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Youth sports coaches in social programmes: the ecology of human development

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The importance of sports in youth development has been recognised, particularly among those who are vulnerable and at social risk (Côté & Hancock, 2014; Whitley, Hayden, & Gould, 2015). This relevance has increased with the surge of theories of positive development in the last 30 years supporting sport participation as a tool and context capable to promote positive outcomes (Larson, Walker, Rusk, & Diaz, 2015; Scales, 2011). The coaches' role here is acknowledged as a key factor in shaping the quality of youth experiences in sport (Ericson & Côté, 2016; Gonçalves, Silva, Cruz, & Figueiredo, 2010; Haudenhuyse, Theeboom, & Coalter, 2012).

Sport experiences have been associated with several benefits throughout the lifespan (Neely & Holt, 2014; Lee & Martinek, 2013). This assumption justifies the promotion of sport participation programmes around the world, mainly in contexts of violence, poverty, ethno-religious conflicts and displaced populations. Consequently, the demand for professionals with specific competences and skills capable of serving these programmes has increased, whether their objective is to create an environment with potential for change or to provide positive stability for the development of youth.

Considering that coaches may be exposed to contexts of vulnerability and social risk, they still need to adopt pro-social attitudes such as establishing themselves as significant adults often through assuming principles and values that may foster positive expectations for youngsters' lives. Despite the recognised importance of the coach's responsibility in this regard, there is still a gap in the study of youth coach development in contexts of vulnerability and social risk. This is because much of the available information has only focused on the role of coaches for the positive development of youth (Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2014; Ericson & Côté, 2016). Consequently, the study of coaches' development in such contexts is sparse.

In Brazil, the Second Half Programme (*Programa Segundo Tempo*, PST) is a significant sports participation action programme administered by the Ministry of Sports in partnership with regional and local governments. The purpose is to increase access to the practice and culture of sports, focussing on serving children and adolescents in situations of vulnerability and social risk. Considering the data available for the PST from 2003 to 2014, 720 agreements were reached with 498 local governments, reaching approximately 1,475,000 children and adolescents across Brazil. However, no information is available about the coaches of these youth sport programmes. Consequently, from an ecological perspective, we know little about what kind of effects PST may have generated in the coaches' development process? Neither do we know what perceptions do coaches have about their involvement in the sport programme?

Within PST, the coaches are often limited by the uncertainty of temporary contracts, low salaries, late payments and discontinued programmes, in addition to being exposed in several cases of violence and poor working conditions (e.g. unavailability of gyms and courts or pitches, support and materials). Moreover, there are also other factors that also serve to diminish their professional activity. These include public policy, as well as governmental and cultural systems. These factors affect coaches in biological, social, historical and cultural dimensions.

For example, from a bioecological perspective, development is a phenomenon of continuity and change in the biopsychosocial characteristics of the individual, as well as that of groups. It is often defined as a process of reciprocal interaction, progressively complex and always constant between the individual or group (organism) and their context (environment) (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Reverdito, Scaglia, Galatti, Gonçalves, & Paes, 2015). Furthermore, coaches within social programmes tend to be focused on the organisational demands of teaching sport (and the youth learning of it) within situations of vulnerability and social risk. Thus, coaches need to be scrutinised as active subjects in the context of sport participation. Our investigative agenda then deals with specific contexts where coaches have an essential role, often neglected in the scope of research and public policies. Even though the PST has the magnitude and importance briefly presented here, involving hundreds of coaches and more than a million children and adolescents, no studies in Brazil, to the best of our knowledge, currently exist about the development of the coach within this programme. Consequently, through adopting a bioecological perspective, we believe it necessary to understand the coach in the context of social programmes, as well as the importance of sport in their own learning and development, in order to develop a better grasp of the role of sport in athletes' personal positive development.

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