

New Zealand Soccer Review of Coach Education



June 2006

CONTEXT

The current NZS Coach Education scheme, launched in 2003, was welcomed by many and seen as a radical but positive shift away from the existing scheme that had been in operation since the early 1990's. The contemporary structure, built on the qualities of the existing scheme, provided coaches with a progressive framework for development, from grass roots to elite levels. It offered an array of formal qualifications that could be accessed through either regional or national courses and catered for the progressive development of both coaches and coach educators alike.

As the incumbent scheme moves into its third year of operation, strategically it is prudent to evaluate its impact to date and identify and consider the opportunities for future growth.

Moreover, in light of the changes to the New Zealand Coaching Strategy '*laying the foundations to create a world class coaching environment that meets the needs of New Zealand's coaches and the athletes they coach*' (SPARC 2005) and the subsequent recommendations to National Sporting Organizations, 2006 becomes a highly appropriate time to conduct a formal review of the NZS Coach Education Scheme.

BACKGROUND

The review and development process will provide a vehicle to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the current scheme, elicit ideas from New Zealand's soccer coaching community and dovetail these findings with 'best practice' features identified from evaluations of Coach Development models worldwide. The subtle integration of these findings, coupled with the process of overlaying the key recommendations from SPARC's Coaching strategy, will provide New Zealand coaches with a significantly enhanced programme of development. In addition, the approach adopted aims to provide key stakeholders with the opportunity to take a leadership role in the conception of a 21st Century model for Coach Development in New Zealand.

FOCUS AREAS

The focus of this review is not just to identify the reasons for the successes and failures of the existing scheme; the following list of reference points was used as a guide to maximize the impact of the work conducted. The work would seek to:

- Generate an understanding of both the range and the idiosyncrasies of the coaching environments found within New Zealand and illuminate the specific development needs of the coaches working within these various settings.
- Provide an understanding of the core needs of players as they move across and through the soccer opportunities continuum.
- Clearly pinpoint 'where' standards in coaching can be raised.
- Strategically address the issue of 'how' to raise standards in soccer coaching.
- Delineate New Zealand's coaching spectrum and subsequently allow development activities to be tailored to the appropriate clientele, which will in turn maximize their impact on players.
- Provide an understanding of Best practice and access models that may be used to inform future planning.
- Provide an understanding of 'What' coach development model will have the desired impact in raising standards.
- Establish 'How' to develop a strategic fit with the New Zealand Coaching Strategy (SPARC 2005)

It is therefore the purpose of this review to augment our understanding in a number of key areas that will provide a knowledge base from which to make effective decisions when determining and strategizing the future of Coach Development in New Zealand.

PROCESS

Review outlines (see appendix one), including terms of reference, were disseminated directly to a cross section of coaches and coach educators who had completed NZS coaching courses during 2004 and 2005. The target group was chosen from the full range of courses, grass roots to high performance, and the list of those selected ensured a geographical spread across the country. In addition, Federation Directors of Football were charged with the task of targeting key people within their own regions in order to distribute the review document to critical stakeholders. The document was also made publicly available on the NZ Soccer website and was advertised on the website throughout the month of March 2006. The closing date for submissions was April 10th 2006, one month after its release.

A list of contributors can be found in appendix two. Of the 20 submissions received, 7 were from New Zealand Soccer or Federation staff. The remaining contributors were made up of junior club coaching directors/coordinators, coach educators, an overseas respondent and a number of passionate coaches from throughout New Zealand, of which some remained anonymous.

PURPOSE

The objectives of the review were as follows:

- To engender a feeling of inclusiveness across the various coaching communities.
- To create a transparent and shared process for reviewing and moving forward 'our' coach development scheme.
- To understand the key areas for future development according to those who have worked, or are currently working, within the existing coach education framework
- To capture the best ideas surrounding future development and solutions to any of the challenges that may hinder coach development throughout NZ.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

In terms of the quantity of the submissions received, the response was certainly disappointing, however the quality of information contained in the submissions helped to make up for this. Collectively, the views and opinions have offered an insight into the thoughts and ideas of a group of stake holders that are passionate about coaching and the development of this area of our game. Indeed, the information presented was highly 'solution focused' and not only outlined key areas for change and development, but also included novel ways of improving the service we offer to coaches and perhaps more importantly players.

The following is a summary of the key themes presented:

MEETING THE NEEDS OF COACHES

- There is a need for leadership from a coach development team that is underpinned by a clear understanding of the specific needs of NZ coaches, taking into account the cultural nuances of football within and throughout NZ.
- Time and energy must be spent researching and comparing the specific needs of the various coaching communities found within the game i.e. a coach working within an elite women's premier team or someone preparing an 11th grade boys team for a local club competition.
- A coach's toolkit that enables coaches to both effectively communicate with and create learning environments for the players they are coaching is needed. Linked in with this is the availability of age specific coaching programmes and resources that cater for the holistic development needs of all players. Such resources could be presented as part of a virtual coaching centre that coaches can access at the touch of a button at their own convenience. Many submissions reflected the need for both self-learning opportunities and 'on the job learning' that could be supported by mentoring programmes.
- It was unanimously accepted that coaches need more opportunities to access informal development. These informal opportunities may take the form of workshops, conferences, conventions, seminars or informal development modules. These modules may have a range of outcomes i.e. courses that aim to provide learning bridges from one coaching level to the next or refresher courses that aim to provide on going development for coaches who have completed formal qualifications.

- There was a clear need to provide coaches with frequent and convenient 'club based' support/training and it was suggested that NZ Soccer and clubs should work more closely to provide such opportunities, both formal and informal. Furthermore there is a recognized need to develop a structure that provides clubs with trained mentors who can assist coaches with their personal development, at all levels of player development. Buddy systems (coaches pairing up and evaluating each others work) would also be beneficial.
- Most submissions outlined the need to either reduce or remove the cost of entry level courses, as an incentive to beginner coaches. It was also apparent that NZS and Federations should be responsible for offering 'free of charge' informal workshops and refresher courses to support continued coach development. Some stakeholders highlighted that the high costs of entry level courses had forced clubs into designing and implementing their own coach development programmes.
- The content of entry level courses should be practical and encapsulate the principles of delivering fun and safe coaching practices.
- Some concerns were raised with regard to the 'competency' aspect of assessment and specifically whether this is a necessary aspect of the coach development process. Indeed it was suggested that both the criteria and decision making process surrounding candidate competency was often blurred and lacked the clarity required by candidates to fully understand their level of competence on conclusion of a course.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF PLAYERS

- Most submissions commented on the importance of coaches having up-to-date qualifications and felt that it was a responsibility of both clubs and NZ Soccer to develop structures to monitor and support coaches through a re-validation process. Coupled to this was a strong message to make coaching qualifications mandatory at the junior levels of the game.
- The need to develop coaching courses that are player focused and provide coaches with information that will help them guide players to reach their full potential was identified. Such courses should incorporate a holistic approach to player development and identify the various needs of players at each development level.
- The above findings highlight the need for coach development and player development to go hand in hand and the content used to develop our coaches should reflect the needs of our players at all levels.

COACH DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURE

- Concern was raised about the impact of change on change, as NZ Soccer only last launched a new Coach Education Scheme in 2003. Thus it was highlighted that change should be strategic and not reactive, justified, and properly managed to achieve an effective structure that supports player development within the context of NZ's current football structure.
- In general, respondents saw the club structure as being a hub for coach development and that subsequent coach development approaches and regional delivery plans should harness the opportunity clubs present. Indeed, it was unanimously accepted that the club based structure should involve ongoing, formal and informal development opportunities for coaches, as described earlier.
- It was proposed that NZS should empower specific personnel working within club environments and consequently support the personal development of current and potential coach educators. It was suggested that this process should be managed by Federation or Coach Force Development officers. Furthermore, each region/district should have a 'coach mentor' or 'key personality' that is responsible for the ongoing development of grass root coaches and will be available to support the personal development of coaches in their own environments.
- A structure that embraces the use of multi-media is required, in particular website development is needed to enable, amongst other things, on-line learning for coaches.
- Coaches require an assessment structure that is both transparent and robust and as well as a reliable system for monitoring and managing the quality of the coach development scheme.
- Most submissions outlined the importance of having a structure where the development steps for coaches were sequential, realistic and provided learning bridges between each step in the form of informal preparatory courses.
- Any new structure should be shaped by a philosophy that promotes the 'continual journey of the coach', as opposed to focusing on the coach 'reaching a destination'.
- Content of courses must reflect the needs of the players that coaches work with. In this respect, the NZ coaching structure should incorporate levels of learning that allow coaches to access the specific knowledge and

skills that are required to effectively meet the needs of the groups they work with. To achieve this, an understanding of the needs of players across the player development continuum is first required. Only then can the appropriate learning packages be designed and delivered to support coaches with their understanding of these needs. In support of this, one submission suggested that there was a need to look beyond 'technical and tactical' content and towards providing coaches with a deeper understanding of the holistic development needs of our players.

- The majority of submissions identified both Sport Science and Injury Prevention as key components of the coach development structure. The inclusion of Injury Prevention was portrayed as being paramount to the development of entry level coaches, in order to provide players with a safe introduction to the game. However, there was clear point of division as to whether Sport Science should be included in the development of coaches at every level, providing age specific information, or as part of a more advanced development pathway for coaches.
- Concerns were raised about the reliability and effectiveness of the management and administration structures supporting the current coach development scheme. It was argued that unless the underpinning structures were robust and reliable, any attempt to build new structures would be futile.
- Only top coach educators should be utilized at the high performance end of the spectrum. This could include utilising experienced coach educators from overseas.
- The coach development structure should link specifically to New Zealand's football structure and mandatory qualifications should be introduced for coaches to work at specific levels within the game, i.e. premier league.
- There is a need to develop courses that are coach centered and promote learning in realistic practical environments, i.e. demonstrations and experience with players of a relevant age group, as opposed to using course candidates as has traditionally been the case.

BEST PRACTICE RESEARCH

- Most submissions outlined the importance of conducting best practice research, but also highlighted the need to ensure that research focused on countries where the transfer of findings could be readily matched with the needs and unique nature of football in New Zealand. Moreover it was suggested that best practice research should not always be conducted

overseas and that there was a need to examine the coach development models of successful NZ sporting codes.

- It is concluded that there must not be an over-reliance on using best practice research and ‘following’ others. Rather, more attention should be paid to the uniqueness of New Zealand’s situation and becoming more innovative to maximize our own strengths.

COACH RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

- In general, respondents saw Federations and NZS as having a key responsibility in managing and monitoring the recruitment and retention of coaches. Federation Development Officers and NZS Coach Force personnel should be responsible for a regional quota of coaches to recruit and retain each year.
- NZS and Federations should work in partnership to promote the coaching pathway, sell its benefits and raise the profile of volunteer coaches. With respect to the latter, this may include Federations developing recognition schemes, i.e. regional volunteer ‘Coach of the Year’ awards for coaches working across the spectrum of coaching communities. This could in turn dovetail with a national recognition programme driven by NZS.
- Taster and refresher courses need to be designed by NZS and delivered by Federations to either stimulate interest in football coaching or to provide continued support for those coaches currently working with teams. The taster sessions could focus on working with specific target groups, i.e. senior club players, youth players, school or university students.
- There has been little attempt, by Federations or NZS, to market and promote coach development opportunities. At best, a flyer is produced or a section of a website dedicated to offering a programme of courses. There has been little in the way of direct marketing to specific target groups, selling the benefits of coaching and outlining the exciting features of the courses available.
- Incentives may be required for coaches to attend courses, e.g. give-aways and access to free online resources.
- Internet chat rooms/portals would create a forum for discussion, connect coaches and create communities for them to share ideas and solve common problems.
- The high registration costs associated with grass root courses are proposed as the reason for low recruitment and retention of coaches. Indeed, it was

suggested that coaches often leave the sport due to the lack of readily accessible and realistically priced development opportunities. Coaches state the same reasons for not committing to courses and taking on coaching positions.

- The need to establish a Coaches Association of some kind was a feature of over half of the submissions received. This could be supported by e-updates, newsletters, conferences and coaching chat rooms.
- Concern was raised about the impact change would have on the retention of coaches who had invested time and money in the previous qualification structure. It was thought that some coaches would become disillusioned by major change, subsequently inflating the end of season coach attrition rates that clubs apparently face.

USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) TO SUPPORT COACH DEVELOPMENT

Many of the views and ideas surrounding the use of IT have been discussed earlier. The following list summarises the requirements proposed:

- Website dedicated to coach development offering a range of services including:
 - On line courses
 - Regularly updated coaching resources
 - News and information on coaching courses, seminars, etc.
 - Coach 'chat room'
 - Links to other coaching sites
 - On-line discussion forums with expert coaches.
- E-mail and text updates of regional courses and new promotions.
- CD-Roms and DVDs to support coaching courses.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS (to be included into a Strategic Plan)

- Develop an understanding of the development needs of our players, at all levels in the game, in order to produce both relevant and specific coaching content for coaches working within and across the various coaching communities.
 - Research the needs of players participating in soccer at all levels, from grass roots to elite.
 - Use the research to inform planning around the creation of a coach development framework that can specifically meet the needs of football players at all levels throughout New Zealand.
 - Create a range of learning opportunities for coaches that specifically centre on maximizing effectiveness with the players they actually coach.
 - Adopt an approach that not only provides coaches with the appropriate level of learning, but exclusively meets their coaching needs at a particular point in their development (adopting a customer focused approach to coach development).
 - Subtly raise the number of accredited coaches working within the game, by increasing the quality, accessibility and relevance of coach development opportunities.
 - Introduce 'basic mandatory learning experiences' for coaches that provide them with the fundamental knowledge that will support them working effectively, with a specific group of players, i.e. in its simplest form; to develop an understanding of health and safety issues surrounding working with 6 year old children.
- Create a coach development structure that is tailored to the needs of coaches working within the various coaching communities throughout New Zealand.
 - Increase the development opportunities afforded to coaches 'more opportunities, more often'.
 - Expand the range of development opportunities to include a new line of informal coach development packages.
 - Provide content that is relevant and specific to the players and the working environments that coaches currently face.
 - Generate development opportunities that are easily accessible (club based programmes), affordable, well marketed and that place the coach's specific needs at the centre of the programming process (i.e. venue, duration and time all carefully customized to ensure a customer focused approach).
 - Develop more support mechanisms for coaches; including club based mentoring programmes and a virtual coaching centre that

- can offer a range of services and development opportunities (i.e. on-line courses) to facilitate continued development.
- Philosophically, create flexible delivery and the potential for coaches to progressively accumulate learning over time. The focus being on the 'flexible and continuing journey of the coach', as opposed to the rigid achievement of set milestones and destinations.
- Harness the power of clubs to deliver, grow and release the potential of the coach development scheme:
 - Research the opportunities and capacities for clubs to support 'in-house' coach development in both formal and informal formats.
 - Develop models for applicable and practical club structures that can support effective 'in-house' coach development.
 - Use Coach Force National Development Officers and local Federation resources to provide an appropriate level of support to clubs when designing and implementing their own coach development structures.
 - Formulate an accreditation, management and administration structure that provides a strong and fertile foundation from which the scheme can grow.
 - Develop procedures and protocols for evaluating both the quality and effectiveness of the scheme.
 - Outline clear management and administrative roles and utilize a monitoring process to ensure that the coach development service delivered to stakeholders is of the highest quality.
 - Design and implement an assessment process and accreditation/re-accreditation system that meets the needs of New Zealand coaches, is transparent, robust and reliable and is continually monitored to ensure consistency of delivery and a high level of customer satisfaction.
 - Create an accreditation scheme that reflects New Zealand's unique football structure.
 - Work closely with Federations to support the design and implementation of regional delivery plans and continually monitor the effectiveness of coach development delivered at the regional level.
 - Continue research into best practice with a specific focus on models that best fit New Zealand's current situation. These may or may not be football specific models and should be elicited from overseas and/or domestically.
 - Work with the Federations to plan and manage national and regional 'volunteer coach' recruitment and retention strategies.

- Develop taster and refresher courses to promote and support both recruitment and retention.
 - Introduce fresh and novel marketing campaigns selling the benefits of coaching and promoting coach development opportunities.
 - Design and implement incentive schemes, for new and existing coaches, i.e. free courses for beginner coaches etc.
 - Create and unite communities of coaches and move towards establishing a formal coach development scheme.
- Use the power of Information Technology to both support the delivery of the coach development structure and to enhance the range of services offered to coaches.
 - Devise an IT strategy aimed at prioritizing the needs and maximizing the opportunities that IT presents, in a planned and progressive manner.

CONCLUSION

The information presented in this review reveals a high level of joined-up thinking among people from all parts of the game and demonstrates a shared understanding of how to move coach development forward. The suggestions provided here, without the influence of best practice research, unanimously point towards the need for an emphasis on helping coaches to both understand and effectively meet the specific needs of New Zealand players in all football environments. The evidence also leans towards NZS creating and providing a non rigid coach development structure that is capable of producing a higher volume of coaching opportunities, in a range of user friendly formats, which allows coaches to access learning when they are ready to start or continue their development. In closing, the review has provided a strong insight into the minds of a diverse group of passionate New Zealand coaches, both past and present, creating a fertile foundation on which to grow ideas and build the new future for coach development.

Appendix 1

NZS Coach Education Review 2006 – Your opinion counts

The current NZS Coach Education scheme, launched in 2003, has provided a progressive framework for coach development from grass roots to elite levels. The incumbent scheme offers an array of formal qualifications to a wide audience that can be accessed either through regional or national courses catering for the progressive development of coaches and coach educators alike.

While the scheme moves into its third year of operation, strategically it is prudent to evaluate its impact to date in addition to identifying and considering the opportunities for future growth. Moreover, in light of changes to the New Zealand Coaching Strategy *'laying the foundations to create a world class coaching environment that meets the needs of New Zealand's coaches and the athletes they coach'* (SPARC 2005), and the subsequent recommendations to National Sporting Organizations, 2006 presents itself as a highly plausible option for conducting a formal review of the NZS Coach Education Scheme.

It is therefore the purpose of the document attached to provide you with an opportunity to draw on your experiences and lead the continued development and improvement of our coach development programmes. In this respect the scope for submission, outlined overleaf, provides a framework on which to attach your thoughts and ideas on how we can together raise standards in coach development. The questions are designed to stimulate thinking and provide cohesion to the feedback presented, however feel free to extend the boundaries, particularly when creating solutions to the challenges we may currently face.

The terms of reference for submissions, which will close on Monday 10th of April, 2006 are provided in the attachment and are also available on our website www.nzsoccer.com. If you have any further questions, please call John Herdman Coach Development Manager on (09 414-0187 or 021 734381) or e-mail johnh@soccernz.co.nz. Proposed recommendations stemming from this review will be announced early June for implementation in July 2006.

Review of NZS Coach Education Scheme Submission Guidelines

Closing Date: 5pm Monday 10th of April, 2006

Submission Address NZS Soccer
Coach Education Submission
By email: johnh@soccernz.co.nz
By post: PO BOX 301-043

Albany

Auckland

Attn: John Herdman

By fax: 09 4140176

Please include contact details in your submission

Scope for Submission

1. Meeting the Needs of Coaches

- What do coaches working in the modern environment need most from a coach development scheme?
- How might we cater for the needs of all coaches working in all environments throughout NZ?
- What learning opportunities should be presented to coaches to help meet their needs?
- How should learning be presented to coaches, what forms should coach development take?

2. Meeting the Needs of Players

- What do players need most from their coach and what impact does this have on the future of coach development?
- How can we maximize the impact a coach development structure will have on our players at all levels?

3. The Coach Development Structure

- Where do we need to raise standards in coaching and how should the coach development scheme contribute to raising standards?
- How might a scheme be structured to support the development of all NZ coaches i.e. certification and licensing.
- What part does assessment play in the coach development process?

- Where and how does the development of a knowledge of sport sciences fit into the coach development structure
- Where and how does a knowledge of injury prevention fit into the coach development structure

4. Best Practice Research:

- Should best practice models elicited from soccer and other codes both nationally and internationally to inform the NZS coach development approach?

5. Coach Recruitment & Retention

- How might coach development be used as a vehicle to recruit coaches?
- How might coach development be used as a vehicle to retain coaches?
- How should courses/programmes be marketed to our coaches?

6. Using IT to support Coach Development?

- How can we make best use of IT systems to best support the development of coaches?

7. Sport Science

Please note these are guidelines for your submission only. If you believe that there are other areas that need to be addressed or that would contribute significantly to the coach development scheme, please include them.

Appendix 2

Submissions were gratefully received from the following people. In addition, thank you to those people who remained anonymous and those not included in this list due to the illegibility of the signature presented.

Federation Representatives

Tom Randles	Capital Soccer
Rod Pelosi	Central Soccer
Wayne Dyche	Soccersouth

Junior Club Coaching Directors

Brian Derby	Fencibles Soccer Club
Mark Carter	Three Kings Soccer Club
	Western Springs Junior Club Captain

Education Sector

Jimmy Hogg	Auckland Grammar
Dr Andy Martin	Massey University
Dr Paul Potrac	Brunel University (UK)

NZ Soccer

Ricki Herbert	High Performance Manager and National Coach
Michelle Cox	Head of Women's Football

Coach Force Representatives

Maurice Tillotson	North Auckland Region
Keith McKay	South Auckland Region

NZ Soccer International Team Manager

Charlie Howe



Regional or Club Coaches

Robert Purcell
Ali Bingham
Phillipa Geguer

Nameless submission x 3