

COACHING AS AN APPROACH TO MOTIVATION IN ADOLESCENT ATHLETES

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ABSTRACT

This work deals with theoretical foundations of motivation and analyzes the different motivational theories and principles applied in sports. A coaching approach was focused in terms of increase on motivation of teenaged sportspersons. In the research project a coaching approach was examined and compared with a traditional conduct and the GROW method has been used as a motivational instrument. The results obtained by means of psychodiagnostic inventory and motivational questionnaire, constructed and examined by students for this purpose, showed the positive influence of coaching and the GROW method on a motivational level of the experimental group compared to control one. Coaches who have been systematically trained in coaching and in the GROW method as well considered these tools as an efficient way to improve internal motivation for teenagers in the field of sport performance.

Keywords: extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, transformational leading, coaching, GROW method

INTRODUCTION

Developmental period of adolescence is critical in terms of sport motivation not only on a recreational but also on a performing level. Schools with sports education report less and less applicants. According to the director of a sports school in Bratislava the index (i.e. applicants versus accepted students) has decreased from 3:1 to 1:1 in the last ten years. In other words, sports schools have no choice other than accept almost all applicants in order to fill their capacities. Therefore, it is challenging to find new ways of making sport more attractive for youngsters. One aspect of this process is to improve the communication between the athletes and the coaches or sports teachers. We have to learn to understand young sportsmen better and accept their needs and desires for sport and consequently make the training process more attractive and motivating.

METHODS

The subject matter of our research is the coaching approach and its so called GROW method.

Based on the transformational model of communication (ADAIR, 2004), coaching is seen as a higher level of communication, which helps to increase awareness and independence.

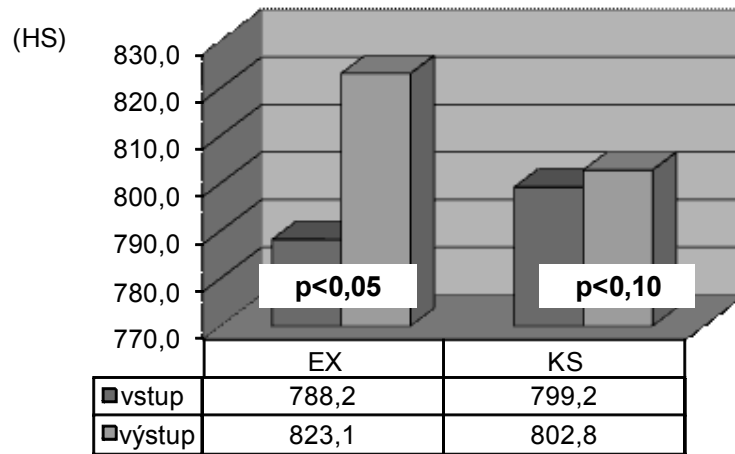
This model distinguishes qualitatively four phases of communication process: directing, coaching, supporting and delegating. It is recommended to start with a directive style but gradually change to a coaching style which is more symmetric; it enhances partnership between the coach and the athlete, which also increases independence of an athlete. More studies suggest that an open communication is more motivating for people in sport as well as in the business domain (GALLWEY 2010, ATKINSON-CHOIS 2009, WHITMORE 2009, PARMA 2006, GIERTLOVÁ 2004). The GROW method is a semi structured interview between the coach and the coachee (i.e. between a trainer and an athlete) which consists of four successive phases (the acronym GROW). In the first phase called „Goal (G)“ the coach supports the coachee in defining and setting his/her own goals. The goal should be defined as clearly as possible and it needs to be attractive for the young sportsman/sportswoman. It can be a short-term goal (for example to acquire some specific sport skill or a technique), or a long-term goal, alternatively a desire (for example to win an Olympic medal). However, even in this case scenario it is vital to set several approaching short-term goals too. In the second phase called „Reality (R)“ the coach guides the athlete to establish his/her actual situation (i.e. performance level or ranking position). In the third phase called „Options (O)“ the athlete tries to find ways how to approach his/her goal. The coach and the athlete, both seek various possibilities and resources which can be used to achieve their goal. In the fourth phase called „Will (W)“ the coach concentrates on the athlete's inner commitment to his/her goal including specific action steps in order to make progress (the action plan). Coaching talk requires excellent communication skills in order to ask appropriate questions, listen carefully and follow athlete's thoughts to search for his/her own solution. Coaching is also based on mutual trust.

The research was organized as an experiment in-vivo running in two phases: first, coaches who participated voluntarily in this project spent three all-day seminars (one seminar in a month) learning and acquiring the coaching principles and the GROW method itself.

Then coaches had to find athletes within their teams and start coaching them for at least three months performing two GROW-interviews. The aim of coaching was to increase internal motivation for sport in athletes. The experimental group consisted of 12 athletes and 4 coaches: 4 tennis players (with a tennis trainer as a coach), 3 shooters (with a shooting trainer as a coach), 3 fencers (with a fencing trainer as a coach), 1 track and field and 1 alpine skier (with a sport psychologist as a coach); 8 of them were males and 4 females aged 13.11–18.1. The control group consisted of 19 individual athletes from a sport school (6 gymnasts, 5 track and field, 5 judoists, 3 wrestlers); 16 of them were males and 3 females aged 14.7–18.8. The trainers of the control group used traditional conduct without coaching. Both groups were tested before and after a coaching period with two questionnaires. LMI inventory (Leistungsmotivation Inventar invented by SCHULER-PROHASKA, 2003) with 170 items focused on 17 motivational factors and DMŠ (Dotazník motivácie k športu) constructed for this purpose with 35 items for positive motivation (DMŠ+) and 35 items for negative motivation (DMŠ-). Statistical method like the Mann-Whitney U-test was used to measure differences between the groups and the Wilcoxon T-test was used for differences within each group. We received and analyzed coaches' evaluation statements via e-mail correspondence after accomplishing their work.

RESULTS

1. Feedback to seminars: The trainers adopted coaching style as a new and interesting way of influencing athletes positively. They practiced the GROW method with a progress. Typically, they practiced GROW in one-to-one interviews. After three all-day seminars within three months they were prepared to start fieldwork coaching their athletes.
2. Comparison between the groups: LMI test results before (input) and after (output) the coaching period showed more significant improvement in experimental group ($p < 0.05$) than in control group ($p < 0.1$). DMŠ indicated slight but insignificant increase of positive motives and decrease of negative motives in experimental group as opposed to control group (see fig. 1)
3. Motivational factors: LMI shows 17 motivational factors in the experimental group before (input) and after (output) a coaching phase. Scores show significant improvements ($p < 0.05$) in the following factors: courage (NE), systematic (CV), internal motivation (IN), belief in own success (DÚ) and decreased scores in (PO) difficult task preference (fig. 2).
4. Individual analysis: Results showed two athletes without a motivational improvement measured by both instruments, LMI and DMŠ. Their coaches were able to identify possible causes interfering the motivational process. In the case of a skier the coach reported inadequate training load before competitions followed by bad performances. In the case of a fencer his coach reported advance to a higher category where the athlete needed to adapt to a higher level of competition. However, both reasons might be perceived as hypothetical only.



DMŠ: input (left-red) and output (right-blue), EX=experimental, KS=control

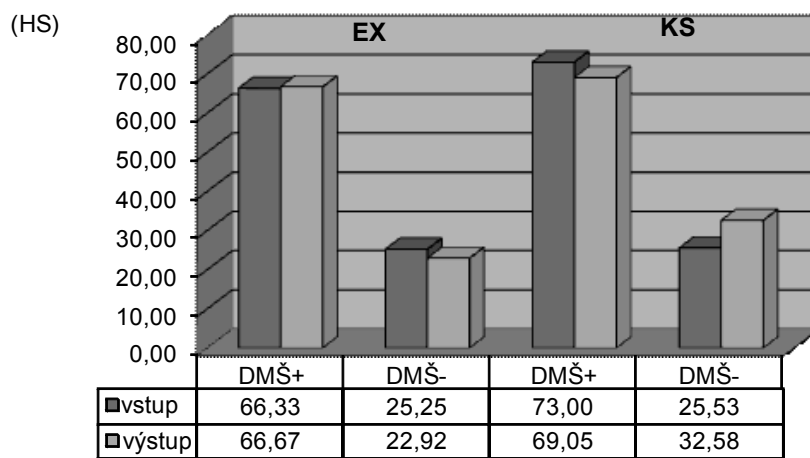
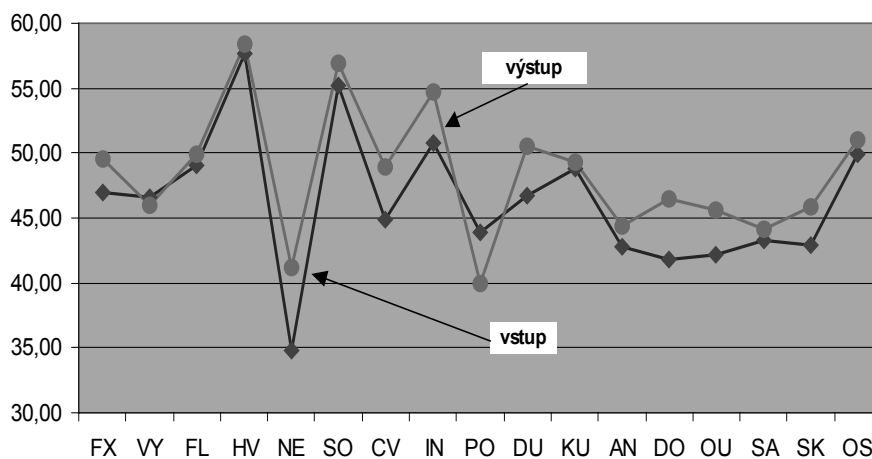


Fig 1.

LMI: input (left-red column) - output (right-blue column), EX=experimental KS= control



Motivational factors: FX=flexibility, VY=endurance, FL=flow, HV=self-esteem, NE=courage, SO=competitiveness, CV=systematic, IN=internal motivation, PO=difficult task preference, DU=belief in success, KU=compensation effort, AN=engagement, DO=dominance, OU=willingness to learn, SA=independence, SK=self-control, OS= personal status

Fig. 2

LMI motivational factors: input (lower line), output (upper line) in experimental group

DISCUSSION

Motivation is a dynamic and multilateral process whereupon researchers obviously use different approaches to understand motivational issues. Some theories emphasize realistic goal-setting (Weinberg – Gould 2007) or strengthen intrinsic motivation (Standage – Ryan 2012) or suggest more reinforcement and positive feedback to athletes (Smith 2001, Pitino 1998). The key motivational theories underline an intrinsic motivation as related to a long-term motivation and three key-values for strengthening intrinsic motivation: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Deci – Ryan 1985, Hemery 1991, Mallet – Hanrahan 2004, Duda 2005, Standage – Ryan 2012). Our research confirms that coaching is an efficient communication approach to teenage athletes strengthening intrinsic motivation. Coached athletes were able to find an intrinsic motivation, more self-belief and joy for sport compared to the athletes under a direct conduct.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Coaching provides appropriate sporting climate and increases intrinsic motivation among teenage athletes.
2. Intrinsic motivation was indicated particularly in motivational factors like individual goal-setting, self-esteem increase, belief in success and systematic work.
3. The GROW method can be learned, practiced and applied successfully by trainers.
4. Coaches perceived the study and practice in coaching as beneficial for their professional and social competence.
5. Coaches should build up a trust relation with their athletes before the coaching starts.

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