Training and Selection of Sport Psychologists: An International Review

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In a world that seems to be changing ever more quickly, sport and exercise psychology has developed rapidly during the last 30 years. Many countries have recognized the political, economic, and social implications of sport and exercise in the era of globalization. As the importance of success in sport grows around the world, nations seek every avenue to enhance their achievements. Although sport psychology is not typically at the top of the list, sooner or later, those individuals and groups with the responsibility for delivering international sporting success in each country expect a contribution from this discipline. At the same time, in every country, scholars with training in physical education, sports science, or psychology, who are fascinated by the way people think, feel, and behave in sport, have studied sport from a psychological perspective. Largely through the interaction between the needs of sport and the interests of scholars, a profession of sport and exercise psychology has developed, or in many cases, is currently developing, in many nations around the world. The Managing Council of the International Society of Sport Psychology (ISSP) believes that ISSP has a responsibility to examine the development of sport and exercise psychology around the world and to state its position with regard to the way sport psychologists are trained and selected to work in service provision in a range of contexts. The aim of this paper is to report the findings of a review conducted on behalf of ISSP by four members of its Managing Council. Before describing patterns, it is important to clarify terms in the field of training and selection. Thus, this paper first considers a range of terms that are commonly used. Next the paper explains the main sources of information that were used in the review. In the main section of the paper, current practices around the world are described and discussed. To ensure that the review reflects the development of sport psychology training and selection processes worldwide, this section is divided along regional lines. It would take much more
than a single paper to describe the arrangements in every country (see the World Sport Psychology Sourcebook, the third edition of which is being published in 2001, for reports on sport psychology around the world, country by country). Thus, typical patterns are described and deviations are reported. Discussion occurs alongside reporting, so the paper concludes with a brief overview of training and selection around the world.

It is important to state that the view of ISSP Managing Council is that it is not appropriate for any organization to judge the different ways in which the profession has developed in various countries. Rather, it is acknowledged that sport and exercise psychology is emerging in ways that are influenced by the culture and traditions of each country and region around the world. The conviction of ISSP is that by trying to understand the ways in which sport psychology is emerging internationally, groups like ISSP will be in a stronger position to provide appropriate advice and support. Professionals will also be better placed to understand their colleagues, who work within the constraints of different cultural, political, economic, and social structures. The promotion of international understanding and communication between members of the sport psychology community around the world, and the global development of sport and exercise psychology are important elements of the ISSP mission. This paper offers information that has the potential to provide the foundation for such understanding, communication, and development.

Training and Selection Terminology

Before discussing the terminology of training and selection, it should be noted that it is a well-established position of ISSP that the field of sport psychology should be closely allied with the area of exercise psychology. This has been acknowledged formally by actions, such as the establishment of Division 47 of the American Psychological Association, the Division of Exercise and Sport Psychology and the amendment of the title of the British Association of Sports Sciences (BASS) to the British Association of Sport and Exercise
Science (Bases). ISSP has chosen to retain its long-established and well-known title. Nonetheless, ISSP considers its interest to include the area of exercise, alongside that of sport. For the purposes of the present paper, the term sport psychology will be employed, but it should be considered to be inclusive of exercise.

Sport psychology is a profession of mixed parentage. In countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, sport psychology was nurtured through its infancy and adolescence by academics in physical education and human movement disciplines. In such cases, psychology has only latterly recognised the legitimacy of sport psychology and adopted the well-developed, late adolescent! In other parts of the world, psychologists have been drawn into the world of sport and shaped the profession of sport psychology accordingly. The question of what is a sport psychologist is critical to the determination of the appropriate training of professionals in this field and the selection of suitably trained individuals to provide services. Issues related to this question have been debated widely, especially within the largest and longest established community of sport psychologists, the profession in North America (e.g., Danish & Hale, 1991; Dishman, 1983; Heyman, 1993; Silva, 1989; Zaichkowsky, 1993).

Zaichkowsky and Perna (1996) discussed the issue of certification as the basis for determining training and selection, with particular reference to North America, but also acknowledging other systems. They acknowledged that there is considerable lack of clarity about the use of terms related to what they call credentialing. Zaichkowsky and Perna stated that credentialing is a generic term commonly defined as "a process of giving a title or claim of competence (p. 396). It includes both statutory designations, which are enacted by legislative bodies and, thus, protected by law and non-statutory designations, such as recognition by organizations and registries. Such designations are not protected by law.
Zaichkowsky and Perna went on to define four terms within the generic area of credentialing. There are certification, registration, licensure, and accreditation.

Certification

Certification is described by Zaichkowsky and Perna as a non-statutory designation granted by an organization. It, typically, has no legal standing, because no legislation has been enacted, but it could be a step towards the establishment of statutory standards. A prime example of non-statutory certification in sport psychology is the program operated by the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP), an American group that certifies sport psychologists.

Registration

Zaichkowsky and Perna (1996) proposed that registration or "registry", as they called it, is also a non-statutory designation. It indicates that a person meets the qualifications specified by an organization. This makes the person eligible for formal listing. Typically, the identification and listing are public. A problem with this description is that some countries use the term in a different way. For example, some years ago, the Australian federal government required the states to enact legislation to make compulsory the registration of psychologists, in order for them to practice. In some Australian states there are specialist titles, including "sport psychologist", whereas in others, all psychologists, including those who specialize in sport, are designated by the general title "psychologist". The legal registration of psychologists is entirely independent of their membership of professional associations, such as the Australian Psychological Society.

Licensure

According to Zaichkowsky and Perna (1996) the statutory process is licensure. This indicates that, within a state or province, there is a legal process of regulation of "professional conduct within a particular field" (p. 397). Licensure as a psychologist is a
statutory process that is intended to protect the use of the title "psychologist" and the scope of practice. It is possible for the legislative body to adopt an organization's admission standards or code of practice as the basis for licensure. Zaichkowsky and Perna stated that it is even acceptable for the legislature to delegate its authority to a professional body, but the legislature retains the legal authority. In the United States, psychologists are licensed by the states, whereas in Australia, the same process is termed registration.

Accreditation

This is typically a process of recognition that a program of education or training has met a set of standards that has been determined by a professional organization in the field. It can also refer to a practice program. In the United Kingdom, for example, sport and exercise physiology and biomechanics laboratories are accredited by BASES. Accreditation indicates that the procedures employed in a laboratory meet the standards laid down by BASES for the provision of a range of testing services. Generally, whether the program involves education, training or practice, accreditation results from a review conducted by a panel of experts designated by and reporting to the professional organization. The American Psychological Association (APA), the British Psychological Society (BPS), and the Australian Psychological Society (APS) each accredits psychology programs in educational institutions throughout the country. This accreditation bears no formal relationship to registration or licensure, although regulatory bodies often include accredited educational qualifications among the criteria, when deciding whether to license people. Again, somewhat confusing is the example in the United Kingdom, where individuals are accredited by BASES as sport psychologists. This terminology can be interpreted as a historical accident, resulting from the effort of BASES to be consistent across physiology and biomechanics, where laboratories are accredited, and psychology, where the professional standards are vested in the individual. To complicate matters further, to practice as psychologists in the UK, individuals must be
"chartered", a term deriving from the legislative process in that country being the granting of a royal charter.

To minimize confusion, in this paper, we will refer to certification as the non-statutory recognition of professional standards attained by an individual, licensure as the statutory regulation of professional practice, and accreditation as the non-statutory recognition of programs. Exceptions will be acknowledged. Thus, Australian registration and UK chartering are considered to be examples of licensure, and UK accreditation of individuals as sport psychologists is classified as a certification process.

Information-gathering Activities

The research group aimed to gather as much information as possible about the training of sport psychologists and the processes by which they are selected to provide services from countries all around the world. To achieve this aim, a range of possible sources of information was identified. These were publications about training and selection in books, journals, and conference proceedings; the statutes and other official documents of national and regional sport psychology organizations, whether published in hard copy or lodged on the internet; and direct contact with officers from societies and associations around the world. Members of the review group volunteered to search for information in various sources and meet again to collate their findings.

On reconvening, we found that this approach had not been very fruitful. The main reason for this was that there was not a great deal of documentary information to examine. A small number of well-established organizations have produced substantial written material about their procedures, including training and selection. In some cases, there has been a large amount of public debate, in journals and magazines, among members of these organizations or the sport psychology profession in a particular country. The vast majority of countries do not have such a tradition of discussion of professional issues and publication of
organizational procedures for matters like accreditation and certification. Direct contact was also of limited value, as it was often not clear who to contact and it was difficult to make contact with the appropriate person in many cases. It was agreed that alternative should be tried. This involved examination of the relevant sections of the reports submitted by sport psychology organizations from many countries for the third edition of the *World Sport Psychology Sourcebook*, which ISSP members were concurrently collating.

The Sourcebook reports proved an effective source of information on a wide range of countries. Papers and documents of those organizations that had a tradition of official documentation and information dissemination, whether produced in paper or electronic format, supplemented Sourcebook information. In addition, scientific and business meetings of several regional groups provided the opportunity for some direct questioning of officers of national societies. This happened in particular for German-speaking countries, Scandinavian countries and Russia, and Asian countries. The review is based on collation and analysis of this information.

**Training and Selection Procedures around the World**

Description of the typical training and selection processes derived from the review is accompanied by analysis. It was felt that separation into results and discussion sections was not appropriate for this review. To provide a reflection of trends around the world, information is discussed by region. The regions are presented in alphabetical order. For each region, a dominant pattern is described first and then any exceptions to the typical approach are described. It should be noted that this exercise was undertaken to provide greater understanding of current training and selection processes in sport psychology. It should not be considered to be comprehensive or definitive. ISSP welcomes any information from organizations or individuals that adds to, contradicts, or clarifies this review. Depending on the scale of such information, ISSP will publish it in some form.
Africa

In general, sport psychology is in its infancy in Africa, particularly in organized form. Thus, it has been difficult to obtain information on training and selection in most countries in this region. The 2001 Sourcebook entry for Africa indicates that key countries in sport psychology currently include Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Morocco, Egypt, Botswana, and South Africa. Yet few of these countries provided national reports for the 2001 edition of the Sourcebook. In 1999, the All African Games Scientific Congress was organized in Johannesburg to coincide with the gathering of sport scientists from all over the continent for the All African Games. Sport psychology was prominent and practitioners discussed the idea of establishing a continental federation. As yet, nothing formal has emerged from these discussions.

South Africa is a country that has developed sport psychology training and service provision. There is no official, national sport psychology organization, but the South African Association for Applied Sport Psychology (SAASP) has a substantial membership, for whom a Newsletter has been produced. Sport psychology is offered as part of undergraduate physical education and sports science programs at many universities and technicons. Postgraduate study is also available at selected universities. The relationship of sport psychology with the general discipline is unusual. Psychologists are currently registered in South Africa by specialism. This is an example of statutory licensing. Sport psychology is not considered to have sufficient numbers of practitioners to become a specialism. The South African government proposes to revise the registration process, so all psychologists will be registered simply as psychologists. Then sport psychologists will not be excluded. Presumably they will need to meet the criteria for registration as a psychologist and currently most sport psychology training is done outside psychology departments, so it is not accredited. The only training specifically for applied work appears to be done through the
SAASP, which presents workshops and seminars for this purpose. Service is provided to elite sport, in both the professional and Olympic arenas. Selection of service providers occurs partly though the Sports Institute of South Africa (SISA), which employs three sport psychologists to work with national Olympic teams. Other practitioners arrange their work with individual athletes or clubs. Sport psychology in South Africa is, like many countries, currently poised between the disciplines of psychology and sports science.

Aside from South Africa and Nigeria, sport psychology in Africa is emerging relatively slowly. The recent emergence of African countries in a number of sports at the world level might herald the acceleration of development of the field. Presently, Africa as a whole would appear to offer the least in terms of education and training, as well as service, of any region in the world.

Asia and the South Pacific

The history of sport psychology in this region reflects a broad range of national development in sport psychology. A small number of countries, including Japan, Korea, and Australia, can report long traditions of organization of the field in terms of professional associations. Sport psychology service is relatively new to a substantial group of countries. There are other countries that have yet to embark on this path. The creation of a regional association, the Asian South Pacific Association of Sport Psychology (ASPASP), has lead to greater communication within the region, increased understanding of the current status of sport psychology in a number of countries, and an acceleration in the development of sport psychology in several of these nations.

Most common among developmental patterns is the recent development of efforts to achieve success in world competitive sport from countries that have little cultural tradition in those sports. These countries often have long traditions in the practice of other forms of physical activity, often reaching outstanding levels of accomplishment. Frequently, the
refocus onto traditionally Western sports has been driven, or at least strongly supported, by
government policy. In these countries, sports administration and training has typically been
the first step in the development of sport at the elite level. Following the establishment of a
national sports council or sports authority and the appointment of high level coaches, sports
medicine and sports science have been put in place. Sport psychology has then been
considered. In most of these countries, there is a well-established education and training
route for psychologists, typically with little or no recognition of the sport psychology
specialization, and, at least, undergraduate level training in physical education, usually
including some sport psychology. Sports authorities, either directly or through administrators
and coaches at the national team level, have sought sport psychology service support from
two sources. First, they have explored the ranks of trained psychologists for individuals with
an interest in sport or a past record as a high level sports performer or coach. Second, sports
administrators have considered people with physical education training, who have developed
some special skills and knowledge in sport psychology, either through individual research,
personal study, or the acquisition of formal qualifications in sport psychology in other
countries. Psychology graduates also seek such overseas specialist training, although less
frequently than those in physical education, because they can acquire professional
psychology qualifications at home.

The emphasis on recruitment of psychologists or physical educators varies from
country to country. Often, the relatively small number of individuals who have obtained
sport psychology doctoral qualifications in North America, Europe, or Australia are quickly
recognized as leaders in the field in their own country. To summarize, in many countries
expediency has lead to a process whereby selection for service is based on identification of
individuals with the most suitable training from existing programs, supplemented by
personal efforts. Interestingly, few institutions in these countries have responded to the needs
of elite sport by establishing professional training programs in sport psychology. Thus, in
many countries in the region, there is no formal training that qualifies an individual to
practice or to conduct research in sport psychology. Individuals are sometimes sponsored to
go overseas for such training. As a consequence, there is no certification, accreditation, or
licensure for sport psychology in these countries, although most have at least non-statutory
procedures for the practice of psychology itself.

The course of development of sport psychology in other countries is idiosyncratic,
but has, over a substantial period of time, lead to the establishment of formal procedures.
Japan has probably been longest organized at the national level. There have been Japanese
representatives on the Managing Council of ISSP since its inception. The Japanese Society
of Sport Psychology (JSSP) is one of the largest in the world, with around 500 members. In
Japan, training in sport psychology is almost exclusively conducted in physical education
programs, at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It is possible to obtain a
doctorate in sport psychology in a number of universities in Japan. The JSSP has recently
established a certification process. The provisional title of certification is "approved mental
training instructor". Requirements are a masters degree in sport psychology, supplemented
by some applied experience and supervision at a number of JSSP workshops. Selection by
Olympic and professional sports for the provision of sport psychology services occurs at an
individual level. There is no established process and, although the JSSP has good relations
with the Japanese Olympic Committee, no special recognition of JSSP membership as a sign
of special expertise and no preference given to JSSP members in selection.

Sport psychology has also developed over a substantial period of time in Korea. The
Korean Society of Sport Psychology (KSSP) has a similar membership to JSSP. Sport
psychology training in Korea is typically conducted in university physical education
departments, of which there are approaching 150. Some sports sciences programs also exist
and these offer sport psychology subjects. There are no specialist postgraduate training programs in sport psychology. In Korea, there is no certification process in sport psychology. Selection of individuals to provide psychological services in elite sport is based on individual training and experience. Much of it is still voluntary.

In Australia, individuals have studied and practised sport psychology for several decades and sport psychology has been part of many undergraduate physical education programs for many years. Until 1991, there were several national groups, each with a different emphasis, such as elite sport servicing, the dissemination of knowledge about sport psychology, or interest in the field in general. At that time, these groups came together with a commitment to develop education, training and practice within the profession of psychology. The Australian Psychological Society (APS) supported a proposal for the establishment of a College of Sport Psychologists (CoSP), Which became the national body in sport psychology. CoSP had status equivalent to that in traditional areas like clinical, educational, and organizational psychology. CoSP developed a training route that met APS guidelines, being equivalent to training in the other specialties. This process comprises four years of undergraduate psychology, in programs formally accredited by the APS, followed by a two year masters program, predominantly involving coursework and 1000 hours of practical experience, with a minor thesis on an applied issue. Finally, full membership of CoSP requires 100 hours of supervised practice. There is no formal certification process, but full members of CoSP are recognized as qualified to practice sport psychology. Currently, there are four masters programs in sport psychology in Australia. The College of Sport Psychologists has informal agreements, that reflect mutual understanding regarding the exclusive selection of CoSP full members as service providers, with major bodies, such as the Australian Olympic Committee. There is no formal arrangement, however, so some Olympic sports do employ individuals with whom they feel comfortable, but who are not
recognized by the College. CoSP exerts less influence over the selection of people to provide 
sport psychology services to professional sports organizations, but, as education increases, 
more professional clubs choose CoSP members, because their education, training, and 
experience is strong. Separate from the processes established by APS, the main professional 
association for psychologists in Australia, the states have enacted registration of 
psychologists. This is a form of statutory licensure. Some states have established specialist 
registers and sport psychology is recognized as a specialist area in all these states. Only those 
individuals on the specialist register are entitled to call themselves sport psychologists. In 
other states, only the title of psychologist is registered. Here, any psychologist can claim to 
provide sport psychology services. In those states where specialist title exists, although it is 
quite separate from membership of CoSP, the criteria for specialist registration currently 
mirror those for membership of CoSP. The Australian system is clear and straightforward, 
with close coordination of registration (licensure) and professional membership with 
education and training, which is accredited by the professional association. Yet, people who 
do not possess the required qualifications or registration do still provide services in 
Australia, due to the lack of education and information of many sports organizations. In 
addition, practitioners can offer services legally, provided they do not claim the title of sport 
psychologist.

Training and selection of sport psychologists in the Asia South Pacific region reflects 
a wide range of well-established and emerging systems. Cultural and historical factors 
clearly influence the development of sport psychology in many countries. The creation of 
ASASP and the attraction of more countries into its network is beginning to provide a 
forum for discussion of the issues concerning training and selection that will help sport 
psychologists from different nations to understand each other better. This interaction has the 
potential to promote the shaping of training programs and selection processes that suit
particular cultural traditions and ensure the employment of individuals with good credentials in sport psychology practice.

Europe

In the German-speaking countries of Europe, there is no accreditation of sport psychologists within general psychology. There is a licensure process for psychologists, by which they become registered, but sport psychology is not included in this process. Sport psychology is taught within sport science programs in universities, where some study of sport psychology is typically considered to be obligatory, whereas sport psychology is, at best, a voluntary or elective area in psychology programs. National groups attempt to exert some sort of influence on the question of who is considered to be a sport psychologist for the purposes of employment. Groups like the German Sport Psychology Association are well established. That group has 250 members, but their guidance is nevertheless advisory.

The Franco-Latin countries reflect a similar pattern. In countries like France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy, sport psychology has largely developed through the physical education and sport science disciplines. Typically, undergraduate courses in sport psychology are core components of human movement, physical education and sports science programs, whereas, if they are included at all, they are elective subjects in psychology degrees. Specialization in sport psychology at the postgraduate level is usually restricted to a small number of institutions, such as the Universities of Reims and Montpellier, in France, the Universities of Lisbon and Minho, in Portugal, and the Universities of Barcelona (Autonoma) and Madrid, in Spain. In Italy the Italian Association of Sport Psychology offers short courses in sport psychology. In all these countries, where a regulatory licensing system is in place for psychologists, sport psychology is not a part of it. Sport psychologists are selected to work with national teams based on word of mouth contacts or their involvement in generic sport organizations that permit them to network with administrators and coaches from national
teams or professional clubs. Most of these countries have well-established national sport psychology organizations, such as the Portuguese Society of Sport Psychology, which was founded in 1978, the Italian Association of Sport Psychology (AIPS), and the French Society of Sport Psychology (SFSP). Each of these groups has well in excess of 100 members and pressure seems to be growing in many of these groups for formal recognition of sport psychology. It will be interesting to see the paths down which these organizations travel over the next few years.

In the Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden the term "psychologist" is protected under law. Individuals who call themselves psychologists must be licensed. This is a statutory process in the four Scandinavian countries. To claim the title of "sport psychologist" a person must have both met the general psychology licensing criteria and have special training in sport and exercise science. There is currently no separate system of certification in sport psychology. Very few licensed psychologists call themselves "sport psychologist". It appears that there is also no formal recognition of the term sport psychologist within general psychology. There is much greater recognition of the role of sport psychologist within the world of sport and even by the general public, than there is by the profession of psychology.

Educational programs that include sport and exercise psychology and act as a foundation for practice, exist mainly in sport and exercise science programs. Across the four countries only a handful of programs exist. Typically, a three-year undergraduate training in sport and exercise sciences is followed by a two-year masters degree in sports science, in which sport psychology can be the major. There are also only a few doctoral students in sport psychology.

Each Scandinavian country has its own national organization in sport psychology. These provide the basis for communication between those people who are interested in sport
psychology. They also organize conferences, seminars, and workshops that provide opportunities for interaction between practitioners, educators, and researchers. In Finland, a network (listing) of sport psychology consultants has also been established and there is a committee for sport psychology within the Psychologists Union of Finland. The aim of Finnish sport psychologists, with reference to the national psychological organization, is to educate psychologists about sport psychology. In Denmark, a government organization, Team Denmark, coordinates the provision of sport psychology support to elite sport. This group has employed one consultant in sport psychology since 1992. In the main, procedures for the selection of sport psychologists to work with elite teams are *ad hoc*, although the listing of practitioners in Finland is an interested, recent development.

Russia is one of the longest established supporters of sport psychology. Teams representing the former USSR were supported by sport psychologists, in most events, as early as the 1980 Olympic Games. They worked as full-time or part-time employees and were part of a multi-disciplinary scientific group. For the Sydney 2000 Olympics only 12 sport psychologists worked with the large Russian team. Education up to doctoral level is offered in a number of major Universities and Physical Education Academies. Psychology as well as physical education departments are involved. These qualifications stand in the place of formal certification as a practitioner. The Russian Association of Sport and Physical Education Psychologists (RASPEP) attempts to play the role of mediator between its members and national sport federations. Typically, however, individual psychologists are selected by athletes and coaches, mostly for specific sessions to work on a particular problem.

Little information has been forthcoming from the Baltic countries. In Lithuania and Estonia, education that includes sport and exercise psychology and acts as a foundation for practice, exists entirely within sport and exercise science programs. Across these two
countries, only a few programs are currently active. The term "psychologist" is strictly reserved for those who have graduated from psychology training programs.

Although Eastern European countries reflect more varied histories in terms of the development of sport psychology, most of them were influenced by the Soviet sport system until the collapse of the Eastern Bloc in 1989. Countries like Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, and Poland typically had state-driven training of sport psychologists, who were then involved in training athletes and coaches through one or more national sports academy. In some cases, individuals trained in psychology have made their way into sport psychology. Certification often takes place, again being organized by the state and usually recognizing the spots academy training, rather than psychology qualifications, which are typically of a general psychology nature. Fortunes of these countries have varied since the change in political climate. Bulgaria is one of the countries that has a long tradition in sport psychology, dating back to the work of Ema Geron in the early 1960's. Geron was a member of the first Managing Council of ISSP. Since 1989, the Bulgarian Society of Sport Psychology, established in that period by Geron, has not operated. Slovenia has programs at the Universities of Ljubljana and Maribor. A certification system was established in 1998, but it has not really operated fully as yet. Poland is another country that has a long tradition in sport psychology. Nonetheless, there is no formal training system or accreditation. Efforts are currently in train to introduce licensing through the Sport Psychology Section of the Physical Culture and Tourism Authority, which is equivalent to the ministry of sport. The Czech Republic (formerly Czechoslovakia) also has a long tradition of sport psychology. Miroslav Vanek was also on that first ISSP Managing Council and he became the second President of ISSP. Vanek established a formal group in sport psychology in Czechoslovakia, as far back as 1953. Today, the organization of sport psychology in the Czech Republic resembles that in other former Soviet influenced countries.
Sport psychology was formally established in the United Kingdom in the 1970s through the creation of the British Society of Sports Psychology (BSSP). In 1985, BSSP federated with the national physiology of exercise and sports biomechanics groups to form the British Association of Sports Sciences (BASS). The aim of this federation was to create an organization with greater political influence in sport. During the mid to late 1980s, BASS moved to develop accreditation of laboratories in physiology and biomechanics and its sport psychology section concurrently developed a system of accreditation for individual psychologists. A revised system of accreditation was developed in 1994, by which time the organization had changed its name to the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES). The present accreditation system distinguishes between researchers and service providers. To be accredited as a sport and exercise psychologist, members of BASES must hold undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in sports science, psychology or related disciplines. In the UK, there are around 50 undergraduate sports science-type programs that include sport psychology and a much larger number of psychology programs. A number of institutions now offer postgraduate programs in the sports sciences, but stand-alone sport psychology qualifications have not been widely developed. Thus, to demonstrate suitability for research accreditation, members must also present at BASES conferences, have an active involvement in the scientific study of sport and exercise, facilitate communication among those interested in the area, and publish in relevant academic and professional journals. For accreditation in service provision members must submit a portfolio of evidence of their involvement in the scientific study of sport and exercise. The portfolio must also demonstrate an ability to apply and disseminate knowledge to individual clients and groups. The specific criteria for the portfolio are stringent, ensuring the demonstration of good practice in all aspects of service provision. Written support is also required from a recognized sport organization or exercise group. Aside from the substantial opportunities for
formal education in the UK, BASES offers prospective sport psychologists the chance to gain experience of practice under the supervision of an accredited service provider. This is not a requirement for accreditation, nor a guarantee, but it represents the most job-specific form of training offered in the UK system. The UK process of accreditation is a non-statutory certification system. Its authority is vested in the close working relationship between BASES and the British Olympic Committee, as well as, more broadly, with the British Sports Council. These connections ensure that sport psychology services to Olympic teams and many other elite groups and individuals are provided by BASES-accredited individuals, who operate within what has become a substantial support network.

North America

Canada and the United States share much in terms of the professional development of sport psychologists, but their formal systems are separate. The Canadian Registry of Sport Behavioral Professionals was established in 1987. This was a non-statutory listing that was developed by the Canadian Olympic Committee. In 1994, it was replaced by the Canadian Mental Training Registry, which is also a non-statutory listing of professionals. The Registry serves to identify people who can assist coaches and athletes with mental training and performance enhancement. Criteria for listing on the Registry include academic training in an appropriate area, personal experience in sport, and completion of a supervised internship, with favourable client evaluations. The academic training normally includes a masters or doctoral degree with specialization in sport psychology or mental training. Professionals on the Registry do not conduct psychometric testing, provide psychotherapy, prescribe drugs, or deal with deep-seated personality disorders or mental illness. Thus, it does not appear that this Registry is restricted to psychologists. Training in sport psychology is widely available in Universities in Canada and mental training qualifications can also be readily acquired.
There does not appear to be any accredited sport psychology training, although psychologists are licensed in Canada.

Although US sport psychologists have provided support for professional and Olympic teams and individual athletes for more than 30 years, formal structures have emerged more recently. In 1983, the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) established a sport psychology registry. This was a non-statutory listing of three categories, namely clinical counseling, educational, and research sport psychologists. In 1985, the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP) was founded to promote service provision. This organization rapidly gained support as the professional association for applied sport psychology in the USA. AAASP developed a set of criteria for the certification of sport psychologists. This was another form of non-statutory credentialing. A partnership was established between the USOC and AAASP, in 1995, that meant that all consultants certified by AAASP, who were also members of the American Psychological Association were accepted for registration in the USOC registry. The criteria for AAASP certification are stringent, including completion of a doctoral degree from an accredited institution of higher education; knowledge of professional ethics, sport psychology, physiology, biomechanics, history, philosophy, and motor behavior; knowledge of psychopathology and its assessment; training in basic counseling skills; supervised experience; and knowledge and skills in research design, statistics, and psychological assessment. The US criteria cover the fields of psychological counseling and psychotherapy, as well as human movement and sports science. In the USA, psychologists are licensed by individual states. This is a statutory process, which is independent of AAASP certification. The agreement between AAASP and the USOC means that sport psychology support services are frequently provided to Olympic teams by AAASP certified consultants.
South America

South American sport scientists have been involved with ISSP since it was established and there has been a federation of South American Sport Psychologists since at least 1970, when its activities were discussed in early issues of the International Journal of Sport Psychology. Despite its longevity, the development of sport psychology in South America has been variable. Most countries report a resistance to sport psychology from general psychology, so university courses are rarely offered in psychology departments. In some countries there are no academic programs in sport psychology at all, in others there are a small number of programs in physical education departments. More often sport psychology is a part of a larger program. Few training programs exist to certify individuals to practice sport psychology. Most certification-type programs that do exist are run by the sport psychology groups, lacking the status of programs run by major educational organizations. Most countries in South America report that there is no formal national system whereby sport psychologists are selected to work with Olympic teams or professional clubs. More often, sport psychologists work with individual athletes. Some countries report that attitudes of athletes and coaches are also problematic, as they expect immediate effects from the involvement of a sport psychologist. Thus, there is a need for further education within sports in many South American countries, related to the services provided by sport psychologists.

Conclusions

This review of sport psychology training and selection processes around the world supports the general impression of ISSP Managing Council that there is great variation between different countries in the length of time for which education, training, and selection processes have been operating in sport psychology. It is also clear that cultural, social, political, and economic factors have influenced the way in which sport psychology has
developed as a profession, and is developing right now, in different countries. Nonetheless, several patterns can be drawn from the information reported in this review.

One, almost self-evident, point is that it has been difficult for sport psychology to develop as a profession in any country, until that nation has made a political and economic commitment to international sport. Although sport psychology has been a subject within physical education programs for many years, typically, it is only when countries seek international success in sport on a large scale that sport psychologists are invited to provide support services that comprise a substantial involvement, in terms of time and personnel. In addition, the involvement of sport psychologists in high profile international sport, especially when their contribution is publicly recognized, frequently raises the status of sport psychology in sport, in psychology, and in the community. There are few examples of national sport psychology organizations driving the establishment of the profession, although the development of national learned societies in sport psychology has often pre-dated the professionalization of the field in that country by a considerable time. Instead, such groups have usually responded to the demands of sport for the provision of professional services.

Education in sport psychology has predominantly been developed in physical education departments in universities. Often, sport psychology is only one discipline within broader programs, although some countries have been able to develop specialist programs in sport psychology at the postgraduate level. It is most common for the psychology departments of universities and national professional associations in general psychology to ignore or even to actively shun sport psychology. In a relatively small number of countries, sport psychology is taught as a subject within psychology programs and/or is recognized within the professional association. The non-statutory certification of sport psychologists by professional bodies in psychology is unusual, however, and statutory licensing of sport
psychologists within psychology is very rare, although many countries do have statutory
regulation of the psychology profession.

Certification by any professional body is only conducted in a small number of
countries around the world. Most certification programs have been established by
professional sport psychology associations that have a physical education or sport science
base, or that stand alone, as in the case of AAASP in the USA. The influence of certification
on selection of sport psychologists to work with professional or national teams, typically
depends on the relationship that the national sport psychology association has developed
with bodies that govern sport, such as national Olympic committees, as well as with specific
sports organizations, such as professional clubs. In most of the countries in which
certification does occur, non-credentialed individuals operate as sport psychologists, based
on individual reputations.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions presented here, it is possible to make some general
recommendations.

1. The establishment of some form of national sport psychology organization is
often critical to the development of the profession. Criteria for membership of
such organizations must vary, depending, in particular, on the opportunities for
education and training locally. Creation of a critical mass, consisting of many of
those who can be identified as leaders in the field, is important here.

2. Emergent national sport psychology organizations can gain status, support, and
guidance by identification with regional/continental bodies in sport psychology
and with ISSP, the long-established world body in this field.

3. The development of education, especially at the specialist/postgraduate level, is a
major factor in the creation of a professional image. National organizations can
encourage or drive such developments. They can establish guidelines to help
members construct appropriate programs in their own institutions. Later, they can
device accreditation processes to further enhance the standing of professional
programs. Based on this, certification of individuals as practitioners can be
developed.

4. The provision of professional services in sport psychology, typically, is enhanced
by strong associations between the national professional association in sport
psychology and major national sports organizations. This can lead to agreement
by those organizations to prefer, or even to select only, certified members of the
professional organization. In such discussions, the professional organization
needs to be represented by its most eminent members and those with strong
advocacy skills.

5. Increasing knowledge and understanding about sport psychology among athletes,
coaches, and administrators is important to the success of service provision in
countries where sport psychology does not have a substantial history. In some
cases, a new professional association must change negative attitudes, based on
experiences that athletes, coaches, and sports administrators have had with non-
qualified individuals, calling themselves sport psychologists.

6. Without doubt, association with the national professional association in general
psychology has the potential to add status and credibility to sport psychology
education, training, and practice. It is also the case that such relationships are
difficult to develop. Strategies need to match the current view of sport
psychology by the psychology profession. Such strategies can range from the
provision of information, to the negotiation of collaborative activities, to the
establishment of formal structures. Put another way, dissociation of sport
psychology from the psychology profession raises questions in the minds of many, whether they are involved in sport or psychology. Linking up with general psychology will often need to be based on a long-term strategy, but it is ignored at great risk to the future of sport psychology, especially in countries that do have statutory licensing of psychologists.

It is emphasized that the specific ways in which these recommendations might be enacted will vary depending on the cultural, social, political, and economic realities of each country. The rate of change, as well as the processes through which it occurs, will also vary. Many of the developments proposed here also depend on the adoption of an altruistic philosophy on behalf of the current leaders in the field. They are the people whose reputations are established, and, thus, they are presently favoured in any form of competitive service provision process. Nonetheless, leaders in the field are in the strongest position to gather support from others in the profession, to establish new, specialist programs in their own institutions, and to negotiate with major organizations from sport, and perhaps from psychology. They need to recognize that development of the profession will have long-term benefits for them, as it will for those who are coming after them. Contribution of their time and effort to this cause is essential.

Training and selection are both closely intertwined with the question of what sport psychologists should know and what skills they should possess. Analysis at the level of the competencies needed to practice sport psychology was considered to be beyond the scope of this review. It was considered to be a broad enough brief to examine whether training occurs, where it occurs, how it relates to selection for service provision, and what role national, professional sport psychology organizations play in training and selection in the profession. Nonetheless, an appreciation of competencies needed to practice sport psychology will assist those who aim to develop training programs or selection criteria for service provision. To
access the competency considerations of national bodies that have explored these issues, those interested are advised to examine the electronic and paper documentation of professional psychology bodies, such as the American Psychological Association, the British Psychological Society, and the Australian Psychological Society. Sport psychology-specific deliberations have been produced by the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology in the USA, the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences in the UK, and the College of Sport Psychologists in Australia.

ISSP Managing Council sponsored this review, because of a strong commitment to support the continued development of sport psychology around the world. ISSP and its continental federations, such as FEPSAC and ASPASP, are eager to support all countries in the development of their sport psychology profession. The review indicates that there are few, if any, nations that have attained a full-fledged professional status for sport psychology. We encourage those who wish to support the development of sport psychology in their own country to develop and work through organizations at home and link up to their continental body and to ISSP for further support. At the same time, we acknowledge that this review is not comprehensive. Information on countries not covered in the review and on directions of development not considered here would be welcomed by the authors and by ISSP Managing Council. We look forward to stimulating discussion on this issue, as well as continued and, where possible, accelerated development of our field all around the world.

References


