



# THE COACH AS EDUCATOR: CONTENT AND PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

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## Abstract

*Despite an increase of academic activity directed at sport coaching it continues to lack conceptual frameworks that address the complex realities of the coaching environment. Present practice largely rejects the proliferation of research regarding inadequacies of traditional methods for enhancing athlete learning. Dominant coaching practices forego recognition of the complex responsibilities that a coach has within the cognitive, social, cultural and moral, dynamics of the coaching environment. This article argues that first and foremost a coach is an educator. Given this role, sport coaching needs to develop and align itself with more contemporary developments in education. In this alignment, conceptual frameworks need to be developed. In this development, two questions immediately need to be addressed. First, if the coach is an educator what content can they draw from to educate the athlete in a holistic sense? Second, 'what pedagogy/pedagogies will enhance this content delivery in order to maximise holistic athlete development?' Drawing on the supportive arguments of scholars it is suggested that Olympism provides a useful content related coaching framework. In addressing the second question it is suggested that a pedagogical constructivist framework utilizing psychological, social and critical components of constructivism provides the 'best of constructivist worlds' The conceptualisation of the two frameworks; An Olympism based content framework and a synthesised constructivist pedagogical framework gives due focus to an overall coaching framework that is educative, engaging and moving coaching in a more professional direction. It consolidates the coach as educator in an environment which is progressive, educationally sustainable and with a strong focus on meaning-making, reflection and reciprocity.*

**Key words:** Coach education, conceptual frameworks, Olympism, constructivist pedagogies

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## 1. Introduction

Despite an increased emergence of academic research and writings concerning the field of coaching and coach education, coaching is still an "ill-defined and under-theorised field" [18, p. 3] It lacks conceptual frameworks that satisfactorily address the complex realities of the coaching environment [18]. Coach education scholars report that the majority of present coaching programmes are significantly limited and confined to traditional and largely coach-centred instructional techniques [15]. Such coaching is characterised by the coach controlling and disseminating technical content knowledge [25, 22, 15]. These inadequacies result in little regard for individual learning needs of athletes, little cognisance given to individual meaning-making in sport and little attention given

to the range of pedagogical strategies available in order to maximise learning [15].

If the goal of the coach as an educator is to enhance the athlete's control over his or her own development (across the physical, cognitive social, cultural and moral domains) then education practices that singularly promote a traditional, technical, content development are ineffective [3]. The practice of coaching with conceptual frameworks and pedagogies that largely favour the dissemination of technical content knowledge in a traditional coach-centred manner reject the proliferation of research regarding the benefits of athlete-centred coaching for enhanced and on-going learning [3]. Furthermore, the design of coaching programmes in this manner resists the changes, assumptions, interests, and characteristics seen in contemporary youth culture [25, 15]. These

scholars, along with Cushion, Armour and Jones [9] argue that the need to develop more dynamic and thoughtful coaches requires encouragement of a range of coaching frameworks and pedagogies that complement the dissemination of content knowledge within athlete-centred contexts. The tendency of coaching programmes to favour technical content (technocratic approach) fails to provide coaches with the necessary breadth of content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge to implement strategies needed to effectively create a positive learning/coaching environment that engages and develops diverse learners [9].

Light [22] suggests that this 'technocratic' approach to the coaching process is commonly observed hand in hand with pedagogical strategies that position the coach squarely in control of the learning environment. The technocratic coach perceives his/her knowledge as an object or commodity of which he/she maintains ownership and control [24, 15]. As such, learning is viewed as a process of merely transferring and internalising this knowledge [15]. As a consequence, the power resides with the coach and balance of it favours a coach-centred model [22]. All this is in spite of a growing body of research that suggests a coach-centred approach can limit the learning environment [38].

This restrictive approach to coaching implies that the coach's role is merely one of instructing, conveying, and/or modelling a set of (physical) skills for the purpose of enhanced performance [26]. This understanding foregoes recognition of the complex responsibilities that a coach has within the cognitive, social, cultural and moral, dynamics of the coaching environment. It also fails to acknowledge the coach-athlete relationship [18, 9]. Such complexities confirm the coaching role as one of more than a mere instructor of technical content knowledge. However, as a result, the aforementioned technocratic approach to coaching that remains predominant today [15], scholars in the field of sport and physical education suggest that the coach is still not considered an 'educator'. Further, the idea that coaching is a complex educative, pedagogical, social, cultural and ethical process lacks appropriate acknowledgement [18].

Sport coaching, arguably, in the same manner as other education contexts addresses cognitive, social, cultural and moral development considerations. It also has the additional concern for development of physical competence. For this reason, the coaching process must be considered more than a simple conveyance of physical/technical skills with benefits limited to athlete performance, health and fitness, or as the case may be, a transference of 'bio-scientific' knowledge [18]. Rather, it is indeed, as Jones [18] asserts, a complex, multifaceted, and socially significant, and we suggest, interactive reciprocating, and engaging educative process.

## 2. Purpose

On the basis of the physical, cognitive, social, cultural, and moral dynamics and responsibilities a coach must consider in this the multifaceted coaching environment [18] their role is first and foremost as an educator. The wide array of education considerations including pedagogical strategies available to educators can and, should be, accessed by coaches to assist them in working towards the intended holistic benefits of athlete development. Therefore, the purpose of this article will:

- Argue for the conceptualization of the coach's role as an educator;
- Identify the 'traditional' barrier(s) that prevent a coach fulfilling his/her role as an educator;
- Suggest content related and pedagogical oriented frameworks to reinforce and facilitate the coach operating as an educator.

## 3. The Coach as Educator

Historically, 'teaching' and 'coaching' have typically been regarded as separate endeavours – a perception accentuated by dominant discourses found in the apparent parent disciplines of education and sports science respectively [18]. As opposed to the 'holistic and problematic emphasis' found in the education literature that tends to inform teaching, the dominance of physiology, psychology and biomechanics in the sports coaching literature has located coaching in the realm of practice and performance [18, p. 6]. As Lee [21] suggests, while 'teaching' and 'educating' has dealt with an individual's overall development, coaching has

been understood in terms of the attainment of physical skills and the application of these skills in competition. Jones [18] and Cushion et al. [9] view the field of pedagogy as an interactive and engaging social process. Further, we are mindful of the description of pedagogy as “any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another” [43, p. 3]. Within these conceptual understandings, it is argued that the sports coach is also charged with the responsibility of establishing an environment for athletes (learners) to learn and thus ‘grow’ as players and individuals. One such requirement is the coach’s ability to communicate and maintain positive relationships with the learner, as these can be determinants of success [30]. Nakamura [36] contends that this is a far more educative, social and pedagogical context than the traditional technocratic approach allows. Accordingly, the link between pedagogical practice and coaching processes are significantly less distant than historically believed.

Additional to this justification of the coach as educator, Jones [18] suggests that in contrast to the belief that mechanistic performance is the primary focus of the coaching process, maximising athlete learning is markedly more important. To achieve this, education and pedagogical theory can and must inform coaching practice.

Light and Dixon [23] commenting on the role of education into the future, stress that a contemporary society requires citizens to be “lifelong learners, problem solvers, reflective independent learners, and creative and innovative thinkers” (p. 160). Light and Dixon [23] further argue that, “learning is not restricted to formal schooling, but is; instead, a lifelong process within which schooling (including higher education) forms one significant component” [23, p.160]. This suggests that it is the responsibility of the educator to afford the learner the skills to become such a citizen.

Further, in response to the dominant understanding of the coaching process as a mere transference and internalization of content, [15] highlight the position taken by Arnold [1]. Arnold [1] asserted that sport is a valued human practice, one that could make significant contributions to enhancing the human

experience. He further suggested that sport could aid in the construction of a meaningful pattern to life and assist individuals and groups to become more fully human [1]. This position was previously highlighted in the preamble of the *International Charter of Physical Education and Sport* [42] where it is proclaimed that physical education and sport are not limited to physical well-being and health but are an important contributor to the full and well-balanced development of the human being [42]. This UNESCO position on physical education and sport has since been supported by many government sanctioned documents regarding the educative and social benefits of participating in sport and physical education: for instance, the recent *Berlin Declaration* [41], *The New Zealand Curriculum* [28], the *Revised European Sports Charter* [5] and the *European Model of Sport* [13]. These documents, to varying extents, recognise and highlight the idea that learners learn in different ways, based on their socio-cultural backgrounds, and various movement experiences, needs, abilities and aspirations. Furthermore, these documents suggest that in movement contexts, physical educators and sport educators need to be mindful of student diversity, consider psychomotor, cognitive and social learning domains and utilise a range of pedagogies that meet learner needs and the content being (re)produced. This is to suggest that if it is indeed a learning environment that a sport coach is required to establish, the same mindfulness should apply [18]. Arguably, despite the broader education and particular pedagogical content knowledge required of a physical education teacher, as opposed to the typically specialised role of the sport coach, it is suggested here that the learners (athletes) are still learning thinking human beings, and, therefore, require coaching programmes to address physical, cognitive, social, cultural and moral domains in the coaching/learning process. This argument becomes particularly important if the abovementioned benefits of engagement in sport and physical education are to be achieved.

Given the acknowledgement that coaching is a complex activity it becomes clear that the aptly stated onus of contemporary education objectives to develop “lifelong learners, problem

solvers, reflective independent learners, and creative and innovative thinkers” [23, p.160] to suit a rapidly changing society can be, as Arnold [1] alludes to, attained through sport. If this is the case, then, the responsibility of the sport coach is just as crucial as other educators in the development of well-rounded citizens. As coaching is concerned with the teaching and learning of athletes to grow as players and human beings, the key concepts of the educative process apply equally as much to coaching as they do to physical education teaching or any other sphere of education [18]. This understanding of the coaching process provides a clearer portrayal of the sport coach as more than mere “technicians engaged in the transfer of knowledge” [26, p.9].

#### **4. Traditional Barriers to the Coach as Educator**

Historically, coaching has focused on technical content knowledge [22]. Such an approach to coach education is typically associated by pedagogical strategies where the coach is decisively positioned in control of the learning environment [22, 15]. These scholars suggest that within this approach, knowledge is considered an object, and learning is simply reproducing that knowledge.

In their recent study of an elite level New Zealand based coach education programme (CEP), Galvan et al. [15] report findings which suggest that, despite the propensity for the ‘technocratic’ coach-centred approach to inhibit the learning environment to a point where practices and cultures are simply mindlessly reproduced, the impression of the coach as a technician “engaged in the transfer of knowledge” [26, p.9] maintains its dominant presence in coaching and in coach education. The case studies conducted by Galvan et al. [15] confirmed that, like many other CEPs around the world, this New Zealand based elite level programme also placed emphasis on technical skill development “with little regard to pedagogical ways of promoting this knowledge” [15, p. 11]. This reinforces the view of the coach as an instructor rather than an educator. This conclusion aligns itself with Tinning’s [40], argument that coach education courses devote

very little time to pedagogy and/or research into coaching pedagogies and as a result lag behind many innovative developments in understanding human learning and pedagogies that can facilitate this learning.

Current sport and physical education literature [15, 23] emphasise the pitfalls of a traditional, instructor centred approach to learning where the internalisation of a fixed body of knowledge is the primary concern. These scholars argue that, irrespective of the age of young learners, a fast changing social, cultural, and economic world renders the traditional fixed body of knowledge approach out of touch with the reality of how today’s youngsters actually learn [23]. Light and Dixon [23] suggest that it is now more important to give equal consideration to pedagogies that assist young people to ‘learn how to learn’, rather than the singular content focus on ‘what to learn’. In supporting this ‘how to learn’ approach Culpan and McBain [6] argue that such learning is imbedded in pedagogies that allow learners to construct their own meaning and sense of purpose within movement contexts. This analysis reinforces Lombardo [25] who commented that at the turn of the 21st century, coaching education structures have had a propensity to resist many transformations concomitant with youth culture, and that the ingrained coaching models were “incongruent with the expectations, needs, assumptions, interests, and characteristics of many athletes” [25, p.2].

#### **5. Frameworks for the Coach as Educator**

For sport coaching to develop and align itself with more contemporary developments in education two questions immediately need to be addressed. First, if the coach can be conceptualised as an educator what content can they draw from to educate the athlete in a holistic sense? Second, ‘what pedagogy/pedagogies will enhance this content delivery in order to maximise holistic athlete development?’

In addressing the first question, Arnold [1] argued that sport could be a valued human practice when characterised in a certain manner. His thesis was that sport, when characterised by: rules, traditions, specific goals, physical exertion,

social interaction, rivalry/contest/competition, and practised in a moral and ethical manner, was valued by individuals and society. In other words Arnold [1] argued that in general terms sport was valued because it contained 'goods' (values) that humans found desirable and worthwhile commitments. These desired 'goods' enhance and enrich the human condition/experience. In conceptualising sport in this manner Arnold [1] was suggesting that sport had significant educative value. This value can be found in both the inherent values that sport could generate within and of itself [27, 32] or through the transference of values from personal positions/beliefs, societal standards and/or educational systems. Martinkova [27] labelled the values transferred from these areas to sport as sport's 'added values'. She argued that the development and implementation of sport's added values were not 'fixed' but dependent on contextual arrangements. She also argued that these added values needed special pedagogical attention and should become the concern of physical education teachers and coaches as they are considered desirable educative, social and ethical outcomes. Indeed Martinkova [27] suggests values guide and direct the education and development of people and that it is difficult to imagine any education system without them.

In regards to the inherent values found in sport Martinkova [27] and Parry [32] claim that simply engaging in the sport and/or its practice is sufficient for the values to be realised. For instance, Martinkova [27] illustrates this argument by highlighting the competitive characteristic of a team sport. In competition the goal is victory and striving for victory is achieved by physical exertion, self discipline, focused attention, rule adherence, self and collective improvement, decision making and the willingness to cooperate within the team and with the opposing team. As Marinkova [27] suggests, without cooperation there can be no competition. Martinkova [27] labels these as inherent values and are strongly inter-related to each other. They are neither fixed nor immutable but vary from context to context. They are learned by simple engagement and coaches and athletes do not necessarily have to do anything special beyond the training process to promote them [27].

On the other hand, however, Marinkova [27] and Parry [32] suggest that sport's added values present more of a challenge as stated above – they need to be given special consideration. In essence Parry [32] argues that sport's added values draw on the social construction of sport and tend to be more humanistic in nature and form the basis of sport's educative value. They are both the concern of the physical education teacher and the sport coach. They are added to sport in order to make sport more educative, virtuous and humanising [16]. This fosters ethical human development [32]. Such values enrich the sporting experience and moderate, but do not diminish the competitive nature of sport [27]. Indeed, de Coubertin argued that without the moderating effect of added values, sport competition ran the risk of excessiveness which he labelled 'vulgar competition' [29]. Instead, de Coubertin promoted a balanced integration of the inherent values of sport manifested through sport competition and the humanistic added value. This integration he called Olympism and exemplifies what is understood as the Olympic Spirit [29]. As Martinkova [27] argues:

Both of these kinds of values need to be recognised and kept together. Keeping them both means we omit neither of these two aspects of Olympism – we do not reduce it (sport) but keep its richness together: both sport competition and an ethical and full human life [27.p.118].

This article suggests utilising Olympism in this manner provides a possible content related Conceptual Framework for coaching that has been identified earlier as lacking in the coaching process. In suggesting Olympism as a possible and useful conceptual content related coaching framework it is necessary to briefly develop an explanation of Olympism.

### **5.1 Olympism**

Olympism is a 'philosophy' that draws on the 'goods' (values) inherent in sport (i.e. striving for victory, personal betterment, perseverance, controlled aggression, rule adherence, self and focused discipline and the humanistic ideals (added values) i.e. respect for others, non-discrimination, unity, friendship, international understanding, peace, generosity and tolerance.

As Martinkova [27] argues these values - both 'inherent' and 'added' - are inter-related and woven into the competitive sports experience in a complex manner. The complexity resides in coordinating and giving coherence to the desire for victory, holistic education, and the quest to being ethical and human. This, in essence, becomes part of the coaching challenge and can be viewed as the challenge of being an Olympism education coach. Therefore, we argue that coaches, as educators, need to give special attention to Olympism in the coaching process. As educators, the coach's role requires the following: 1) identification of the values inherent in any given sport, 2) identification of the values that are educationally and pedagogically desirable to add, 3) an understanding of how these two sets of values form the philosophy of Olympism and 4) identification of the coaching pedagogies that can best foster the learning of both sets of values (inherent and added) in order to maximise the coaching process.

While scholars have struggled to settle on an immutable definition of Olympism [2] a useful working conceptualisation for the purpose of this article is presented. Olympism can be viewed as a way of life that blends sport with culture and education. It encourages a way of life characterised by

- balanced development of body, will and mind;
- the joy found in effort;
- the educational value of being a good role model; and
- observing the universal ethics of tolerance, friendship, unity, non-discrimination, generosity, and respect for others (adapted from the Olympic Charter), [17].

In providing this working conceptualisation we are mindful and acknowledge that Olympism is highly contested. Damkjaer [10], Simonovic [37] and Wamsley [44] challenge the relevancy of the whole concept of Olympism and argue that it is a conceptual and philosophical remnant of the fixed order of the modern age. Implicit in this criticism is that Olympism is immutable and its educational legitimacy questionable. Bale & Christensen [2] question the universal nature of Olympism while Wamsley [44] argues that Olympism is Eurocentric and complicit in the colonising process. He further argues that

Olympism is used for legitimising the commercial world of capitalism. In particular, Wamsley [44] asserts that Olympism and the Olympic Games are so intimately associated with the political economy of Western Capitalism and Eastern Bloc state capitalism that it cannot achieve the objectives proclaimed in the Olympic Charter. Kidd [19], while seemingly supportive of Olympism, is sceptical about the rhetoric surrounding the plethora of Olympics education programmes, so too are Culpan and Wigmore [8]. However, in acknowledging these criticisms and the problematic practices of the Olympic Games we agree with Parry [33] that while some may see Olympism as a naïve and fond hope, "the philosophy of Olympism has been the most coherent systematization of the ethical and political values underlying the practice of sport so far to have emerged" [33, p. 214]. We would go even further than Parry [32] and suggest that Olympism is also the most coherent educative explanation of sport to have emerged over the last 100 years. Noteworthy in our analysis is the differentiation made between the concept of Olympism and the problematic practices of the Olympic Games. Culpan and Wigmore [8], Parry [33] and previously Arnold [1] suggest that Olympism is a rightful and legitimate part of the education process. The promotion of Olympism, they argue, is best maximised through physical education and sport education in schools. The thesis of this article is that it should also become the focus of the coaching process and be central and pivotal to the coach as educator.

Drawing on the supportive arguments of Arnold [1], Culpan and Wigmore [8], Naul [31] and Parry [33], it is suggested here that the concept of Olympism provides a useful content related coaching framework. More specifically, it can assist in addressing the earlier comment that sport coaching lacks conceptual frameworks that address the complexities of the coaching environment. For instance analysis of the working definition above shows that Olympism can provide for:

- the development of physical excellences in terms of athletic skill development
- the engagement in sport and by definition competitive sport which leads to the

development of values inherent to and within specific sporting practices

- a move beyond mere technocratic coach centred foci to more holistic development of the athlete in terms of cognitive, social, cultural and moral development
- assistance for the athlete to take more control of his/her development
- placement of the athlete at the centre of sport competition learning and learning the humanistic value of human development
- an integrated focus on 'added values' that assist in the development of virtuous and ethical athletes.

The importance of Olympism to the coaching process requires coaches to educate within the contexts of specific sporting activities. This education is dependent on coaches being aware of the ways the two sets of values are integrated and connected to create a holistic content development framework. As Culpan and Moon [7] suggest, this is Olympism education and can apply to the coaching process as well as the schooling context. Culpan and Moon [7] define Olympism education as: "a culturally relevant experiential process of learning an integrated set of life principles through the practice of sport." This is what we suggest to be the focus of any content related coaching framework.

However, in making this suggestion, the second question proposed earlier what pedagogy/pedagogies will enhance this content delivery in order to maximise holistic athlete development? now needs attention.

## 5.2 A Pedagogical Framework

Pedagogical discourses have become ubiquitous in teaching and learning contexts and the terms physical education pedagogy and sport pedagogy are firmly established as academic sub-disciplines [40]. Indeed, in higher learning institutions, such discourses are accompanied by conceptual frameworks to facilitate learning. However, as alluded to earlier, sport coaching is bedeviled by a paucity of conceptual pedagogical understandings and frameworks. In arguing for positioning the 'coach as educator', pedagogical considerations become pivotal. While pedagogy is central to the coaching process [40] we are

mindful of the complexities of the multi-faceted coaching environment and indeed the complexities and diversities associated with pedagogy/ pedagogies. As Tinning [40] argues, there is no Holy Grail of physical; education (*coaching*) pedagogies. However, in acknowledging these sentiments, we also point out the claim by Stones [39] that pedagogy is likened to an amoeba - constantly changing and without shape or form. Therefore, we believe it is necessary, if pedagogical conceptual understandings around coaching are to progress, to be suggestive in regards to coaching pedagogy. In being suggestive, a general orientating conceptual framework for coaching is required. This framework can be neither prescriptive nor absolute but rather a framework that is nimble, educationally current, well supported by the pedagogical literature and adaptable to diverse sporting contexts. With this in mind, a pedagogical constructivist framework is suggested. Fosnot [14], drawing on the area of constructivism, argued that approaches to teaching (*coaching*) and learning needed to avoid the pitfalls of prescription. Rather, they should encourage educators (*coaches*) to think about what is being learned, how it is learned, and how the educator can facilitate that learning – the pedagogical encounter. In utilizing a pedagogical constructivist framework for coaching there are three main areas: of relevance: the psychological, the social and critical components of a constructivist pedagogical framework [36].

### 5.2.1 Psychological constructivism

Drawing on a psychological constructivist position would mean that the coach's view on the coaching/learning process would understand that the athlete interprets and makes individual sense and meaning out of any pedagogical encounter. That sense making is created in the individual athlete's mind by the construction of cognitive schema and maps where new information is processed, compared and added to existing knowledge structures [35]. As Culpan and McBain [6] suggest, this process of learning is best maximized when the learner is actively involved in the learning process. Coaches utilizing this component of constructivism need to

consider the learners as independent entities who actively select the knowledge from which they wish to make meaning from. It is here that the coach as facilitator needs to skillfully emphasize the important learning points in order for meaning-making to occur.

Psychological constructivist approaches focused on an Olympism content framework can provide opportunities to explore perceptions on individual performance, personal development, tensions, anxieties and meanings in relation to the learners' own sporting competition, performance and participation in sport. There is considerable scope for individuals to construct individual meaning, knowledge and personal position-taking in regards to exploring and understanding the quest for self betterment, how the training process contributes to that betterment, and what is needed to achieve this. Furthermore, tensions inherent in sport, such as individual versus group responsibilities and freedom; personal understandings of others in relation to: non-discrimination, respect, tolerance, justice, the educative value of role modeling and the personal meanings attributed to the balanced development of the mind, body and spirit, are all considerations in constructing reflective meaning. All aspects need to be fostered in the education of the athlete. As Culpan and McBain [6] argue, with facilitation there is opportunity to promote active engagement in processing the individual construction of meaning, as nothing is more relevant to learners than themselves. This psychological constructivism provides individual meaning, relevance and authenticity and encourages high degrees of personal reflection.

### **5.2.2 Social constructivism**

Pritchard [34] draws the distinction between psychological and social constructivism by identifying the learner (athlete) in psychological constructivism as the lone explorer making individual and personalized meaning from experiences. On the other hand, social constructivism takes into account the learner's social environment. Social constructivists propose that interacting with the social, cultural and the environmental domains, the learner, constructs knowledge that is meaningful and

relevant to her/himself and to the social cohort with whom they interact [12]. Interaction with others is a critical determinant of learning and the educative process. By 'others', we refer to coaches, fellow athletes, peers, family, teachers and community. In the coaching/sportive context, social constructivists believe the process of knowledge construction comes about as athletes become socialized into the techniques, knowledge, expectations, practices, symbols, relevance and ethical considerations of their sport. The information gained from others via social interaction is processed much in the same way as in the psychological component i.e development of schema and scaffolds so that new information can be integrated into existing understandings. The richness and complexity of interpretations, opinions and knowledge exchanged in the coaching process through social interaction is likely to lead to greater meaning-making and greater learning insights [34]. Leach and Moon [20] call this process the development of learning communities. These learning communities can provide learners with opportunities to develop their skills through practice and to interact by sharing understandings of educative and social worth (competitive values and added values). These simultaneously highlight the moral and ethical dilemmas within sport. Drawing on this framework would underline the richness and educative complexity of the coaching process. Coaches participating in such interactive social arrangements with their athletes, create the potential to challenge the understandings of the sportive process and its role in balanced human development - both from a performance and human learning perspective. This sort of engagement is what Culpan and Moon [7] identify as Olympism Education.

### **5.2.3 Critical constructivism**

Psychological and social constructivism, while essential components of the coaching pedagogical framework only partially complete it. Completion of the framework necessitates the incorporation of a critical pedagogical dimension. Scholars Cassidy et al. [3], Gavin et al. [15] have suggested that coaching lacks a critical tradition. As such, in order for coaching to better align

itself with contemporary developments in education, including physical education, a critical approach to coaching has merit in progressing the pedagogy of coaching [3, 15]. We agree, however, we temper this advocacy by supporting a critical constructivism. By adopting this critical constructivist approach to complete the framework for coaching, we highlight how the critical approach

centres on the ways in which power, the economic, political and social factors affect the ways in which groups of people form understandings and formal knowledge construction about their world [36, p. 1642].

Richardson [36] suggests that the critical dimension of a constructivist framework focuses on learning that is culturally orientated and contributes to the contextual understanding of the big social system that the learner is operating within. As Culpan and McBain [6] suggest, it provides a contextual foundation in which understandings about the relationship between power and knowledge can be constructed and analyzed. It is about identifying inequalities and empowering individuals and groups to take social action to achieve change. Tinning [40] argues, drawing on a critical perspective can provide alternative approaches to the analysis and construction of knowledge, particularly in regards to the economic, social, political and moral beliefs and structures that dominate Western thinking. For sport coaching, the adoption of a critical perspective allows for the potential inclusion of new understandings, visions, voices and intellectual curiosities and creativities [6]. By adopting critical constructivism within a coaching context, opportunities emerge for both the coach and athlete to ask critical questions about: learning processes utilized in coaching, about the ethical behaviour of athletes and coaches, and how seeking performance improvement can be developed in an integrated, balanced and holistic manner with the concept of Olympism. As Martinkova [27] argues, it is when these considerations come together, sport captures its potential to develop human excellences. Furthermore, a critical constructivist approach to coaching will also assist in the development of a critically reflective consciousness within both the coach and the athlete. This sort of criticality will

inevitably, foster the emergence of changes in both coaching processes and understandings of the sportive context. These understanding will encourage both the coach and athlete to make informed decisions around locating themselves within particular sporting cultures and to adopt a criticality to the principles of Olympism.

By synthesizing the psychological, social and critical components of constructivism into a coaching framework we draw on the support of Cobb [4] who suggested that the three separate components of constructivism become natural allies. Indeed, Richardson [36] argued that employing this synthesis “represents a process in the best of all possible worlds that is dialogical and rational, and creates a shared and warranted set of understandings” [36, p.1625].

While it is not the purpose of this paper to engage in the praxis of constructivism from a coaching perspective, it is important to acknowledge that the application of a synthesized constructivist framework for coaching, particularly a critical constructivist dimension, is pedagogically complex and difficult (see Darder, Torres and Baltodano [11] for specific suggestions concerning certain and specific knowledge and technique). As Galvan et al. [15] report, changing coaching processes takes times, particularly in regards to changing thinking and practice. However, in identifying the complexity and acknowledging the prolonged period for change to take place, it seems that perhaps an early step in pedagogical implementation should involve the development of ‘reflective coaches and athletes’. The development of reflective practice, particularly critical reflection, may provide coaches and athletes with the much needed flexibility to acknowledge the complexity and diversity associated with the coaching process. Acknowledgement by both coaches and athletes creates opportunities to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct relationships, new interpretations and challenge taken-for-granted assumptions. It allows opportunities to seek alternatives to their practices and make obvious the need for deliberate, conscious and intentional actions. As Galvan et al. [15] suggest, “this process can liberate coaches from traditional mindsets reproducing what they know” [15, p.137] and

open new visions and possibilities. It creates opportunities for the coaching process to seek new knowledge and move beyond past boundaries. We are suggesting that this sort of pedagogical framework enhances the coaching processes and fosters the development of content associated to Olympism that can address the wide ranging shortcomings of coaching highlighted earlier.

In giving due diligence to both content and pedagogical frameworks for educating the coach and athlete, a reciprocating relationship creates a rich educative environment which is suitable for fostering individual meaning-making, capturing the educative and social power and potential of sport, utilizing the humanistic positioning of Olympism and systematically addressing the benefits of the critically reflective tradition. By achieving this sort of coaching context, the coach truly becomes an educator in the very best sense of the word. The process is educative, engaging, reciprocating and, importantly, pedagogically coherent.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

Despite sport in the 21st Century being ubiquitous across the globe, the coaching of it remains under-theorised and under-developed. This paper has highlighted the need for the coach's role to be conceptualised as an educator. Justifications for this role conceptualisation have been presented and barriers that prevent this happening have been highlighted. The thesis of this paper has acknowledged the importance of athlete growth and development (particularly from a holistic perspective) and the need for those engaged in sport to capture its full educative and social potential. Pivotal in achieving this, is the need for sport coaching to draw on the body of research that informs educational practice today. This research will allow the coach to realise that sport involves more than physical performance. Potentially the research guides the coach into looking beyond coach centred technocratic

instructional behaviours and to recognise the important and diverse responsibilities that they have. This article argued that by doing this, coaches are better placed to maximise athlete learning. In advocating for the coach as educator, the paucity and inadequacy of conceptual coaching models has been acknowledged. As a result, two critically important questions were posed: 'what is the content used to educate?' and 'What pedagogies might assist in achieving this quest?' In addressing these two questions it is proposed that the philosophy of Olympism is a worthwhile conceptualisation of sport that has particular content relevance to coaching. The concept of Olympism characterised, not by the study of the Olympic Games, but rather on the importance of integrating the inherent educative worth of sports competition with 'added humanistic values'-giving meaningful direction to the coaching process. As argued, Olympism can be considered the most systematic political and educative explanation of sport to have emerged in the last hundred years. These sentiments need to be woven into coaching frameworks

In addressing the second question of which pedagogies might assist in developing this coaching content, it was suggested that a synthesised pedagogical constructivist coaching framework be implemented. The psychological, social and critical constructivist pedagogies are natural allies and the presence of all three in a coaching framework provide possibilities for the 'best possible world'.

The conceptualisation of the two frameworks; An Olympism based content framework and a synthesised constructivist pedagogical framework gives due focus to an overall coaching framework that is educative, engaging and moving coaching in a more professional direction. It consolidates the coach as educator in an environment which is progressive, educationally sustainable and with a strong focus on meaning-making, reflection and reciprocity.

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