

## Examining the Relationship Between Selected Human Resources Practices in Professional Sport Coaching

Jhalukpreya Surujlal

North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus),  
Email: Babs.Surujlal@nwu.ac.za

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### Abstract

*Sport in South Africa has grown into an attractive mega-industry that employs many people. Among the different human resources in a sport organisation is the professional sport coach whose job is multi-faceted. The coach plays an important role in helping the sport organisation in achieving its goals and objectives. The management of professional sport coaches requires human resource managers to implement a range of human resources management functions. Among these are recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation, job security and labour relations. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the afore-mentioned functions in sport coaching. The study utilised a quantitative research approach. Four hundred questionnaires were administered to professional sport coaches drawn across from all nine provinces of South Africa. The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (version-22). Frequencies and percentages were used to report on the demographic variables and Pearson correlations were used to examine the relationship between the selected human resources management functions. A positive practical relationship with a large effect was found between recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation, labour relations and with a medium effect with job security. A positive practical relationship with a medium effect was found between training and development, compensation and a large effect between training and development, job security and labour relations. A positive statistical significant relationship was found between compensation, job security and labour relations. The results indicated that all functions need to be considered in the management of professional sport coaches.*

**Keywords:** Training and development, recruitment and selection, labour relations, job security, compensation

### 1. Introduction

Mega sports events hosted by South Africa (SA) have increased tremendously during the past decade. These events have many effects on the host region. Among these are increased international attention, increased interest in tourism, increased employability, increased participation and spectatorship of sport (Green & Chalip, 1998) which has resulted in sport in South Africa growing into an attractive mega-industry that employs many people. Among the different individuals employed by a sport organisation is the sports coach who is considered as one of the primary employees in a sport organisation (Chelladurai, 1999). The sports coach provides an important service, namely coaching which is a multi-faceted job. In carrying out his/her function the coach plays an instrumental role in helping the sport organisation in achieving its goals and objectives. Sports coaches, similar to other employees who offer a service, are responsible to project the image of an organisation or team and ultimately needs to ensure satisfaction of the consumer (fans, sponsors and spectators) (Kelliher & Perrett, 2001). In addition to being motivators, educators, trainers and leaders, professional sport coaches also take on managerial functions such as planning, directing and controlling the activities of their athletes or teams towards the concrete objective of winning (Watson & Tharpe, 1990). Taking into account the significant role that sport coaches play in an organisation, human resource managers at sport organisations are required to implement a range of human resources management functions related to recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation, job security and labour relations in the management of coaches.

### 2. Recruitment and Selection

One of the key functions of human resources managers is to ensure that the right pool of employees are strategically placed within the organisation so that the organisation gains, maintains and sustains its competitive advantage in the market in which it operates. This function involves the recruitment and selection of capable employees who will play important roles in the success of the organisation. According to Bridges and Roquemore (1996) no activity is more important in managing human resources than recruitment and selection. It is therefore imperative that human resources managers adopt proper procedures when recruiting and selecting personnel (Cushway, 1999). Regardless of the

prevalence of effective job designs and impressive organisation charts, no aspect of any organisation will work well if positions are not filled with competent employees since they are the ones that make the organisations' systems work (Chelladurai, 1999).

Recruitment is described as the process of locating, identifying and attracting a pool of capable people to apply for identified vacancies in an organisation (Bratton & Gold, 2007) while selection is described as the process through which human resources managers review the qualifications of applicants for specific jobs and hire those that appear most qualified to do a particular job (Bridges & Roquemore, 1996). Among the different ways in which recruitment is done are: advertising, job centres, employment agencies, walk-in and professional associations (Sisson & Storey, 2000).

### **3. Training and Development**

The differentiation of skills, knowledge and motivation of the workforce in organisations has been receiving increased attention due to the highly competitive environment in which they operate (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). Differentiation can be achieved through the training and development of personnel. Goldstein and Ford (2002) refer to training as a systematic approach to learning so that individual and organisational effectiveness is achieved. It is an attempt to improve the current or future employee performance by increasing an employee's ability to perform through learning by changing his/her skills and knowledge in an activity or range of activities (Cushway, 1999). Training is normally short term and is done to achieve a specific objective. Development, on the other hand, is normally longer term, and refers to providing employees with the abilities that an organisation will need in the future (Gomez-Mejia, Balin & Cardy (1988). It refers to learning opportunities designed to help employees assist the personal growth of employees (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). It is an activity that helps to maintain and improve professional competence and to promote effective performance at work. The aim of effective development is to provide a profession where members are fully trained and competent to perform the tasks expected of them throughout their careers (Surujlal, 2004).

Sport organisations have come to see sport as a means of generating revenues. As a result the coach is called upon to perform different functions. On a managerial level the coach plans, organises, directs and controls the activities of his charges towards the concrete objective of winning (Surujlal, 2004). He/she has the responsibility of providing athletes the opportunity to realise a range of technical, physical and moral excellence (Hardman, Jones & Jones, 2010) as well as educating athletes to develop physically as well as psychologically in the sporting domain. In this role the coach is expected to impart technical, tactical and life skills, including coordinating and guiding athletes in the implementation of these skills (Martens, 2004:vi). In order to develop the skills and abilities, knowledge and wisdom to be receptive, have insight, as well as to be spurred on by an emotional dedication to sport, the self and others (Le Roux, 2007) coaches would require training in the short run and development opportunities over the long term. Coaches thus need to be taught the basics skills like teaching, communicating, motivating and supervising. They should also update their knowledge and skills continuously in order to stay abreast in a complex, competitive and ever-changing sport environment (Mohammadi, Izadi & Salehi, 2011).

### **4. Compensation**

One of the ways of motivating, satisfying and recognising employee outputs is by compensating them appropriately (Surujlal, 2013; Barber & Bretz, 2000). The cornerstone of a compensation package is best viewed as the employees' perceived value of the package. In this regard it is the balance between the rewards that sports organisations offer and the expectations set in exchange for those rewards.

Bratton and Gold (2007) view compensation to be all financial, non-financial and psychological rewards employees receive for performing their jobs. Chelladurai (1999) differentiates between two types of rewards that compensation encompasses, namely intrinsic- and extrinsic rewards. While intrinsic rewards take on an intangible form (e.g. enjoyment), extrinsic rewards take on a tangible form (e.g. salaries, office space, equipment). Apart from the huge cost of facilities is the cost of salaries for a sport organisation (DeSchrive & Mahoney, 2011). According to Gerhart, Rynes and Fulmer (2009) the compensation package is the largest single cost for the average company with employee wages accounting for 60 to 95 percent of average company costs.

A key challenge that faces human resource (HR) managers in sport organisations is how to structure their compensation packages so that not only the employee but also the organisation benefits. In the absence of tangible outputs, it becomes difficult to determine a compensation package for a professional sport coach. Sports organisations offer a wide variety of compensation and reward programs, which need to be customized to reflect the unique business conditions and challenges of the sports industry. Sport organisations need to ensure that the compensation packages are

market-related if they desire to recruit and retain competent sport coaches. The compensation package that are determined for sport coaches depends on many factors which include the performance of the coach in terms of the matches/competitions won, number of athletes successfully coached and the resources provided to the coach to perform his job (Surujlal, 2013).

## **5. Job Security**

One of several issues which sport coaches in sport organisations face regularly is job security (Chelladurai, 1999). In the corporate sector, well performing employees are almost guaranteed a job for life (Burke, 1998). This is, however not the case with regard to sport coaches. With most of the professional sport coaches in the South African sport industry on a contract, a coaching job for life is non-existent (Surujlal, Singh & Hollander, 2005). In corporate organisations job security needs are satisfied for many employees in an organisation by job continuity (no layoffs), a grievance system (to protect against unfair dismissal) and an adequate insurance and retirement benefit package (for security against illness and the provision of income in later life) (Griffin, 1990), but job continuity for professional sports coaches in sport organisations is not guaranteed. The objectives of the sport organisation, organisational structure, skills of the coach, talent of the team, competence of the assistant coach/es and the win/loss record of the coach are some of the factors which determine how long a coach lasts with a sport organisation.

Singh (2001) posits that security in sport coaching lies in the hands of the coach. The author suggests that coaches should rely mostly on their own ability, regardless of the number of assistants on the staff; have complete faith in the players in the team and have faith in assistant coaches, in that they are dedicated enough and possess sufficient knowledge to do an outstanding job of imparting skills and attitudes necessary for excellence in an athlete. Any shortcomings in the afore-mentioned areas may contribute to the job insecurity of the coach. Almost two decades ago, Van Zijl (1984) argued that fluctuating achievements impacted negatively on the job security of coaches and that problems associated with job security and continuity were influenced by the success achieved by the team. A similar situation persists with most professional coaches currently being appraised on their win/loss record (Surujlal et al., 2005). In sport organisations in South Africa most sport coaches are employed on a fixed term contract. This has a negative impact on the job security of sport coaches.

## **6. Labour Relations**

Clegg (1979) describes labour relations as the rules governing employment together with the ways in which the rules are developed and changed, interpreted and administered. It may also be viewed as the relationship between employees and employers. It attempts to explain the practical, everyday problems that arise in the relationship between employers and employees (Ackers, 1994).

Labour relations has become a powerful specialisation within human resources management in many organisations with almost every workplace having its own 'contracts manager' and shop steward (Ackers, 1994). With employment legislation becoming more standardised and more restrictive (Lipiec, 2001), there is an increasing awareness of labour relations, coupled with the continuous pursuit of higher productivity and profits in most organisations resulting in a change in the attitude of South African workers.

The introduction of the Labour Relations Act (Act 66 of 1995) sought to alleviate many of the labour issues at sport organisations. The Labour Relations Act (Act 66 of 1995) (LRA) assists sport organisations by clarifying the law so that human resources managers and coaches are certain about their rights and obligations, ensuring that all coaches are treated equally by the law. It also provides a voluntary system of collective bargaining with minimum interference by statute and courts, for simplified dispute procedures, bringing the South African labour law into line with international labour law standards and complying with the labour relations provisions in the constitution. Advocates of employee involvement argue for labour/management relationships that make unions 'partners' in the organisation's success and regard them as 'critical partners' in helping the organisation achieve its objectives. The union also assumes responsibility for quality, thus creating opportunity for more systems thinking and more problem solving. These relationships also help create a climate in which employees participate in many of the important decisions. In the absence of union support for employee problem solving and union/employee participation in improvement groups, there is a danger that employees will not trust the process (Bowen, Lawler & Edward, 1992).

## **7. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between labour relations, recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation, and job security in professional sport coaching.

## **8. Methodology**

### **8.1 Design**

In addition to a literature review of human resources management a quantitative research approach was used for the study. According to Malhotra (2004), this approach allows for a large number of representative cases to be used, the data collection is structured and quantifiable, and the data analysis is statistical in this approach. Such an approach also eliminates possible subjectivity of judgment (Rozina & Matveev, 2002).

### **8.2 Sample**

The target population of the study comprised professional sport coaches at sport organisations in all nine provinces in South Africa. In the context of this study, a professional sport coach is a person who possesses a body of knowledge in a particular sport and imparts such knowledge to his/her athletes. The coach's main source of income is through sport coaching (Surujlal, 2004).

A list of sport organisations affiliated to the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC) formed the sampling frame of the study. A non-probability convenience sampling method was used to recruit the sample for the study. Four hundred and fifty sport coaches from different sports from all nine provinces in South Africa were invited to participate in the study. Two hundred and thirty eight (n=238; response rate=53%) questionnaires were completed and returned.

### **8.3 Instrumentation and procedures**

A two-section questionnaire was developed based on a comprehensive literature study. Section A of the questionnaire requested respondents to provide demographic information such as gender, age, highest level of professional qualification, number of years of experience, main code of sport and the province in which the respondent worked. In Section B of the questionnaire responses to questions pertaining to human resources management were requested. Items in the scale were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 expressing strongly agree and 5 expressing strongly disagree. The questionnaire was pre-tested with coaches before the main survey to identify and eliminate problems relating to ambiguity and grammar as well as to ascertain its content validity. According to Sudman and Blair (1998) this helps to affirm that the questionnaire captures the information sought by the researcher.

The questionnaires were administered in the following ways: hand delivered, posted or e-mailed to potential participants. A cover letter was attached to the questionnaire explaining the purpose of the study as well as informing the participants that their participation in the study was voluntary. They were also informed that they would remain anonymous at all times and that the data would be treated confidentially and reported in aggregate.

## **9. Data Analysis**

The data were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS –version 22). Descriptive statistics were used to report on the demographic data and correlations and regressions were used to analyse the relationship between recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation, job security and labour relations in professional sport coaching.

## **10. Results**

The demographic profile of the participants is provided in Table 1. More male (n=160; 67%) than female coaches (n=77; 32%) completed the questionnaire. Most coaches were in the age bracket 26-35 years of age (n=97; 41%) followed by those in the 36-45 years age bracket (n=74, 31%). The majority of the coaches had either a Level 1 or Level 2 coaching qualification (n= 65%).

**Table 1:** Demographic profile of the Study Population (n=238)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female (1)	77	32.4
	Male (2)	160	67.4
	Missing responses	1	0.40
	Total	238	100.0
Age	18 to 25 years	21	8.8
	26 to 35 years	97	40.8
	36 to 45 years	74	31.1
	46 to 55 years	29	12.2
	56 and older	3	1.3
	Missing responses	14	5.9
	Total	238	100.0
Highest level of professional qualification in coaching	Matric	34	14.3
	Level 1	80	33.6
	Level 2	74	31.1
	Level 3	26	10.9
	Level 4	11	4.6
	Level 5	6	2.5
	Other	5	2.1
	Missing responses	2	0.8
	Total	238	100
Number of completed years of professional coaching experience	1-5 years	72	30.2
	6-10 years	74	31.1
	11-15 years	49	20.6
	16-20 years	29	12.2
	21-25 years	4	1.6
	26- 30 years	5	2.1
	30 years and more	2	0.8
	Missing responses	3	1.3
	Total	238	100.0

**Table 2:** Alpha coefficients and Pearson correlations

Variable	$\alpha$	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Recruitment and selection	0.70	6.24	1.70	1			
2. Training and development	0.78	13.58	4.38	0.35**	1		
3. Compensation	0.64	10.35	3.00	0.35**	0.24**	1	
4. Job security	0.82	21.91	5.80	0.61**	0.63**	0.48**	1
5. Labour relations	0.83	21.68	5.84	0.61**	0.56**	0.12	0.66**

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As reflected in Table 2 all the Cronbach coefficients are 0.6 and above which are acceptable due to the exploratory nature of the study (Kim & Kim, 1995).

The strength of the relationship between the selected HR practices was measured using the guidelines suggested by Cohen (1988). According to Cohen (1988) the strength of the relationship can be measured as follows:  $\pm$  (0.5 to 1.0) = large;  $\pm$  (0.3 to 0.49) = Moderate; and  $\pm$  (0.1 to 0.29) = small. It is evident from Table 2 that a practical significant relationship with a medium effect exists between recruitment and selection, training and development and compensation of coaches. A practical significant relationship with a large effect exists between recruitment and selection, job security and labour relations. Only a statistical significant relationship exists between training and compensation of sport coaches. A practical significant large effect exists between training and development, job security and labour relations of sport coaches. A practical significant medium effect exists between compensation and job security of sport coaches. A practical significant large effect exists between job security and labour relations.

**Table 3:** Multiple regression analyses with labour relations as a dependent variable and recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation and job security as independent variables

Model		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	p	F	R	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
1	(Constant)		7.32	0.00	128.58	.607	.369	.37*
	Recruitment and selection	0.61	11.34	0.00				
2	(Constant)		4.09	0.00	54.81	.704	.495	.13*
	Recruitment and selection	0.47	9.07	0.00				
	Training and development	0.38	7.40	0.00				
3	(Constant)		5.19	0.00	11.08	.721	.520	.02*
	Recruitment and selection	0.52	9.85	0.00				
	Training and development	0.41	8.03	0.00				
	Compensation	-.171	-3.33	0.00				
4	(Constant)		5.17	0.00	37.81	.769	.591	.07*
	Recruitment and selection	0.36	6.47	0.00				
	Training and development	0.22	3.88	0.00				
	Compensation	-0.27	-5.35	0.00				
	Job security	0.43	6.15	0.00				

\*Statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$

The results in Table 3 indicate that recruitment and selection predicts Labour Relations in Model 1. Model 1 accounts for 37% of the variance in Labour Relations and is significantly fit of the data ( $F_{(1,220)} = 128.58$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The adjusted  $R^2$  (0.36) shows some shrinkage from the unadjusted value (0.38) indicating that the model may not generalise well. In terms of the individual predictor it could be reported that Recruitment and Selection ( $\beta = 0.61$ ;  $t = 7.31$ ;  $p < 0.00$ ) predicted a positive Labour Relations. In Model 2, adding Recruitment and Selection and Training and Development the statistical significance decrease in the prediction of variance in Labour Relations ( $F_{(1,219)}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $\Delta R^2=0.13$ ), accounting for approximately 13% of the total variance. More specifically, it seems that significant predictors of positive relationship are Recruitment and Selection ( $\beta = 0.47$ ;  $t = -2.13$ ;  $p < 0.00$ ) and Training and Development ( $\beta = 0.38$ ;  $t = -7.40$ ;  $p < 0.00$ ,  $t = -3.00$ ;  $p < 0.00$ ). All variables in Model 2, VIF values are below 10 or alternatively tolerance values are well above 0.20, indicating no multicollinearity in the data. In Model 3, by Compensation being added to this step only 2% of the total variance is explained. Taken together, it seems that significant predictors of Labour Relations are Recruitment and Selection ( $\beta = 0.52$ ;  $t = -6.47$ ;  $p < 0.00$ ), Training and Development ( $\beta = 0.41$ ;  $t = 8.03$ ;  $p < 0.00$ ) and Compensation ( $\beta = -0.17$ ;  $t = -3.33$ ;  $p < 0.00$ ). In Model 4, Job Security was added to this step. By adding Job Security it did not statistically significantly influence the model, which explains 7% of the total variance. It seems therefore that Recruitment and Selection ( $\beta = 0.36$ ;  $t = 6.47$ ;  $p < 0.00$ ), Training and Development ( $\beta = 0.22$ ;  $t = 3.88$ ;  $p < 0.00$ ), Compensation ( $\beta = -0.27$ ;  $t = -5.35$ ;  $p < 0.00$ ) and Job Security ( $\beta = 0.43$ ;  $t = 6.15$ ;  $p < 0.00$ ) influence Labour Relations to an extent.

## 11. Discussion

The results of the study indicate the important role that recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation and job security plays in determining labour relations practices in sport organisations in South Africa. The stepwise regression analysis (Table 3) reflected that the largest predictor of labour relations is recruitment and selection. This implies that if the recruitment and selection processes are proper, the organisation is unlikely to face any labour-related issues. It is therefore imperative that sport organisations adopt proper procedures when recruiting and selecting personnel (Cushway, 1999). The selection process in an organisation can have a significant impact not only on the output in an organisation but also on labour relations practices, turnover and retention of employees. The recruitment and selection process must comply with the provisions made by the government (e.g. the Labour Relations Act (Act 66 of 1995) and Employee Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998). Deviance from this Act may have serious consequences such as staff dissatisfaction, go-slow or strikes.

Training and development also predicted labour relations positively. The dynamic nature of sport organisations and the increasing demands placed on sport coaches compel HR managers in sport organisations to address issues such as training and development so that sport coaches are not only capable of doing their job but also provides the organisation with a competitive edge. Effective and efficient management and implementation of training programmes reduces learning costs, increases performance and overall productivity, increases job knowledge and extends employees' range



of skills (Surujlal, 2013).

Uncertainty in the job situation influences job security of sport coaches negatively and may influence labour relations. Sport organisations should, therefore, take proactive measures to ensure that the job security needs of sport coaches (e.g. a grievance system to protect one against unfair dismissal; retirement packages for provision of income in later life) are met.

Compensation was found to be a negative predictor of labour relations. This implies that if compensation is not viewed as fair to employees, it is likely that labour related issues may surface. It is therefore important that the compensation system should be fair and clearly indicate how outputs are measured and rewarded (Surujlal, 2004). Employees should be able to see justice in the compensation offered. Sport organisations which operate in an increasingly competitive environment should ensure that their compensation packages are competitive and market-related if they wish to attract and retain good coaches.

## 12. Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between selected human resources practices. Given that the HR function in sport organisations today is more integrated and strategically involved, it is difficult to ignore the inter-relatedness of human resources practices such as labour relations, recruitment and selection, training and development, job security and compensation. Professional sport coaches who are an integral part of the human resources at sport organisations play a vital role in contributing towards the achievement of organisational goals. Therefore implementation of human resources practices should be efficient and consistent so that labour relations issues do not hinder the progress of a sport organisation.

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