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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF COACH EDUCATION FRAMEWORKS AND COACH EDUCATION CHALLENGES IN OMAN

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ABSTRACT

Sports coaches play a crucial role in guiding and instructing participants in professional and leisure sports. The modern-day sports coaches should have coach education qualification. Coach education is essential for raising standards and athlete development. As such a number of coach education frameworks have been proposed worldwide in recent years. This study aims to analyze and compare global coach education frameworks and identifying the best practices. Further, we identified the specific challenges and barriers to the coach education development in Oman. The frameworks from USA, Europe, Canada, the UK, Australia, South Africa and the International Olympics federation are investigated. The study uses existing literature and experts' experiences in critically exploring and analyzing six selected coach education frameworks. Furthermore, the frameworks are compared based on set of factors including core principles, philosophy, and objectives. It is found that the main components of the existing frameworks include an athlete-centered approach, lifelong learning, creating personal coaching philosophy, and strict adherence to high ethical standards, as fundamental principles for effective coach education. Additionally, most of the frameworks emphasize the importance of knowledge and competence, learning methodologies, coaching pathways, certification and accreditation processes in the coach development process. The key challenges to coach education in Oman are the absence of structured coach education programs, limited resources, cultural and social barriers, and isolation from international best practices. Experts found the International Sport Coaching Framework (ISCF) most flexible and adaptable to Oman's needs, while National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) and the UK framework scored lowest due to contextual differences. Theoretical and practical implications: The outcome of the study will lead to establish a self-sustaining coach education framework in Oman, aligning with global standards, to standardize coach qualifications and enhance coaching quality across various sports disciplines.

KEYWORDS: Sports, Coach Education, Sustainable Coach Development, Coach Certification, Training, Oman.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sports coaches have a variety of roles and responsibilities including guiding, encouraging and instructing participants to learn and improve their skills, both for professional or leisure sports (Jang et al., 2024). Several studies have highlighted the importance of coach education in raising the standards of coaching practice and athlete development (Simarelli et al., 2022; Nelson et al., 2013; Al Buafi, 2013a; Al Buafi et al., 2013b; Gomes et al., 2011; Côté and Gilbert, 2009). However, ensuring effective coach education extends beyond just acquiring theoretical knowledge. The special Assembly of the International Council for Coach Education (ICCE) held at the Swiss Federal Sports Institute in July 2000 emphasized that coaching effectiveness and expertise extend beyond the formal sport-specific knowledge (Special Assembly of the International Council for Coach Education, 2000). The main responsibility of a coach is, to promote the development of positive athletes by integrating interpersonal, intrapersonal, and professional knowledge through coaching sessions. The coaching seeks to cultivate in every athlete competence, confidence, connection, and character, thereby producing athletes who can contribute to society.

During the last decade, there has been a special emphasis on coach education frameworks and programs worldwide. For instance, Sports Coach UK, published the UK Coaching Framework in 2007 (Kubischta, 2018). The ISCF is the outcome of the collaborative efforts of Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF), ICCE, and Leeds Beckett University (LBU) dating back to 2012 (International Sport Coaching Framework, 2013). Globally, the ISCF has emerged as a widely recognized standard for coaching development worldwide. Working with ICCE, nations from Portugal and the USA to Japan and Italy, as well as international federations like World Sailing, the International Tennis Federation, and the International Triathlon Union, have developed their own coach education frameworks.

In 2012, the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC) introduced the South African Model for Long-Term Coach Development, mostly inspired by ISCF version 1.1 (South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee, 2012). In 2017, the United States Olympic Committee published the Quality Coaching Framework (USOC QCF) (United States Olympic Committee, 2017). CoachLearn, in line with the ISCF, established the European Sport Coaching Framework (ESCF) in 2017 with the aim of

supporting sport coaches across Europe. The Coaching and Officiating Framework Toolkit, published by the Australian Sport Commission, is a comprehensive resource aimed at providing training for coaches in Australia (Australian Government & Australian Sport Commission, 2016). The Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) has proven to be very helpful in nurturing technical and leadership skills among coaches in Canada (Coaching Association of Canada, 2018).

The development of coach education frameworks has produced positive outcomes to the sports sector in the developed countries. On the contrary the developing countries such as Oman are still far behind of such initiatives. Oman's involvement in organized sports has developed relatively recently due to its distinctive social, historical, political, religious, and cultural context (Majid al Busafi, 2013). The establishment of the Oman Athletic Association in the 1980s and the country's relatively low international participation indicate that athletics as professional sports are still in developmental stages (Al Droushi, 2020). In Oman, the job of coaching has remained unorganized, part-time, and in most of the time is voluntary in nature (International Association of Athletics Federations, 2008; Zayed, 2006). Hiring experienced foreign coaches is costly. Due to a shortage of qualified local coaches, there is a reliance on unqualified local coaches to meet the demand (Zayed, 2006).

Therefore, it is necessary to examine the existing international coach education frameworks and investigate the key challenges; the Omani sports sector is lagging. Hence, this study aims to analyze and compare global coach education frameworks and identifying the best practices. Further, we identified the specific challenges and barriers to the coach education development in Oman.

There are five sections. Section 2 describes seven well-known coach education frameworks. Section 3 compares the coach education frameworks. Section 4 presents the discussion. Section 5 summarizes the findings.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW ON COACH EDUCATION FRAMEWORKS

2.1. *The International Sport Coaching Framework (ISCF)*

The International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE), the ASOIF, and the LBU in collaboration developed the ISCF. The framework was first released in 2012, followed by an updated and revised document in 2013 as version 1.2. It comprises of ten

chapters. The framework promotes a variety of coaching techniques, encourages coach collaborations and networking for continuous learning and development. It highlights the value of lifelong learning and an athlete-centered approach. The ISCF recognizes coaches in a number of roles, including volunteers, part-time paid, and full-time paid (Duffy et al., 2011). The framework presents a comprehensive coaching method founded on eight basic ideas, including athlete-centered techniques. Vision and strategy, environment, relationship building, practice and competition management, field observation, and continual learning— that are consistent with the abilities and skills required six core-coaching responsibilities— for coaches.

2.2. The European Sport Coaching Framework (Escf):

The ESCF emerged from the CoachLearn project, a collaborative effort spanning from October 2014 to September 2017, co-funded by the Erasmus+ program of the European Commission. The ESCF is a reference for coach development across all of the European Union's governmental agencies, sports organizations, universities, sports federations and associations. The ESCF recognizes five fundamental pillars that forms the foundation of all coaching systems. These includes athlete-centered approach, coaching expertise, coaching practice, coach development, certification and recognition, collectively shaping the coaching system. The ESCF places significant emphasis on the formulation of a coaching philosophy by every coach, rooted in strong values and ethical decision-making principles aligned with Fair Play, Anti-Doping, and Integrity regulations to enhance athlete experiences.

2.3. The United States Olympic Committee Quality Coaching Framework (Usoc Qcf):

In 2017, the United States Olympic Committee introduced the USOC QCF, aimed at offering National Governing Bodies (NGB), coaching education providers, sport organizations, programs, and coaching associations in USA with a set of core principles for ensuring quality coaching in coach education initiatives and programs. The primary objective of the USOC QCF is to enhance coaching standards, evaluate programs, highlight the beneficial aspects of sport coaching and serve as a guide for cultivating quality-coaching practices. The framework is intended to be utilized to enhance sports coaching program structures, coaching practices, athlete well-being, and overall success in sports endeavors across various sports that fall under

the umbrella of Team USA, representing the United States in international competitions such as the Olympics and Paralympics.

2.4. The South-African Long-Term Coach Development Model (LtcD):

The LTCD model provides a comprehensive framework for coach development, similar to version 1.1 of the ISCF. The framework recognizes coaching as a multifaceted profession. By aligning with the ISCF, the framework aims to enhance the quality and consistency of coach training nationwide. Central to the framework is the formal recognition of coach qualifications, aligning them with the National Qualification Framework. The framework acknowledges the diverse coaching landscape, encompassing volunteer, part-time, and full-time paid roles, along with a "pre-coach" category. It emphasizes recognizing prior learning (RPL) and outlines four coaching domains: children, participation for adolescents and adults, emerging/talented, and performance and elite performance, catering to various athlete groups.

2.5. The Australian Coaching and Officiating Framework Toolkit:

The Coaching and Officiating Framework Toolkit, developed by the Australian Sport Commission provides a comprehensive guide to developing a structured framework for training coaches and officials within sports organizations in Australia. This toolkit emphasizes the importance of aligning the framework with the strategic plans of National Sporting Organizations (NSOs) in Australia and ensuring that it meets the needs of both participants and the coaching workforce. The toolkit highlights several key principles, including prioritizing participant needs, providing multiple entry options for participants, ensuring an adequate number of coaches and officials, designing flexible and accessible programs, and ensuring continuous improvement through regular reviews and updates.

2.6. The Uk Coaching Framework:

The UK Coaching Framework (Sports Coach, U. K., 2012), serves as a benchmark for the advancement of coach education throughout the UK. A comprehensive manual for creating outstanding coaching practices throughout the UK, the framework promotes an inclusive, participant-centered approach that benefits both coaches and athletes. The framework provides a solid foundation for a high-quality coaching system by focusing on athlete-centered approaches, equality and equity,

and self-awareness, etc. The framework incorporates both athlete and coach development in parallel through participant and coach modeling. Participant Modeling, advocates a model for the sustained growth of sports participants and athletes, while Coach Modeling, offers a distinct and inclusive pathway for the development of coaches. Furthermore, the framework places great emphasis on providing easily attainable, applicable, and long-lasting training and certification programs through Coach Education and Development.

2.7. Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) And the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP):

The CAC manages the NCCP since its inception in 1974. The CAC looks after the qualification statuses of coaches across Canada, categorizing them into three distinct broad groups: In Training, Trained, and Certified. To facilitate sport-specific NCCP training,

the CAC collaborates with various NSOs to offer coaching workshops. In addition to these sport-specific workshops, coaches can participate in multi-sport modules provided by the CAC as part of their ongoing training. The advantages of NCCP include development of technical as well as leadership skill among coaches (Coaching Association of Canada, 2018).

2. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

3.1. Comparisons Of Coach Education Frameworks

The coach education frameworks ISCF, ESCF, USOC QCF, LTCD, Australian Coaching and Officiating Framework Toolkit, UK Coaching Framework, CAC and the NCCP are compared in terms of philosophy and principles. Table 1 presents a comparative overview of international coach education frameworks based on origin, philosophy, and objectives.

Table 1: Comparison Of Coach Education Frameworks.

Frameworks	Origin and development	Core philosophy and principles	Objectives
ISCF	In 2012, the ICCE, ASOIF, and LBU designed it.	Emphasis on athlete-centered orientation and Lifelong learning as core principles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve as a comprehensive and adaptable reference guide that supports coach development, recognition, and certification. Provide essential guidance for designing, benchmarking, and refining coach education and development programs.
ESCF	Developed as a complementary document to ISCF through the CoachLearn project, 2014-2017, and co-funded by the Erasmus+ program of the EU.	Emphasizes an athlete-centered approach, integrating aspects like coach development, expertise, practice, certification, and recognition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act as a reference for the learning and employment of coaches in the EU. Establish a shared reference point and language to facilitate communication and collaboration within the coaching community.
USOC QCF	Developed in 2017 by the USOC in collaboration with National Governing Bodies and Dr. Wade Gilbert (expert from Human Kinetics Coach Education)	Based on Holistic-athlete development and well-being through the implementation of the 4C's model (competence, confidence, connection, character).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance coaching recognition and certification in the US while promoting positive coaching principles. Support aligned coaching education programs with NGBs and partners to address performance gaps.
LTCD	Published and adapted for South African National Federations in 2012, in line with the ISCF version 1.1.	Based on principles of athlete-centricity, ethical conduct, mutual respect, and continuous professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To systematically aligns coach education and development programs conducted by South African National Federation.
Australian Coaching and Officiating Framework Toolkit	The Australian Sport Commission designed in 2016.	Prioritize participant needs, design flexible programs, and ensure continuous improvement through reviews.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help NSOs in Australia in designing coach and officiating sports development programs.
UK Coaching Framework	Developed by the Sports Coach UK in 2008 and updated in 2012, the UK Coaching Framework aims to be a reference point for coaching development across the UK.	Emphasis on holistic, participant-centered coaching. Based on values of fair play, equality, continuous self-improvement, and the motto of Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a source of reference for coaching development in UK. Ensure alignment between the Coach Development Model and the Participant Development Model to prioritize participant needs and enhance coach

		coaching every time for everyone	development.
CAC and NCCP	The CAC was established in 1974 to manage the certification standards of coaches.	There are five core principles in NCCP: Valuing, Interacting, Leading, Problem-solving, and Critical Thinking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide coaches with sport-specific technical, decision-making, and leadership expertise. • Integrate athlete needs into coach education and curriculum development, based on the Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) long-term athlete development.

A content analysis of the seven international frameworks (ISCF, ESCF, USOC QCF, LTCD, Australian Toolkit, UK Framework, and CAC/NCCP) was conducted across five key dimensions: Athlete-centered approach, Lifelong learning, Ethical principles,

Certification/accreditation Integration of academic and practical learning. Nearly all frameworks prioritize athlete-centeredness and certification, but fewer explicitly emphasize bridging theory and practice. Figure 1 shows the percentage of frameworks emphasizing core principles.

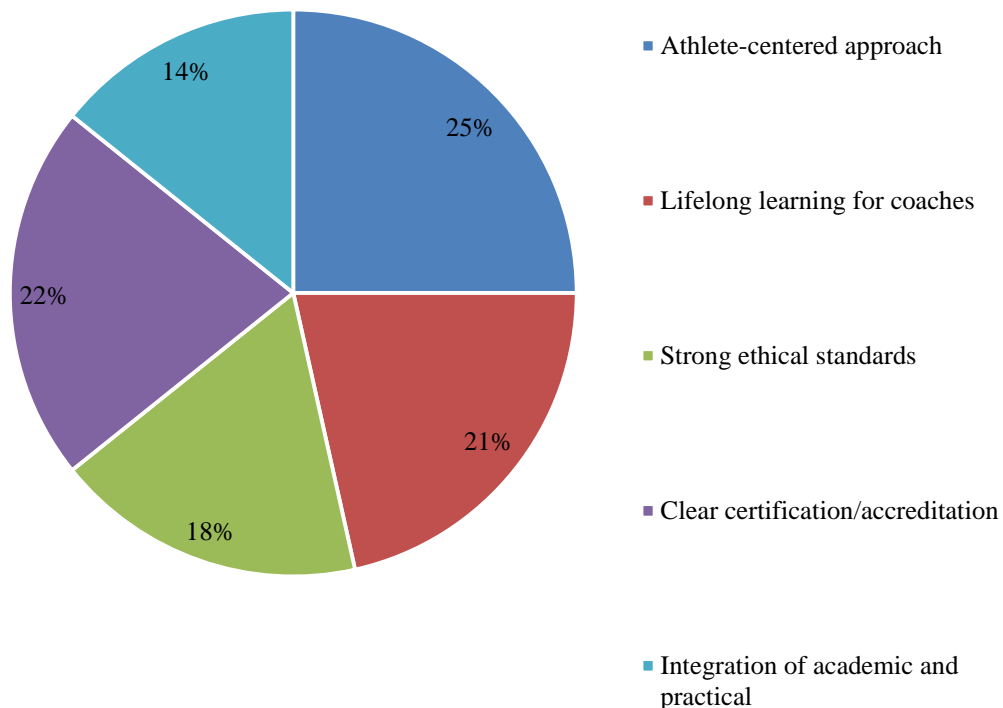


Figure 1: Percentage of Frameworks Emphasizing Core Principles.

3.2. Comparative Scoring of Framework Relevance to Oman

A number of experts were selected for comparative scoring of the frameworks in Oman. The expert panel consisted of twelve participants, including academic scholars in sports sciences and senior coaches working in Oman. The experts were

specifically selected based on their expertise and experience. All experts had at least ten years of experience in coaching or coach education and had exposure to international coaching systems through education, certification, research, or professional work. A 5-point Likert scale (where 1 indicated least applicable and 5 indicated most applicable) was used to evaluate how relevant each coach education

framework was to the Omani context, with higher scores indicating greater relevance. Before data collection, two subject experts to ensure clarity and appropriateness reviewed the assessment tool

Overall, the ISCF was viewed as the most adaptable (M=4.7), followed by the ESCF, USOC QCF, and South Africa’s LTCD. Frameworks from

Australia, the UK, and Canada scored lower, with the NCCP and UK model rated least applicable due to contextual differences. Overall, the ISCF emerged as the most suitable framework for Oman. Table 2 shows the expert ratings of framework applicability to Oman.

Table 2: Expert Ratings of Framework Applicability to Oman.

Framework	Mean Score (SD)
ISCF	4.7 (±0.4)
ESCF	4.2 (±0.6)
USOC QCF	4.1 (±0.7)
LTCD (South Africa)	4.0 (±0.5)
Australian Toolkit	3.8 (±0.6)
UK Coaching Framework	3.6 (±0.7)
CAC/NCCP (Canada)	3.5 (±0.8)

3.3. Coach Education Challenges in Oman

There are a number of key challenges to coach education in Oman. They are discussed below.

3.3.1. Absence Of Structured Coach Education Programs

Oman lacks a comprehensive and organized coach education programs comparable to those found in other advance nations. The current programs are often unstructured and lack formality, resulting in poor quality of coaching education. The absence of a national coaching certification system further creates challenge in establishing uniform standards for the qualifications and skills of coaches in various sports (Zayed, 2004). Moreover, besides some higher educational institutes offering courses in physical education, there are very few academic institutions offering specialized sports related coach education programs.

3.3.2. Limited Resources and Support

Omani coaches have limited access to resources available to enhance their coaching knowledge. Limited availability of coaching literature, training modules and professional master coaches, force the coaches to rely only on self-directed learning methods such as videos, books, online course modules and personal interactions with few local coaches.

3.3.3. Cultural And Social Barriers

Female coaches have substantial cultural and social obstacles that restrict their involvement and advancement in the coaching field. Research has

shown that despite facing multiple barriers women coaches remain more committed to coaching because of strong interpersonal relationships and social bonding within the sporting community (Solanas et al., 2022; Silva et al., 2020). Hence, there is a need of comprehensive programs that tackle these difficulties and introduce gender parity in sports coaching.

3.3.4. Isolation From International Best Practices

Coaches in Oman have limited opportunities towards international coaching standards and best practices. Limited literature on coaching education is available in Arabic and inadequate translation of worldwide coaching material into Arabic restricts local coaches' access to the global knowledge. Significantly, few collaborations with global sports associations limits the availability of resources.

3. DISCUSSION

The coach education frameworks offer practical guidance for creating and implementing coach and official development programs, including the necessary curriculum and materials. It provides less emphasis on values, coaching philosophy, the roles and functions of coaches, and core coaching competencies. However, each country has developed coach education frameworks as per their needs. For instance, ESCF seeks to offer countries across the European Union tools, techniques and methodologies specifically designed according to the specific context. The ESCF was developed after carefully examining the coaching profession and the current coach education systems in Europe, while

also applying basic principles of ISCF. It is found that the key principles of coach education include an athlete-centered approach, lifelong learning, creating personal coaching philosophy, and strict adherence

to high ethical standards, as fundamental principles for effective coach education. Figure 2 shows the key principles of coach education.

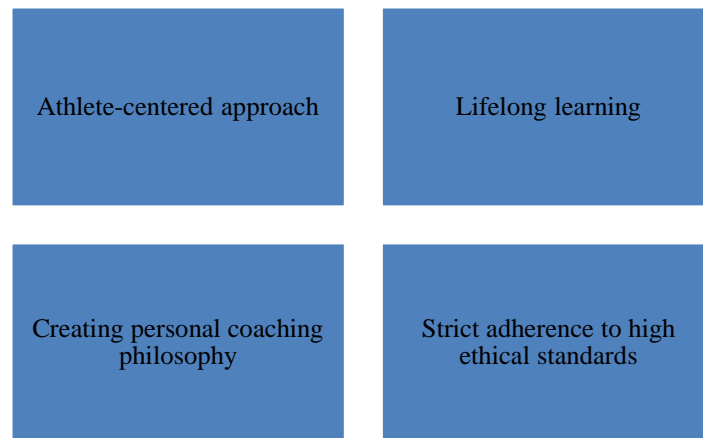


Figure 2: Key Principles of Coach Education.

Recently, Oman has launched the National Coach Certification Program aimed at developing and enhancing the capabilities of sports coaches (Oman Olympic Committee, 2023). However, the program is at a very early stage and requires proper structuring to effectively address the coaching needs. In short, the country lacks a formal, structured coach education system, which poses a major obstacle to the development and professionalization of coaches. Several other shortcomings include a lack of standardized accreditation and certification programs, inadequate resources, cultural and social barriers, and adoption of unscientific traditional practices in coaching. These issues hinder the establishment of a standard sports coaching system, making it difficult to develop local coaches with international standards in Oman. Traditionally, foreign coaches have mainly held professional coaching positions, whereas Omani coaches have typically worked in voluntary or part-time jobs (Al Busafi, 2013). One major factor is that coaching is a relatively new or emerging profession in Oman.

Very few Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Oman provides courses related to sports sciences and physical education.

However, still there is a gap between formal education and skill-based learning. Collaboration between HEIs and sports federations may fill this gap and ensure that coaches receive both the basic foundational knowledge and practical skills needed to excel in their profession. Coaches in Oman are increasingly using internet-based resources and online learning platforms to enhance their coaching skills. Coaches can improve their knowledge and supplement their skills by adopting these self-

learning methods at their own pace, without time limitation. However, certain steps like establishing sports libraries and collaborating with foreign universities can significantly enhance the digital experience.

4.1. Recommendations For Improvement of Coach Education in Oman

Guided by several core values, the frameworks emphasize fair play and equality in all coaching practices, promoting a holistic athlete-centered approach that considers technical, tactical, physical, mental, and lifestyle skills. It encourages continuous personal and professional development among coaches and ensures that coaching systems are inclusive and welcoming, supporting diversity in sports participation.

4.1.1. Design A Coach Education and Development Framework

Establish a standard national coach education and development framework for Oman that aligns with the global standards. The framework should have clear established objectives and principles, define coaching roles and responsibilities, map these responsibilities to the knowledge and competence required by coaches and establishing a clear coaching pathway to help in accreditation and certification.

4.1.2. Enhance Resource Availability:

Increase the availability of coaching resources, including opening a specialized sports university, establishment of sports libraries at various sports training federations and translating sports coaching

literature and training modules in Arabic in order to encourage coaches to access international coaching courses.

4.1.3. Establish International Collaborations

Establish partnerships with global sports organizations, universities offering specialized coach education programs, International Olympic committee, visiting scholarship programs for coaches and other international coaching bodies expertizing in coach education to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, best practices, and professional development opportunities for Omani coaches.

4.1.4. Promote Integration of Academic and Practical Learning

Facilitate a strong collaboration between HEIs and sports organizations to ensure that the curriculum of the courses on sports sciences and physical education must incorporate practical coaching skills. The courses must include compulsory internships and engagement with senior coaches to gain enhanced sports skills. This will ensure a fine balance between foundational theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

4.1.5. Continuous Professional Development

Ensure regular licensing and reaccreditation of coaches to ensure that coaches are update according to the latest trends and developments in the field of coach education. Events such as workshops, seminars, and mentorship programs at regular intervals may provide coaches with platform to share knowledge and create networks.

4.1.6. Financial Independence and Self-Sustainable

Several sources of income, such as certification fees, paid workshops, seminars, online course subscriptions, and business sponsorships, can reduce the dependence of coach development framework on government funding. Further, the framework can be self-sustainable by generating revenue through fundraising events, renting training facilities and offering consultancy services. Any coach education framework following this approach can be self-sustainable and can guarantee efficient coach education and development in the long run. Figure 3 summarizes the key strategic recommendations proposed to strengthen coach education and development in Oman.

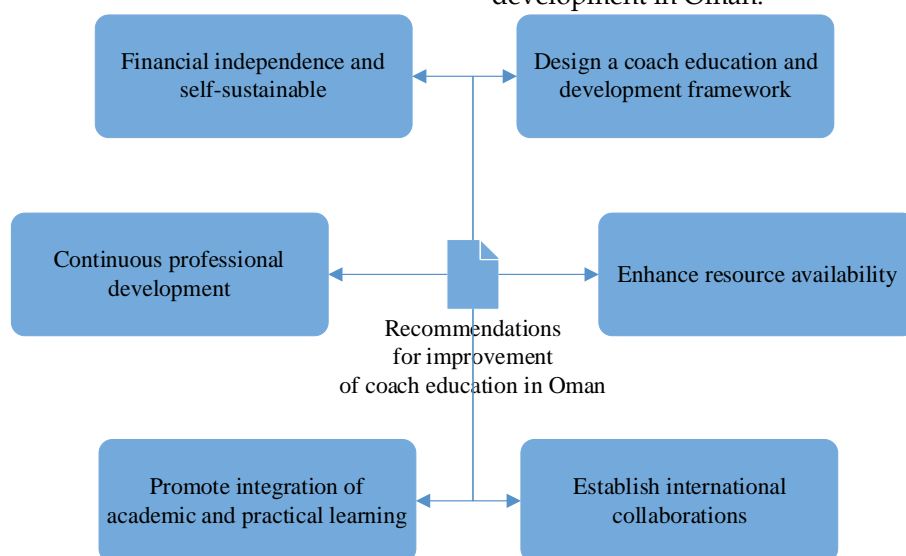


Figure 3: Recommendation To Improve Coach Education in Oman.

4. CONCLUSION

The coach education aims to increase the visibility and recognition of coaching, and acknowledges the hard work and dedication of coaches. The study presents a comprehensive analysis of coach education frameworks to address the challenges in the coach education in Oman. It critically analyzes seven international coach education frameworks, from the USA, Europe, Canada, the UK, Australia,

South Africa, and International Olympic federations. The frameworks from these countries are based on principles such as an athlete-cantered approach, lifelong learning for coaches, the importance of personal coaching philosophies, and adherence to high ethical standards is essential for any coach development system. The ISCF is most flexible and robust among all the coach education frameworks. This flexibility of ISCF makes it an important benchmark for structuring coach development

programs worldwide. Recent efforts to enhance coach education in Oman like the National Coach Certification Program, coach education and development workshops, seminars, and conferences indicate a growing awareness of the need to improve coach education in Oman. However, still more structured measures are needed to establish and implement a comprehensive and effective framework. The recognition of coaching and sports as an attractive career can attract young and passionate individuals in the field.

After identifying the current challenges in Oman, along with a detailed review and analysis of various coach education frameworks globally, we aim to create a self-sustainable coach education and development framework for Oman in future. The framework will be developed in accordance with the best international standards and practices adopted globally. Implementing such a framework will not only standardize the qualifications and competencies of coaches but also enhance the overall quality of coaching across various sports discipline.

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