortunately there is lack of formal coach education opportunities and resources. While coaches may have ongoing informal education through practice and observation, they do not always have the formal training, access to resources, and strategies to refine practice (Mallett, Trudel, Lyle, & Rynne, 2009; Reade, Rodgers, & Hall, 2008).

In this literature review, I examine the literature on high school athletic coaches of all sports and genders. I begin by defining effective coaching and what researchers have concluded as the dimensions athletic development (Côté & Gilbert, 2009; W. Gilbert et al., 2010). I follow with a description of how the coaching profession is developed and how coaches learn through
formal and informal education (K. Erickson, Bruner, MacDonald, & Côté, 2008; Werthner & Trudel, 2006; Winchester et al., 2012a). I also address some of the major legal and professional issues that coaches have faced in the last decade and how they impact the need for coach education (Brown, 2012; Pitney, 2008; Ryan, 2008). I discuss the implications of coaching education research and suggestions for the improvement of professional development in the coaching field (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; W. Gilbert, Gallimore, & Trudel, 2009; W. Gilbert et al., 2010). Lastly, I present an overview of the evidence that participation in sports positively affects academic achievement with coaches playing a major role in student success (Fox, Barr-Anderson, Neumark-Sztainer, & Wall, 2010; Rees & Sabia, 2010; Shulruf, 2011). I conclude with research that underscores the need for ongoing coach education and the rationale for my study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Experiential learning theory has intellectual origins in the works of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget and has been applied in the framework of professional development and adult education (Miettinen, 2000). This learning approach focuses on the human ability to gain new knowledge through a process of experiences. Ideally, experiential learning includes a cycle of experience and reflection. “Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) provides a holistic model of the learning process and a multilinear model of adult development, both of which are consistent with what we know about how people learn, grow, and develop” (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001). The best-known elaboration and explanation of ELT can be understood through David Kolb’s four-stage model of learning (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning is ongoing and cyclical, going through four stages of learning: concrete experience, observation and reflection, formation of
abstract concepts and generalizations, and testing implications of concepts in new situations (Miettinen, 2000). Experience is not necessarily concrete and structured, yet it is inevitable and adds to the learning process and knowledge base. Experiential learning is often a professional development framework that may not even be formal but is constantly happening and working.

Research on athletic coach development and education focuses a lot on the experience coaches have with the sport through their lifetime and careers. The majority coach development comes from experience as an athlete, observing, practicing, reflecting, and adjusting. Furthermore, coach education is preferred through the informal format of peer learning and observations. Many aspects of the coaching profession are aligned with Experiential Learning Theory. Additionally, coaches who are going through the experiential learning cycle throughout their careers become the experts in the field and are the most qualified to contribute to the field and bridge the gap between research and practice. This supports the action research model for coach education development, which is in high need according research (W.D. Gilbert & Trudel, 2004).

**COACH DEVELOPMENT**

The subject of coaching science, defined as research on coaching, has not been researched in depth, yet in 2004, Gilbert and Trudel, published an analysis of coaching science research from 1970-2001 (W.D. Gilbert & Trudel, 2004). This study reviewed and analyzed research in the field of coaching and concluded that coaching science is gaining increased global recognition and coach education is becoming more universally recognized and necessary for the growing profession. There are four major categories of research in coaching science: behavior, thoughts, characteristics, and career development, with a major focus on coaching behavior and
what coaches do. The review of thirty years of coaching science concluded that there are still gaps in research and the connections between theory and practice (W.D. Gilbert & Trudel, 2004).

The development of a coaches’ career can explain the behavior, thoughts, and characteristics of coaches. Research on how coaches learn to coach helps understand the profession and also how to support coach development. Although coach development is complex, the two major ways coaches learn to coach are formal coach education programs or training and informal observation or experience: acquisition and participation (Werthner & Trudel, 2006). Several studies have shown that coaches value the informal day-to-day learning over formal training because it is more practical and they spend a lot more time doing it (K. Erickson et al., 2008; Wade Gilbert, Côté, & Mallett, 2006; Werthner & Trudel, 2006). Formal coach education programs and training haven’t been assessed on their effectiveness and therefore the studies on coaching development can only assume validity based on coaches’ opinions.

Although coach education programs have become more prominent in the last few decades, there is still no research on the programs themselves. The most widely known and studied large-scale coach education programs are in Canada and Australia, with the United States currently only offering online certification and training through a several national athletic and coaching associations (Mallett et al., 2009). Werthner and Trudel (2006) interviewed coaches aiming to answer the question, “What do you feel has helped you develop as a skilled coach”? The findings from this study and others state that the debate about formal versus informal coach education is valid because both learning methods have a benefit to the success of coaches. Ideally, coaches should reflect on learned and experienced material in developing their skills. Studies suggest that since informal education bears so much importance on coach development, these experiences should be supported and athletic federations should encourage it (Werthner &
Trudel, 2006). A structure to support information coach education is needed in order to make it more effective and efficient for coach development.

Individuals who coach youth sports vary in their level of expertise, education, and pathways that have brought them to this profession. Coaches also vary in their stage of professional development and commitment. People become coaches for many reasons, but the majority of coaches have had previous experience playing the sport, which is the first milestone in the development of coaching skills. The stages of coaching development are generally outlined by playing the sport, competing at the youth level, competing at the college or professional level, followed by part-time coaching or assistant coaching, then leading to high-performance head coaching (K. Erickson et al., 2008). “Through participation and observation from player through to becoming a coach, methods of coaching are experienced and witnessed”, therefore, coaching education is mainly informal through practice and observation (CUSHION et al., 2003) (page 217). The dynamic nature of the work coaches do requires them to have rich learning experiences through the informal interaction with the sport, but in order to be effective and an expert, coaches must also have formal and ongoing education (CUSHION et al., 2003; W. Gilbert et al., 2009).

Research on coaching development has concluded that effective coaches are good teachers (W. Gilbert et al., 2010). Although there are many ways to describe effective coaching, the consensus from experts in the field has been narrowed down to the four Cs of athletic development, “competence, confidence, connection, and character” (CÔTÉ & Gilbert, 2009; W. Gilbert et al., 2010). These four components have been incorporated with other coaching theories and research to also create a Pyramid of Teaching Success in Sport. Gilbert et al. adopted this structure from legendary coach John Wooden’s Pyramid of Success in order to
summarize the dimensions and levels of coaching success. The lowest tier, the foundation of coaching is defined universal principals of teaching success: love, friendship, loyalty, cooperation, and balance. The second tier consists of the coach’s learning community, formal and informal education and professional development. The third tier is the “heart of the pyramid,” which concludes that coaching is beyond subject knowledge, and effective coaching must include teaching the four Cs through action and being true role models. The last tier consists of two components, courage and commitment (W. Gilbert et al., 2010). This is especially important to coaching when it is not a primary job for the individual and a lot is at stake. Being an effective coach requires a multitude of characteristics, skills, training, and experience, therefore, commitment to the role of the coach is a top tier requirement for effectiveness.

Coaches continue to develop in their expertise throughout their careers and through additional development and learning opportunities. A study on the learning profiles of coaches categorized coaches into three classifications: the rookie, the varsity athlete, and the veteran (Winchester et al., 2012a). The stages are defined similarly to other research of coach development (Karl Erickson, Côté, & Fraser-Thomas, 2007; W. Gilbert et al., 2010; Werthner & Trudel, 2006). The study by Winchester et al (2012) focused on coaching development of teacher-coaches, defined as individuals who are trained and work as teachers as their primary job and coached sports after school. Teacher-coaches have a slightly different development path because it is often a secondary responsibility at the school site. Therefore teacher-coaches start at different development levels based on their previous experience with sports and coaching. “The rookie” may have little or no experience playing or coaching the sport, “the varsity athlete” learned coaching primarily through experience playing the sport and/or observing coaches, and
“the veteran” usually gained coach experience or training prior to becoming a teacher or by being an assistant coach (Winchester et al., 2012a). Teacher-coaches will vary in their expertise, training, and commitment to their role as a coach. In addition their coaching development is different than of those who are coaches as a primary job. Teacher-coaches are educated as teachers and have expertise working with students but may not have the education on coaching and sports science. It is difficult to expect teacher-coaches to invest a lot of time in professional development in coaching since it is a secondary job and is not always a paid position. Therefore, teacher-coaches need additional support to access learning opportunities to assist with their professional development.

**Coach Education**

Researchers generally delineate different definitions of coach education into two types: formal and informal. Formal education refers to education through institutions and learning programs, while informal learning is through activities and experience (Mallett et al., 2009). There is value for both kinds of education benefiting the coach development. Formal learning have an advantage of being structured, with access to resources, experts, and assessment of learning, yet it may lack relevance to sport specific coaching and personalization. Informal education may lack quality control and comprehensive access to information and resources; but informal learning opportunities offer coaches freedom to consult experts and sources specific to their individual needs (Mallett et al., 2009). Since it has been established that all coach development begins with playing the sport followed by a series of formal and informal learning experiences, researchers have concluded that the combination both types of professional
development is ideal (Wade Gilbert et al., 2006; Mallett et al., 2009; Reade et al., 2008; Werthner & Trudel, 2006).

While both formal and informal coach education has benefits, studies have found that current formal education programs do not fully meet the needs of coaches (K. Erickson et al., 2008; Mallett et al., 2009) Learning through experience such as playing, interacting with colleagues, mentorships, and observation are key components of coach development. A study of 44 Canadian coaches, who were all certified by the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP), asked participants to rank their actual and preferred sources of knowledge (K. Erickson et al., 2008). The top three primary actual sources of coaching knowledge were found to be: learning by doing 58.4%, interacting with others 42.7%, and NCCP training 42.7%. Interestingly, the ideal preferred sources of coaching knowledge were NCCP training, mentoring, and interacting with others. The discrepancies between what coaches prefer and actually use as sources of knowledge suggests that there is a gap between research and practice. The most consistent source of knowledge both actual and preferred is interaction with peers. Since coaches find value in learning from colleagues, there should be more emphasis put on this type of coaching education. This can be in the form of structured observations, mentoring relationships, or professional learning communities (Cushion et al., 2003; K. Erickson et al., 2008; W. Gilbert et al., 2009). The results of this study and other research on coach education reinforce the idea that there is benefit to both formal and informal professional development.

Further research has looked at how high performance coaches gain knowledge. In a recent study by Reade et al. (2008), coaches were asked about their interest in looking for learning opportunities and a majority agreed that they seek out new ideas and reference sports science research. Yet, the overall results showed, “sport science does not have a strong presence
in coaches’ regular practice although they believe some relevant research is being done” (pg. 323). The expert coaches who participated in this study reported that they were most likely to gain new ideas directly from other coaches, attending clinics, seminars, and conferences (pg. 326). The barriers in regard to accessing new information for coaches were found to be limits to funding to get information (30% stated as most difficult), having higher priorities (33% stated as most difficult), and finding out where the information is (41% stated as second most difficult) (Reade et. al, 2008, pg. 329). The results of this research reiterate the gap between coach science and coach development. Coaches need to have efficient and accessible opportunities to learn through the formal, informal, and research based types of professional development. Coaching knowledge is different from pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986) in that it needs to be ongoing, adjusted to sociocultural contexts, and use value judgment (Cushion et al., 2003).

Research on sport science has shown that coaches value peer-learning opportunities. Studies suggest that mentorship and structured peer observations should be part of ongoing coach education (Cushion et al., 2003; Karl Erickson et al., 2007; W. Gilbert et al., 2009; Wade D Gilbert & Trudel, 2005). Not only is this type of informal learning preferred, it is also a lot more practical to accommodate coaches’ busy schedules and can be part of many stages of development. Coaches spend approximately 1,000 hours each year on coaching duties, and as little as 10 hours on formal coaching education(Wade Gilbert et al., 2006). A study of how youth-sport coaches learn derived that even when coaches train through formal education programs, it does not ensure competency and informal training in the form of mentorships is highly recommended to reach expertise in the field (Lemyre, Trudel, & Durand-Bush, 2007). Erickson, Cote, and Frase-Thomas (2007) propose that coach education programs and athletic
organizations should support and provide access for new coaches to mentor coaches and possibly mandate a mentorship model for coach education.

Coach development is not any different and experts in the field have concluded that learning through action is a primary preferred and actual source of knowledge for coaches. Specifically, mentorship has been cited as one of the most valuable methods of coach development (Cushion et al., 2003; K. Erickson et al., 2008; W. Gilbert et al., 2009; Lemyre et al., 2007; Lyle, 2002). Coaching is a human interactive process, thus a social interface is an essential part of on-going learning and development. Additionally, one-dimensional coach education programs are not enough to incorporate context and varying experience of coaching. Cushion et al. (2003) suggests adopting a reformed version of the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) model that is widely used for teachers. They suggest that a reformed version of CPD would be more effective by involving collective participation during work hours, on site, and involving mentorship. Coaches all have varied experiences and knowledge that can be drawn upon by novice coaches and help create their coaching “toolbox” (Cushion et al., 2003). Therefore, in creating professional development support for coaches, it is essential to consult and include the experts in the field, who have experiential knowledge through their own practice and reflection.

Gilbert, Gallimore, and Trudel (2009) propose a professional learning community (PLC) approach to coach development. As a result of a survey of research from several decades, the proposal for a PLC for coaches seems to line up with other suggestions for further informal learning and mentorship opportunities. A PLC approach helps bring coach education closer to actual practice. PLCs are valuable and effective methods for coach development because they are ongoing, practical, and relevant. A type of PLC that has been studied in the coaching field is the
Community of Practice (CoP) approach, where group of people share concerns, passion, knowledge, and experience. This method has been successful in use by legendary UCLA Basketball coach, and applied in several studies. The results of implementing the CoP approach were positive, but showed that in order to be sustained, strong leadership and structure must be maintained. In addition, CoP and any other type of professional learning community must adapt and cooperate with the schedules and needs of the participants. Sports science research has shown that coaches have an interest and willingness to participate in ongoing professional development as long as it accommodating and valuable.

Gilbert et al. (2007) considered the research and proposed five key elements of a successful teacher learning community and how it would apply in the youth sports setting. First, a stable setting dedicated to improving instruction and learning must be set up that supports different sports seasons, practices, games, and other professional development requirements. Second, job-alike teams should be created that cater to type of sport, team, or season of the coach. Learning in the relevant context is essential. Thirdly, published protocols that guide but do not prescribe is an important element of successful learning communities. This implies that some research based or formal training is incorporated in this type of learning model. Fourth, leadership from trained peer facilitators is essential for accountability and sustainability of the professional learning community model. Lastly, specifically catering to the practical needs of coaches, working on athlete learning goals and athletic development must be including in this learning community model. This would include problem-solving strategies that have worked of coaches and can be accessed by members of the learning community (W. Gilbert et al., 2009). This proposed model is based on research and has tremendous potential to improve coaching professional development and be a supplement to large-scale coach education programs. The
prominence of suggestions for cooperative and peer learning models shows that there is validity in this type of professional development for coaches. Since coaches are actively learning from their own experience, they are the experts in their own fields. Learning from each other in a structured and ongoing format seems to be the future for coach development.

THE COACHING PROFESSION

The assessment of coaching effectiveness and expertise, according to Cote and Gilbert (2009) is the integration and interaction of, “coaches’ knowledge and athletes’ outcomes in specific coaching contexts” (pg. 309). Coaching knowledge includes a wide range of areas including content and people knowledge. Having the knowledge in the sport and even coach education is only part of the equation. Through research, it has been found that coaches’ interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge is equally as important (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). Once again, the definition of effective coaching includes the holistic approach and the four C’s are reintroduced: competence, confidence, connection, and character. Coaches’ ability to have all these characteristics is vital to their influence on athletes to adopt them as well. This is where the integration of athletes’ outcomes is seen, if athletes can portray the four Cs, and then the coach, as a role model, has been effective. According to a review of research by Cote and Gilbert (2009) the proposed definition of coaching effectiveness is, “the consistent application of integrated professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge to improve athletes’ competence, confidence, connection, and character in a specific coaching context” (pg. 316). These characteristics of an effective coach apply to many roles adults play in the lives of students, and legendary coach John Wooden said, “a good coach, is a good teacher”.

20
Teacher-Coach Role

In the high school sports setting coaches are either teachers on campus or walk-on coaches who do not work at the school site. Nationwide, the proportion of teacher coaches versus walk-on coaches varies, but both types of coaches have their own set of benefits and deficits. Both types of coaches have equal qualification requirements to coach, and all coaches have the same expectations. Historically, high school coaches have been teachers, often Physical Education teachers. Therefore, research on the high school coaching profession has focused on teacher coaches (TCs). Teaching is a demanding profession, often requiring teachers to plan and instruct up to six classes a day. Teachers who also coach after school have an entire second load of preparation and work to do. Dual positions such as teaching and coaching sometimes cause role-strain, a state of emotional stimulation due high stress and obligations (Brown, 2012; Pitney, 2008; Ryan, 2008). Teacher coaches have dual responsibilities to teach, produce test scores, and earn wins. In addition, they have to balance multiple roles as colleagues in their respective departments and to their students and student-athletes.

In a study of 257 teachers who were also athletic trainers at the high school setting, four major categories regarding role strain emerged: time related issues, role relationships, support and appreciation, role clarification/negotiation versus role accommodations (Pitney, 2008). These issues closely relate to findings from a five-month field study on multiple role demands of 50 teacher coaches at six different high schools (Sage, 1987). Observations and interviews revealed that the teacher coach role is complex, including work overload, inter-role conflict, and role strain. The results suggest that individuals in dual roles need to have support networks, resolution strategies, and clear definitions of responsibilities (Pitney, 2008; Sage, 1987).
Academics and Athletics

According to the National Federation of State High School Association, nearly eight million high school students participate in sports. Participation in sports has a lot of benefits, and the athletic coach makes a great impact on what the student-athlete gains from his or her experience. Coaches have been found to have the most non-parental influence of youth actions and beliefs (Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, & Jones, 2005). Several studies that looked at the relationship between sports and academics drew data from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) of 1988 in which researchers surveyed 25,000 students, parents, teachers, and principals from all areas across the United States in private and public schools. The study was conducted and published by the Institute of Educational Findings and data was collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the key federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education (NCES, 2011). The base year was eighth grade and followed students through the tenth grade, with 15,000 cases total. The participants were resurveyed through four follow-ups in 1990, 1992, 1994, and 2000. The data collected was used to find the effects of athletic participation on dependent variables. As summarized by Hawkins and Mulkey (2005), “these data offer evidence that athletic participation can and often does have a positive impact on student motivation and engagement, and that these positive benefits accrue to both male and female athletes” (p.62). The data was used by other researchers in their studies on the relationship between athletics and academics (J. Braddock, 2005; J. H. Braddock, Royster, Winfield, & Hawkins, 1991; Broh, 2002; Hawkins & Mulkey, 2005; Jordan, 1999).

Additional findings from studies on school-sponsored sports participation have shown personal growth and development among students who are involved. This is often related to the coach’s role in teaching life skills. Participation in athletics develops social and physical skills
(Rees & Sabia, 2010). These qualities can relate to academic motivation and achievement. In team sports particularly, students learn general social values, “values reflected in athletic competition-striving for excellence, fair play, sportsmanship, hard work, and commitment to a goal” (Jordan, 1999, p. 54). Participation in organized sports not only has the potential to teach values, but also build social capital by providing students opportunities for socialization (Kronholz, 2012; O'Bryan, Braddock II, & Dawkins, 2008). Athletes spend additional time with peers, coaches, and other adults who support these activities. These relationships become part of a support network, which enhances youth development (O'Bryan et al., 2008). Participation in sports may not be the direct cause of stronger academic performance, but it relates positively, based on the characteristics of athletes and the requirements to participate in school-sponsored sports.

**Teaching Life Skills Through Sport**

The role of the coach is critical and complex; the development of life skills through sport depends on the environment created by the coach (Gould & Carson, 2008; Lyndon, Duffy, Smith, & White, 2011). Unfortunately, current youth sports coaches have minimal training and knowledge on teaching life skills (Petitpas et al., 2005), and it is up to them to express their coaching philosophy (W.D. Gilbert & Trudel, 2004). Life skills can be behavioral, cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal, teaching much more than just technical and tactical skill. Coaches can teach life skills through modeling, teaching, practice, and showing how these skills can be applied to other realms (W.D. Gilbert & Trudel, 2004). A recent study by Camire, Trudel, and Forneris (2012) sought to understand the philosophies model coaches, how they coach life skills, and whether or not student-athletes transfer those skills into other domains of life.
Findings supported Gilbert and Trudel’s (2004) model for coaching life skills. Coaches recognize student pre-existing make up and communicate their philosophy with student-athletes and make it clear that life-skills learned through sport are tools for life (Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2012). Coaches need to reflect and understand their own coaching philosophies, the mission of the school, and the goals of their program (Camiré et al., 2012; Collins et al., 2011). The implications of studies on coaching life skills through sport reveal the importance for youth sport coaches to recognize the importance of developing a philosophy and having strategies for coaching and transferring life skills learned through sport. Coaching life skills is a vital part of the coaching role and should be included in coach education and professional development.

Medical and Legal Responsibilities of Coaches

The job of an athletic coach is highly demanding with the desire to satisfy many stakeholders such as student-athletes, parents, administrators, and the community. Coaches are expected to lead teams to wins while addressing legal, medical, financial, and personal needs of running a sports program. In the last decade there has been a spotlight on athletic injuries and a proposal for a federal legislation to address to set minimum standards for concussion management in public schools (Samuels, 2010). According to the American Council on Exercise, over 60,000 concussions occur in high school sports each year (Boyer, 2011). “Estimates of brain injuries suffered by people of all ages during sports activities range from 1.6 million to 3.8 million a year. Further studies on high school football players specifically range from 43,200 to 67,200 annually” (Samuels, 2010). Although there is variety in prevalence of injuries across different sports, all coaches must be prepared to prevent, diagnose, and respond to
all levels of injury. This additional high level of responsibility adds to the knowledge base and requirements coaches need to fulfill.

In addition to medical training and injury awareness, coaches must be prepared and actively conscious of legal and ethical laws pertaining to student athletes. College and high school coaches both have a responsibility to ensure safety of their student-athletes. Recent allegations of child abuse and inappropriate relationships between coaches and student-athletes in the media have brought about heightened awareness to this matter. The largely publicized 2011 Penn State University football coach sexual abuse case put a spotlight on the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) (Gearity & Denison, 2012). NCAA coaches are under a lot more pressure and watch than high school coaches, which brings to question the preparation and regulation of professionals in the field. Gearity and Denison (2012) discuss the lack of coach education and how American sports have dealt with issues like these in a reactionary form. They argue that coach education has never been a priority and there is more emphasis on performance coaching than being an education coach, which means coaches teach beyond the game and instill values and life skills into athletes. This article summarizes the problem of the reactionary approach to allegations of law and rule breaking and unethical code of conduct. The authors suggest a re-focus on educator-coacher and putting the focus on preparing and supporting coaches to be teachers first (Gearity & Denison, 2012).

SUMMARY AND RATIONALE FOR STUDY

The coaching profession has greatly developed over the years. Athletic coaches play critical roles in the lives of students and have a lot of responsibility to lead athletes to sports, academic, and personal success. Coaches have a privileged opportunity to exert an enormous
amount of influence on student-athletes regarding sports and life on and off season (Lyndon et al., 2011). While the expectations are great, the process to prepare coaches to be able to do all of that effectively is unclear and lacks structure and support. Research on coaching and sports science has defined key elements and characteristics in expert coaches. Findings also show the development of a coach and the steps necessary to learn and acquire those experiences and skills to reach a level of expertise. In addition to the natural course of events in the development of the coach, formal and informal education has been assessed and has indicated a prominence in actual and preferred coaching education through informal learning, peer interaction and mentoring. A common conclusion from findings in this field of research is that there is a gap in theory and practice, between researchers and practitioners. There is a need to connect coaches to information on their own profession. To improve practice, coaches need to have accessible, relevant, and effective professional development. With the increase of the number of students participating in sports in high school and an increase in responsibilities and expectations for coaches, there is a higher need than ever to improve the coach education process. Through action research, utilizing the experiential knowledge of expert coaches and academic knowledge of experts in sports science, an improved model for coach learning can be created.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research in sport science and high school athletic coaching supports the need for effective professional education and resources for coach development. However, the high school athletics coaching profession lacks a universal, systematic, and relevant format for professional support. Coaches have a privileged opportunity to exert enormous amounts of influence on student-athletes regarding sports and life, on and off season (Lyndon, Duffy, Smith, & White, 2011). With the ongoing annual increase in the number of students participating in sports in high school and an increase in responsibilities and expectations for coaches, there is more of a need now than ever to improve the coach education process. High school athletics coaches vary in professional, personal, and educational backgrounds and therefore require preparation and support in order to achieve optimal coaching for student athletes. However, there is currently a major disconnect between what coaches should know and what they actually do know and what support and information is offered to assist them (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004). Consequently, coaches don’t know what they don’t know, but they need to have the opportunity and access to learn.

Having more structured preparation, training, resources, and support for coaches can help with: retaining high school coaches for longer periods of time, help improve athletics programs, increase student academic achievement and preparation for college, enhance the student-athlete experience, and potentially affect recruitment of more student athletes. The responsibilities for athletic coaches are only increasing, while there is little support for their professional development. Research has shown the need for ongoing coach education and structured, semi-formal professional development. Therefore, the goal of this research was to find out what
essential knowledge, skills, and resources coaches need; bridge the gap between resources and coaches; and create a tool that is accessible and beneficial for all high school athletics coaches.

The goal of this study was to contribute to high school athletics and include experts in the field through creating an action research project that will develop a resource tool for coaches. The objective was to utilize the experiential knowledge of veteran coaches and the professional needs of novice coaches to find a general consensus as to what coaches perceive are the essential knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports. The goal of this research was to create a universal reference and resource handbook for high school athletic coaches based on what they believe they need to know as well as academic research.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What do veteran (five or more years) high school athletic coaches and athletic directors perceive to be the essential knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports?

2. What do novice (two or less years) high school athletic coaches perceive to be the essential knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports?

3. What do veteran and novice high school athletic coaches and athletic directors perceive to be the most effective and preferred methods of coach education and access to resources.

4. How do veteran and novice high school athletic coaches and athletic directors view effective implementation and use of a coaching resource guide based on their
perceptions of what should be included in it.

This chapter describes the research methodology, data collection strategies, data analysis methods, ethical issues, reliability and validity of the study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to answer the research questions, I did action research with veteran and novice high school athletic coaches and the district Athletic Office Administration. “Action research is an orientation to knowledge creation that arises in a context of practice and research to work with practitioners” (Huang, 2010). The goal of the study was find out what coaches feel they need to know and the information they would like to have in order to do their job effectively and successfully. Veteran coaches who have experience and novice coaches who are still learning both contributed ideas regarding their perceptions of the most important knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports.

The action research used qualitative methods that include interviews followed by an action research team focus group with a smaller subgroup of coaches and athletic directors that met twice throughout the process. Qualitative research focuses on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem (Creswell, 2009). The goal was to find perceptions of participants; qualitative methods allow for voices to be heard and answer the research questions that led to creating a coaching resource guide for all coaches to use in their profession. The process was emergent, meaning that some phases of the research changed and shifted once data began to be collected and as the action research cycle progressed. The action research process followed a cycle involving: generating and collecting data, feeding the data back, conducting collaborative analysis of data, planning and taking collaborative action based on the diagnosis,
and jointly evaluating the results that lead to further planning (Coghlan & Brannick, 2009).

The action research cycle was followed by initially gathering information about the current system of professional development support and resources. These data were collected through interviews with current coaches and athletic directors. Once the data were collected and coded, a focus group was conducted with a team of five participants in order to share the findings and collaboratively analyze the data. Focus group participants were selected after all the individual interviews were completed. The interview participants were all invited to continue with the study on a voluntary basis to be part of the two focus group meetings and as members of the action research team.

Based on the results of the first focus group meeting, I summarized the outcomes and composed a draft of a coaching handbook. Lastly, the focus group met again at the end of the study to evaluate the results of the research and create an action plan for the implementation of the resource guide. The focus group participants and the LUSD Athletics Office coordinator were the members of the action research group.

STRATEGIES OF INQUIRY (DATA COLLECTION METHODS)

Site and Population

The participants of the study were individuals who coach sports in a local section of the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF), specifically in the Large Unified School District (LUSD). This school district encompasses a wide variety of neighborhoods, ethnicities, races, and socio-economic levels. LUSD is not only the largest school district in California, but also has so much variability that it allows for generalization to other school districts across the state. Utilizing a large district also offered opportunity to access a large number of candidates for this study and ensured adequate sample size. In addition, the LUSD Athletics Office supported the
research and agreed to recruit candidates for the study from the entire database of coaches (~2,000). Participants from this particular population were a convenience sample, because their selection was based on location, availability, sites, and respondents. Nevertheless the sample was valid for the purpose of the study and the research questions. The sample included a diverse group of professionals representing different sports, backgrounds, locations, and gender. “The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (Creswell, 2008).

Convenience sampling is a form of purposeful sampling often used in qualitative studies to answer the specific research questions (Merriam, 2009). Common types of convenience sampling include snowball, chain, or network sampling, which is when a few key participants refer other participants who fit the criteria of the study and may be interested in participating (Merriam, 2009).

I recruited twelve veteran (five or more years of experience) and eight novice (two or less years of experience) coaches who show interest and represent a diverse spectrum of experience, sports, gender, age, and school type/population. The sample selection process was purposeful in order to successfully answer the research questions. The selection of the sample also took into account the goals of achieving representativeness while also capturing heterogeneity in the population. The purpose of including a balanced sample of veteran and novice coaches was to obtain a clear understanding of the needs and perspectives of individuals from both ends of the spectrum of coaching (Maxwell, 2012).

The sample size was both manageable and representative based on the total population of coaches working in LUSD. Since the data collection included in depth qualitative interviews with two follow up focus groups, the sample size provided rich information to answer the
research questions and creating the coaching resource guide. Additionally, to ensure validity and reliability, all phases of the research were reviewed with the LUSD Athletics Office commissioner.

In order to encourage participants to volunteer their time to be interviewed, I offered to come to the participants’ sites or neutral territory based on their schedules, during the workday, nights, or weekends. Offering flexibility alleviated hesitation for them to give up personal time. The interviews took no longer than forty-five minutes. I offered all of the participants a copy of the transcript of their interviews and guaranteed anonymity. All of the participants have been given a digital copy of the final handbook that was produced to use at their discretion. In addition to having accommodated the participants’ time and comfort, I offered each interviewee a small gift card with a chance to enter a drawing for a larger gift card of $100 to an athletic retail store. The reason to use a small incentive for participation was to entice coaches to participate in the study.

The participants who were interviewed were asked to be part of the action research team and participate in the focus group that met at a later time. From the twenty interview participants, five people joined the action research team and participated in the focus group that met at a central location on two occasions throughout the action research process. The incentive to participate in the focus group was a provided meal at the meetings and a drawing for another $100 gift card to an athletic retail store.

**Sampling Frame and Selection Procedures**

**Phase 1:** October 2013 – I worked with the LUSD Athletics Office, Thomas Carter, to send out an informational email to all coaches and athletics directors about the research study and invited participants to be part of the study if they qualified. In order to have qualified, participants must
have been either novice (two or less years of coaching experience) or veteran (five or more years of experience). The goal was to recruit ten novice and ten veteran coaches or athletic directors. Participants were asked to participate in one 45-minute interview at their site of choice during their available time. Participants were also given a small gift card ($10) with a chance to enter a drawing for a larger gift card ($100) to an athletic retail store. In order to ensure representation of a diverse spectrum of experience, sports, gender, age, and school type/population of participants, only two volunteers from each sport (male and female) were selected for the participation. This avoided situations such as overrepresentation from any single sport.

**Phase 2: November 2013- January 2014**—Interviews with the 20 participants were conducted outside of their work-mandated hours and at their site of choice. The interview participants were provided with a Letter of Consent that stresses the voluntary nature of their participation in this research and their anonymity in the study. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The written transcripts were provided to the participants for review and approval upon request.

**Phase 3: February 2014 and April 2014** – From the 20 interview participants, four coaches (two veteran and two novice) and one athletic director, were selected to be part of the action research team. The five participants were selected on a voluntary basis, first-come first-served, and based on availability during the two pre-scheduled focus group meetings. The focus groups took place at a central, neutral location and were audio recorded by two devices and transcribed. Participants were provided refreshments and a drawing for a $100 gift card to a sporting goods store.

**Phase 4: January-April 2014**—Data Analysis – After the interviews, major themes and findings were highlighted from the transcripts and reviewed with the action research team at the focus
group meetings in February and March. Additionally, all findings throughout the interview and focus group data collection process were provided and discussed with the commissioner of the district Athletics Office as part of action research.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

*Interviews*

Interviews are one of the most common methods of data collection in qualitative research. Interviews allow the researcher to gather information about perception, feelings, or experiences that cannot be observed (Merriam, 2009). This study was looking for perceptions of coach experiences, which is why interviews were the primary method of data collection. I used a semi-structured interview format including open-ended questions that were asked in a different order depending on the responses of the participants. The questions were pre-written in order to gather specific data, but all questions had flexibility and gave the participants an opportunity to define their own world view (Merriam, 2009).

The interviews were conducted at a location and time most convenient for the participant and lasted less than 45 minutes. The interview protocol was written and was used to guide the conversation that led to answering the research questions. The interview was semi-structured to allow for room for participants to share their perceptions and interpretations of their experience as coaches. The interviews were recorded, with permission, by two devices, transcribed within one week, and shared with the participant for verification. The interview protocol was piloted with three coaches in order to give the researcher experience with these questions, to learn if any questions need to be reworded or if any questions need to be taken out or added in order to provide relevant responses to the research questions (Merriam, 2009). (Appendix B)
Focus Groups

In order to narrow down and validate findings from the interviews, participants were asked to volunteer to be part of the action research team and participate in a follow-up focus group that met twice throughout the data collection and data analysis stages. Using multiple methods of data collection to check one another and verify that they support the same conclusion is often called triangulation (Maxwell, 2012). This strategy helps reduce biases of a specific method or individual experiences of the participants and allows for the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the issue. A second method of data collection was focus groups, an interview with a group of people who share knowledge of the topic. Focus groups were socially constructed within the interaction of the group and offered participants an opportunity to brainstorm and make additional comments beyond their original responses (Merriam, 2009). The focus group followed a semi-formal protocol to lead discussion about the preliminary findings from the interviews. The focus group participants validated and narrowed down the key findings in order to accurately and representatively answer the research questions. The second meeting of the focus group was after the findings were put into the resource guide format and participants had an opportunity to provide final feedback on the accuracy and effectiveness of the final product. Focus groups included five participants and lasted 60-90 minutes. The focus groups took place at a central, neutral location and were audio recorded by two devices and transcribed. Participants were provided a meal and a drawing for a $100 gift card to a sporting goods store. (Appendix C and D)
Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis is an ongoing process that involves making sense of the data, conducting different analyses, progressing deeper into understanding, presenting and interpreting the data (Creswell, 2008). Creswell outlines a hierarchical approach to data analysis: organize and prepare data for analysis, read through all the data, and begin detailed analysis with a coding process by segments of themes (p. 186). In this research, I read the transcripts of the interviews and searched for the most frequent answers given by coaches in regard to coach education, knowledge, skills, and resources. First, I created categories and then I prioritized the most common responses for each theme by taking notes while reading the transcripts. I then created a spreadsheet categorized by interview question and participant. Categorizing in qualitative research is referred to as coding, “rearranging data into categories that facilitate comparison between things in the same category and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts” (Maxwell, 2012, p. 107). The most meaningful and common answers found in the interviews were then presented to the action research team during the focus group meetings to validate and make adjustments. The feedback from the focus groups was then considered in the editing of the data analysis and findings.

ETHICAL ISSUES

The research was conducted with compliance to federal (Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects (34 CFR Part 97) and state regulations, and professional standards in conducting research. I also abided by the policies set forth by the UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP). The OHRPP is the administrative arm of the UCLA
Human Research Protection Program (HRPP). The OHRPP in partnership with the research community is responsible for ensuring the safety and welfare of participants in Human Research Projects conducted under the aegis of UCLA. A Consent Form was given to all participants in the study and the voluntary nature of participation will be stressed. (Appendix E)

I have completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), a web based training and certification program in human research subject protection. CITI training is required for All Key Research Personnel prior to IRB approval of a new or continuing review application. (http://ora.research.ucla.edu/OHRPP/Pages/EducationTraining.aspx#overview). The LUSD Committee on External Research Review has approved the study.

The identity of the participants was confidential and pseudonym were used exclusively for each one. When participants mentioned any specific names of other staff, administrators or students, the names were redacted from the transcriptions of the interviews. All materials dealing with the study, participants, and data collected were stored on an electronic, password protected portable hard drive. The drive was stored in a locked cabinet at the residence of the researcher.

Possible ethical issues may have arisen if participants revealed information about situations they have experienced or witnessed that were not legal or ethical, or describe inappropriate behavior with students, etc. Yet, nothing was revealed throughout the study that presented any ethical issues. As part of the voluntary consent for participation, I also reviewed the exceptions to confidentiality with all participants so that they are aware of mandated reportable information. My employment by LUSD had no impact or ethical conflict for the purposes of this research study.
RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

In qualitative research it is important to address validity threats. “Validity, as a component of your research design, consists of your conceptualization of these threats and strategies you use to discover if they are plausible in your actual research situation, and to deal with them if they are plausible” (Maxwell, 2012, p. 123). The most common validity threats in qualitative research are researcher bias and reactivity. It was important for me to be aware of how I, as the researcher may influence the information that the participants say and how I interpret the data (Maxwell, 2012). Therefore, I piloted the interview questions and reflected on my own personal conduct as far as leading to certain responses I may be looking for or my own interpretations of what I think are the most important responses. In order to alleviate bias and reactivity, I included questions in the interview protocol that ask the participant to prioritize and reflect on their perspectives from their own experiences.

I recruited participants to interview and participate in the action research focus group by having the commissioner of the LUSD Athletics Office send an email to all coaches and athletic directors asking for volunteers. The participants who chose to offer their time and input were a sample of active coaches and athletic directors who are involved and interested in improving the profession. Coaches who were too busy to participate may actually be ones who need support, and were not in the sample because they may be preoccupied balancing their overwhelming responsibilities. The sample of participants was voluntary, and therefore may not have represented the opinions and perspectives of all coaches. The size of the sample was also limited to twenty coaches and athletic directors since participation was voluntary. In order to ensure representation of a diverse spectrum of experience, sports, gender, age, and school type/population of participants, only two volunteers from each sport (male and female) were
selected for the participation. This avoided situations such as overrepresentation from any particular sport.

Another possible threat to validity was lack of generalizability. The sample was limited to the LUSD athletic programs only, which is a unique area with its own structure and policies for athletics. This was not only a possible problem for generalizability to other districts, but also a possible problem for generalizability within the district since schools and athletic programs vary so much based on location, student population, strength of athletic program, budget, and years of establishment.

In order to ensure a solid sample size, I offered incentives to participants. To support generalizability, I encouraged participants to think about their perspectives as coaches in general, in or out of the district and school they currently work at.

SUMMARY

The goal of the study was to create a coaching resource guide based on what practitioners (novice and veteran coaches/athletic directors) perceive is the most important knowledge, skills, and resources coaches need. The study was done through action research with a leadership group of experts in the field and followed a process that involves collaboration and joint evaluation of the results (Coghlan & Brannick, 2009). At the completion of the study, the action research group offered suggestions for implementation of the findings and the resource guide. The resource guide will be adopted in a digital version, added to the district Athletic Office website, and become available for athletic coaches throughout the district. With the support of the LUSD Athletics Office, the results of the action research will continue to be used to improve practice and provide access to resources and tools for athletic coaches and athletic directors in LUSD.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

High school athletics in the Large Unified School District has experienced a number of changes in recent years. One of the most prevalent changes has been a major shift from coaches being schoolteachers to nearly half of all coaches being walk-on coaches, individuals who have other day jobs and coach during after school hours only. In addition, almost half of all coaches are novice, having coached less than two years. Having a large number of non-teacher and novice coaches has contributed to different needs for coach preparation, support, and ongoing professional development. Not only have the types of individuals who are coaching at high schools transformed, there is an increased turnover rate of athletic coaches altogether. The findings from this study have confirmed the need for supporting all coaches in their daily jobs in order to improve retention rates and success of athletic coaches. The responsibilities of coaches have been exponentially increasing while the compensation and support has been gradually been cut. Coaches are feeling this pressure and need for help, a veteran coach shared, “Since they are now cracking down and enforcing policies, they also have to spend the same amount of energy to teach it”.

Furthermore, the athletics structural organization in the District has split into two separate entities in 2013, the school district’s Interscholastic Athletics Office and the California Interscholastic Federation City Section (CIF). Having a large number of non-teacher coaches, high turnover rates, and a new governing system, the coaching profession is in need of support to adjust and maintain it’s athletic programs in over 80 high schools across the district.
The athletics department of this large district is in currently in a crucial place to address the needs of coaches. Athletic coaches are at an all time high turnover rate and there is a large percentage of walk-on coaches replacing teacher coaches. In recent years, coaching stipends have been cut, and teachers’ time to coach during the school day has been pushed to after school hours only, discouraging teachers to take on the additional task after a full work day and for less compensation. Walk-on coaches are taking over these jobs because they tend to be younger without families or large financial needs, or retired and coach as a hobby. Therefore, these walk-on coaches are usually temporary and do not stay long enough to invest and build an athletic program. Therefore, it is important to understand and address the needs of coaches in order to keep them longer and sustain long-term athletic programs for students.

This action research project sought to gather coaches’ perceptions on what they reported to need to succeed in their roles. The study set out to answer the following research questions:

1. What do veteran (five or more years) high school athletic coaches and athletic directors perceive to be the essential knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports?

2. What do novice (two or less years) high school athletic coaches perceive to be the essential knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports?

3. What do veteran and novice high school athletic coaches and athletic directors perceive to be the most effective and preferred methods of coach education and access to resources.

4. How do veteran and novice high school athletic coaches and athletic directors view
effective implementation and use of a coaching resource guide based on their perceptions of what should be included in it.

INTRODUCTION TO FINDINGS

Action Research Process

The findings in this chapter are based on the results from action research with a diverse group of coaches and athletic directors in the Large Unified School District. The first set of data were collected from interviews with 20 participants who varied in their backgrounds, experience, and location of coaching. The interviews were conducted during November 2013 through February 2014. Each interview lasted 25-45 minutes and took place in coaches’ classrooms, offices, or neutral locations. The interview transcripts were then coded by interview questions within each research question, and frequent responses were highlighted as key findings. This chapter will discuss the major findings from the interviews and trends among different populations of coaches (veteran/novice, male/female, teacher coach/walk-on coach). The categories emerged from looking at the population of all coaches in the district and the major divisions based on their backgrounds and experience.

Table 1.0 Research Participants
Male  
\( (n = 12) \)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coach Experience</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Novice = two or less years experience; Veteran = five or more experience

At the completion of the interviews, each participant was offered the opportunity to be part of the action research (AR) team and participate in two focus groups to review the findings. The action research team consisted of five members: four coaches and one school site athletic director. The goal of the first AR focus group was to present interview data, gather team member feedback, and use the findings to create an action plan to address the identified needs. The information from the focus group was used to create a Coaching Resource Guide. I then met with the coordinator of the LUSD Interscholastic Athletics Office to share interview findings and AR focus group data. His responses to the data and the Coaching Resource Guide were then shared with the AR group and I once again received feedback from them in order to make final adjustments to the Coaching Resource Guide to be finalized and adapted for use in the 2014-2015 school year by the LUSD Interscholastic Athletics Office.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1 AND 2: What do veteran/novice (5 or more years/2 or less) high school athletic coaches and athletic directors perceive to be the essential knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports?

The first research question of this study was designed to explore the perceptions of a representative sample of high school coaches and athletic directors on the essential knowledge,
skills, and resources needed by all coaches to successful. The goal of this question was to gather information that would later contribute to the contents of a Coaching Resource Guide. Research questions one and two are the same, yet differentiated by participants’ years of experience, novice being under two years and veteran being five or more years. The findings show several similarities among the two groups, but also a few distinctions that are clearly due to their experience and perception of coaching needs. In addition to the two major groups, another distinct category emerged from talking to the interview participants, different perceptions from teacher coaches versus walk-on coaches. The discussion of findings from research question one and two examine the unique and similar results from the different population groups of coaches and athletics directors who participated in the study.

Teaching & Motivation Skills

Coaches reported needing teaching and motivational skills in order to successfully coach high school sports. One of the most prominent responses among all coaches was the need for them to know and support their students, skills that many of them say they lack. Coaches of all years of experience and background mentioned the need for coaches to know their students, how to work with the specific LUSD student population. There was a slight differentiation between novice and veteran coaches in the sense that teachers focused on the need to have classroom management skills when it came to working with a team. Almost every teacher mentioned the use of teaching and interpersonal skills. A novice teacher-coach went into depth discussing the need for coaches to be teachers, “coaching is almost like constructing a lesson plan, it helps to know how kids learn, how to teach young people, and how to get the outcomes that they want”. A novice walk-on coach mentioned that, “to be successful as a coach I think you need to have
knowledge of how to deal with kids, how to motivate, and how to plan”. Coaches across the board agree that coaching is about supporting students, a veteran teacher-coach proclaims, “I think they need to know how to motivate kids first and for most to be the best that they can be”.

Regardless of the novice coaches being teachers or walk-ons, their main priority was having the tools and support to get to know their student-athletes and the skills to work with this age group and properly motivate them. While teacher-coaches all have a background in teaching and daily experience with students; walk-on coaches, who represent almost half of all coaches, claim to need resources on particular skills working with this age group.

Supporting the Student-Athlete

Study participants conveyed the importance of having knowledge of college entrance and eligibility requirements for student-athletes. Both veteran and novice coaches discussed the need to know how to work with students, but the veteran coaches said they were especially concerned with learning how to support students’ transition to and preparation for college athletics. Coach Sebastian, a 13-year veteran stated, “coaches need to know the students’ goals as far as how far they can go athletically, and they need to know what the college level requires in terms of NCAA Clearinghouse requirement”. Every veteran coach mentioned the importance of knowing how to support student-athletes academically and prepare them for college level sports. Unfortunately, even the most experienced coaches felt they lacked professional development and knowledge on how to properly prepare student-athletes for the next level. Coach Johnny mentioned, “most coaches whether they are walk-on or teachers, played in high school and didn’t go on to the next level themselves so they don’t understand what it takes”. When discussing this concern with Thomas, the coordinator of Interscholastic Athletics of the district, he acknowledged that their office has never trained coaches or offered resources in this area, yet agreed there is high value in
this information to be taught to coaches. Cornwell points out the consequences of the lack of college preparation for student athletes:

There are not a lot of kids going to play in college, but obviously part of that is because they’re not receiving the proper in-service. There has to be at least one kid at every school in the district that should be able to go somewhere and play at some level. I want to learn for myself, not only because of this job. I need to educate myself because the parents don’t do it and the schools don’t do it. Now that I’m in this position I somewhat feel like the district is letting a lot of our kids down. Sometimes I get people calling me asking, “How many of your kids got scholarships?” I’m just like, “Well, none of them.” And then I wonder, “Why is that?” Well, I’m not really offering any support, which I know our schools aren’t really offering.

The new Athletic Director of a high performing athletic school, Suzanne, discussed the lack of knowledge among coaches at the school site regarding preparing student-athletes for the next level of college sports. While the students are talented and being scouted by colleges, she said, they are not academically prepared and the proper protocols aren’t followed to give them the opportunity to play college sports. Suzanne explains the reason for this disconnect:

I think coaches just need to be developed in knowing what it takes…they need resources and information about what it takes to not only make it to a NCAA school based on athleticism, but also preparing students in high school to be NCAA academically ready, they need the information on how to make that happen.

In response to this clear need for coaches, the AR group suggested that the Coaching Resource Guide includes a section on preparing student-athletes for the college level with references from NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association), which governs all college level sports.
Logistic, protocols, procedures, and rules

Coaches in the study unanimously reported the need to know and have access to ongoing training on new rules, procedures, protocols, and logistics of Large Unified School District interscholastic athletics. Veteran coaches mentioned the importance of having the appropriate tools to work with student-athletes, but their focus was more on the logistics, coach Joseph, a 19-year veteran teacher-coach stated his thoughts, “It is important in a public school setting to understand the policies, procedures, protocols, and rules”. Many of the other veterans discussed the complex rules and regulations implemented by the governing agencies and how much of the coaching job is logistics and paperwork. The action research group strongly agreed that knowing logistics was the primary need for all coaches, the athletic director in the AR group stated:

What stands out from the interview answers is protocols and procedures: legal information, logistics, those kinds of things. Coaches have no idea going into it. Whether it’s a new coach or transfer from a different section, there are slightly different rules and regulations, even now the separation from CIF and LUSD and having two different entities, there are so many different rules and responsibilities and a lot of them just have no idea, most of the athletic directors don’t even know, so I know it has to find a way down to the coaches.

The action research group sympathized with this concern, a veteran coach added, “I think a lot of these coaches aren’t even aware that certain rules and protocols exist”. Another veteran member of the AR team added:

I would agree with my colleague that protocols and procedures and the following of the rules is the most important for young coaches and should be delineated in some sort of a
In response to the urgent need to clearly disseminate logistical information to novice and veteran coaches, the AR group suggested that in addition to the annual sports-specific coaches’ meetings, there should be a new coach meeting each season to introduce all the rules, regulations, and protocols to first and second year coaches in particular. In addition, part of this action research project has included the creation of a coaching resource guide, which will be discussed in the fourth research question, and its implementation will be explained in the discussion chapter.

Thomas of the district office also added that there should be a short training on how to navigate the new Interscholastic Athletics Office website, which has only been live a few months, and how to access the rules, resources, and forms coaches need.

Willingness to Learn

In order to successfully coach high school sports, coaches in the study conveyed that it is essential to have the willingness to learn. When asked about the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports, both veteran and notice coaches discussed the most necessary resource, other coaches. Novice coaches mentioned talking to veteran coaches and the athletic director, first year coach Luke adds that, “it’s important to be very open minded and understand that you don’t know everything, and really going out and asking for help from the athletic directors, other coaches on campus or even going to a coaching clinic”. Coach Johnny, a veteran at the same school site agrees that it is often a matter of taking initiative, “there are so many resources out there but the number one thing is willingness to learn and wanting to seek it out”. Along the same lines, coach Cody, a novice, discussed why it is important to have ongoing professional development in coaching. “Willingness to learn is important, you have to
constantly find better ways to get across information, even through you may have done it for years and years, because the kids keep changing”. According to testaments from coaches in this study, the foundation of coaching is the students themselves. Whether it is how to teach students or how to develop teaching skills for walk-on coaches, preparing students for sports after high school, instilling proper knowledge of rules for a successful athletic program, all of them are student-centered. The coaches in this study were unanimous that they wanted young people to succeed and have a positive experience playing sports in high school.

**Character Development**

In order to holistically support student-athletes, participants stated that is essential for coaches to have the skills to develop character in their athletes. The findings showed that coaches choose this profession to make a positive impact on student-athletes despite low or non-existent coaching stipends. Many coaches discussed reasons why they coach and what they need to be successful. "You can be a coach to change a person to be a better athlete, but how about changing them into a better person for a lifetime, that's what I try to do," said Coach Frank, 23-year veteran. Many coaches mentioned how their job incorporates a lot more than the actual game, which comes with responsibility to a leader to the student-athletes on and off the court. Coach Kenny, a first year track and field coach explained his view of what it means to be a coach, “A coach is a motivator and an innovator; coaches need to be passionate, positive, and unwavering”. The action research team discussed the importance of providing tools to coaches to motivate students and learn these essential skills if they don’t naturally posses them. Coach Jacob, an 8 year veteran assistant coach said, “I learn a lot from coaching clinics, you learn a lot of different methods for motivation and get motivated yourself”. Another member of the AR
team mentioned going to coaching clinic where legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden spoke, “just hearing a great coach like that speak, can ignite the fire of any coach. I went back to my team with a whole new energy to inspire and more than just teach basketball skills”.

Coaches discussed a variety of side effects of their job besides the “Xs and Os” and as many of them referred to in regard to just focusing on the game. According to Thomas, coordinator of Interscholastic Athletics for the district, LUSD has promoted character development as a motto for years with various campaigns to reinforce and celebrate not only wins, but also personal growth of student-athletes. A seven-year veteran, Coach Ian shares:

> Around LUSD, it’s about character and how much sportsmanship has been emphasized and a large part of your program should be about building character. Sports a lot of times becomes a metaphor for building character, and can be a metaphor for situations you encounter later in life.

This additional responsibility for coaches to help build life skills for student-athletes is never part of actual coach education or their job description, but this research has revealed the importance of addressing this role coaches play and how to support them in doing so.

Financial Resources

In order to successfully run an athletic program most coaches reported the need for sufficient financial resources from the school, district, or fundraising. When looking at this need as a resource, coaches explained that they needed to know what type of access to funding they have at their particular school site and the rules and opportunities for fundraising. Novice coaches who are just getting started in their coaching positions discussed how they need access to information about financial resources. First year head track and field coach explains, “I need
support as far as fundraising, knowing how to fundraise, and knowing what resources I have access to”. With shrinking budgets in LUSD schools, athletics are the first to see cuts and coaches need at least the basics to run their programs. Novice baseball coach talked about his needs in his first year, “I needed gloves, cleats and bats especially working in inner city schools, resources aren't available to these student-athletes because of their social economic status and the school doesn’t have some this stuff, I brought in my own”. There is a limit to how much coaches can do without having adequate support. Another novice coach shared her perception of coach retention being impacted by financial resources:

   Time is money and the amount of time that it takes to build a successful program is sometimes too long so coaches leave it, its money. You'll get passionate people that will do something for a certain period of time and when they've exhausted that and don’t have the financial resources to support their passion, then they'll stop.

This research question found the perceptions of the essential knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports. The findings from this question were used to directly follow the action research process and find out how coaches currently have access to this knowledge, skills, and resources and their preferred way of accessing it, which was answered in the next research question.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: What do veteran and novice high school athletic coaches and athletic directors perceive to be the most effective and preferred methods of coach education and access to resources.

   Coach education is any form of professional development that supports the growth and effectiveness of coaches in their work with student athletes. Coach education varies from actual
game specific strategy to logistical and legal training to help coaches meet district and sport
association needs. The most evident finding from this research question throughout the action
research process has been that there is a lack of access to coach education and LUSD coaches of
all calibers, seldom participate in formal coach education or professional development. There
was no disagreement from the participants, the action research group, or the coordinator of the
Interscholastic Athletics Office that coach education is necessary, but unfortunately there is
currently nothing in place to connect coaches to professional development resources and
opportunities. Therefore this research question aimed to find the most effective and preferred
methods of coach education and professional development in order to help create a resource that
would support this need for the district athletics department.

*Human Resource – Other coaches*

Coaches said that the most common and preferred method of coach education and
professional development is through learning and observing other coaches. The primary
perception found from coach interviews is that there is a lack of encouragement, support, and
access to coach education at the school sites and at the district level. Veteran boy’s basketball
coach Sebastian agrees, “we should all be doing professional development but I think with the
lack of funding and support there is nothing available for coaches, we just take a test and that’s
pretty much it”. Coach Sebastian was referring to the single coach education online course that is
required at the start of the coaching position that includes a short quiz at the end. Several coaches
referred to this initial coach education online course as something that was either done in passing
or in a group setting where they just typed in the correct answers to get the completion
The majority of coaches discussed the primary way they develop their coaching skills has been through other coaches. The novice coaches reflected on their experience playing the sport under their own coaches and learning from what they observed as athletes. Coach Tamara and Coach Haley both played their sport since a young age, and in their first year coaching this year, they both looked back at all the coaches they have had over the years and said they are trying to use what worked. Coach Tamara discusses how she develops her coaching skills:

   Everything I am doing is what I learned while playing soccer since I was eight, so I take bits and pieces from all my coaches, I’ve even called my old high school coach for advice.

Coach Tamara, among other coaches in the study mentioned the importance of other coaches for support and development, whether it is in the formal or informal networking setting. A second year Athletic Director Suzanne, also discussed the most effective delivery of coach education through peer-mentoring, “the best resource is human resources, using other coaches, other A.D.s, a lot of times former coaches to help the new coach not have to reinvent the wheel”. Coach Mario, a veteran, also agreed with the power of human resource, “I’ve been coaching for about 20 years and everything I’ve learned, I’ve had former coaches and people mentoring me and teaching me”.

   When asked about their level of coach education, access to resources and information, every participant mentioned professional development through talking and observing other coaches, or networking. Literature in the area of coach development has concluded that learning through mentorships with other coaches is one of the most valuable methods of coach development (Cushion et al., 2003; K. Erickson et al., 2008; W. Gilbert et al., 2009; Lemyre et al., 2007; Lyle, 2002). This was validated through the interviews and the action research focus
group discussions. In order to address this finding, suggestions for the district athletics office will be discussed in the next chapter.

The Rulebook

Coaches stated the need to have access and professional development on the district and state athletic rulebook. The LUSD Interscholastic Office and CIF (California Interscholastic Federation) have very distinct rules and regulations that are given to coaches at an annual meeting and available online. Unfortunately, research has revealed that coaches do not necessarily know this information or how to get access to it. While an official rulebook, the Orange Book, exists, coaches are not being connected to this information effectively. The high turnover rate of coaches also contributed to the inefficient transfer of information to new coaches. Coach Joseph, a 19-year veteran suggested:

I think all coaches don’t just need a copy of the rulebook, they need to have a mentor coach sort of a veteran, like a Yoda, someone to talk to, lean on, ask questions, and get advice.

The rulebook that coach Joseph referred to was mentioned by others, and they also stated that this book is not accessible and not easy to read. Suzanne, second year Athletic Director also talks about the Orange Book, “we have the official rules, but I don’t know how organized it is and it’s hard to understand, I think it needs a user friendly format with contents that anyone can use and access”. During the action research group discussion of this Orange Book, a veteran coach agreed, “I know that the rule book is online and I look at it and know how to access it, but someone who is new or doesn’t understand the management part of coaching may have trouble
locating, deciphering, and following it”. In fact, when asking novice coaches about the rules they were given at the start of their job as coaches, none of them mentioned the Orange Book or any other type of support materials. Coach Luke, a first year walk-on coach explained, “If I have questions it’s really up to me to ask for help from the athletic director and find out what forms I need and the rules for this and that”. When asking the Athletics Office coordinator about the Gold Book distribution, Thomas explains:

> It used to be that every coach got their own copy, but with budget cuts and going into a digital age, they are now available on our website and people stopped printing all that much because it was about $10,000 every year to print an Orange Book for everyone, $8 a book. What we do know is send three copies to every school and everyone else is responsible for downloading or accessing it online. We leave it up to the schools.

It seems as though there isn’t a standardized system for sharing the rulebook with coaches unless the school site athletic director takes initiative to offer a copy or show new coaches how to access it online.

_Coaching Clinics_

One of the most preferred methods of coach education was found to be coaching clinics. Although coaches in the study shared that they have rarely participated in formal coach education opportunities, many of them revealed that one of the most preferred and effective types of coach education is through hands-on coaching clinics. While coaches appreciate the positive professional growth through participating in coaching clinics, they seldom attend these events because these opportunities are not supported by the district as far as compensation and time off work. Unless coaches seek out these opportunities and participate on their own time and
money, there is little available that is accessible and convenient for them.

During the action research focus group, one school site Athletic Director revealed that coach education opportunities do exist but are left up to coaches to pursue and follow up. Collin, a 5th year Athletic Director (A.D.) explains:

The school district does every once in a while send an email to the A.D. to forward to coaches “such and such is happening, this is happening at this location you should look into it.” But not a whole lot, not a lot at all. The coordinator of our athletics office is actually really good at sending emails out to everybody about general problems that everyone is having. Just kind of make them aware and you have that list, you can contact people if you want to, but then again they won’t. In the beginning of the year, at the Athletic Director’s meetings, you get a list of all the different things of what’s going on, what you should make the coaches aware of, very general and after that you’re kind of on your own.

Veterans in the field seem to all discuss the same annual coaches meeting but felt that it was insufficient as far as providing the support that new coaches need. A novice athletic director talked about her experience with these meetings, “it’s mandated by LA City Section, once a year and if there is anything new for CIF or the district, like concussion became a new thing this year, so I had to go to formal concussion training as the A.D.”. For veterans, the annual coaches meeting hosted by the district athletics office is perceived to be of little use, Coach Frank stated, “When I think about the annual coaches meeting, I'm bored. I hear the same thing every year and I'm required to attend it and I do but I haven't learned anything new that I did not know beforehand”. The AR group made suggestions for improving this annual coaches meeting to become more effective and to serve as true coach education. The ideas were given to the district
office and the suggestions for improvement as a result of the action research findings will be discussed in the following chapter.

The coaches who have participated in coaching clinics outside of just the annual district meeting shared their positive experiences. Coach Anthony, a 15-year veteran coach responded about his experience participating in coach education, “Clinics are great, I have participated in the Nike clinic and college camps for coaches a lot my first ten years, now I rarely have time and the district won’t pay for it”. Novice coach Cody explains his participation in the LA84 clinic:

I know they advertised for them pretty consistently, that’s the only one I’ve been to as a track head coach. I had a great experience at the clinic, they had a number of great speakers and you could learn about different events. So it was really cool, I regret not going to more of those, it was free and good experience meeting other coaches too.

Other coaches also discussed their positive experiences participating in clinics but felt that they were limited on attending more of these types of workshops. Veteran coach Ian discussed his experience attending coaching clinics:

Over the years, even if it wasn’t every year, there was just about every type of professional development training that would available and I would attend. As busy as I was in my life, and running a year-round program, my capacity is limited to seek out and go out to professional developments more often.

Action research group member coach Johnny discussed his motivating experience participating in a coaching clinic that he sought out, but explained why coaches do not attend as often as they should:

I walked out of there wanting to do 50 new things I haven’t done before in my program. You never know what will inspire or teach or motivate. The biggest part of it is getting
coaches to buy into it and go. But they don’t go; districts will not support that because they can spend their money elsewhere. We are barely fighting to keep athletics as part of the school day, everything is going in the other direction, they are not going to support professional development for coaches, so it’s up to us to take initiative and do it on our own time and money.

The action research group was asked about coaching clinics as an effective coach education tool, to which they agreed, but explained that coaches tend to participate in professional development workshops only if they are made mandatory. Veteran Coach Joseph of the AR group explained, “you have to start by making it mandatory, but mandatory doesn’t mean it’s boring or evil. Once you get them in the room, and talk about stuff that matters to them they will want to be there and come again”. Coach Johnny added in agreement, “Especially if the content is specific to what we are talking about, the things coaches say they need, actually inspire, motivate, give ideas, there are so many angles you can take it”. During the follow up discussion of findings with the athletics coordinator, Thomas, he responded to the AR suggestion for mandatory coaching clinics, “It’s up to the coach’s dedication; obviously they all attend the mandatory annual coaching meeting”. The coaching meetings Thomas referred to are the same meetings discussed by participants in the sense that they occurred as a logistical meeting to share new rules and regulations, not necessarily coach education or professional development. He continued to explain, “If coaches want to enhance their own skills, LA84 offers free clinics for most sports, I don’t know if any of them brought that up. And they’re always local and they’re free. I used to go”. The research revealed that coaching clinics are valuable for coaching professional development but they lack support in terms of time and money to attend them. Coaches also share that they have only participated in workshops that they personally sought out. Therefore,
there seems to be a lack of information being shared by the district office and athletic directors to coaches about what is offered and available to them as far as professional development opportunities.

*Online Resources*

In the current age of technology, coaches agreed that the preferred method to access resources and coach education was online. Since there is a lack of time and funding for coaches, many participants mentioned the use of online resources for coach education. When asked about the coaching resources they currently access, coaches mentioned the use of various websites. Coaches varied in their purpose of using the Internet as a resource for their coaching needs. A few coaches talked about watching videos online to get ideas for drills and sports specific development. Novice coach Bliss talks about how she develops her program, “I go online daily to look up information on drills and watch YouTube videos for ideas and strategies”. The use of technology can bring a lot of information to the coaches without them having to go anywhere. Another novice coach Vanessa explained, “Just being a coach, a teacher, and a mom, it’s helpful for me to do everything online, so that I can pick and choose my own time”. Using online resources for coach development leaves it up to the coach to be proactive, seek it out, and be willing to learn, as examined earlier. In the discussion of online resources during the AR group meeting, a novice coach Jasmine admitted that, “when it comes to the online courses, a lot of time people just click and don’t pay attention to what’s going on”. Another AR member, coach Johnny, continued to explain, “a lot of the times the videos and examples online don’t work for the level of athletes and resources we have in the inner-city”. While limitless resources are out in the digital world, it is up to the coach to decipher through what is useful and applicable to their
program.

Another use for the Internet that coaches discussed was for accessing websites that track game statistics, such as Maxpreps. While veteran coaches and athletic directors all seemed to talk about this website as a common tool, the novice coaches felt like they did not have a good idea of how to use it. When asking the AR group about this particular tool, coaches agreed, “it’s up to the coach to upload information,” a novice coach disagreed and stated, “I have never had training, I thought the A.D.s do that”. There is not a clear system of how this and other interactive coaching websites are being used. In a discussion with Thomas regarding protocols on using Maxpreps or other statistics tools for athletics, he talked about different best practices that vary by school:

It’s up to the coach. You can designate someone. In reality, the coaches that have really busy lives often times have a team manager or maybe the captain or someone who is kind of computer savvy. They give them the password and they keep it all updated. This tool helps get our kids recognized by colleges, but it’s up to the coach.

The findings are inconsistent regarding the use of technology and there is no specific protocol for specific websites that are actively used by many coaches. The discussion chapter will talk about AR group suggestions for improving the effectiveness of online resources for coach education.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4: How do veteran and novice high school athletic coaches and athletic directors view effective implementation and use of a coaching resource guide based on their perceptions of what should be included in it.

This research questioned aimed to summarize the findings from the first three questions and create a tool to address the reported needs of coaches. Initially, interview participants were
asked about content and method of delivery for a coaching resource guide that would include the information and resources coaches and athletic directors perceived to be most important. In this question, participants were asked to visualize an ideal resource guide and propose what would be included and how it would be implemented in order to be effective. The next part of the action research process was to actually create this resource guide based on the responses and present it to the AR group and district office for feedback and final changes. The resource guide was then adapted based on the AR group responses and a final version of the resource guide was completed and will be adopted by the LUSD Interscholastic Athletics Office for the 2014-2015 school year and presented during the annual coaches meeting.

Resources and references

Coaches reported that they need access to relevant coaching resources and references. After discussing necessary information and resources coaches’ need in the previous question, this part of the research really aimed to narrow down the actual contents that would be included in the coaching resource guide that will support coaching needs. Coaches were asked to name categories of information they felt would be helpful to them. The most common answer was a compilation of useful and practical resources. Coach Vanessa, a first year coach explained:

We need resources like sample student and parent contracts; it would be helpful to have a website that has a lot of those resources for coaches in terms of templates, ideas and samples of drills, fundraiser, things that anyone can adopt for their program.

Another novice coach Tamara also shared this need, “just different resources they can go to get ideas or maybe drills and what best practices work for working with students, and also really
good templates of how to organize your season”. An AR group member further explained the type of content that would be helpful, “Templates of letters, websites, maybe a phone list, contact list of coaches, something like an appendix, like the quick reference guide for those sorts of things would make sense”. Coach Vincent of the AR group added, “Another thing you might want to add to the book, like the forms that we use, like the eligibility forms, they are ridiculously convoluted, we need a checklist so we know exactly what needs to be done.” The AR group showed me the current reference pages provided in the appendix of the Gold Book that was discussed earlier and shared that it’s the most helpful tool that is currently available but needs to be made more accessible and include more of what coaches actually need. An AR veteran coach added:

I have always found helpful an actual list of people in the CIF office and the LUSD office, with their names and contact information and a flow chart of exactly of what their responsibilities are, if I have questions about something in particular, I know who to call. I would like an appendix or phone tree or something like a blog or online discussion group.

This response follows closely with a previous finding regarding the popular use of human resources and learning from other coaches and personnel.

Looking back at the previous responses from coaches, it was also evident that a major component of what coaches do is follow protocols, rules, and procedures. This component for resources and references seemed to be a priority for coaches to simplify the logistics aspect of their jobs so that they could concentrate on the game. A novice coach, Luke affirmed the need for a coaching resource guide, “I think a resource guide would be a good tool for young coaches because it’s not much we know, we are just being taught by older coaches and it’s not enough”.

62
I looked through all of the current resources and references for LA City Section coaches, asked for additional information from the athletics office coordinator, and put together a compilation of the available documents and information. When the resource guide was presented to the coordinator of the district office, his response was, “So what you learned from all that is that it would be very difficult for some young coach, especially if they were a walk-on, to find all that and know what their resources are”. Thomas looked through the information and was interested to find items he had never seen and agreed that all the documents needed to be on their website, centralized, organized, and labeled.

During the second AR group meeting, members approved this collection of resource and reference documents and discussed how it would best be organized and shared with all coaches and athletic directors. Coach Michael said, “I would actually like to see that electronically so I can download all the pages or one by one depending on what I need at that moment, even view it on my phone”. Coach Vincent agreed, “That’s genius, computerize and centralize it. I know all those documents are not currently all in one place, let alone online”. When this information was presented to the athletics office coordinator he admitted that the items that are online aren’t easy to access, “I hate to say it, but when people call me and say that they are looking for something, I take them to the website and it even takes me a couple minutes to say, “Oh, there it is!”.

The summary from the action research process in regards to necessary resources and references for coaches is that it needs to be centralized in one place online, organized in a practical way, available for download, and presented to all coaches so that everyone knows how and where to access it. The AR group agreed that paper version would be up to each coach to print as they see fit, and the contents should be updated regularly. The AR group agreed that at the annual coaches meeting, veteran coaches see it as, “I go and pick up my packet, get the
schedule, and never look it again”. Coach Vincent explained that it could work:

If you already have all the coaches in the room and show them a tool to help make their job easier, literally open the website and show them, maybe even have them take out their phones and open it right there. Call it a reference guide, something practical, easy to use, and based on what they need. You have buy-in.

Best practices

In order to support student-athletes, coaches reported needing ideas for best practices as part of the coaching resource guide. Along similar lines of resources, coaches and the AR group talked about the need to network and be able to share best practices with new coaches. Coach Vincent, a 19-year veteran, talked about how there are so many successful coaches and programs that new coaches do not need to reinvent the wheel, they just need access to information and ideas that work, “I will take initiative and ask another coach what they are doing to make such and such work, and will try to adopt it in my program, although we compete, we all want our students to succeed”. During the AR group discussion of resource guide content, a veteran athletic director added in agreement, “We need to share actual examples from successful programs and how are they doing it, so that it works and show us how they do it, a real life examples”. In order to offer coaches information regarding best practices, the AR group suggested effective method for delivery of this information, “We’re not going to put your school name, but ask everyone to share something that’s been working for their school, and put it on the forum of best practices”. A novice coach agreed, “I think that’s a great idea. I feel like actual scenarios are helpful to see, and best practices that other schools are doing. That’s something coaches would get out of having a mentor or networking too”. Coaches and district athletics
coordinator Thomas agreed, “I can go on and on about best practices I have seen at different schools, I think we can come up with a good list of best practices to share with coaches”. Thomas agreed to consider creating a forum for coaches to share their best practices online and introduce it at the annual coaches meeting.

UNEXPECTED FINDINGS

In addition to a coaching resource guide, participants mutually indicated their need for additional financial support. At the conclusion of interviews and AR group meetings, coaches were asked to share anything else that they feel would help support coaches in LUSD. Almost every coach, novice and veteran, mentioned the low monetary stipend currently offered to coaches. Coach Chris, a novice baseball coach explained;

I did the calculations last year it's like 75 cents an hour. Family members just don't understand why would you go out there, look at your check and then look at how much time you're putting, it just doesn't make sense. There is a lot of outside pressure to stop coaching, which I've seen rip families apart.

Many other coaches shared his concern and said that we are losing good coaches because there is not enough support to keep them. A 23-year veteran coach Frank shared, “it's hard to get good coaches now, they need to raise the pay and have adequate facilities. Back in the day, those of us who coached did it because that is what we really wanted to do”. An AR novice member agreed, “I found that in the past few years they’ve cut coach salaries, supplies, equipment, everything. I know I am not doing it for the money, but at this rate I don’t know how long I will do it for”. Unfortunately this is true across the board and the turnover of coaches is at an all time high.
Although aspect of financial compensation is out of the control of even the LUSD Interscholastic Athletics Office, Thomas responded to this great concern from coaches:

The reality is that no one is doing this job for the money and they’re really doing it to have a good time and there are too many obstacles to prevent people from having a good time. If you can just give them the tools and the support, they’ll have a good time and be successful. People coach for different reasons but ultimately; hopefully, it’s for the challenge and for the nurturing and development of the kids to make better people in the world. But who knows? I mean I hope that’s why they’re doing it.

Thomas is right in the sense that hopefully coaches do it for the right reasons, but the good coaches need to be retained. If there is little control over financial compensation, coaches reported that they need to be supported in other ways to continue to do this job. Nineteen-year veteran coach Vincent describes his perception, “I would like to see, just across the board, maybe administration sort of understanding the importance of athletics and maybe provide a little more support in whatever way to make things successful”. An AR veteran group member agreed with this sentiment and added that:

They are trying to tighten up all the loose ends and enforce all these rules and protocols, mainly because of litigation. For those of us who are on the ball and have done this for a while, we are okay with it. I think this is positive and keeps everyone more aware and going in the right direction, but at the same time they don’t offer the support and training part of it.
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This research validated the popular view of a shift in the field of coaching: A new generation of walk-on and novice coaches who need additional coach education, mentorships from veteran coaches, access to resources, and ongoing development and support. Veteran and novice coaches and athletic directors conveyed their perceptions on the essential knowledge, skills, and resources needed to coach high school sports. Key findings included the need for coaches to have teaching skills, knowledge of academic preparation of student-athletes for college, knowledge of rules, protocols, and procedures. Participants also discussed the importance of willingness to learn. Coaches agreed that it is vital to not only coach the sport, but also instill character into student-athletes. In order to have a successful program; participants unanimously agreed that they have a need for financial resources.

While coaches reported sporadic participation in coach education, they did claim that the most effective method of professional development was through learning from other coaches and during hands-on coaching clinics. In addition, coaches stated their desire for training in the major rulebooks that already exist and ongoing regulations and protocols that are regularly being updated. The most preferred access to these resources was reported to be online through websites and videos. Coaches asked that there be an online resource guide that includes links to useful resources and references. They also requested having access to ideas for best practices that would work with their specific student population.

The action research process successfully gathered perceptions from a variety of coaches which helped produce a resource guide that will be provided and presented at the annual coaches meeting next year. Additional findings were presented to the LUSD Interscholastic Athletics
office and suggestions for addressing these items have been offered to the coordinator. These recommendations will be discussed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

INTRODUCTION OF DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to gather the perceptions of high school coaches and athletic directors on what they need to be successful in their coaching positions and their ideas for the most effective methods that will meet those needs. I have outlined major findings that help answer the research questions in this study. From these findings, the action research team and I have developed recommendations for the interscholastic athletics department to support the needs of the coaches and improve their professional community.

In this chapter, I propose recommendations that have emerged from the findings in this study. The recommendations address the major areas of improvement necessary to support the athletics department. The suggestions are based on the participant interview data, action research team discussions, and literature in the field of coach education. The coordinator of the interscholastic athletics office has reviewed these recommendations, and many of them will be implemented in the 2014-'15 school year. Following the recommendations, are unexpected findings, limitations to the study, opportunities for future research and lastly my reflections on this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Implement Mentorships

Research revealed that the most effective and preferred method of coach education is learning from other coaches. Many coaches in the study revealed that they have their own informal mentors or participate in social networks with other coaches that help them develop
their skills and athletic programs. Literature in the area of coach development has concluded that learning through mentorships with other coaches is one of the most valuable methods of coach development (Cushion et al., 2003; K. Erickson et al., 2008; W. Gilbert et al., 2009; Lemyre et al., 2007; Lyle, 2002). The action research team suggested a mentorship model to pair new coaches with veteran coaches for support in their first two to three years. Additionally, I suggest that a professional network is set up for coaches in the district through which coaches can communicate throughout the school year. Given the participants’ gravitation toward digital access to resources, I suggest that the interscholastic athletic office include a discussion forum or interactive blog to their website for coaches to be able to communicate, ask questions, and share best practices informally. The coordinator of the office stated in agreement with this idea, “I definitely know that there’s a whole lot of room to create better communication and networks with the coaches and support for the coaches”. The action research group suggested an idea that is currently used in the district with new teachers:

Something like a when you are starting to be a teacher, you have BTSA program (Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment), something like that for coaches under a supervised group so so that after two years of BTSA, you are allowed to go be a teacher. They should have something like that for coaches, the first two years you are directly aligned with the athletics office or another coach in the same sport from another school so that they do get that one-on-one, how to deal with things, what the protocols and procedures are, logistically what it is that you have to do.

This recommendation is not a only a result of finding from research, but it also validates literature on coach education that found communities of practice as a successful strategy for
coach education and professional development (Gilbert, Gallimore, and Trudel, 2009).

*Academic Preparation for Student-Athletes*

One of the major needs reported by coaches, athletic directors, and even the coordinator of the interscholastic athletics office was for more information on preparing student-athletes for the college level. In order to best address this need, each school’s athletic director should be trained in NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) requirements, which is the governing agency that clears student-athletes to play sports in college. The action research team agreed that it is most efficient to train the athletic directors and have them disseminate information to the coaches at each school site. My recommendation is to add NCAA Clearinghouse requirements to the professional development items at one of the monthly athletic director meetings. Additionally, I suggest that NCAA proficiency be added to the job description and responsibilities of the athletic directors. The athletic director at each school site should be knowledgeable in all NCAA student eligibility requirements, educate all coaches on these requirements and ensure that all student-athletes are informed and prepared for college athletics eligibility.

*Introduce the Resource Guide*

The research revealed that coaches need improved access to resources that will support their coaching success. Through the action research process, a coaching resource guide has been created and will be digitalized and uploaded to the interscholastic athletics office website for the next school year. In addition to uploading the resource guide, I suggest reorganizing the website to be more user friendly and that it offer the information, documents, and resources coaches need. The coordinator of the athletics office acknowledged this need:
Well it could be reorganized. You said it was impossible to find almost. When people call me, I hate to say it, but when people call me and say that they are looking for something, I take them to the website and it takes me about a couple minutes so that I can say, “Oh, there it is!”

Coaches and athletic directors either did not know how to access the website or felt that it was disorganized and ineffective. In this age of technology, it is imperative that every coach and athletic director has access to necessary resources at their convenience. More than half of the participants mentioned using Internet as a primary method of professional development and access to resources. Therefore, I highly suggest that the district athletics office website be reorganized and introduced to coaches for their use and convenience as soon as possible.

Restructure Annual Coaches Meeting

My recommendation is to dedicate a portion of the annual coaches meeting to presenting the new website content, and showing coaches how to access it. The office website has only been online for a few months and most coaches have not yet been notified or exposed to it. Once the proper documents, information, and resources are available on the website, I suggest that a formal introduction be made to all coaches and athletic directors at the beginning of the school year. The coaches meeting should also include introduction to the mentorship idea, NCAA requirements, and the new online resource guide. In addition, the coaches meeting should include speakers who would not only give information, but also share inspirations and motivate coaches. The action research group explained how they see a better version of the annual meeting:

I think it’s helpful to give time to networking between coaches, older, younger, I think getting coaches in the same room together is very helpful. A part of the meeting could be
connected to a new coaches meeting, in addition to having someone like the coordinator
give these young coaches the protocols and rules, you also invite senior and older
coaches to talk about that other stuff as well.

The action research group continued to reemphasize the idea of new coaches learning from
veteran and mentor coaches. They also added a suggestion of having an additional separate
coaches meeting for just new coaches.

*Motivate Coaches to be Motivators*

Findings showed that a significant part of coaching is teaching students life skills,
building character, and being a motivator. In the study, veteran coaches credit their ability to
motivate students and spend time on character development because of some experience they
have had being motivated by other coaches, “just hearing a great coach like that speak, can ignite
the fire of any coach”. The action research group proposed inviting successful veteran and
college level coaches to the annual coaches meeting to be a keynote speaker:

There are lots of experts out there that are willing to give their time. You don’t need three
hours of one person talking at you. You do a general meeting and then break it down into
smaller sessions and have a keynote speaker.

Another suggestion from the AR group was to include motivational quotes for coaches in
emails, on the website, and at meetings to keep up positive spirits. My recommendation is to
utilize the resources LUSD already has and invite successful veteran coaches to address novice
coaches not only at the annual coaches meeting but at also at their individual school sites. AR
team members agreed that the content of the annual coaches meeting needed to be adjusted to
address the need for coach motivation:

I think the meeting shouldn’t just be going through what we need to do, but actually inspire, motivate, give ideas; there are so many angles you can take it. If it’s mandatory once a year or once a semester per sport or however, it really could help.

This suggestion was offered to the coordinator of interscholastic athletics and he has agreed to revise the agenda of the 2014-2015 annual coaches meeting and invite successful veteran coaches to speak about their best practices and anecdotes of achievement from their experience.

Regional Accountability

The findings from the first three questions outlined the needs of coaches and athletic directors. Based on the structure of the interscholastic athletics office, my recommendation is that regional league commissioners implement the previously presented ideas. While the major recommendations will be introduced to all coaches and athletic directors in the annual group meetings, each league commissioner should maintain implementation and follow-up. The athletics office commissioner Thomas also mentioned this division of responsibility, “Some of these things probably could be put on a league commissioner’s plate of responsibilities, just because it would be a lot easier to manage”. In addition, the needs of each region might vary; therefore splitting up the responsibility between different regional commissioners will make the information even more relevant. I recommend that the central interscholastic athletics office commissioner decide on the changes and additions for the school year and allow each regional commissioner to implement and support new programs and resources. In addition, because of the sizable number of new and walk-on coaches at each high school campus, I recommend that regional commissioners offer direct support to their schools by physically having a presence on
campuses and possibly hosting athletic department meetings at each of their schools. Many coaches in the study mentioned the need for support, coach Cody specifically explained, “We need support, along the lines of support from the athletic department, not necessarily financial, we need to be organized and know all the logistical things”.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study participants represented a relatively diverse sample of coaches in different areas, experience, gender, and sports. Nevertheless, the number of participants was limited by the willingness of coaches to participate and availability. The sample size provided valuable information that revealed major trends and findings, but the sample size was just 20 coaches in a district with close to 2,000 coaches. Coaches whose sports were in season during the study were least available to participate. In addition, the members of the action research group were all from the same general area in west and mid-city Los Angeles, because of their availability to meet in a central place.

Another limitation of this study is that it was done specifically with and for Large Unified School District’s coaches and athletic directors. While these individuals are able to proclaim their perceptions of the needs of coaches on this district, their views may not be reflective of the needs of coaches in other school districts.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The study indirectly found that there is a high turnover of coaches and a drastic change from traditional teacher-coaches to non-teacher, walk-on coaches. This shift in who is coaching and how long they coach for has been gradually occurring in the last decade. While it could be
assumed that the change has been aligned with budget crises in California education and schools, I believe that there is room to explore why this shift has occurred. Along those lines, it would be helpful to see why some coaches leave the profession after a short time, while others continue to coach through retirement. Understanding why coaches stay and leave would help with retention and stability in this professional field.

In addition, while there have been an increased number of non-teacher walk-on coaches, currently at about 50 percent, it would be helpful to study the difference in success and impact of teacher-coaches versus walk-on coaches. Although this study and literature in the field has shown that teaching skills are an essential part of coaching, there has not been a study comparing the effectiveness of teacher-coaches and walk-coaches. I believe that a study measuring the success of the two types of coaches would help athletic departments make better hiring decisions. Understanding the difference between the coaches could also help see the needs and the strengths of each type of coach to better support them.

Lastly, if the recommendations from this study are implemented in the next school year, I would like to measure the impact and improvement they make on the success and retention of coaches. Furthermore, it would be interesting to see how the coaches perceive each recommendation as they are implemented, and then in a few years, how it will have long-term effects.

**REFLECTION**

My passion for high school coaching originated from my personal experience as a cheerleading coach for over five years. Through my experience I learned to understand a different level of responsibility and impact coaches have on student-athletes. The expectations of
coaches is to play a multitude of roles ranging from teacher to parent of each student on the team. Students also spend more time with their coaches than any other adult in their lives, sometimes even more than their parents. The impact they make on kids is of great value; therefore coaches should be well prepared, supported, and qualified in order to successfully coach and moreover lead student-athletes.

My motivation to do this particular research was to assess the needs of coaches by doing action research with them. I wanted to gather the perceptions of novice coaches so that I could best address their reported needs; and collect the views of veteran coaches, so that their experiences could help guide the solutions to meet those needs. In speaking with coaches during the data collection process, I was constantly reminded of how passionate and committed all of these individuals are to coaching and to their students. Unfortunately, I was also able to see the discouragement many of them experience having little support and a lot of responsibility.

Through the action research process, I really felt as though the findings were genuine and the process truly allowed for a creation of a resource guide that was developed together with the individuals in the field and will be implemented by the district interscholastic athletics office. The testimonies of the coaches and athletic directors who participated in this study reassured me how important this research is. Speaking to these passionate individuals, I began to feel a sense of responsibility to put these findings to action. My commitment to this research does not end here; I am determined to follow through on the recommendations to the athletics office and plan to support the district athletics coordinator in planning the implementation in the near future.
LIST OF APPENDICES

A. District Letter of Support
B. Interview Protocol
C. Focus Group 1 Protocol
D. Focus Group 2 Protocol
E. Consent to Participant in Research
Appendix A

Katherine Hayes, Ph.D.
Committee for External Research Review (CERR)
Office of Data and Accountability
Los Angeles Unified School District
333 S. Beaudry Ave, 16th Floor

Dear Dr. Hayes,

This letter is regarding the research proposal of Julia Pelikhova, UCLA Educational Leadership Program. On behalf of the LAUSD Athletics Office, we support Ms. Pelikhova’s study, "An Action Research Study with High School Athletic Coaches and Athletic Directors examining essential information and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports in Los Angeles to create a Coaching Handbook."

The LAUSD Athletics Office plans to support the research project in the following ways:

1. Send out an email to all coaches and athletic directors in LAUSD introducing the research project and recruiting participants.
2. Provide Ms. Pelikhova with current LAUSD coaching guidelines, memos, resources, tools, and any other pertinent information relating to the study.
3. Provide Ms. Pelikhova with a private room to conduct two focus groups in the LAUSD Athletics Office.
4. Give ongoing feedback throughout the action research process and serve on the action research team.
5. Edit drafts and final version of the Coaching Handbook throughout the action research process.
6. Plan to adopt the Coaching Handbook and make it available via digital file for all current and future coaches and athletic directors in LAUSD.

On behalf of the LAUSD Athletics Office, we support and find great benefit of this research project to LAUSD coaches and the Athletic Department. The coaching handbook will be created based on the needs of veteran and novice coaches and offer a universal resource for coaches of all levels and sports.

If you have any questions regarding our involvement and support for this research, you may contact me via email or phone.

Sincerely,

Trenton Cornelius
Coordinator,
Interscholastic Athletics
LAUSD
Appendix B

Interview Protocol

SAY: The goal of these interviews is to gather data on the perceptions of veteran coaches and novice coaches, to find a general consensus of what coaches perceive is the essential knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports. Questions will explore your experiences and ideas for professional development needs and areas of improvement in the coaching field.

I will first ask a few background questions to learn about your coaching experience.
1. What is currently your primary job besides coaching? WHAT OTHER JOBS DO YOU HOLD BESIDES COACHING? (GIVE EXAMPLES)
2. How long and which sports have you coached at the high school level?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH QUESTION</th>
<th>METHOD</th>
<th>INTERVIEW QUESTION</th>
<th>SAMPLE ANSWERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do veteran (5 or more years) high school athletic coaches and athletic directors perceive is the essential knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports? AND WHY…</td>
<td>Interviews with veteran coaches &amp; ADs.</td>
<td>i. What do you think coaches need to know in order to be successful in their role as a coach? 1a. Why do you think this is important for coaches to know? 2. What are some essential skills that you feel coaches need to have? 2a. Why do you feel these skills are most important? 3. How do you think coaches can gain this knowledge and skills? 4. What do you believe are some of the necessary resources for coaches? 4a. Why do you think coaches need these resources? 4b. How do coaches</td>
<td>Resources for coaches Important websites Involvement and memberships in professional organizations Knowledge of state and national level athletic organizations Knowledge of their sport Rules for sport in the district, city, and state level High School graduation requirements Knowledge of student-athlete requirements NCAA eligibility requirements Good rapport with college recruiters Knowledge of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| What do novice (2 or less years) high school athletic coaches perceive to be the most important knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports? | Interviews with novice coaches. | 1. What do you think coaches need to know in order to be successful in their role as a coach?  
1a. Why do you think this is important for coaches to know?  
2. What are some essential skills that you feel coaches need to have?  
2a. Why do you feel these skills are most important?  
3. How do you think coaches can gain this knowledge and skills?  
4. What do you believe are some of the necessary resources for coaches? | different divisions of athletics  
Network and contact to other coaches in the league, district, state.  
Knowledge of the “Orangebook” (LUSD)  
Concussion diagnosis  
Emergency contact information  
CPR/First Aid  
Laws pertaining to minors  
Basic life skills working with high school students, parents, and faculty.  
Knowledge of adolescent developmental stages and trends.  
Understand mentality of students.  
Be good at the sport.  
Social development of the age group.  
Knowledge of student trends.  
CPR/First Aid  
Get to know other staff and build relationships in order to support student success in the classroom.  
Getting to know parents.  
Nutrition knowledge  
Athletic training knowledge  
Physical fitness  
Teaching strategies  
Fundamentals of the sport |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4a. Why do you think coaches need these resources?</td>
<td>Laws relating to children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b. How do coaches currently have access to these resources?</td>
<td>District and school policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contacts to local college recruiters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of the league and other schools in the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fundraising ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Best plays for sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Game strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emergency contact information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laws pertaining to minors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Interviews (all)                                                        | 1. How often do you participate in coach education programs or workshops? |
|                                                                          | 2. If any, what are some of the coach education workshops you have participated in? |
|                                                                          | 3. What type of coach education do you most prefer or find helpful?       |
|                                                                          | 4. What is the most preferred method of delivery of coach education (ie. Online, specific sport, general coaching, school specific, handbook, peer-mentoring, coach clinics, etc.) |
|                                                                          | 5. What is the most effective method of delivery of coach education?     |
|                                                                          | 6. What type of coaching resources do you currently access? (ie. Online Workshops Professional Development Mentoring Peer-observation Coach Clinics Phone/email with expert Handbook Web based resources |
| How do veteran and novice high school athletic coaches and athletic directors view effective implementation and use of a coaching handbook based on their perceptions of what should be included in it. | Interviews (all) | 1. How would you be able to utilize a coaching handbook?  
2. How do you think a coaching handbook could be presented to coaches?  
3. What would make a coaching handbook most useful/effective for coaches?  
4. What would be the ideal format for a coaching handbook? (ie. bounded softcover, binder, digital document, smartphone app) | Through school site athletic department meetings. During monthly Athletic Director meetings. District/League meetings/workshops Workshop or clinic for new coaches Provided by athletic director to new coaches upon starting their position. Online link or website Bounded softcover, binder, digital document, mobile app. |
Appendix C

Focus Group Protocol 1

SAY: The goal of this focus group is to share finding from initial interviews with veteran and novice coaches on their perceptions of the essential knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports. We will discuss themes found in the data and you will have the opportunity to give feedback on the most essential findings to be used in creation of a Coaching Handbook.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH QUESTIONS</th>
<th>FOCUS Group Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 &amp; 2 What do veteran and novice high school athletic coaches and athletic directors perceive is the essential knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports?</td>
<td>Share major themes and finding from interview questions and open for non-formal discussion of the results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share major themes and finding from interview questions and open for non-formal discussion of the results.</td>
<td>1. From the responses that interview participants shared, what do you think are the most relevant and important skills, resources, and knowledge needed for coaches?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. What other essential information is needed for coaches to know and have access to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. How can all the findings be grouped into a few major sections?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. What are the major sections and what ideas would fit under each one?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What do veteran and novice high school athletic coaches and athletic directors perceive to be the most effective and preferred methods of coach education and access to resources.</td>
<td>1. What is the most effective method of delivery of professional resources for coaches?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Who should be responsible for distributing the coaching handbook to returning and new coaches?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. What would be the best format for a coaching handbook? (ie. bounded softcover, binder, digital document, smartphone app)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. When would be the best time to distribute the handbook that will be created?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D
Focus Group Protocol #2

SAY: The goal of the second focus group meeting is to review a draft of the coaching handbook. This draft was created with respect to the feedback and discussion from the first focus group and the LUSD Athletics Office Administration.

During this focus group meeting you will have a chance to review and share feedback on the (1) categories of the handbook, (2) content of the handbook, (3) format of the handbook, (4) usability of the handbook, and (5) preferred accessibility and use of the handbook once it is finalized.

(Focus groups participants will each receive a hard copy of the draft of the coaching handbook, paper and writing utensil for notes. The participants will have 5-10 minutes to review and write down feedback notes, questions, and corrections).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH QUESTIONS</th>
<th>FOCUS Group Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 &amp; 2 What do veteran and novice high school athletic coaches and athletic directors perceive is the essential knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports?</td>
<td>1. Before we discuss the content of the Coaching Handbook, please share your perception on the format of the handbook. (organization, clarity, readability, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What do veteran and novice high school athletic coaches and athletic directors perceive to be the most effective and preferred methods of coach education and access to resources.</td>
<td>2. Please share feedback on the major categories of the Coaching Handbook? 2.a. Are there categories that should be cut? That should be added? That should be changed? 3. After reviewing the content of the handbook, please share your feedback. 3a. Is there content that can be cut? Is there content that should be added? Is there content that should be changed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What do you think about this format of the handbook? 1A. What other format would be useful for coaches? (ie. bounded softcover, binder, digital document, smartphone app)</td>
<td>6. When would be the best time to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. How do veteran and novice high school athletic coaches and athletic directors view effective implementation and use of a coaching handbook based on their perceptions of what should be included in it.

7. How can the handbook be made easily accessible and usable to coaches and athletic directors?

SAY: Thank you for your great feedback throughout the process of creating this Coaching Handbook for coaches and athletic directors in LUSD. All of your professional experience and opinions contributed greatly to the production to the final handbook and added to the body of knowledge in the field of sports science and will help coaches for years to come. Thank you for your time and contribution to this research and thank you for your work with our student athletes.
Appendix E

University of California, Los Angeles

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

An Action Research Study with High School Athletic Coaches and Athletic Directors examining essential information and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports in Los Angeles to create a Coaching Handbook.

Julia Pelikhova, under the faculty sponsorship of Professors Dr. Tucker and Dr. Wilms from the Department of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) are conducting a research study.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are an athletic coach or athletic director in the CIF Los Angeles City Section at an LUSD school site. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the high school athletic programs in Los Angeles. The project aims to develop a resource tool for coaches. The objective is to utilize the experiential knowledge of veteran coaches and the professional needs of novice coaches to find a general consensus as to what coaches perceive are the essential knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully coach high school sports. The goal of this research is to create a universal reference and resource handbook for high school athletic coaches based on what their needs as well as academic research from the field of sports science.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- Participate in one 45-minute interview during non-work hours at your selected site.
- Answer interview questions regarding your experience and perception as a coach.
- You will be asked for permission to have the interview audio recorded.
- You may choose to participate in a follow up focus group.

How long will I be in the research study?

Participation will take a total of 45 minutes for the interview and if you choose to participate in the follow up focus groups, participants would need to meet on two occasions for 90 minutes each at a central location.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?

- There are no anticipated risks or discomforts.
Are there any potential benefits if I participate?

By participating in the study, you will be offered a hard copy and electronic copy of the Coaching Handbook that will be created as a result of this research.

The results of the research may improve professional support for athletic coaches in LUSD and create a universal tool that may improve coaching practice and athletic programs.

Will I be paid for participating?

- You will small gift card ($10) with a chance to enter a drawing for a larger gift card of $100 to an athletic retail store.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of pseudonyms and your real name and work site will not be identified or shared with anyone.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.
- You may refuse to have the interview audio recorded.

Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?

- The research team:
  If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers. Please contact:

  Julia Pelikhova, Graduate Student, UCLA Department of Education and Information Studies
  (323) 371-1476
  jpelikhova@yahoo.com

- UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):
If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to:

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program
11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 211, Box 951694
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

________________________________________
Name of Participant

________________________________________  __________________________
Signature of Participant                             Date

☐ I give permission to the researcher to audio record the interview. I understand that the recording and any transcription of the interview will be kept confidential and stored in a locked safe. _____

Initial

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

________________________________________  __________________________
Name of Person Obtaining Consent                  Contact Number

________________________________________  __________________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent             Date
REFERENCES


