

## Expected Qualifications for External Coaches in School-Based Extracurricular Sports Activities

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### Abstract

*This study aimed to examine the importance of expected qualifications for external coaches and their differences between junior high and high schools. The participants were 253 teachers at public junior high and public high schools. A cross-sectional self-administrated questionnaire survey was conducted. The questionnaire was developed based on a previous interview study among teachers. Percentages of applicable response were calculated to evaluate the requirements for each qualification. Chi-square tests and Fisher's exact test were used for analysis. As results, "humanity," "ability," "cooperativeness," and "trust" were highly expected. Conversely, expertise in areas other than technical coaching, age, and occupation were not highly perceived as expected qualifications. Further, there were no considerable differences between junior high and high schools. It is necessary to develop guidelines for recruiting external coaches that reflect the highly expected qualifications found in this study. It would also be useful to conduct workshops to convey strongly expected qualifications to external coaches. However, expertise for areas other than technical coaching, age, occupation, and differences between junior high and high schools have low priority in the recruitment strategy for external coaches. This study adds a quantitative evaluation to the expected qualifications identified in a previous report. Investigating these expected qualifications using a quantitative method would be valuable toward improving the recruitment system for external coaches.*

**Keywords:** human resource management; human resource development; extracurricular activity; physical education; volunteer

### 1. Introduction

Large numbers of children and adolescents participate in school-based extracurricular sports activities (SBECSA) after school or on weekends and engage in sports and physical activities (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012; Edwards, Kanters, & Bocarro, 2011; Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in Japan [MEXT], 2013; Sport Council Wales, 2009). These SBECSA have many positive benefits for young people's physical, mental, academic, and

social development (Barnett, 2007; Dotterer, McHale, & Crouter, 2007; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Lipscomb, 2007; MEXT, 2012; Schaefer, Simpkins, Vest, & Price, 2011; Shernoff & Vandell, 2007). Promotion of youth participation in SBECSEA is thus important.

The need for external coaches in SBECSEA has increased over recent years (Macdonald, 2011; MEXT, 2013; Wiersma & Sherman, 2005; Williams, Hay, & Macdonald, 2011). This is due to the lack of in-school coaches (i.e. teachers) who are able to coach SBECSEA expertly, the aging of teachers (Akita Prefecture Board of Education, 2013), and excessive workload burden for SBECSEA teachers (Japan Senior High School Teachers Union, 2008; MEXT, 1997; Whiteley & Richard, 2012). External coaches are therefore considered a vital human resource in addressing these problems and maintaining active SBECSEA.

However, extortion and violence have been reported as problems caused by external coaches (Shioya, 2002; Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education, 2008; Wiersma & Sherman, 2005). Further, external coaches may not be beneficial for youth education since they sometimes focus excessively on skill development and winning (Aoyagi et al., 2013; Flintoff, 2008). Accordingly, recruiting appropriate external coaches for SBECSEA is an important issue. Aoyagi et al. (2013) conducted semi-structured interviews for teachers to identify qualitatively categories of expected qualifications for external coaches; the results included "humanity," "ability," "cooperativeness," "attributions," and "trust." However, that study addressed only the classifications of expected qualifications—not the extent of teachers' expectations for each qualification. Assessing those qualifications extracted by qualitative research from a quantitative method—called mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2014)—is important to develop effective recruitment strategies that large population of teachers could adopt. Because there are not even descriptive data, the present study primary aimed to examine the percentages of teachers who expect external coaches to have each qualification identified in the previous qualitative study (Aoyagi et al., 2013).

In this regard, it is also necessary to examine differences among the various types of schools owing to potential differences in their coaching needs (Flintoff, Foster, & Wystawnoha, 2011). In Japan, it is appropriate to focus on the differences between junior high and high schools since most SBECSEA are performed in such schools. The other purpose of the present study was therefore describing the differences between junior high and high schools.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Participants and Procedures

The participants in the present study were teachers who worked at public junior high or public high schools. A cross-sectional self-administrated questionnaire survey was sent to them in 2012. Request letters for participation in the study along with a set of questionnaires (including instructions and a consent form) were delivered to the principals of 188 randomly selected schools (94 junior high and 94 high schools). All 47 prefectures in Japan were represented. Two junior high and two high schools were selected from each prefecture. Unified junior high and high schools, evening schools, and branch schools were excluded before the random sampling because they are a minority in the school system and may have biased the results. To avoid sampling bias, such as only physical education teachers answering the questionnaire, 10 sets of questionnaires were sent to each school. Therefore, the maximum numbers of participants was 1,880. The school principal distributed the questionnaire to the teachers. Then, completed surveys were returned to the researchers. All participants were informed of the purpose and design of the study before provided written informed consent. The research proposal was approved by the university ethics board.

### 2.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire contained 52 items for assessing the expected qualifications for external coaches in SBECSEA. The items covered all expected qualifications found in the previous qualitative study (Aoyagi et al., 2013). This was the basic question: "If you used an external coach, which of the following qualifications would you look for in such a coach." Responses were set on a six-point scale ranging from "not applicable at all (0)" to "very applicable (5)." Each participant was also asked to answer a series of sociodemographic questions about their gender, age, type of school (junior high or high school), teaching subject, and whether or not they undertook any SBECSEA and made use of external coaches.

### 2.3 Analyses

Percentages of applicability were calculated to evaluate the requirement for each qualification. Responses of 0–2 were defined as inapplicable answers, and 3–5 were considered applicable. Percentages of applicability among SBEC SA teachers who worked in junior high and high schools were calculated separately. Chi-square tests ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) were conducted to verify differences between the two groups. Fisher's exact test was used if the chi-square test was not appropriate for analysis. Any missing values were excluded. All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 21.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Participant Characteristics

Responses were received from 253 teachers (response rate, 13.5%). Their characteristics appear in Table 1. There were 178 males (70.4%) and 74 females (29.2%). The participants had a wide age range, with a mean age of 42.0 years (standard deviation, 9.8). The numbers of teachers who worked at junior high and high schools were 107 (42.3%) and 142 (56.1%), respectively. There were 71 physical education teachers (28.1%); 228 teachers (90.1%) undertook SBEC SA, and 65 SBEC SA teachers (25.7%) used an external coach.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of participants

	n	%
Overall	253	100.0
Gender		
Male	178	70.4
Female	74	29.2
Missing	1	0.4
Age group		
23-29	33	13.0
30-39	70	27.7
40-49	81	32.0
50-60	68	26.9
Missing	1	0.4
Type of school		
Junior high	107	42.3
High	142	56.1
Missing	4	1.6
Teaching subject		
Physical education and Health	71	28.1
Others	178	70.4
Missing	4	1.6
Status of SBEC SA		
Engaged and use external coach	65	25.7
Engaged but don't use external coach	163	64.4
Not engaged	25	9.9
Missing	0	0.0

### 3.2 Expected Qualifications for External Coaches

The percentages of the applicable responses were calculated for all participants and with respect to each school type (Table 2). In terms of "humanity," all the items in "abidance by rules" were indicated by over 90% of the participants. The other items in the "humanity" category—"character," "educational thinking," and "no business use"—were selected by over 80% of the participants. In terms of "ability," although the two items in the subcategory of "technical coaching" were chosen by 90% or more of the participants, the other expected qualifications were low except for the following: no. 26. "having credentials for coaching" (70.3%) and no. 30 "having experience in coaching" (76.2%). Expertise in areas other

than technical coaching was much less of a requirement.

In the category of "cooperativeness," all items in the "communication skill" subcategory were selected by over 90% of the participants. High percentages were also achieved for the following in the "support of SBECESA teachers" subcategory: no. 36 "being an adjunct of SBECESA teacher" (82.3%); no. 37 "coaching regularly" (97.6%); and no. 39 "giving main position to SBECESA teacher" (77.8%). Expectations for the "age" and "occupation" subcategories of the "attributions" category were only 30% or less. With regard to the "trust" category, only no. 49 "understanding the character of the person" (96.8%) achieved a high percentage. Other items in that category were not highly rated, such as no. 47 "pupil the teacher once taught" (9.2%) and no. 51 "parent of the team members" (8.8%).

The items that showed significantly higher proportions among junior high school teachers were as follows: no. 36 "being an adjunct of SBECESA teacher" (89.5% versus 76.6% for high school teachers; chi-square = 6.849,  $p = 0.009$ ) and no. 51 "parent of the team members" (13.3% versus 5.7%; chi-square = 4.336,  $p = 0.037$ ). By contrast, with four items, there were significantly higher proportions among high school teachers: no. 9 "no physical punishment" (97.9% versus 90.3% for junior high school teachers; chi-square = 6.782,  $p = 0.009$ ); no. 12 "having clear boundaries with team members" (99.3% versus 94.3%; by Fisher's exact test,  $p = 0.044$ ); no. 16 "not only engaging in technical coaching" (93.6% versus 83.8%; chi-square = 6.027,  $p = 0.014$ ); and no. 47 "pupil the teacher once taught" (12.1% versus 4.8%; chi-square = 3.933,  $p = 0.047$ ).

**Table 2.** Percentages for expected qualifications of external coaches by teachers

Large category (5)	Middle category (14)	Small category (52)	Overall (%)	School type			
				Junior high	High		
humanity	character	1. a person of integrity	95.2	96.2	95.0		
		2. being trusted by team members	98.0	98.1	97.9		
		3. having passion	99.2	98.1	100.0		
		4. having general intelligence	99.2	99.0	99.3		
		5. a person who likes children	92.8	92.4	92.9		
		6. cheerful disposition	86.7	89.5	84.4		
		7. a person who does not hide anything	81.5	82.9	80.9		
		8. a person who likes sports	80.3	76.2	83.7		
humanity	abidance by rules	9. no physical punishment	94.7	90.3	97.9**		
		10. staying on time	97.2	96.2	97.9		
		11. no sexual harassment	98.0	97.1	98.6		
		12. having clear boundaries with team members	97.2	94.3	99.3*		
humanity	educational thinking	13. abiding by a duty of secrecy	98.0	98.1	97.9		
		14. thinking of the personal progress of team members	98.4	97.1	99.3		
		15. understanding that SBECESA is a school activity	95.6	95.2	95.7		
		16. not only engaging in technical coaching	89.5	83.8	93.6*		
humanity	no business use	17. not only valuing winning	88.0	90.5	85.8		
		18. not using status of external coach in other business	84.7	87.6	82.3		
ability	expert	19. expert in physical training	50.2	49.5	51.1		
		20. expert with a high level technique and coach in the short-term	55.4	58.1	54.6		
		21. ability to perform acupuncture or massage	18.7	14.4	21.6		
		22. expert in mental training	42.3	42.3	42.6		
		23. a person who can engage more than one SBECESA	14.9	12.5	16.3		
		24. expert in nutritional guidance	43.0	37.1	47.5		
		ability	credentials	25. taken a course in coaching	61.0	59.0	63.1
				26. having credentials for coaching	70.3	70.5	70.2
ability	technical coaching	27. having teaching credentials	14.5	12.4	16.3		
		28. being able to coach technically	98.8	98.1	99.3		
ability	experience	29. having knowledge about technical coaching theory	90.3	91.3	89.3		
		30. having experience in coaching	76.2	71.2	79.4		
cooperativeness	communication skill	31. having experience in teaching	14.9	14.3	14.9		
		32. being able to communicate with others	98.0	98.1	97.9		
		33. fit of coaching policy with SBECESA teacher	95.6	96.2	95.0		
		34. not coaching only by the external coach's opinion	94.4	95.2	93.6		
		35. ability to communicate opinions to SBECESA teacher	92.0	95.2	89.4		
cooperativeness	support of SBECESA teachers	36. being an adjunct of SBECESA teacher	82.3	89.5**	76.6		
		37. coaching regularly	97.6	97.1	97.9		
		38. becoming a bridge between SBECESA teacher and team members	67.9	70.5	66.0		
		39. giving main position to SBECESA teacher	77.8	81.9	74.3		

	age	40. young	20.8	18.6	22.1
		41. age from 30s to 40s	16.1	15.2	16.4
		42. elderly	4.8	4.8	5.0
attributions		43. younger than SBECSA teacher	11.2	9.5	12.8
	occupation	44. civil servant	5.2	3.8	6.4
		45. a person whose job is coaching SBECSA	30.0	25.0	32.1
		46. sport store staff	4.0	4.8	3.5
	acquaintances	47. pupil the teacher once taught	9.2	4.8	12.1*
		48. introduction from acquaintance	27.7	21.9	31.9
trust		49. understanding the character of the person	96.8	96.2	97.2
		50. graduate student of the school	10.8	10.5	9.9
		51. parent of the team members	8.8	13.3*	5.7
	selection by SBECSA teacher	52. selection by SBECSA teacher	63.0	62.1	63.6

Note. \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \* =  $p < 0.05$ ; Percentages exclude missing data.

#### 4. Discussion

In the present study, a cross-sectional self-administrated questionnaire survey was conducted among teachers to examine the importance of the expected qualifications for external coaches. The differences in perceptions between teachers in junior high and high schools were also evaluated. The mainly reported expected qualifications of external coaches by teachers were as follows: "humanity" (e.g., appropriate "character," "abidance by rules," and "educational thinking"), "ability" (especially having coaching credentials and experience, and technical coaching skills and knowledge), "cooperativeness" ("communication skill" and "support of SBECSA teachers"), and "trust."

Recently, there has been growing concern about physical punishment in Japanese schools. Accordingly, MEXT (2013) has produced a guideline toward preventing such punishment. With this context, many participants in the present study may have been particularly conscious of the need to abide by rules.

Flintoff et al. (2011) stressed the importance of coaching with educational thinking, especially in elementary schools. The results of the present study indicate that educational thinking is also a strong requirement for external coaches in junior high and high schools. Therefore, educational thinking could be considered an essential qualification for external coaches in all school stages.

Cooperativeness was also highly perceived in the present study. Aoyagi et al. (2013) found that teachers' concerns about the ill-defined status of external coaches and teachers was a barrier to their recruitment: an external coach having stronger influence on students than an SBECSA teacher could cause problems in teacher-student relations. Thus, cooperativeness on the part of the external coaches in maintaining the dominant position of teachers is an important factor in recruiting coaches.

The present study found that over 70% of teachers required that external coaches have coaching credentials. Aoyagi, Ishii, Shibata, Arai, and Oka (2014) reported that individuals with coaching credentials were about eight times more likely to be motivated to become external coaches than coaches without such credentials. Coaches with the appropriate credentials would therefore appear to be an appropriate potential human resource. Japanese local governments (e.g., boards of education) and mediating organizations (e.g., sports leader bank: Sasakawa Sports Foundation, 2014) should obtain information about the needs of external coaches from schools and convey such information to coaches with credentials. However, one study found that the unknown character of the registered individuals was an impediment to teachers' use of such a mediation system (Kanagawa Prefectural Center of Physical Education, 2007). The present study found that being able to understand the character of the coach was more important than their relationship with the teachers (or students or parents of students). Hence, with a mediation system, information about the character of registrants is essential for the system to be effective. If disclosing information about the character of registrants on a Web site is difficult because of privacy protection, it is recommended that local governments operate a mediating system or work with mediating organizations to conduct interviews and check the registrants' character before a formal decision is made about their registration. It is also necessary to allow teachers to conduct interviews before formal recruitment of external coaches takes place.

This study found that expertise in areas other than technical coaching, age, and occupation were not accorded high importance. In addition, there were no considerable differences between junior high and high schools. Item no. 36 "being an adjunct of SBECSA teacher" was highly perceived in junior high schools; no. 9 "no physical punishment," no. 12 "having clear boundaries with team members," and no. 16 "not only engaging in technical coaching" were statistically high in high schools. However, the response to these items in both school types indicated their high value. Thus, qualifications for expertise in areas other than technical coaching, age, occupation, and the differences between junior

high and high schools have low priority with respect to recruitment strategy for external coaches.

The present study has some limitations. First, although the participants were collected nationwide, the representativeness of the participants may have been insufficient owing to the low response rate. Therefore, careful discussion is required regarding the generalization of the results of this study. Second, this study used a self-administrated questionnaire; however, the questionnaire content was sound, having been developed through careful interviews based on previous findings (Aoyagi et al., 2013). Despite these limitations, the present study adds quantitative evaluation to the expected qualifications reported by Aoyagi et al. (2013). Using these expected qualifications based on a quantitative method—the mixed-methods approach adopted by Creswell (2014)—would be valuable toward improving the recruitment system for external coaches. Future studies should evaluate how many external coaches have the expected qualifications or how those qualifications of external coaches may be improved by workshop interventions.

## 5. Conclusion

The results from the cross-sectional self-administrated questionnaire survey given to teachers indicated that “humanity,” “ability,” “cooperativeness,” and “trust” were highly expected. By contrast, expertise for areas other than technical coaching, age, and occupation were not highly perceived as expected qualifications. There were no considerable differences between junior high and high schools. This study has practical implications for local governments that operate a mediating system or work with mediating organizations. First, it is necessary to develop guidelines for the recruitment of external coaches that reflect the results of the present study. Second, it would be useful to set up workshops to convey the highly expected qualifications to external coaches and promote participation in them by coaches. Third, it is essential to provide information about the character of external coaches to teachers. It is also necessary to determine the needs for external coaches of schools and convey these needs to coaching credential holders. Fourth, it is recommended that mediating organizations conduct interviews among registrants and that their character be checked before formal registration. There is also a need for teachers to be encouraged to conduct candidate interviews before formal recruitment of external coaches takes place. If a local community lacks such a mediating system, establishing this type of system could promote the recruitment of appropriate external coaches.

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