Psychological Skills Training:
A Qualitative Study of Singapore Coaches
探討星加坡教練之心理技能訓練

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Abstract

This is a qualitative study of the concerns that Singapore secondary school coaches have with psychological skills training (PST). Two hundred and three coaches were asked to complete the Stages of Concern Questionnaire. The coaches were categorized into four coaching levels. The survey data demonstrated high levels of informational and personal concerns of the lower level coaches and high consequence concerns for the club level and national youth coaches. A group of four coaches, one from each level of coaching agreed to be interviewed in connection with the study. The interview questions were based on an analysis of the survey data. Results of the study revealed three dominant lines of discourse which went beyond the use of PST in schools and which appeared to be systemic concerns about teaching physical education and coaching in public schools. These included issues were closely aligned to existing concepts prevalent in the professional socialisation literature including marginality, isolation and wash-out. It was considered that these concerns would have a negative effect on the likelihood of coaches introducing PST in local schools.

Keywords: Coaches, Concerns, PST, Isolation, Marginality, Wash-out

摘　要

本文嘗試探討星加坡中學體育教練的心理技能訓練，203位教練接受訪問，結果發現專業的社會化過程可能會影響教練人員的心理技能訓練。

Introduction

There have been suggestions in the literature that physical education teacher-coaches can become 'educational sport psychologists' and teach their athletes about sport psychology (e.g., Martens, 1981; Danish & Hale, 1983; Settinerland, 1983a; Hughes, 1990; Sinclair & Sinclair, 1994). Vealey (1988) argues that psychological skills are analogous to physical skills, which can be taught and learned to a certain degree. Psychological Skills Training (PST) therefore can be viewed from an educational perspective whereby psychological skills can be taught and learned such that they can become an enduring part of a person's life. This approach emphasizes continuous growth and change where interventions do not focus on short-term remedies but lifelong enhancement of personal and athletic performance (Danish & Hale, 1983). Selected research projects on the impact of teaching psychological skills to young athletes have been undertaken at the elementary school level (Settinerland, 1983a, 1983b; Li-Wei, Qi-Wei, Orlick, & Zitzelsberger, 1992; Orlick, & McCaffrey, 1991) as well as at the High school level (Hughes, 1990). In general these data offer support to

the idea of coaches and teachers as educational sport psychologists. The developmental/educational approach to PST is not exclusively confined to school age athletes. It has also been employed at an elite level (Gould, Petlichkoff, Hodge, & Simons, 1990), in professional sport psychology consulting (Smith & Johnson, 1990) as well as at the intercollegiate level (Petruzzello, Landers, Linder, & Robinson, 1987; Brewer, & Shillinglaw, 1992). These studies have focused on the effects of a PST program on a given group of athletes and many have been administered by training sport psychologists or PST researchers. No studies have been found that investigate the role of the coach in implementing PST programmes especially with school age athletes. If PST is to be introduced to athletes of school age then the delivery system will most likely be the coaches of these athletes. It is the purpose of this study to explore the concerns that school coaches in Singapore have with the teaching of PST in their Extra Curricular Activity sport programs. Further, to uncover the coach's attitudes and feelings toward the introduction of PST. It is one thing to ask what are your concerns with PST based on a theoretical concerns model it is quite another to ask why a person feels the way they do about the innovation.

Psychological Skills Training in the Singapore Context

In 1993 the Singapore government introduced Sports Excellence 2000 (SPEX 2000) to maintain and improve elite sport in Singapore. The programme is administered through the Singapore Sports Council. With the advent of SPEX 2000 there was an increasing interest in sport science and its potential contributions to the development of athletic excellence. One of the focus areas was the introduction of sport psychological support services for developing and elite athletes. This was to be designed and implemented through the Sports Medicine and Fitness Division (SMF) of the Singapore Sports Council (SSC).

Increased financial and management support were given to fourteen Core and Merit sports which included two personnel to provide (clinical) psychological services to athletes in all sports. It was a difficult task for the two sport psychologists to achieve effective results as the sheer number of athletes involved made consulting services very difficult. At the same time athletes and their coaches were sceptical about mental training activities and their usefulness. Coaches were also not always comfortable with PST and tend to ignore the advice on the subject offered by the SSC personnel[1]. This is congruent with observations in the sport psychology literature (Anshel, 1989). Some reports even suggest that coaches would not even support the use of PST with their athletes even when their athletes had some experience with mental skills training (Salmon, Hall & Haslam, 1994).

In the context of the thrust toward Sports Excellence in Singapore, there was also a review of the coach education and development program along the lines of the National Coaching & Certification Program (NCCP) from Canada. The Singapore National Coaching Accreditation Program (NCAP) contains a 5-level theory/technical track, which includes an introduction to the coaching of psychological skills. It was hoped that all coaches, especially those working with school age athletes would feel sufficiently comfortable with psychological skills that they would attempt to implement some PST themselves.

The majority of coaches in Singapore are the teacher-coaches in Schools who manage the Extra-Curricular sport Activities (ECA). This is an established program in all schools in Singapore whereby students are provided with the opportunities to participate in sporting activities ranging from the recreational level to representing their schools at national schools competitions. The cream of the crop from these competitions are further selected to represent the Combined Schools Teams at regional competitions and a further few may don national colours at the National youth squads or even full National teams. Some of the teacher-coaches also coach at the national level. If teacher-coaches are to be asked to teach psychological skills then it could be important to identify the nature of the concerns that they might have about implementing the training themselves. This would be the first step towards developing methods of implementation that are both compatible with the concerns of the coaches and helpful to the athletes.

Theoretical Framework

The Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hall, 1973; Hall, 1976) is a theory of organizational and individual change. Hall and his associates discovered that change takes place as a process, rather than an event. Each individual goes through certain stages, each of which is characterized by specific questions, anxieties, or uncertainties about the particular innovation. These stages were called the Stages of Concern (Hall and George, 1979; Hall, 1985) and represent a theoretical means of elucidating the types of concerns that individuals perceive as relevant during the adoption of an innovation. We define the innovation in this case as the introduction of PST in local school sport programs. Briefly, the CBAM suggests that as an individual becomes more familiar with a particular innovation, the concerns relevant to the individual will change

in both intensities and type. Furthermore, the model claims that the types of concerns, and the kinds of information associated with those concerns, will unfold in a systematic and developmental pattern as the adoption process proceeds. The intensity of concerns at a particular Stage can be measured by asking individuals who are about to use or who are already using the innovation to respond to the Stages of Concern (SoC) questionnaire.. The purpose of the CBAM for those seeking to implement an innovation would be to understand the particular stage of concern that the individual is experiencing and adjust the in-service education of the individual to be alleviate the concern.

Table 1. Stages of Concern about an Innovation.

Stages of Concern	Description
0 - Awareness:	Indicates little concern about or involvement with the innovation.
1 - Informational:	Indicates a general awareness of the innovation and interest in learning more about it.
2 - Personal:	The individual is uncertain about the demands of the innovation
3 - Management:	Attention of the user is focused on the processes and tasks of using the innovation
4 - Consequence:	Attention of the user is focused on the impact of theinnovation
5 - Collaboration:	The focus of the individual is on co-ordination and cooperation with others regarding the use of the innovation.
6 - Refocusing:	The focus is one of exploration of the universal benefits from the innovations

(Hall et al., 1977).

The model in general and the SoC questionnaire, specifically, has received some empirical support in educational settings. This includes the in-service training of teachers on a new curriculum innovation (Broyles & Tillman, 1985); the attitudes of pre-service teachers toward science curriculum (Malone, 1984); reality therapy techniques (George & Rutherford, 1980); physical education teacher concerns during in-service education (Faucette, 1987) and the implementation of computer technology in schools (Bluhm & Kishner, 1988). In all of these studies the researchers indicated that by using the SoC to identify relevant concerns, anxiety surrounding those concerns was, to various degrees, more easily alleviated, because instructors could teach specific information to match specific concerns.

Method

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to investigate the concerns that secondary school sport coaches have with PST in after school sport programs in Singapore. The first phase of the study involved an island wide survey of the concerns that school coaches in general had with using PST with their athletes. The second phase of the study involved in-depth interviews with four coaches; one from each of the four levels of coaching experience determined by the questionnaire survey. The interview guide was derived from the questionnaire items and dictated to by the descriptive data from the survey. That is, if certain concerns were high or low they could be explored more fully in the interview setting.

Phase One: National Survey of PST concerns among teacher/ coaches

Participants:

Seven hundred and twenty eight teacher-coaches were surveyed using the Stages of Concern Questionnaire and two hundred and three subject's participated (27.8% return) in the study. The research subjects (n=203) coached children and youth at the school level (n=174), combined schools (n=7), club level (n=8) and national youth level (n=14).

Instrumentation:

The survey instrument used to assess the coaches concerns about using PST with their athletes was the Stages of Concern (SoC) questionnaire adapted from the version developed by Hall et al., (1977). The SoC. is a 35-item survey (Figure 1) with seven sub scales which correspond to the seven stages of the CBAM (Table 1). Each sub scale contains five items that are designed to reveal both the type and intensity of a specific concern. Respondents are asked to rate how they feel about an item on an eight point scale that ranges from,

"this statement is irrelevant to me" (0) to, "this statement is very true of me now" (7). The intensity of a particular Stage is obtained by summing the values expressed by a respondent for the five items of that stage. Thus, the intensity for a concern at a given Stage can range from 0 to 35. The results of all seven Stages are usually plotted to produce a "concern's profile". This questionnaire has been used by a similar study on community coaches concerns in Canada by MacDonald, (1992). The test-retest reliability coefficients of Hall et al. (1977) education version of the SoC questionnaire ranged from .65 to .86; four of the seven SoC sub scales (Stages) are reported to have alpha coefficients above .80.

Subscale (Stage) internal reliability coefficients (alpha) are reported to range from .64 to .83 with six of the seven coefficients above .70. All sub scales of the SoC (Sport) questionnaire had acceptable internal consistent coefficients (N = 36, alpha > .65) (Macdonald, 1992). The instrument was then subject to validity checks by professors of sport psychology and coaching at the university as well as graduate students involved with coaching and psychological skill projects. Lastly, the instrument was reviewed by a selection of local school sport coaches and following all the face validity checks minor adjustments were made to what was deemed to be a valid instrument for the purposes of this project.

Figure 1. Stages of Concerns Questions.

1) I am concerned about the athletes' attitudes toward this innovation.
2) I now know of some other approaches that might work better than this innovation.
3) I don't even know what the innovation is.
4) I am concerned about not having enough time to organise myself each day.
5) I would like to help other coaches in their use of the innovation.
6) I have a very limited knowledge about the innovation.
7) I would like to know how using the innovation will affect my professional status.
8) I am concerned about conflict between my interests and my responsibilities.
9) I am concerned about revising my use of the innovation.
10) I would like to develop working relationships with both our coaches and outside coaches using this innovation.
11) I am concerned about how the innovation affects the athletes.
12) I am not concerned about this innovation.
13) I would like to know who will make the decisions in the new system.
14) I would like to discuss the possibility of using the innovation.
15) I would like to know what resources are available if I (we) decide to adopt this innovation.
16) I am concerned about my inability to manage all that the innovation requires.
17) I would like to know how my coaching or administration is supposed to change.
18) I would like to familiarise other teams or individuals with the progress of this new approach.
19) I am concerned about evaluating my impact on the athletes.
20) I would like to revise the innovation's instructional approach.
21) I am completely occupied with other things.
22) I would like to modify my use of the innovation based on the experiences of our athletes.
23) Although I don't know much about this innovation, I am concerned about things in the area.
24) I would like to excite my athletes about their part in this approach.
25) I am concerned about the time spent working with non-sport problems related to this innovation.
26) I would like to know what the use of the innovation would require of me in the immediate future.
27) I would like to coordinate my effort with others to maximise the innovation's effects.
28) I would like to have more information on time and energy commitments required by this innovation.
29) I would like to know what other coaches are doing in this area.
30) At this time, I am not interested in learning about this innovation.
31) I would like to determine how to supplement, enhance, or replace the innovation.
32) I would like to use feedback from athletes to change the innovation.
33) I would like to know how my role will change when I am using the innovation.
34) Coordination of tasks and people is taking too much of my time.
35) I would like to know how this innovation is better than what I (we) have now.

Data Collection Procedures:

The data for the national survey was collected by direct mail. Questionnaires were distributed to the 364 schools and educational institutions in Singapore with prior written permission from the Extra Curricula Activity (ECA) unit of the Ministry of Education. Participation in the study was voluntary and all subjects were guaranteed anonymity. A university Ethics Review Board endorsed the project.

Analysis of Data:

The survey data was checked for missing values and accuracy of data entry for all the seven Stages of Concerns scores. There were a total of forty-three missing values on some of the variables. The subjects with missing values on a particular variable were excluded from the respective analyses using those variables. As this was an exploratory survey only descriptive data analysis will be reported in this paper. The means (Table 2) at each Stage of Concern are plotted according to coaching levels. The results indicate a similar pattern of concerns for all four coaching groups with no distinct 'user profile' across stages.

Table 2.　Mean Intensity of　PST Concerns at different Coaching Levels in Singapore.

Stage of Concern	School (n=174)	Combined Schools (n=7)	Clubs (n=8)	Nat/ Nat Youth (n=14)
Awareness	15.4	13.4	11.3	14.0
(Stage 0)	(5.0)	(5.9)	(7.4)	(5.4)
Informational	24.3	24.1	23.7	23.6
(Stage 1)	(5.4)	(5.2)	(3.5)	(7.0)
Personal	24.7	23.7	25.8	26.1
(Stage 2)	(6.4)	(6.5)	(5.2)	(7.9)
Management	21.7	22.4	16.4	19.1
(Stage 3)	(6.7)	(6.4)	(6.9)	(7.3)
Consequence	23.3	24.9	26.0	25.1
(Stage 4)	(7.0)	(5.8)	(6.6)	(5.5)
Collaboration	19.6	22.7	24.5	24.8
(Stage 5)	(7.9)	(8.3)	(7.3)	(5.2)
Refocusing	16.9	20.0	22.6	19.2
(Stage 6)	(7.5)	(7.0)	(7.6)	(7.2)
Most Intense Stage	Stage 2	Stage 4	Stage 4	Stage 2
Second Most Intense Stage	Stage 1	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 4

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations

From Table 2 it can be observed that the mean intensity of concern values show that the lower level coaches have the most intense Concerns at early (stages 0,1) stages whilst the higher level coaches have the most intense Concerns at the later stages of concerns (stages 4, 5, 6). This trend was confirmed when comparing most intense/second most intense concerns for each of the coaching group. That is, coaches who coached at a lower level (primary/secondary school) have a combination of early and intermediate concerns while coaches who coached at higher levels (Clubs and National level) have a combination of intermediate and late concerns.

Phase Two:　In-depth interviews on PST concerns among teacher-coaches

Participants:

Individual interviews were conducted with the four coaches who represented each of the four levels of coaching namely Local school level, Combined schools level, Club level and National level. These coaches had agreed to a follow up interview on the initial questionnaire and were readily accessible as well as deemed representative of the sample as a whole. There were three female coaches and one male coach and the four

coaches had been coaching and teaching Physical Education in local schools from between three to five years. The local level school coach was from the primary school (she coached in the upper primary division) and the other three coaches were from the neighbourhood secondary schools. They were all post graduate trained teachers and specialized in teaching Physical Education as well as a second subject.

Data collection:

The in-depth focus interview was selected as an appropriate follow up method of gathering large amounts of data on the issue of programme innovation generally and PST in sport specifically. Of the three types of interviews namely the informal conversation, the interview guide approach and the standardized open-ended approach; the interview guide was selected. The interview guide was partially developed from the data from the survey questionnaire and partly from personal, local experiences of the four interviewers who have all been school coaches themselves. To further augment the audio data the teacher-coaches who were interviewed agreed to be videotaped. The video helped to clarify non-verbal aspects of the transcript such as facial expressions, gestures and emotions. It also helped in the validation and reliability of the data as it could be played and replayed by different researchers as they sought to explain the large amounts of transcribed data.

The interview questions were derived from the national survey conducted in phase one of the project. They were designed to provoke in-depth discussion on sport innovation and PST in Singapore. The results of the first phase of the study allowed the interviewers to focus on specific concerns exhibited by various levels of coaching during the interview. No other studies of this nature had been conducted on local coaches and none were found to have been conducted on Asian coaches. As a result the research group structured additional questions as well as possible themes based upon their knowledge of coaching in local schools. The interview guide consisted of twelve open ended questions which provided a framework for the interview while at the same time allowing the respondents to freely interact with minimal restraint. Besides questions from the stage of concern that appeared the most intense for the coach they were also asked, for example, if they had ever come cross anything comparable to the PST innovation and if they had how they had come to terms with it. They were asked to discuss the receptivity of the student/athletes to PST and whether they thought the students would practice the skills regularly. Prompts were used (from the various stages of concern such as management of PST issues, interest in PST, consequences of using PST with student athletes etc.)

to encourage them to discuss their concerns with some detail while focusing on a particular emerging theme. They talked about their beliefs and experiences concerning coaching generally and the use of PST with their athletes. The interviews were videotaped and the coaches agreed to wear a microphone. The interview sessions were transcribed and the videotaped discussion was compared to the transcripts in their entirety to ensure accuracy. The conversion of the recorded data proved somewhat problematic as interviewees slipped into 'Singlish'[2] and at times used Mandarin to explain a point. Where particularly interesting observations appeared in the text of the transcript the research team located the point on the video and listened to the discussion again to validate the accuracy of the translation. This was deemed awkward and problematic at first but the more we listened to selected sections the more we were able to understand what the subject was trying to say.

Selection and preparation of interviewers:

Four graduate students agreed to be interviewers on the study. The students were selected for a number of reasons. Firstly, they were teacher-coaches themselves in the Singapore system and were familiar with the coaching context of local school sport programs. Secondly, they were taking courses in both sport pedagogy as well as sport psychology. Thirdly, they were planning to use interviewing methods in their future research. Fourthly, they knew the local school-coaching scene and were respected as equals in the system, able to speak and understand the local dialect and could easily make themselves understood. They were also motivated to learn the techniques and the procedures for further study in the future.

The interviewers took a training program where effective interviewing skills were presented and practiced during in-class sessions. The training protocol was derived from the work of Evans, Hearn, Uhlemann and Ivey (1989) and included 'effective questioning', 'paraphrasing' 'focusing' 'summarizing' and 'reflecting feelings' in response to a subjects comments.

Data Analysis:

When attempting to understand phenomenological data researchers are typically presented with a thick description of reading material (and in our case video material) so as to attempt to understand the coaches views of PST in school sport programs. Our interpretive efforts have been described as a 'creative process' which is guided by the theories in use and the research question (Patton, 1990). The inductive process each of us used included a shared assessment of our personal bias about the work followed by a phenomenological reduction of the data. This included the location of phrases

and statements, interpretation of the meaning of these statements, coaches' interpretations of our analysis, and the relationship of our newly formed understanding to the study question. The third step in the process required 'horizontalizing' the data by organizing the data into meaningful clusters. This allowed for a textual illustration or description of the issues which was followed by a structural synthesis. This contained the essence of the coaches' views and revealed the meaning behind their concerns about PST in school sport.

Chronologically, the principal investigator read and viewed the video tape of all four interviews on two separate occasions making summary notes in the margins and on the back of the transcript pages (data reduction). The diagrams on the back of the transcripts resembled spider webs as the observations and comments related back to the concerns based adoption model. At the same time unusual observations that emerged from the interviews were noted in red both on the text then on the back of the pages next to the spider diagram. The four interviewers also read and viewed the videotape of each of the four transcripts that includes the transcript of their own interview as well as those of the other three interviews. This was an attempt to secure inter-interviewer reliability. They were encouraged to use the margins and the reverse of the page as well as use of spider diagrams to make sense of themes and categories of data as it emerged (horizontalizing). Lastly, interviewers were encouraged to identify particularly interesting quotations that they felt might capture a theme or category of concern that might or might not fit into the stages of concern model which was the theory in use for this study. As a group they met on numerous occasions to compare their independently derived themes and categories from their notes and spider diagrams. Their observations turned out to be very similar to each other which is not surprising in that they were exploring the transcripts from a single theory in use. What was interesting, however, was the number of times they recorded the same paragraph and associated it with a particular category of our theory. We negotiated our independent findings until a consensus was reached on the theme and a label to accurately represent it (structural synthesis). Care was taken to ensure that all themes were clearly supported in the data. As a final check we followed the procedure used by Roth (1996) in the validation of learning history data where the interviews were provided to the coaches in a follow up session (come second interview) to ascertain accuracy of the analysis of the data. Minor adjustments were made to the data following the validation process.

Results

In depth participant profiles was beyond the scope of this paper. Instead themes are presented which build upon the concerns exhibited during the national survey and which contrast the personal beliefs of Singapore coaches at different levels of coaching. Commonalties were organized into three themes including (a) marginality (Sparkes et al, 1993), (b) isolation (Stroot et al. 1993) and (c) wash out (Stroot et al. 1993).

Marginality

The perceived low status of the work of Singapore coaches was evident in all the interview data which led participants to suggest that introducing a PST at any level would not be appreciated by either administrators, coaching colleagues or parents alike. This is not a new issue as it has been discussed in the professional socialization literature in Physical Education Teacher Education both in Singapore (Wright, 1997) and elsewhere (Sparkes et al, 1993). In the Singapore context Physical Education is a non-examination subject in schools and considered only marginally important in Singapore compared to the more traditionally examined subjects like Math, Science and English. Similarly, sport coaching is undertaken under the purview of the Physical Education department and it too was of low status. The national survey revealed that the local coaches were high on personal concerns and informational concerns. This is because many coaches only had a passing knowledge of PST as it applies to sport. Thematically there was a clear trend across all four interviewed coaches toward the notion of 'why bother when no-one really cares' in the transcript data? On the one hand the local coach felt that all the school wanted her to do was essentially "supervise a free play experience." PST was considered beyond the scope of their role as a school coach and as no one in their school had ever mentioned it before and if they were truthful they really were "not interested in learning more information about PST". Things might be different if other coaches were using PST in school and they supported each other with suggestions and ideas about developing PST. Further testimony to both the lack of knowledge and interest of local school coaches to PST suggested:

The teams I coach don't have a chance of winning anything anyway so there's not much point teaching something like, what do you call it when a person has butterflies about something, you know they need some, Oh, what's it called (pause), I know, stress management. All the school wants me to do is to make sure no one gets injured and that the kids have

a chance to run around and play. Neither she nor the students (she suggested) were interested in 'performance enhancement' enough that they should bother with PST. Even the combined schools coach referred to the lack of time with the athletes and general sense of futility about developing these players any further than their present level of play. The male coach working with Club level athletes suggested that his organization would be delighted to hear that he was doing mental skills training but they would just use that to sell more registrations and not really worry about what he was doing. As the Club level coach reported:

None of the other coaches at the Club bother with mental training. I bet they don't even know what it is. Anyway, most of the parents don't care what we do when we coach the kids. They just drop them off for training and leave. I once tried to do imagery but when I told the parents the athletes should practice at home they just laughed. They said they had too much homework and swimming was not that important.

The club and national coach were not as persuasive on the marginality issues probably due to the elevated status that goes with select team coaching. However a comment from the national coach that was interviewed did suggest that marginality could well be an issue at her level as well:
I have nothing to do with that side of things (PST) although I sat in on a very boring workshop on it. I concentrate on skills and fitness. The NSA (national organization) would like me to do more but no one really cares as long as we do well in tournaments. Besides I don't know how I would do it with these guys anyway, as we are so busy working on training and technique there is no time for anything else.

Isolation

The notion that coaches specifically feel professionally distanced from their coaching colleagues is not well documented in the literature. However, the isolation felt by young physical education teachers in the USA was reported in Stroot et al. (1993) and then more recently in the local context by Wright, (1997). The interview data revealed that all four Singapore coaches felt isolated. They neither had other coaches to work closely with (even the national level coach) nor did they appear to have any opportunity to interact very often with other coaches either in their school or other schools. On top of this there practice and competition areas were typically distanced from the schools main building. They had a feeling of isolation from each other and from the mainstream program of sporting and educational activity. As the local school coach reported:

Every night we practice it's just me and the students. The other coaches are all over the place and usually they are gone when I get finished. The kids just take off after practice and it's me putting equipment away and checking out the office.

Similar thoughts of isolation from a professional or administrative coaching structure was evident during the interview with the national team coach:

I do it for the players. I know they are keen and have big ideas of playing football for Man U. but they give me a lot of enjoyment. I rarely see other coaches except at national workshops and I don't have an assistant coach. Mostly when we practice there is no one around to help and I have to check out the equipment as well as run practice. It's not great.

The national survey indicated that the Club and National coaches both had high Stage 4 concerns (Consequence). The two coaches representing these levels of coaching suggested that they could do anything they really wanted too as they were running the practice. Their problem was expressed succinctly by the combined schools coach who suggested:

We work on our own and nobody tells us what to do. At least in my school so if we wanted too we could (teach PST) but what if it didn't work? What if the players played badly because they were too busy thinking about their game? Besides I don't know if I know enough to teach it (PST). I would have to take courses and learn what to do. If I didn't and I tried it the players would lose respect for me cause I didn't know what I was talking about.

Wash-out

When young physical educators and coaches graduate from the university they are full of good ideas and innovative solutions to existing professional problems. When they have been in the system for six months or so they have been socialized into the existing culture of the school and are either too intimidated to try something different or forget what might be possible. This has been referred to as a 'wash out effect' (Stroot et al. 1993). Wright (1997) reported a similar finding in his study of Singapore teachers who lose their enthusiasm for new ideas and innovative approaches about six months into their professional life. They assimilate the working procedures and operations of the school they work in and become like their peers. The combined schools and national coach felt that there was a lot of pressure on them to produce results in a short period of time.

The national coach said:

> Usually the players I get are fifteen years old and in their last year of under 16 year's competition. They want to win and so do the administrators in the national organization. There is no time at practice but to train and play. No time of mental training anyway. Besides it would probably take too long to take effect and we don't have that time. The school coaches should do it.

The school coach simply said:

> No, not interested. I mean, if you force me to say what am I most concerned about with psyche skills then I would answer that I don't know much about it. That doesn't mean that I would even consider coaching it. The kids don't need it, they are not skilled enough and the school doesn't ask me to do it so I am just going to give them a ball and let them play. Then pick a team and play a few games. That't it.

Discussion

The national survey on the concerns that coaches have with the implementation of PST was helpful in trying to understand the feelings of Singapore school coaches on this innovation. The data revealed that lower level coaches had high intensity informational and personal concerns about PST. Higher level coaches had high intensity consequence concerns about PST in school sport. Generally speaking, however, all coaches seem to exhibit a 'new user' PST concerns profile. Higher intensity low level concerns and lower intensity high level concerns. The qualitative data revealed that coaches would only have these concerns about the innovation if they were required to implement PST. As it stands now it is a purely optional feature of any coaching programme in Singapore. Much the same way as it is in Canada and other parts of the world. As such the interviews revealed much deeper systemic reasons why PST was essentially of no concern to them. These were classified according to the notions of marginality (Sparkes et al. 1993), isolation (Solomon et al. 1993) and the wash-out effect (Stroot et al, 1993) which have appeared in the professional socialisation (Lawson, 1986) literature over the years.

The fact that physical activity programmes generally in schools are not considered as important as other subjects is a serious problem in Singapore. Especially when it comes to programme development or innovations because the perception is that nobody really cares anyway. When asked why they felt that no-one cares about the after school coaching in schools

the feeling was that because physical education and therefore sport was non-examinable it was therefore not accountable. In short, nobody in authority was too concerned about the ECA sport programme and therefore it was not important. It could be therefore, that examinations in Physical Education might enhance the academic credibility of the subject in school. It might also be helpful to undertake quality assurance measures across the programme and then to use that information to promote the valuable contribution that ECA sport programmes can make in the lives of Singapore children.

Feelings of isolation both physical and professional as well as intellectual were evident in the comments of all four coaches interviewed in this study. Sometimes coaches worked a long way from the school buildings and were isolated in the physical space sense. They were also isolated intellectually, as the work they did was not considered intellectual at all but was purely physical. It was clear that the impressions of these coaches suggested their colleagues did not know what could and should go into a carefully designed physical training programme or a skills development programme. The knowledge these coaches had to bring to bare was perceived of as unimportant in the intellectual scheme of school life. In like manner, the chance to share ideas with other coaches of physical education specialists was also limited. Few were working in teams or had the chance to compare notes or ideas on their coaching experiences. They were working in a professional vacuum. The only reprieve from this situation was during workshops conducted by the school or the Sports Council or the Ministry of Education physical education unit.

When student teachers graduate and enter the teaching force on a full time basis they are fresh with news ideas and new approaches to teaching and coaching which they feel they want to practice in schools. Within a short period of time they experience a reality shock (Lawson, 1986) as they realize that there university experiences were different from the reality of the job. The new ideas they have are not required or appreciated by either their colleagues or the school not to mention the students. The teachers in the school have socialised the students into taking physical education and sport lessons in a particular way and any radical deviation from the school norm was not only unsettling but also potentially disruptive. Young teachers and coaches soon realise that to survive on the job it might be best to conform to the operating procedures of the school and forget about innovative solutions to problems or other changes in work routines. This is known as the wash-out effect that the school has on a graduate's new knowledge and ambitions for themselves and their students.

These issues go far deeper than the notion of the concerns that coaches have with PST innovations in their daily lives. They are systemic issues associated with teaching and coaching in Singapore schools. It seems reasonable to conclude from this study that PST innovations are most likely to be successful in schools where coaches do not feel marginalised, isolated or washed-out. PST innovations will be more successful in schools where sport education is central to the operating ethos of the school and given high status in relation to other aspects of the curriculum.

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[1] Personal conversations with Singapore coaches

[2] A local dialect with a mixture of English and mandarin as well as other local phrases.

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