

Fostering Organizational Learning across the Canadian Sport System through Leadership and Mentorship Development of Sport Science Leaders

Authors : Jennifer Walinga, Samantha Heron

Abstract : The goal of the study was to inform the design of effective leadership and mentorship development programming for sport science leaders within the network of Canadian sport institutes and centers. The LEAD (Learn, Engage, Accelerate, Develop) program was implemented to equip sport science leaders with the leadership knowledge, skills, and practice to foster a high - performance culture, enhance the daily training environment, and contribute to optimal performance in sport. After two years of delivery, this analysis of LEAD's effect on individual and organizational health and performance factors informs the quality of future deliveries and identifies best practice for leadership development across the Canadian sport system and beyond. A larger goal for this project was to inform the public sector more broadly and position sport as a source of best practice for human and social health, development, and performance. The objectives of this study were to review and refine the LEAD program in collaboration with Canadian Sport Institute and Centre leaders, 40-50 participants from three cohorts, and the LEAD program advisory committee, and to trace the effects of the LEAD leadership development program on key leadership mentorship and organizational health indicators across the Canadian sport institutes and centers so as to capture best practice. The study followed a participatory action research framework (PAR) using semi structured interviews with sport scientist participants, program and institute leaders inquiring into impact on specific individual and organizational health and performance factors. Findings included a strong increase in self-reported leadership knowledge, skill, language and confidence, enhancement of human and organizational health factors, and the opportunity to explore more deeply issues of diversity and inclusion, psychological safety, team dynamics, and performance management. The study was significant in building sport leadership and mentorship development strategies for managing change efforts, addressing inequalities, and building personal and operational resilience amidst challenges of uncertainty, pressure, and constraint in real time.

Keywords : sport leadership, sport science leader, leadership development, professional development, sport education, mentorship

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