

Drawing on de Coubertin's Olympism philosophy in the Secondary School Rugby Experience

Blake Bennett

New Zealand Centre for Olympic Studies,
New Zealand

Blake.Bennett@sportcanterbury.org.nz

Abstract

The literature indicates that the values of, and justification for, rugby participation in Japan and New Zealand share many similarities including the development of young males' character (Abe, 2008; Phillips, 1996). Importantly to the pursuit of Olympism studies, such development resonates with de Coubertin's intentions for sport participation in young males (Müller, 2000). The current article presents hermeneutic interpretations of texts (conversations) held with Japanese and New Zealand secondary school rugby coaches. Findings reveal the ways Japanese coaches sought to enhance various qualities in their players as they spoke explicitly about developing traits beyond the physical domain. The idea of *ningen keisei* (人間形成; character development or human cultivation) emerged as the premise of their aims. Conversely, New Zealand coaches indicated that they put emphasis on technical skills, and despite equal opportunity, did not articulate any intention to develop their athletes beyond the physical domain. Although a complete paucity of underlying philosophies regarding character development in New Zealand secondary school rugby coaching practices is not being suggested here, the findings could signal an important consideration for future directions of school-based rugby participation.

Keywords

Character building, moral education, secondary school, rugby.

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Introduction

For educators of late 19th century England, education encompassed both academic and physical endeavours. Headmaster of Rugby School from 1828-1841, Thomas Arnold, developed a model of moral education through sport that highlighted earnestness, selflessness, and humility in the school boys of the rising English middle-classes, with a later shift to emphasise austere values such as hardness and endurance (Chandler & Nauright, 1996). Concurrently, as new ideals concerning deportment and manners began to prevail in England, public school masters turned their focus to the cultivation of young gentlemen (Ryan, 2007). Educators deemed organised team games as an appropriate vehicle to achieve their objectives, and formalized games became viewed as important for the development of “men who were polite and Christian in their bearing” (Phillips, 1987, p. 86) – the notion of ‘muscular Christianity’.

This idea of muscular Christianity was of interest to Pierre de Coubertin who would focus much of his study on physical education and the role of sport in education. In 1883, de Coubertin visited England to investigate the physical education program of Thomas Arnold at Rugby School (Hill, 1996). De Coubertin believed the methods implemented by Arnold contributed to an expansion of British power during the 19th century, and as a result he advocated for similar pedagogies to be adopted in French institutions (Hill, 1996). For de Coubertin, the playing fields of Rugby and other English schools demonstrated how organised sport could develop moral and social strength in young men (Müller, 2000). He viewed the English school system “not only as cultivating individual moral qualities, but ... as social training for life in a democratic society” (Loland, 1995, p. 56), demonstrating de Coubertin’s humanistic vision for sport participation (Smirnov, 2000).

Britain’s dissemination of this public school model is said to have become one of its greatest exports (Lambert, 2004), and the concepts of moral and social development would impact on both the meaning and practice of sport in the British colonies and beyond (Chandler & Nauright, 1996). As a colony of Britain, as Phillips (1987) and Ryan (2007) highlight, it is unsurprising that similar values were transported to New Zealand and disseminated through the game of rugby. Yet, what impact did such notions of masculinity, and the vehicle of rugby, have on other countries and cultures? Japan, for instance, was not a part of the British Empire.

The absence of sport in foreign lands was perceived to be indicative of cultural weakness and racial inferiority (Roden, 2001), and the vigour required of team sports was seen as symbolic of national strength and health (Mangan & Hickey, 2000). Japanese educators would attribute British colonial expansion and military strength to the moral strength attainable through the playing of games, and this concept was later integrated into more uniquely Japanese practices that would continue to influence the practice of sport throughout the 20th century (Inoue, 1997).

Irrespective of cultural transformations in each setting over time, participation in rugby was viewed by educators in Japan (Abe, 2008) and in New Zealand (Phillips, 1996) as a means to develop masculinity in school boys whilst emphasising a range of other educative, moral, and social functions. It was these functions that de Coubertin viewed as the important contribution that participation in sport could make to the lives of school boys, and therefore society at large (Müller, 2000).

In 1995 the game of rugby made a transition into the professional era. This shift would alter the coaching landscape, and predictions were made about the erosion of the educative, humanistic and amateur values that underpinned the game (Ryan, 2008). To date, little has been written about the current pedagogical intents and the degree to which historio-socio-cultural factors may or may not influence coaches in secondary school sport, or more specifically, rugby, in New Zealand or Japan since its transition to professionalism over 20 years ago.

Purpose

To investigate this topic, the current article draws on the findings of a Doctoral study conducted with rugby coaches in New Zealand and Japan (Bennett, 2016). Was Ryan's (2008) prediction about the erosion of educative, humanistic and amateur values underpinning rugby accurate? To what extent do contemporary pressures, and historical and sociocultural influences impact the game at a level that is now treated as a location for the selection of the next wave of professionally contracted players? Addressing these questions can shed light on the way(s) in which the professional era has impacted coaches at a 'grass root' level in a game that was developed upon, and championed the educative value of sport; and cognisant of de Coubertin's quest, a game that was intended

to contribute to the development of moral and social strength in young men (Müller, 2000).

Methodology

This study utilised a hermeneutic methodology – a type of phenomenological methodology situated among interpretive phenomenology (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Referred to as the art interpretation (Kinsella, 2006), hermeneutic inquiry requires the researcher, or inquirer, to tuck between theory and data, using one's own voice and the voice of the 'other'. In a 'piecemeal' process (Bontekoe, 1996), the inquirer is to first consider the text in its entirety, as a 'whole', and attempt to understand it from his own vantage point or *horizon* (Gadamer, 2002). The inquirer then identifies hermeneutical moments as 'parts' to be further investigated, in depth, to develop or enhance an understanding of the 'whole'. This 'whole-part-whole' process is referred to as the 'hermeneutic circle' (Dilthey, Makkreel, & Rodi, 1996).

Gadamer (2002) posited that a total understanding may never actually be reached (Gadamer, 2002), and based on the idea that there is no 'one truth' (Clifford, Friesen, & Jardine, 2001), the process of interpretation will instead *break open* the text to be understood from many different vantage points. Gratton and Jones (2004) highlight the relevance of qualitative interpretive inquiry, such as that offered by a hermeneutic methodology, in sport and physical education contexts due to its consideration for a complex interaction of thoughts, beliefs, values, and relationships to be interpreted from multiple vantage points.

Theoretical Framework

Jones, Potrac, Cushion, and Ronglan (2011) suggest that, as a complex social practice, coaching can be better understood as socially and culturally situated. Nevertheless, it is the social and cultural influences that are often underemphasised in this context (Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2006). Cognisant of the importance of sociocultural understandings in the coaching context, and the assertions made by Stephenson and Jowett (2009) concerning the significant role personal experiences play in the development of coaching behaviours, the current study drew on Vygotskian sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978). As Vygotskian

theory stresses the mutual influences of cultural-historical, social, and individual factors on learning and development (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003), Vygotsky's (1978) emphasis aligns with Gadamer's (2002) acknowledgement of the traditional (historical), social, and cultural influences acting on a person's vantage point or perspective. As such, the combination of the hermeneutic methodology and Vygotskian socio-cultural theory provided a complimentary structure from which to analyse the findings.

Method

Procedure. With approval from the appropriate university Human Ethics Committee received, 17 secondary school rugby coaches were approached to voluntarily participate in the study. Four coaches from Japan and five coaches from New Zealand agreed to participate, however, with a focus on certain themes, data from the four Japanese coaches and three New Zealand coaches is presented in this article. Players were asked to voluntarily participate based on the criteria that they needed to be aligned with each of the respective coaches. All participants were actively coaching or playing rugby in secondary schools in Japan and New Zealand at the time of data collection. The following sections provide a brief description of the participants, with relevant information included to assist the reader contextualise the data and findings. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of all participants.

Participants. Japanese coaches ($n = 4$) were aged between 20 and 65 years old. Naoto and Jin were among the older participant coaches, and aged between 41-50 years old and 51-60 years old respectively. Each had over 20 years of rugby coaching experience. Naoto's players, Nori and Ryuji, were aged between 16-18 years old; as were Jin's player, Hiro. Japanese coach, Ito, had 6-10 years of rugby coaching experience, and was aged 31-40 years old. He too was coaching a school-based team, and his player, Masa, was aged between 16-18 years old. Yuji indicated that he was under 20 years old and had approximately five years of rugby coaching experience. He coached Ken and Taro aged 16-18.

New Zealand coaches ($n = 3$) in this study were aged between 20 and 65 years old. Joe and Brian were among the older participant coaches, aged between 51-60 years old and 31-40 years old respectively. Joe had been coaching secondary school rugby for more than 20 years, and Brian had approximately three to five

years of rugby-coaching experience. Each coached athletes aged 14-17 years old. Glen was coaching players between the ages of 15-16 years old, and had less than two years operating as a rugby coach at the time of data collection.

Procedure and Data Collection. As a common part of qualitative, interpretative research, an in-depth, semi-structured interview schedule was developed and employed with participants with the intention to gain a rich understanding of the complex interactions of thoughts, beliefs, values, and relationships to be interpreted (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). Before commencing each conversation, permission to record the conversation was requested and obtained. Following this, the purpose of the study was reiterated, as were the terms of confidentiality. The participants were asked if they had any questions prior to beginning. Once the conversation was completed, participants were thanked and dismissed. All conversations were digitally recorded, transcribed, and re-examined many times during the data analysis process to ensure that important information was not missed.

Data Analysis. Throughout the process of data analysis, transcripts were read numerous times in order to develop an understanding of the conversations as a 'whole'. Interpretation comprised of a re-examination of the text(s) as a whole, in relation to the parts, in order to uncover other possible understandings (Gadamer, 2002). My understanding of the influences of historical and sociocultural values on participants as a whole was enhanced through the interpretation the smaller parts therein. Whilst considering my own traditional (historical) and present horizons, interpretations of the participants' voices led me to further my understanding of the text. According to Gadamer (2002), one's attempt to develop this understanding is a process of "assimilating what is said to the point that it becomes one's own" (p. 398). While I, as the researcher and interpreter, attempted to interpret the text itself, my own thoughts, or horizons, were naturally revealed in the interpretation. As Gadamer (2002) suggested, this is not a personal standpoint that will be maintained or enforced in the analysis, but rather "an opinion and a possibility that one brings into play and puts at risk" (p. 388), in an attempt to reawaken the meaning of text.

Findings and Discussion

In this article, findings (or interpretations) are combined with discussions. Participants' comments are italicised and followed by hermeneutical interpretation. Comments made by Japanese participants have been presented in Japanese script followed by an English translation.

Data analysis revealed several significant findings related to the participants' philosophies and pedagogical practices. For instance, in their dual roles of rugby coach and school teacher, Japanese coaches outlined their intention to enhance various moral qualities in their players. Although skill and tactical improvement was mentioned at times, Japanese coaches often spoke explicitly about development outside of the physical domain. In particular, the idea of character development or human cultivation (*ningen keisei*; 人間形成) was the premise of their rugby coaching approach. The following sections highlight the ways in which Japanese coaches sought to positively develop a player's character by creating an environment that encouraged the development of a strong *kokoro* (mind/heart/spirit) and *kimochi* (feeling/attitude/vitality) - revealing some of the underpinning sociocultural values which influence the ways rugby coaching might unfold in the Japanese high school context.

Japanese Findings

Rugby as a vehicle to develop mind, heart, and spirit

Drawing on his experiences as coach of a school-based team, Japanese coach, Ito, referred to the strengthening of players' *kokoro* [mind/heart/spirit] as central to his rugby coaching approach. He stated:

心[の発展]が6[割です]…心が育つと体も育つし、
体を育てようと思ったら心も育つと思うんで。…う
ちとこはどちらかという、心をしっかりと育てて
あげたいっていうのが、どちらかというあります
ね。(Ito)

Around sixty percent of my coaching places emphasis on the development of “*kokoro* [mind/heart/spirit]”...If [their] *kokoro* is cultivated, their body will follow, and if the body is cultivated, the *kokoro* will become stronger, too...I try to cultivate the *kokoro* foremost. (Ito)

Interpretation of *kokoro* (心) may provide a helpful insight into Eastern understandings of the body-mind, mind-body relationship and the significance of the term in this context. Yuasa (1987) suggests that, from an Eastern perspective, the mind can be cultivated and even enlightened through rigorous physical training. In contrast, suggests Kasulis (1987), Western philosophies, drawing on Cartesian philosopher, Descartes, have tended to deny any unity between body and mind. Where unity has been envisioned, it has often been “as an essential, substantial, unchanging link” (Kasulis, 1987, p. 2). For Yuasa (1987) this Western philosophical discourse has a tendency to consider the mind-body relationship as both constant and universal. Unity between body and mind is not necessarily cultivated, nor does it vary between person to person (Kasulis, 1987). Conversely, Eastern thinking ignores universality and, instead, considers the ‘exceptional’. As Kasulis (1987) puts it, Yuasa highlights the Eastern emphasis on an “*achieved* body-mind unity” (p. 3, emphasis added). Harsh and monotonous practices, such as that found in the Japanese rugby summer training camp and training regimes like the ‘run-pass’ drill (Richards, 2007) are examples of this approach. For some Japanese coaches, such unforgiving practices show little distinction between the physical development of the body and the cultivation of the mind and spirit, other than to claim that forging (*kitae*) the body leads to cultivation of the *kokoro*. Certainly Ito’s intention to develop *kokoro* through demanding physical training could be understood with consideration to this world view.

Rugby as a vehicle to develop feeling, attitude, and vitality.

In addition to references to *kokoro*, the term *kimochi* (気持ち; feeling; attitude; vitality) was referred to numerous times in the data. From my perspective as a speaker of Japanese as a second language, I note that, depending on context, *kimochi* is open to various interpretations. Cognisance for the breadth of ways this term was used by coaches and players is noteworthy. For instance, while coach participant, Jin, noted that: “*you have to run with kimochi* (気持ちも入れて走らないと)”, referring to his understanding that *kimochi* is an important component of the training session; Ito associates the term with preparation to enter the work force “[*our boys are*] *becoming fully fledged members of society, so we are really conscious of helping them to prepare themselves for this transition, and want to sufficiently develop aspects of their kimochi to this end* (社会人としてやっぱり生きていくところを、気持ちの部分のところできっかりとしてあげないと)”. Conversations with player participants such as Hiro and Masa

suggested that *kimochi* was understood in terms of effort or, more specifically, an attitude toward effort. Hiro's experience indicated how *kimochi* was perceived by his coach, Jin.

試合前とかやったら、気持ちの面で負けたらあかんっていうのを伝えて、しっかり。練習中でも、ダラダラ練習しないように、そこは注意しながらやります。(Hiro)

Before a game, we are told clearly not to lose on *kimochi*. Even in practice, [the coach] focuses on making sure we aren't sluggish/mucking around. (Hiro)

The way in which Hiro articulated his thoughts implied a mental attitude in one sense (e.g. *if there is kimochi [in the play] and you make a mistake you can carry on*), but alluded to physical intensity in another (e.g. *if you don't have enough kimochi in play it becomes very tough*). Might this allude to a combination of mental, spiritual, and physical attitude?

Further complexities of the term are epitomised by coach participant, Naoto, as he referenced his emphasis on a "*kimochi* of respect".

まず、「優しさ、思いやり、気配り」…ラグビーなんか、1人じゃできないんですから。仲間に対してもそうですし…相手チームに対してもやっぱり、リスペクトするような気持ちを持ってほしいなと。(Naoto)

First and foremost [the points I emphasise] are "kindness, compassion, and consideration"...because rugby is something you can't play by yourself. So it applies to your teammates, and of course ...the opposing team, I like them to have a *kimochi* of respect. (Naoto)

The three qualities Naoto wished to instil in his players indicated his aim to pursue *ningen keisei* (character development) through rugby participation. This was understood by his players, Nori and Ryuji, who echoed the words *kindness, compassion, and consideration* in a reflective moment of their rugby experience, and their perceptions of Naoto's intentions.

Direction provided by the notion of *kimochi*, for the purpose of *ningen keisei*, appears to be a prominent part of the coaching process; in this instance it was articulated by Naoto, Nori, and Ryuji in conjunction with the notion of a "*kimochi* of respect"

toward the opposition. Attempts to understand these emerging themes suggest that cultivation of the *kokoro*, with an application of *kimochi*, is seen as paramount in the human development (*ningen keisei*) of Japanese players as they move into wider society. The physicality of a sport like rugby is used as a medium to achieve this culturally embedded aim, and this, in turn, demonstrates discernible links to de Coubertin's intent to promote educative experiences through sport (Müller, 2000).

Interpretation of the texts provided by Ito, Jin, and Naoto highlight the prominent and enduring educative intent of the Japanese coaches to cultivate *kimochi*, *kokoro*, and ultimately the humanistic aim of *ningen keisei* through the medium of rugby. Pedagogies with the purpose of emphasising such objectives, and additionally, a sense of 'Japaneseness' and masculinity, have been referred to in the literature as *Bushidō* (literally: the way of the warrior) coaching (Miller, 2011). Miller's (2011) conceptualisation of the *Bushidō* coach suggests an attempt to promote holistic development, founded in a uniquely Eastern concept of spiritual education. Whilst the *Bushidō* coach approach is noted as a type of coach-centred pedagogy, its complexity lays in its concern for humanistic and educative outcomes from participation in sport (Miller, 2011). These outcomes include the (balanced) development of body, will and mind; and the joy found in effort (Miller, 2011), once again revealing similarities to the philosophical stance of Olympism (International Olympic Committee, 2010).

New Zealand Findings and Discussion

Rugby as a vehicle to develop technical proficiency

In contrast to their Japanese counterparts, the New Zealand participant coaches focused primarily on specific skill development. For instance, when asked to elaborate on his intended learning areas, Glen stated:

I think it is [important to focus] more on the skills development and stuff like that. Like, with the team I'm coaching it is more important to get things right. Like, their passing is still not right, stuff like that. So it's just about trying to get that skill level, like, up to scratch, I guess. (Glen)

Such comments about skill development were common in the New Zealand data. Joe, for instance, stated that his focus was on a “*wham, bam kind of practice*” through specific drills to develop skills. Additionally, reflecting on a typical pre-game discussion, Joe indicated his team’s focus on winning:

[I would give players] a reminder about where we are tracking in terms of how the season is going. Like, we said we were going to be unbeaten by this stage, and we’re having a really good week...‘things are falling into place this week, so let’s build on that’. (Joe)

Given Joe’s comments it may be reasonable to conclude that, through the development of skills and his ‘wham, bam’ approach to simplistic drills, winning was the primary aim of his coaching. An additional statement Brian demonstrated a similar focus. Despite a brief comment regarding leadership and contribution to the school and team, Brian indicated that the effectiveness of his own coaching could be measured based on the results of his team.

Yeah, it was a really good year. Um, I mean they didn’t lose a game in the Year 10 side of it...they won that competition. And then in the Under 15s they only lost one game... So it was really a good year...[so the effectiveness of my coaching] would be a ‘4 out of 5’ because we didn’t win that last game. (Brian)

Here, Brian implies that his team’s results were an indication of his success, or otherwise, as a coach. Although this is not to suggest that there is a complete paucity of educative or cultural philosophies in New Zealand schoolboy rugby, given equal opportunity, comments made by Brian and Joe highlight examples of some emerging themes in the data: New Zealand coaches spoke more frequently of technical matters, and the intent to win matches.

I am mindful that rugby in the secondary school context is a competitive sport, and emphasis on technical matters is most likely a result of performance targets. It is natural that coaches would prefer to produce a consistently high-performing team with strong skill ability. However, if skill acquisition was the primary aim of New Zealand coaches (and win-loss ratios were an indication of coaching ability), these outcomes were articulated in absence of any reference to holistic, educative intentions – such as those emphasised by de Coubertin.

Kidman (2007) has alluded to the pressure to obtain results as greatly impacting coaches' pedagogies, and it is questioned here whether a desire to win resulted in the coach-centred, technocratic pedagogies articulated in the conversations. The influence of the professional game may also explain the emphasis New Zealand coaches placed on technical development and winning. The success of the All Blacks and other regional and professional teams in New Zealand, or media representations of success (Kentel & Ramsankar, 2015), might also be indicative of contributing pressures felt by coaches to produce results.

Perhaps the emerging focus of the All Blacks to develop "better people" is eclipsed by their performative feats? From the perspective of other coaches, perhaps the numerous staff employed by professional teams to address technical analysis, statistics, and other matters regarding performance undermines such holistic objectives (Hugh Galvan, personal communication, December, 2015)? Given the role of secondary school rugby games as an environment for recruitment into regional franchises, and the recent success of the New Zealand All Blacks, it is possible that the focus of New Zealand coaches on technique and results is a 'trickle-down' effect from New Zealand's rugby prowess and the societal importance placed on the game. One might question whether this achievement has promoted (or will promote) a technical focus – particularly with regard to the economic capital one can achieve with superior skill sets (Bourdieu, 1977; Ryan, 2008).

If overemphasis is given to results in this way, might we expect that the coach controlled environment would lead to the exploitation of players and their bodies, as Martinkova and Parry (2011) have suggested? If the educative purpose of rugby is overshadowed by a technical focus and, moreover, a desire to produce results, there may indeed be grounds for concern about further erosion of more complex educational aims in school sport (rugby), such as those advocated by Arnold (1998), Martinkova and Parry (2011), and de Coubertin (Müller, 2000).

'No pain, no gain' and character development

New Zealand society has long regarded rugby as a vehicle to preserve masculine values associated with the pioneers, while its structure and constraints ensured male culture was kept orderly and disciplined (Phillips, 1987). "The schools ... became a central institution for spreading the game and imposing its value system upon virtually every New Zealand male, Pakeha and Maōri, in the twentieth century"

(Phillips, 1987, p. 108). As such, any paucity of reference to rugby's educative potential, its character development possibilities, and/or its ability to cultivate a certain type of (New Zealand) masculinity may be interpreted as a result of these outcomes being naturally fostered through participation. Might objectives related to austere values such as 'manliness' and 'character' (Mangan, 1996; Phillips, 1996), such as those valued by de Coubertin (Müller, 2000; Smirnov, 2000), be so implicit that they were not articulated?

The use, at times, of harsh training methods in New Zealand to accomplish this end is not refuted here. Anecdotal stories and adages such as "no pain, no gain" point to such a sentiment in New Zealand rugby circles. And, it was with this understanding in mind that I considered how the underpinning intentions of rugby in New Zealand might be comparable to the culturally unique ideologies and the processes associated with *ningen keisei*. Interestingly, however, this idea did not emerge in the New Zealand data. During the conversations, Japanese coaches seemed eager to explain to me how they intended to develop the character of their players. They aimed to afford their players the best opportunity to join Japanese society as capable people prepared for the pressures and hierarchical structures of adult and company life. Nevertheless, while I have approached this interpretation and quest to understand mindful of the anecdotal evidence and literature-based suggestions that New Zealand rugby practices can be gruelling for the purpose of developing masculinities and character, the resounding question stemming from my interpretations asks: why were the responses of New Zealand coaches so noticeably removed from the development of character and other educative aspects of sport, such as those advocated by de Coubertin (Müller, 2000), Arnold (1998), and Martinkova and Parry (2011)?

Making an assumption that there are educative aims operating below the surface at an unarticulated level, scholars such as Gordon (2010) have noted the difficulties experienced by learners who struggle to make conscious connections between their sporting or physical education experiences and their behaviour beyond these settings. It is therefore important, suggest Bredemeier, Weiss, Shields and Shewchuk (1986) for coaches to articulate the way in which sport can have lasting impact on the learners' character. While the Japanese coaches appeared to express this intent more freely, attempts of the New Zealand participants were much less obvious.

Conclusions

Japanese coaches spoke of their aims to forge their players' *kokoro* and *kimochi* as a way to use corporeal practices to 'access' and cultivate the mind/spirit and vice versa (Yuasa, 1987). Ultimately they indicated their mindfulness of the potential long term benefits that could be gained from participation in rugby. Analysis of the New Zealand findings revealed a paucity of reference to character development or any overt acknowledgment for the educative possibilities of rugby. Rather, technical matters were more prominent discussion points in the conversations, and this was considered as a potential concern in the interpretations.

Based on the findings of this study, might the coaching approaches of the Japanese participants be considered as more closely aligned to de Coubertin's moral and social intentions of sport for young men (Müller, 2000)? Certainly, a similar conversation with a coach in a different area of New Zealand could reveal the prominence of a culturally sensitive or educative philosophy in rugby. Yet, on the basis of these findings, I am left wondering how some (coaches and players) might experience their involvement in rugby differently if discussions about players' contemporary and sociocultural needs were explored further by coaches; and how player experiences could differ if the benefits of participation in rugby (or sport in general), beyond the physical realm, were clearly articulated?

As discussed, it is not suggested that there is a complete paucity of underlying philosophies regarding character development in New Zealand secondary school rugby coaching practices. However the finding that New Zealand coaches spoke often about performance matters and skill acquisition, and seldom mentioned players' holistic development as young men, such as that intended by de Coubertin (Müller, 2000) and other scholars (Arnold, 1998; Martinkova & Parry, 2011), could signal an important consideration for future directions of school-based rugby participation.

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Author

Blake C. Bennett (PhD., University of Canterbury), Evaluation and Monitoring Advisor, Sport Canterbury. Dr. Bennett completed his Doctoral degree in the field of sport coaching with a focus on the pedagogies of rugby coaches in New Zealand and Japanese secondary schools. He completed his Masters Degree in Sport Sciences at the Osaka University of Health and Sport Sciences, Japan, regarding aggression and violence in the Japanese martial art of Kendo. Dr. Bennett has coached for over 20 years, leads the Education Task Force of the New Zealand Kendo Federation, and is currently coach of the Mens' New Zealand Kendo Team.

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