High School Sport Stakeholders' Perspectives on Coaches' Ability to Facilitate Positive Youth Development

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ABSTRACT

Coaching for positive youth development (PYD) in the context of high school sport is a complex process given that many factors influence this environment. The purpose of this study was to explore the ability of high school coaches to facilitate PYD from the perspective of administrators, coaches, and athletes. Although stakeholders in general perceive coaches as having the ability to facilitate PYD, scores for coaches were higher than athletes and administrators and scores for athletes were higher than administrators. Furthermore, coaches who participated in coach education perceived themselves as having a greater ability to facilitate PYD compared to coaches with no coach education.

Key Words: athletes, administrators, coaches, values, life skills

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Introduction

The act of coaching has been described in the coaching science literature as a complex activity due to its inherently dynamic and social nature (Cushion, 2010; Cushion & Lyle, 2010). Indeed, in order to be effective, coaches must integrate various forms of knowledge, understand the context in which they operate, and work to facilitate the development of athletes (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). As it relates to development, positive youth development (PYD) is the most general term used in the literature to describe the promotion of youth's competencies (Gould & Carson, 2008). PYD is a broad approach to development and according to its basic principles; youth should be treated as resources to be developed rather than problems to be managed (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). This means that the development of youth cannot be conceptualized solely as the prevention and/or reduction of undesirable behaviours such as aggression, violence, cheating, and disrespect (Larson, 2000). Rather, adult leaders must adopt a strength-based approach (focus on future outcomes and assets that people bring to a problem) that is based on promoting life skills (e.g., leadership, teamwork) and values (e.g., responsibility, sportsmanship), which are necessary to live cooperatively in society (Danish, Forneris, Hodge, & Heke, 2004).

In the context of sport, coaches are adult leaders who play a crucial role in structuring suitable environments for PYD. In fact, coaches have been described as occupying a position of considerable power and may be the most influential people in the sporting context (Cushion, 2010; Gould & Carson, 2008). In order to adopt a strength-based approach in the sporting context, coaches should: a) carefully develop their philosophy; b) nurture meaningful relationships with their athletes; c) implement strategies to teach life skills and values; and d) teach athletes how life skills and values transfer to non-sport settings (Camiré, Forneris, Trudel, & Bernard, 2011). Past research has shown that effective coaching requires coaches to have well developed philosophies and articulated strategies to facilitate PYD (Gould, Collins, Lauer, & Chung, 2007; Collins, Gould, Lauer, & Chung, 2009). Furthermore, the coaching of life skills and values should not be considered as an isolated activity; rather, it should consist of specific strategies that are integrated into general coaching practices (Gould & Carson, 2008).

High school sport is often framed as an extension of the classroom. Therefore, a comprehensive and integrated approach to coaching should be favored (Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008). In addition, many school sport organizations communicate through their mission statement that the global development of students should be the primary objective of high school sport (Camiré, Werthner, & Trudel, 2009a). Past research has been conducted with coaches, athletes, and administrators in order to document their perspectives on how high school sport should be practiced and results suggest that they believe it is a context suitable for PYD. For example, Lesyk and

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Kornspan (2000) surveyed 109 coaches to examine their expectations of what children should gain from their participation in high school sport. The results of their study indicated that coaches believed the top benefits of high school sport were to have fun, learn life skills, be part of a team, and develop confidence. Gould, Chung, Smith, and White (2006) surveyed 154 high school coaches to determine what their perceptions of their roles were related to developing life skills through sport. Findings indicated that coaches ranked the psychological and social development of their athletes as a priority and the main focus of their coaching. In terms of problems encountered while coaching athletes, the result indicated that coaches mentioned that some athlete's failed to take personal responsibility, lacked motivation, and had poor communication skills.

Studies have also been conducted with high school athletes to document their experiences in high school sport. Camiré, Trudel, and Forneris (2009b) conducted interviews with 20 high school athletes and found that they believed high school sport participation allowed them to develop a number of life skills (e.g., time-management, communicating effectively) that could be transferred to other life domains. In a second study with these same 20 athletes, Camiré and Trudel (2010) indicated that athletes believed that through their participation in high school sports, they also learned important values, such as teamwork, perseverance, honesty, and respect. However, athletes also indicated how trash talking and intentional fouling were often used by high school athletes to gain an advantage over an opponent. It was reported by the athletes that these tactics were rationalized as being part of the game. Voelker, Gould, and Crawford (2011) interviewed captains of their high school teams in order to understand their experiences in this role. The majority of captains indicated that this experience was positive for their development, although many stated receiving little training from coaches for their roles as captains. Some captains even believed that their coaches inhibited their ability to develop leadership skills by refusing to take their suggestions and by using intimidation. Finally, Montreuil (2007) conducted a study with high school principals to better understand how they view high school sport participation. In general, principals indicated that they were supportive of the practice of high school sport and recognized its importance for youth development. Furthermore, the principals mentioned that they encourage participation for all students and work to create a sporting environment that is in accordance with their school's mission statement.

The previous studies highlight the experiences of different stakeholders and how they believe the high school context should be structured. Despite facing some challenges and undesirable behaviors, coaches, athletes, and administrators appear to believe that high school sport is a context in which athletes can learn life skills and values that facilitate PYD. Although quite useful, this information only provides us with a partial picture of what is currently occurring in high school sport. Little is known concerning stakeholders' perceptions of the coach's role in developing life skills and values. High school coaches are integral and highly influential social agents in sport (Gould et al. 2006). Therefore, more research is needed to understand what coaches should be doing to facilitate PYD in this context. For this reason, the purpose of this study was to explore

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high school coaches' ability to facilitate PYD from the perspective of coaches, athletes, and administrators. Two research questions guided the study: (a) Are their differences between stakeholders in how they perceive coaches' ability to facilitate PYD? and; (b) What variables predict coaches' perceived ability to facilitate PYD? Examining these two questions is an important first step in understanding the perceived influence that coaches have on youth development as well as investigating the variables that influence coaches' perceived ability to teach life skills and values.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited in high schools throughout the province of Quebec in Canada. High school sport is a popular practice in the province with over 166 000 athletes involved in more than 45 sports (FQSE, 2009). High school sports in Quebec are practiced after school hours in organized leagues which hold regional and provincial championships on an annual basis. A total of 672 participants (i.e., administrators, coaches, athletes) voluntarily agreed to take part in this study. Participants were recruited from all 14 administrative regions of the Federation Quebecoise du Sport Etudiant (FQSE), the governing body of high school sport in the province of Quebec. Coaches ($n = 235$; 72% male, 28% female) were between the ages of 15 and 64 ($M = 32.74$; $SD = 11.29$). Nearly all coaches reported being involved in sport as athletes and 12 % were involved in recreational sport, 58 % in developmental sport, and 29 % in elite sport. Administrators ($n = 188$; 66% male and 34% female) were comprised of high school principals, assistant high school principals, and athletic directors and ranged in age between 26 and 64 years ($M = 40.35$; $SD = 9.97$). Athletes ($n = 249$; 35% male and 65% female) were between the ages of 12 and 18 ($M = 15.49$; $SD = 1.74$) and were involved in 21 different sports. The gender breakdown for coaches (72% male, 28% female) and administrators (66% male; 34% female) is representative of the coaching and administrative positions in sport across Canada. However, for athletes (37% male, 63% female) there were more female respondents.

Procedure

An online survey was disseminated to the participants through the 14 regional directors of the FQSE. Administrators and coaches received the survey by email directly from the regional directors. Upon having completed the survey, coaches were instructed to forward it to all of their athletes. The return rates for the survey were fairly representative across the province, meaning that the regions with the most athletes were the regions with the highest number of returned surveys (e.g., approximately 45% of the athletes live in urban areas of the province and these areas represented 41% of the returned surveys). Data were collected over a period of five months during the academic school year. Approval to conduct this study was obtained from the University's Research Ethics Board and the Federation Quebecoise du Sport Etudiant (FQSE).

Measures

The survey used in this study has been previously employed in a study by Forneris, Camiré, and Trudel (2012). The survey was developed using Survey Monkey's online survey software (Finley & Finley, 1999) and a number of steps were taken to refine the survey during its original development. A first version was created from items selected from the life skills and values literature and findings from qualitative studies

conducted with Canadian high school sport stakeholders (Camiré & Trudel, 2010; Camiré, et al. 2009b). This first version of the survey was presented to FQSE regional directors during an annual meeting. The directors provided feedback by approving the relevance of the questions posed, by suggesting new questions, and by ensuring proper terms were used in the wording of some questions. Both French and English versions of the survey were developed by the first author who is fully bilingual. Prior to commencing data collection, the survey was pilot tested in one administrative region to ensure that the URL address was operational and that the dissemination process worked effectively. The survey was composed of six sections: a) demographics, b) type of involvement in sport, c) awareness of mission statement, d) impact of sport on development, e) coaches' ability to facilitate PYD, and f) administration of coaching. For the purpose of this paper, data were drawn from the following two sections of the survey.

Demographics. All participants were asked to provide general demographic information which included their age, gender, and athletic experience. Coaches were asked additional questions such as their occupation, coaching experience, and participation in formal coach education initiatives (i.e., workshops/seminars, National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP), National Coaching Institute (NCI), or a degree/diploma in Human Kinetics or a related field).

Coaches' ability to facilitate PYD. A recurring issue facing sport scientists is that life skills and associated terms are often ill-defined (Gould & Carson, 2008). In non-sport domains, the 5Cs (competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring) have often been associated as indicators of PYD (Lerner et al. 2005). However, a recent study suggested that existing measures of the 5Cs of PYD might not be valid in sport and that PYD in this context might be best represented by pro-social values (Jones, Dunn, Holt, Sullivan, & Bloom, 2011). According to Gould and Carson (2008), PYD in sport also encompasses the development of life skills. Given that at this time, there is no existing validated questionnaire to examine the facilitation of PYD through sport and that development in the sporting context is associated with life skills and values, the participants of this study were asked to provide their perspective on coaches' ability to teach 12 life skills and values. The items were selected based on literature that outlines the various life skills and values that can be developed through sport participation (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1993; Rudd, 2005; Shields & Bredemeier, 1995). The researchers met with the regional directors of the FQSE to have them certify that the life skills and values selected for the survey are those that best represent the type of influence high school coaches can have on youth development. Each of the 12 life skills and values (12 items; one item per life skill and value) were measured on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = totally disagree, 4 = totally agree). The stem question for administrators and athletes was: 'High school coaches teach athletes how to'. The stem question for coaches was: "Personally, as a coach, I teach athletes how to" followed by the following 12 statements: a) accept criticism and feedback from others, b) effectively deal with winning and losing, c) work with people they don't necessarily like, d) develop leadership, e) develop self-confidence, f) foster social connections, g) sacrifice in order to accomplish objectives, h)

be a team player, i) develop a good work ethic, j) develop sportsmanship, k) have a sense of right or wrong, and l) develop responsibility. Care was taken to protect the integrity of the items' inherent meaning during the process of translation from English to French.

Data Analysis

For the first research question, 12 one-way between group ANOVA's were performed to examine whether or not there were significant differences between administrators, coaches, and athletes in their perceptions of coaches' ability to facilitate PYD. Twelve one-way ANOVA's were conducted as the purpose of the research was to examine these life skills and values separately (they were not combined to form a PYD measure or scale). Given the number of ANOVA's being conducted a conservative alpha (.01) was used for the main effect analyses and an alpha of .015 for the post-hoc tests to control for Type 1 error.

To examine the second research question, a multiple regression analysis were conducted to examine whether a) years of athletic experience, b) years of coaching experience, or c) coach education predicted coaches' perceived ability to facilitate PYD. All predictors were entered into the regression analysis simultaneously as it was unknown which predictors may play a more important or significant role in predicting coaches' perceptions of facilitating PYD. The assumption of collinearity was examined and the correlation analyses revealed low correlations (.021-.086) between the independent variables indicating an absence of collinearity. The software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, 2009, Version 18) was employed to conduct all analyses.

Results

Question 1: Are there differences between stakeholders in how they perceive coaches' ability to facilitate PYD?

Overall, the results revealed that there were differences across stakeholders on their perceptions of coaches' ability to facilitate PYD. Although stakeholders in general perceive coaches as having the ability to facilitate PYD, scores for coaches were higher than athletes and administrators and scores for athletes were higher than administrators. More specifically, on a 4-point Likert scale, administrators' perceptions of the 12 life skills and values ranged from 2.75 to 3.35 while coaches' perceptions ranged from 3.28 to 3.61 and athletes' perceptions ranged from 2.90 to 3.60 (See Table I for Means and Standard Deviations). Results from the ANOVAs showed significant differences across stakeholders on all 12 components of PYD: accept criticism and feedback ($F(2, 667) = 62.27, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.16$); deal with winning and losing ($F(2, 664) = 71.98, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.18$); work with people they don't like ($F(2, 549) = 64.72, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.19$); develop leadership ($F(2, 663) = 54.07, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.14$); develop self-confidence ($F(2, 659) = 24.29, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.07$); foster social connections ($F(2, 670) = 7.73, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.02$); sacrifice to achieve objectives ($F(2, 646) = 84.05, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.21$); be a team player ($F(2, 673)$

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= 62.71, $p < .001$, eta squared = 0.16); develop a good work ethic ($F(2, 672) = 46.31$, $p < .001$, eta squared = 0.12); develop sportsmanship ($F(2, 670) = 69.73$, $p < .001$, eta squared = 0.17); have a sense of right or wrong ($F(2, 564) = 62.92$, $p < .001$, eta squared = 0.18); develop responsibility ($F(2, 564) = 64.80$, $p < .001$, eta squared = 0.19).

Compared to administrators, the results indicated that athletes and coaches rated coaches higher on many of the items (alpha set at 0.015 to control for Type I error). For “accept criticism and feedback”, “deal with winning and losing”, “work with people they don’t like”, “develop leadership”, “develop self-confidence”, “sacrifice to achieve objectives”, “be a team player”, “develop a good work ethic”, and “develop sportsmanship” the perceptions of administrators were significantly lower than the perceptions of coaches and athletes. Compared to athletes, administrators had significantly lower perceptions for “foster social connections”. With regards to differences between coaches and athletes, coaches rated themselves significantly higher than athletes on “deal with winning and losing,” “work with people they don’t like,” “have a sense of right or wrong” and “develop responsibility” whereas athletes rated coaches higher on “develop leadership,” and “sacrifice to achieve objectives.”

Table I

Means and Standard Deviations for Elements of Positive Youth Development

	Administrators		Coaches		Athletes	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Accept criticism & feedback	2.75	0.49	3.32	0.53	3.27	0.61
Deal with winning & losing	2.80	0.49	3.46	0.54	3.31	0.66
Work with people they don’t like	2.75	0.49	3.29	0.53	3.01	0.33
Develop leadership	2.98	0.50	3.32	0.56	3.51	0.51
Develop self-confidence	3.23	0.43	3.53	0.51	3.55	0.55
Foster social connections	3.35	0.54	3.42	0.60	3.55	0.52
Sacrifice to achieve objectives	2.78	0.46	3.31	0.60	3.45	0.54
Be a team player	3.05	0.50	3.53	0.54	3.60	0.56
Develop a good work ethic	2.96	0.53	3.41	0.54	3.42	0.60
Develop sportsmanship	3.15	0.53	3.61	0.52	3.70	0.47
Have a sense of right or wrong	2.76	0.48	3.28	0.63	2.76	0.48
Develop responsibility	2.99	0.49	3.43	0.54	2.90	0.42

Question 2: What variables predict coaches' perceived ability to facilitate PYD?

Descriptive analyses indicated that 26.7 % of coaches had between two to five years of athletic experience, 32.4 % had between six to nine years of athletic experience and 40.9 % had 10 or more years of athletic experience. With regard to years of coaching experience as a high school coach 1.5 % reported they had 1 year or less experience, 43.5 % reported having between 2 to 5 years of experience, 27 % reported between 6 to 9 years of experience and 28 % reported having 10 or more years of experience. Descriptive statistics on coach education revealed that 14 percent of coaches reported no coach education while 86 % reported having participated in some form of coach education.

Results from the multiple regression analysis indicate that the overall regression model, which included three independent variables (years of athletic experience, years of coaching experience, and coach education), was significant for seven of 12 elements (accept criticism and feedback, develop leadership, foster social connections, sacrifice to achieve objectives, develop a good work ethic, develop sportsmanship, and develop responsibility) (see Table II). The results also indicate that for all of these seven elements, the only significant predictor was coach education. More specifically, the Beta values (see Table II) for coach education were significant for all elements with the exception of "be a team player". In addition, for four of five elements (deal with winning and losing, work with people they don't like, develop self-confidence, and develop a sense of right or wrong) for which the regression model was not significant, the Beta values for coach education were significant.

A post-hoc analysis was performed to examine the variable of coach education more closely. Given that coach education was the only significant variable in the model, a one-way between groups ANOVA with PYD as the dependent variable and level of coach education as the independent variable was conducted. Level 1 was no coach education (N =31), level 2 was participation in coaching workshops or seminars only (N=21), level 3 was accreditation from the NCCP, NCI, or a degree/diploma in Human Kinetics or a related field (N=55), and level 4 was the combination of workshops/seminars with the NCCP, NCI, or a degree/diploma in Human Kinetics or a related field (N=106). The results of the ANOVA were significant, $F(3, 209) = 4.37$, $p < .01$ (effect size .059). Post hoc-analyses of the ANOVA indicated that coaches' perceived ability to facilitate PYD was significantly higher ($p=.002$) ($M = 3.47$, $SD = .34$) for coaches at level 4 compared to coaches at level 1 ($M = 3.21$, $SD = .39$). There were no other significant differences observed.

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Table II

Means and Standard Deviations for Elements of Positive Youth Development

	R	R ²	F-value	p-value	coach exp	Beta (p value) athlete exp.	coach edu.
Accept criticism & feedback	.268	.072	3.731	.013	-.026 (.746)	-.081 (.316)	.258 (.002)
Deal with winning & losing	.189	.036	1.770	.155	.015 (.860)	.009 (.910)	.186 (.025)
Work with people they don't like	.220	.048	2.401	.070	.014 (.863)	.004 (.957)	.218 (.009)
Develop leadership	.226	.051	2.682	.049	.073 (.366)	-.009 (.911)	.209 (.010)
Develop self-confidence	.177	.031	1.597	.193	-.026 (.749)	-.048 (.553)	.171 (.037)
Foster social connections	.264	.070	3.667	.014	.062 (.443)	-.016 (.837)	.253 (.002)
Sacrifice to achieve objectives	.367	.135	7.385	.000	-.061 (.441)	.090 (.255)	.355 (.000)
Be a team player	.147	.022	1.109	.348	-.067 (.413)	-.025 (.762)	.134 (.101)
Develop a good work ethic	.320	.103	5.607	.001	.027 (.736)	.039 (.616)	.313 (.000)
Develop sportsmanship	.290	.084	4.582	.004	.059 (.458)	-.050 (.525)	.278 (.001)
Have a sense of right or wrong	.195	.038	1.986	.118	.058 (.471)	.068 (.402)	.164 (.042)
Develop responsibility	.253	.064	3.415	.019	.053 (.504)	.021 (.787)	.241 (.003)

Note: exp=experience; edu= education

Discussion

The original contribution of this study resides in how it examined the perceptions of multiple stakeholders on coaches' ability to facilitate PYD in the context of high school sport. Findings indicated that perceptions across stakeholders were significantly different, with moderate to strong effect sizes. Specifically, coaches rated themselves higher in their ability to facilitate PYD than athletes and administrators rated them. Moreover, athletes rated coaches' ability to facilitate PYD higher than did administrators. A number of factors may explain these findings.

A first factor that may explain the findings is that social desirability might have played a role in coaches' and athletes' responses. To present a positive portrait of their coaches, some athletes may have rated coaches higher and some coaches may have rated themselves higher because they wanted to validate their work with athletes. Second, some people in society have been socialized to hold the notion that sport can promote the development of athletes (Fullinwider, 2006; Theodoulides, 2003). Docheff (1997) stated: "for some reason, people hear the phrase 'sport builds character' and readily accept the claim. People don't question the phrase because they really want to believe it" (p.34). For this reason, it is possible that athletes and coaches in this study may have rated coaches higher on their ability to facilitate PYD because of a foundational belief that sport has the power to promote development.

A third factor that can potentially explain these findings is that coaching youth sport and teaching life skills and values is regarded as a relatively straightforward and easy process. McCallister, Blinde, and Weiss (2000) conducted a study with youth baseball and softball coaches and showed how they generally perceive themselves as having the necessary abilities to promote PYD because of an "assumption on the part of many respondents that coaching at the youth sport level required minimal knowledge or preparation" (p.42). Similarly, the high school coaches in this study might have perceived themselves as having the necessary abilities to facilitate PYD and rated themselves at a higher level than other stakeholders.

Fourth, the types of investments and responsibilities administrators have in the youth sport context might explain their low ratings of coaches' ability to facilitate PYD. Administrators are responsible for promoting their schools in order to attract prospective students, and often use their sport programs for this purpose (Montreuil, 2007). As noted earlier, high school sports are often framed as an extension of the classroom. Some school sport organizations communicate through their mission statements that the global development of students is a primary objective of sport participation (Camiré et al. 2009a; Holt et al. 2008). As a result, administrators in this study might have rated coaches' ability lower because they have higher expectations of sport and believe coaches should be doing more to facilitate PYD. Although these explanations are plausible, further research is needed to explain the underlying reasons for the discrepancies found between stakeholders. Future studies using qualitative methodologies would be useful to

examine the perceptions of coaches, athletes, and administrators as it relates to the role of coaches in the process of facilitating PYD in the context of high school sport.

A unique contribution of this study is the examination of the perceptions of stakeholders along with the factors that influenced coaches' perceived ability to facilitate PYD. Three predictors (i.e., athletic experience, coaching experience, and coach education) were examined in this study. Interestingly, only coach education significantly predicted coaches' perceived ability to facilitate PYD. Compared to having no coach education, coaches who participated in coaching workshops and/or formal coaching education courses had higher scores. These results support previous research indicating that coach education increases coaches' general self-efficacy (Malete & Feltz, 2000; Sullivan & Gee, 2008). The results also extend previous findings by specifically highlighting that coaches' perceived ability to facilitate PYD is greater for those who participate in various types of coach education initiatives than for those who do not participate in coach education. Participating in numerous coach education initiatives might have led coaches to perceive that they had the required skills to facilitate PYD in high school sport, but more information is needed to specifically understand why coaches with coach education felt more confident in their ability to facilitate PYD. Consequently, future studies should explore the underlying mechanisms that influence coaches' perceived ability to facilitate PYD.

Practical Implications

This study offers original findings that can be useful to coaches and administrators working in the context of high school sport. First, the discrepancies between coaches', athletes', and administrators' perspectives point to the fact that the work of coaches is not viewed in a unanimous manner. It is important to consider that coaches, athletes, and administrators have different roles and different experiences in high school sport that influence their perceptions of the context. To align stakeholders' perspectives, administrators must work collaboratively with their coaches and communicate to them their expectations of what a high school coach should teach athletes. For example, a school principal or an athletic director can organize a meeting at the beginning of the year with all of the school's coaches to share with them the institution's mandate and the importance of using sport as an instrument for development. A widely available tool administrators can use to communicate their expectations is their school's mission statement, which is usually comprised of the organization's purpose, values, and philosophy (Bart & Baetz, 1998).

Camiré et al. (2009a) conducted a case study of a high school in Canada and demonstrated how little communication existed between administrators and coaches and how administrators assumed that coaches knew the school's mission statement. Furthermore, coaches did not communicate the mission statement to their athletes. Therefore, in order to ensure that all stakeholders share the same notion of what coaches should be promoting in high school sport, administrators and coaches should make more

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efficient use of their school's mission statement. As Bart and Tabone (1999) stated, mission statements can provide a focused guide for decision making and can motivate stakeholders towards working for a common objective. In addition to making better use of the school's mission statement, coaches should, at the beginning of the season, present their coaching philosophy to athletes and share the core values that drive their coaching practice (Camiré et al., 2011). Such initiatives can help ensure that all involved in high school sport understand the fundamental reasons as to why sport should be practiced in this context.

The second original finding of this study was how coach education was found to be a significant predictor of coaches' perceived ability to facilitate PYD. Based on this result, it appears that all high school coaches should be encouraged to participate in coach education. Despite this perceived benefit, it is essential to mention that formal coach education is not mandatory in Canadian high school sport; it is at the discretion of coaches to decide whether or not they wish to become certified (Lacroix, Camiré, & Trudel, 2008). As researchers have discussed in the past, formal coach education courses can provide coaches with useful information but time constraints usually hinder coaches' ability and/or willingness to take part in them (Vargas-Tonsing, 2007). Therefore, more developmental opportunities are needed for coach learning to extend beyond formal education programs (Lemyre, Trudel, & Durand-Bush, 2007). For example, such developmental opportunities can include having access to a mentor, attending coaching seminars, and being part of a learning community.

Gilbert, Gallimore, and Trudel (2009) proposed a learning community approach to coach development as a way to complement formal coach education programs. A learning community is formed of coaches who share similar interests and get together to discuss coaching issues. This approach can provide coaches with opportunities to reflect on real coaching issues in specific coaching contexts. In order to develop learning communities that take into consideration coaches' busy schedules, Gilbert et al. (2009) suggested reorganizing already existing structures into opportunities designed to help coaches further their development. Practically, this could mean using league meetings to allow coaches to share ideas related to coaching philosophies and the development of youth. Despite the potential benefits of learning communities, it is important to recognize that under current circumstances, such initiatives could prove to be very difficult to initiate and sustain. The current reality in the context of youth sport is that coaches do not necessarily view other coaches as learning partners but more often as rivals which limits the amount of information they are willing to share (Lemyre et al. 2007). Furthermore, high school coaches, whether they are teachers or community members, already volunteer a significant amount of time and effort in order to coach sport teams and there are currently few incentives for them to invest time and effort in further developing their abilities (Lacroix et al. 2008).

In order to further promote high school sport as an extension of the classroom and meet the objectives communicated by school sport organizations (Camiré et al. 2009a),

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changes are needed to improve the status of high school coaches. Practically, administrators should consider allocating more resources to coach development by giving coaches the time and the tools necessary to learn how to facilitate PYD. In the province of Ontario in Canada, the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations (OFSAA) has recently developed a coaching program for high school coaches. The three and a half hour course is divided into eight chapters and is accredited by the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP). The course is designed to provide coaches with basic information on how to coach in the school environment by covering topics such as coaching philosophy, safety guidelines, and coaching responsibilities (OFSAA, 2009). Currently, participation in these courses remains voluntary but in light of the results of this study, it is important to raise the question as to whether participation should be mandatory for all high school coaches. Such training courses can prove to be quite useful as they provide coaches with valuable information on the roles and responsibilities of coaching in this context.

Conclusion

It is important to identify some of the limitations of this study. First, having used a self-report measure, social desirability might have played a role in the discrepancies observed across stakeholders. Second, data were collected in high schools in a single province and might not necessarily be representative of other Canadian provinces and/or other youth sport contexts. Third, there was an over-representation of female athlete respondents in the sample which might influence the type of answers provided by athletes. Finally, it is important to distinguish that this study examined stakeholders' perceptions of coaches' ability to facilitate PYD and did not measure actual coach behaviors.

Despite these limitations, the results of this study can help researchers and practitioners identify the discrepancies that exist across stakeholders' perceptions. In order to minimize these discrepancies, administrators should make efforts to communicate their school's mission statement with coaches and athletes, thereby helping ensure that all stakeholders share the same vision concerning the life skills and values that high school coaches should promote. This study also demonstrated how coach education is a significant predictor of coaches' perceived ability to facilitate PYD. Researchers and coach educators can use these findings to motivate coaches to continually engage in professional development in order to refine their skills and gain coaching efficacy. Formal coach education should be promoted but given the time constraints that youth sport coaches face (Vargas-Tonsing, 2007), other types of learning opportunities should also be endorsed. It is by investing in coaches and their development that we can help ensure that youth are learning the life skills and values necessary for becoming productive citizens in society.

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