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Positive Pedagogy for sport coaching

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The literature suggests that, despite some challenges in their implementation, player/athlete-centred, inquiry-based approaches to teaching games and coaching team sport can improve game playing ability, increase player/athlete motivation and provide positive affective experiences of learning. A range of these approaches, including Teaching Games for Understanding, Game Sense, Play Practice and the Tactical-Decision Learning Model vary in detail but share enough in common to be referred to as game-based or game-centred approaches. This includes the central role that dialogue, reflection and purposeful social interaction play in facilitating learning and the deep understanding that they can promote. While these approaches are widely referred to as instructional models for teaching and coaching consideration of the common pedagogical features they share offers an alternative conception that creates possibilities for promoting the same positive learning outcomes in sports beyond team games. In this article, we examine the concept of Positive Pedagogy as an extension of Game Sense pedagogy beyond games and team sports to explore what it has to offer coaching across a range of sports.

Keywords: *Positive Pedagogy; Game Sense; Athlete-centred coaching; Sport coaching; Antonovsky; Positive Psychology*

Introduction

Learner-centred (often referred to as athlete, player or student-centred), inquiry-based approaches to teaching games and coaching team sport are effective for improving game playing ability, increasing player/athlete motivation and providing positive affective experiences of learning (see, for example, Cassidy & Kidman, 2010; Kidman, 2005; Kirk, 2005; Mitchell, Oslin, & Griffin, 1995; Pope, 2005). Here, we adopt the term learner-centred coaching in reference to a focus on the learner and the process of learning as opposed to on what the teacher or coach does in the teacher or coach-centred approach (Weimer, 2002). This involves a shift from transmitting knowledge to facilitating active learning (Light, 2014). Consistent with social constructivist theories of learning (see, for example, Fosnot, 1996; Gréhaigne, Richard, & Griffin 2005; Wallian & Chang, 2007), the central role that dialogue, reflection and purposeful social interaction play in facilitating learning in these approaches can promote deep understanding (Light, Curry, & Mooney, 2014) while

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making learning authentic and meaningful (Kirk & MacPhail, 2002). Through these experiences, players/athletes not only learn the content of the practice session but also 'learn how to learn' through dialogue-oriented learning while building intellectual self-sufficiency (Poerksen, 2005).

There is a wide acceptance of seeing game-based approaches (GBA) as variations of an instructional model for teaching and coaching (see, Kirk, 2005; Metzler, 2005), but a focus on the core pedagogical features they share offers an alternative perspective that creates possibilities for promoting the same positive learning outcomes and experiences beyond team games. Indeed, the word 'game' in Game Sense and Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) could be seen to be blocking applications of this pedagogy to sports other than team sports. However, as Jones (2006, 2009) suggests expert coaches often look beyond these restrictions as they consider their roles differently.

In her Positive Pedagogy approach to teaching piano, George (2006) suggests that it provides positive learning experiences that can foster a love of learning, imagination and problem solving skills while developing active, inquisitive learners instead of passive receivers of knowledge. She argues that teaching focused on 'fixing' mistakes deprives learners of the joy of self-discovery that can build self-confidence and autonomy and lead to a lack of learner focus, engagement and motivation, which are significant problems associated with directive, coach-centred approaches that focus on the technical mastery of sport skills approach (Kirk 2005, 2010). Surely, these attributes of Positive Pedagogy for learning music are as important for sport coaching and particularly when coaching children and young people.

In this article, we examine the concept of Positive Pedagogy as an extension of Game Sense pedagogy (Light, 2013a) beyond games and team sports to explore what it has to offer coaching across a wide range of sports (see, Light, Curry, & Mooney, 2014; Light & Kentel, 2013). We avoid taking a 'functional' view of coaching and learning that does not engage with the human element of coaching as a complex practice that might suggest taking up Positive Pedagogy would be a smooth and unproblematic process. Instead, we merely offer Positive Pedagogy as a framework for meeting the sometimes-confronting challenges involved in undertaking the significant change in practice required by teachers and coaches wanting to take a GBA approach.

Game-based pedagogy

The different approaches used in game-based teaching and coaching can provide consistently positive learning experiences that enhance learning and promote both the ability and motivation to learn. This is largely due to them being learner-centred, inquiry-based approaches that emphasize reflection upon experience and social interaction. The oldest and most established of these approaches is TGfU (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982) with a later variation of this GBA developed for coaching in Australia as Game Sense (den Duyn, 1997; Light, 2013a). Launder's (2001) Play Practice was not developed from TGfU but is informed by similar ideas about coaching.

Athlete-centred coaching (Kidman, 2005) has also underpinned the development of youth sport programmes and coaching and rugby in New Zealand (Cassidy & Kidman, 2010; Evans, 2012; Smith, 2005).

Although these approaches focus on developing better players or athletes, the process of learning involved can generate positive experiences that are enjoyable, satisfying and facilitate learning how to learn (Light, 2003; Pope, 2005). The learning experiences provided by this pedagogy can also contribute towards positive social, moral and personal development as ‘secondary’ learning (see, for example, Dyson, 2005; Light, 2013b; Sheppard & Mandigo, 2009). However, this secondary learning should not be seen as an automatic outcome of taking these approaches because, as Harvey, Krik, and O’Donovan (2014) contend in relation to the sport education model rather than being automatically ‘caught’ it must be taught.

Challenging behaviourism through Positive Pedagogy

There are now a number of approaches that specifically focus on promoting positive development for young people through sport and other physical activity such as Positive Youth Development (Holt, Sehn, Spence, Newton, & Ball, 2012), Sport Education (Siedentop, 1994) and Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (Hellison, 2003). At the same time, developments in coaching pedagogy that emphasize learner-centred, inquiry-based coaching such as Game Sense have prompted a re-examination of traditional ‘folk pedagogies’ (Bruner, 1999) linked to personal and professional practice histories in sport (Nelson, Cushion, Potrac, & Groom, 2014). GBA have also been used successfully at the highest levels of sports such as with the New Zealand national rugby team, the All Blacks, emphasizing an holistic approach (Evans, 2012; Kitson, 2005; Light, Evans, Harvey, & Hassanin, 2015; Smith, 2005).

These holistic approaches lie in contrast to behaviouristic approaches in which coaches provide large amounts of instruction, feedback and demonstrations based upon the assumption that the greater the level of intervention the more learning will occur (Douge & Hastie, 1993; Williams & Hodges, 2005). These are approaches that have much to answer for in regard to the host of negative experiences that they can produce for players/athletes due to a mismatch between their developmental needs and coaches’ behaviour (Partington, Cushion, & Harvey, 2014).

Even for confident and experienced player/athletes who have the necessary skills to meet the expectations of performance in this approach, the learning involved is not necessarily positive because this can lead to a fear of failure that limits players’ capacity to learn from mistakes (Partington et al., 2014). It may be enjoyable for them because it allows them to demonstrate competency but it does not help them learn to learn or foster the development of positive personal or psychological attributes. Indeed, it can promote selfishness, egotism and a lack of empathy or compassion for other learners (teammates) while also failing to teach real teamwork, which is a core focus of Game Sense, as an example of Positive Pedagogy (Light, 2013a).

Traditional sport skills approaches are based upon a narrow conception of player/athlete development that is underpinned by the belief that learning to play team games requires reaching a level of competence in performing techniques seen to be fundamental to the game *before* playing it. Assuming that there is one ideal form of technical execution that learners must strive to master, teaching in this approach focuses upon reducing errors and moving the player/athlete closer to the ‘correct’ performance of the technique. While the extent to which this de-contextualized practice can be applied in the dynamic context of games is questionable (Light, Harvey, & Mouchet, 2014); this is not the focus of this article. Instead, the focus is on the essentially negative nature of these learning experiences that too often highlight what learners *cannot* do, sometimes exacerbated by attempting to perform these skills in front of their peers and their coach(s) which is a particular problem with children and young people. Of course, in game-based practice, players can still evaluate each other as the coach can and typically does but it is far less explicit than striving to perform an ideal version of technique as peers look on.

Renshaw, Oldham, and Bawden (2012) have suggested that GBA can develop the three innate needs suggested in self-determination theory—those of autonomy, competence and relatedness. They suggested that within GBAs such as Game Sense mistakes provide opportunities to learn rather than being used as controlling devices and to pressure players/athletes with others highlighting the essential role that constructive errors play in learning (Light, 2013a; Light et al., 2015). Vickers, Livingston, Umeris-Bohnert, and Holden (1999) argue that this positive view of mistakes in the learning process actually emphasizes the long-term nature of player/athlete development and their desire to remain in the sport when compared to a short-term need for them to improve performance.

Making learning positive

The four pedagogical features of Game Sense proposed by Light (2013a) encourage positive learning experiences but Positive Pedagogy for coaching also draws on Antonovsky’s (1979, 1987) salutogenic theory and Sense of Coherence (SoC) model and the broad ideas of Positive Psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) to foster positive learning experiences.

Positive Psychology

Positive Psychology sets out to redress a preoccupation of psychology with pathologies and repairing the ‘worst aspects’ of life by promoting its positive qualities (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It focuses on well-being and satisfaction in the past, on happiness and the experience of ‘flow’ in the present and on hope and optimism in the future (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). It aims at building ‘thriving individuals, finding and nurturing talent and making, normal life more fulfilling’, drawing on the concepts of *flow* and *mindfulness* as positive states that generate learning (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5). Flow has also been

proffered to explain the possible experiences when learning through sport and practice/modified games that provide appropriate levels of challenge (Harvey et al., 2014; Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Kretchmar, 2005) and which can be experienced through a GBA such as TGfU (Lloyd & Smith, 2010). It refers to a state of being absorbed in the experience of action through intense concentration, as the athlete is 'lost' in the flow of experience. It provides a positive affective experience through which deep learning occurs, especially when the coach 'gets the game right' (Thorpe & Bunker, 2008).

Although it does not specifically focus on developing well-being or happiness, all five elements of Seligman's (2012) PERMA (positive emotions, engagement, relations, meaning and achievement) model are evident in Positive Pedagogy. The pedagogy of approaches such as TGfU can generate positive emotions such as enjoyment or delight (Kretchmar, 2005), engagement in learning, the building of relationships and a sense of belonging (Light, 2008a), meaning, and opportunities for achievement, both individually and collectively. Positive Pedagogy emphasizes what the learner *can* do and how s/he can draw on existing individual and social resources to meet learning challenges through reflection and dialogue.

Antonovsky's salutogenic theory and SoC model

Antonovsky's (1979, 1987) salutogenic theory and SoC model focuses on the socially constructed resources that allow people to achieve and maintain good health. In this article, Antonovsky's SoC is used to provide a framework for understanding what is needed to make pedagogy positive. Antonovsky (1979) developed the concept of 'salutogenesis' as a reference to *the origins of health* to take a positive, holistic approach by emphasizing what supports health and well-being rather than what causes disease or the 'lifestyle' approach that focuses on identifying risk factors (Antonovsky, 1996). His positive approach rejects the dichotomy of health and disease with his SoC model offering a useful means of identifying the ways in which coaching pedagogy can produce positive learning/development. He is primarily concerned with the affective and social dimensions of life rather than with its cognitive aspects and with a focus on experience. His model comprises three elements necessary for good health: (1) comprehensibility, (2) manageability and (3) meaningfulness that can also be used to identify conditions that promote positive experiences of learning. In the following section, we briefly outline his use of each concept and then suggest how it is applied in Positive Pedagogy for coaching.

Comprehensibility is developed through experience and refers to the extent to which things make sense for the individual in that events and situations are ordered and consistent. For learning to be *comprehensible* in sport, we draw on the TGfU and Game Sense literature to suggest that it should help learners know, not only how to do something but also when, where and why (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982; Light, 2013a). It should also foster deep learning that typically involves understanding the concepts or 'big ideas' (Fosnot, 1996) that underpin learning. Comprehensive understanding involves not only rational, conscious and articulated knowing but also

a practical understanding or sense (Bourdieu, 1986) developed through experience and engagement in a process of learning as the unfolding of knowledge that includes learning how to learn. This is evident in the emphasis placed on deep understanding of the fundamental concepts of the manipulation of space and time in team sports when using GBA such as Game Sense. This building upon deep understanding of fundamental concepts is maintained when adopting Positive Pedagogy for individual and more skill-intensive sports such as swimming or throwing events in athletics (Light, 2014; Light & Kentel, 2013). For example, the fundamental concepts underpinning swimming can be seen to be the maximization of propulsion (or thrust) and the minimization of resistance, whether swimming, diving or turning and streamlining off the wall (Light, 2014).

Manageability is the extent to which an individual feels s/he can manage stress and challenge by having the resources at hand. Resources can be objects such as tools and equipment, skills, intellectual ability, social and cultural capital and so on. In Positive Pedagogy, this includes the resources available from interaction within groups and teams and/or the whole team in dialogue and the 'debate of ideas' (Gréhaigne et al., 2005). In Positive Pedagogy, learning is manageable when the challenges set extend the learner but can be met by drawing on individual resources (for example, skill, physical capacity intelligence) and/or social resources such as social interaction with peers and the teacher/coach. The provision of a supportive socio-cultural environment assists in making challenges manageable and rewarding. This means that in a Positive Pedagogy practice session, the challenges set by the coach are seen to be manageable when the player or athlete feels s/he has adequate skill and understanding and has the support of teammates, and the coach in order to meet these challenges. The collective, social element is of prime importance here.

Meaningfulness refers to how much the individual feels that life makes sense and that its challenges are worthy of commitment. According to Antonovsky, meaningfulness promotes a positive expectation of life and the future and encourages people to see challenges as being interesting, relevant and worthy of emotional commitment. When activities engage learners affectively and socially as well as physically and intellectually, they are likely to be meaningful. Positive Pedagogy in team sport is meaningful because learning is situated within the game or game conditions and clearly related to the game. This provides the players/athletes with *engagement* that gives meaning to tasks and experiences. A good example of how this meaning can be provided is provided by designer games (Charlesworth, 2002) and action fantasy games (Lauder, 2001). Learning is meaningful in team and other sports when its comprehensibility gives meaning to tasks and learning activities because they make sense within the 'big picture'. Coaching using Positive Pedagogy can make learning meaningful by relating detailed foci on particular aspects of the sport to its most fundamental concepts and to the end aims of the learning. Explaining what each session involves and why would add to making it engaging and meaningful. This does not only involve cognitive processes, but, from an holistic perspective, also affective, emotional and corporeal learning that ensures long-term engagement with the activity (Renshaw et al., 2012).

Pedagogical features of Positive Pedagogy

This section examines the ways in which the four core features of Game Sense pedagogy (Light, 2013a) can be applied beyond games to provide for consistently positive learning experiences in practice. It also notes some of the significant challenges facing coaches taking up authentic interpretations of Positive Pedagogy that we discuss more fully later. They are that: (1) it emphasizes engagement with the physical learning environment or experience, (2) the coach asks questions that generate dialogue and thinking instead of telling player/athletes what to do, (3) it provides opportunities for player/athletes to collectively formulate, test and evaluate solutions to problems, (4) the coach provides a supportive socio-moral environment in which making mistakes is accepted as an essential part of learning.

Designing and managing the learning environment/experience

When coaching team sports Game Sense (as an example of Positive Pedagogy) focuses on the game as a whole rather than on discrete components of it such as technique (den Duyn, 1997). The game is seen as a complex phenomenon within which learning to play well involves adapting to its dynamics with tactical knowledge, skill execution and decision-making all interconnected as knowledge-in-action (Light, 2013a). Learning is located within modified games or game-like activities based on the assumption that learning occurs through engagement with the learning environment and not through direct instruction (Dewey, 1916/97). This is also initially learning that largely takes place as a process of adaptation at a non-conscious level to form the basis of ensuing learning experiences as attempts are made to bring it to consciousness through language. This means that ‘getting the game right’ (Thorpe & Bunker, 2008) and the ability of the coach to manage the activities or a game to establish and retain the appropriate level of challenge is of pivotal importance. Indeed, designing practice activities and managing them through the analysis of performance is probably the biggest challenge facing coaches in implementing a Positive Pedagogy approach with some recent attention paid to this (Turner, 2014).

Adopting a Positive Pedagogy approach for more individual sports such as running and swimming typically involves learning experiences that place constraints on the athlete to create problems to be solved and processes of non-conscious thinking and conscious thinking (see, Light, 2014) that can lead to the joy of discovery (George, 2006) and which often involve a guided discovery coaching style (Mosston & Ashworth, 1986).

As players/athletes adapt to Positive Pedagogy, they take on more autonomy and ownership to participate in modification of learning games/activities (Almond, 1983) as well as the formulation, testing and evaluation of tactical solutions. This leads to the empowerment of the players (as learners) achieved through a growing understanding in and about games and of how to learn. As player/athletes learn how to learn, and become more prepared to engage in purposeful social interaction they

tend to rely less upon the coach to take more responsibility for their own learning which is an important and positive learning experience. This typically involves a coach–athlete relationship that is more equitable in the repositioning of the coach and the empowerment of the athlete(s).

Learning through a physical learning activity occurs at a non-conscious level as a process of adaptation as emphasized by Piaget, enactivism (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991) and in complex learning theory (Davis & Sumara, 2003). The use of practice games designed to achieve particular outcomes suggests that they improve player motivation in a range of team sports (see, for example, Light, 2004; Harvey, 2009). Alan Launder’s notion of Action Fantasy games (Launder, 2001) and the use of ‘designer games’ (Charlesworth, 2002) also suggest the efficacy of authentic game-based coaching. While some practice games can be, and are, designed to focus on particular aspects of the full game, they additionally provide a holistic experience that typically includes developing awareness and decision-making. They are also social in nature, even when there is no verbal interaction (see Tan, Chow, & Davids, 2011; Turner, 2014 for an overview of learning design using GBAs).

Ask questions to generate dialogue and thinking

Questioning is one of the central mechanisms employed for promoting player/athlete-centred learning in Game Sense (Forrest, 2014; Wright & Forrest, 2007). It aims to stimulate dialogue, reflection and the conscious processing of ideas about playing the game as the ‘debate of ideas’ (Gréhaigne et al., 2005) but typically presents a significant challenge for coaches (see Roberts, 2011). This is not to say that other types of questions are not used but that a Positive Pedagogy approach emphasizes open-ended questions aimed at stimulating dialogue, thinking and reflection. In Positive Pedagogy, questions are employed to promote thinking and dialogue but it takes time for coaches to become skilful enough with questioning to achieve these aims. In Positive Pedagogy, questions should create a range of possible answers or solutions rather than lead to predetermined answers that are deemed to be either correct or incorrect. Wright and Forrest (2007) identify the problems involved with questioning in GBA through their criticism of the sequencing of questions suggested in some TGfU texts and the ways in which it limits the possible responses instead of expanding them. This is the problem with the Initiation, Response, Evaluation method of questioning because this shuts down interaction between the coach and the learners and between the learners themselves (Forrest, 2014; Wright & Forrest, 2007). Instead, Forrest (2014) recommends the reflective toss methodology of van Zee and Minstrell (1997) in which the coach prompts and probes different learners’ perspectives of game play. This discussion draws on the learners prior experiences by enabling reflection on this experience and promote the development of an agreed action plan for the next bout of game play where the learners experiment with their agreed strategy.

In addition to questioning, Positive Pedagogy encourages the coach to avoid being critical or telling learners they are wrong as a means of further promoting divergent thinking, creativity and enjoyment of meeting challenges and of discovery (George, 2006). As positive as this can be for learning, coaches accustomed to directing and attempting to determine learning would likely find this difficult to do (Harvey, Cushion, & Massa-Gonzalez, 2010). To make learning as positive as possible we suggest that, when an individual, or groups of learners find that a solution does not work they should be asked to reflect upon why it did not work and then modify it or seek a different solution. This does not mean that coaches cannot correct mistakes. Nor that it means that corrections cannot be done in a reasonable positive way. Instead, it encourages coaches to emphasize the promotion of learner-centred, active learning through collaborative problem solving.

This 'solution-focused' approach focuses the players/athletes attention on what the goals of the activity are and what they need to do in order to achieve these goals (Clarke & Dembowski, 2006; Grant, 2011). This way, the players/athletes formulate solutions to overcome the problems they are faced with, whether tactical or technical, by drawing on the resources they have available and within the constraints of the games rules. This approach ensures that discussions are future-paced and focus directly on solutions rather than problems that may result in players/athletes disengaging from the practice session (Grant, 2011). It also aligns with Antonovsky's notion of manageability. This approach also encourages coaches and their athletes to work collaboratively to solve the problems that arise in practice and in competition. This typically involves a change in power relations between coach and athletes to operate on a more equal level in which the coach not only facilitates learning but also learns him or herself as a co-participant in learning (Davis & Sumara, 1997).

Within this 'debate of ideas', whether between two swimmers discussing how to compensate for the reduction in thrust when doing one-arm butterfly or in teams playing small-side games, there will be some disagreement because this is the nature of debate (Gréhaigne et al., 2005; Light, 2014). Athletes unused to this empowerment and responsibility may also take some time to adapt and respond to the opportunities offered (Roberts, 2011). This aspect of Positive Pedagogy can also be demanding for the coach because it requires skill in shaping and facilitating productive interaction to foster players'/athletes' abilities to negotiate, compromise and arrive at outcomes without making any participants feel 'wrong' or excluded and disengaging them. This is not an easy task for coaches used to telling players/athletes what to do. The coach's contribution here is to promote a positive enjoyment of inquiry and ask questions about what options or strategies might be appropriate to guide inquiry. This solutions-focused approach should help player/athletes learn that making mistakes is an essential part of learning with these learning experiences promoting resiliency, creativity, social learning, collective effort and an enjoyment of inquiry and discovery (Forrest, 2014).

Provide opportunities for formulating, testing and evaluating solutions

In the practice games used in Game Sense, the teams are given opportunities to have 'team talks' at appropriate times (Light, 2013a) as *game appreciation* (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982) develops. In these talks, the player/athletes collectively formulate strategies that they test whether in may be two relay runners testing ideas for improving their change-overs or groups in small-sided games. After this, they gather again to critically reflect upon how the strategy worked. If it did not work, they are asked to identify why it did not work and formulate a new strategy or plan and test it (Light).

While the more confident and experienced players/athletes may initially dominate discussion, the less experienced can make valuable contributions when encouraged by the coach. Player/athletes improve while developing confidence in their ability to become independent learners and problem solvers and so remain motivated to participate in the activity for the longer term (Renshaw et al., 2012). The productive social interaction involved in this process can also lead to player/athletes understanding each other as more than objects on the field or court. It encourages empathy, compassion, meaningful relationships, a sense of connection and care for each other as well, both on and off the field. This includes a range of levels of sport from primary school cricket (Light, 2008a) to rugby played at the highest level by the New Zealand All Blacks (Evans, 2012).

Develop a supportive environment

To get player/athletes to speak up, take risks and be creative, coaches have to build a supportive environment where they feel secure enough to do so. This must involve coaches making it clear that mistakes are not necessarily negative but, instead, are essential for learning and can be seen to provide opportunities for learning (Renshaw et al., 2012). In Positive Pedagogy, mistakes are seen as constructive errors that are made into positive learning experiences with the provision of opportunities for adequate reflection and analysis. This is facilitated though a focus on the longer term of the season or the development trajectories of teams or athletes so that players/athletes do not feel immediate pressure to succeed. As Rach, Ufer, and Heinze (2013, p. 22) suggest, the idea that 'mistakes are often the best teachers' is widely accepted. This helps develop an awareness of the process of learning and can make it meaningful enough to make it worthy of emotional commitment (Antonovsky, 1979).

Discussion

In this article, we are not proposing a specific model for coaching practice but, instead, making broader suggestions about a pedagogical approach that coaches could draw on to make their coaching more positive. In doing so, we recognize the challenges that coaches working across a range of sports in a range of settings face.

As we noted earlier, research on GBA such as Game Sense identifies the difficulties in taking up what would essentially be a radical change for many coaches. Designing and managing practice games or learning experiences requires the ability to analyse performance in practice and adjust the activity to get the best results and to maintain the optimum level of challenge for learning which is a demanding task (Light, 2013a). The effective use of questioning to stimulate thinking and interaction is also a substantial challenge and particularly for coaches who have relied upon directive approaches underpinned by epistemological assumptions about knowledge being an object that is transmitted from coach to athlete/learner (see Light, 2008b; Roberts, 2011). Indeed, the different sets of assumptions that Positive Pedagogy and more 'traditional' coaching sit upon create a significant challenge for individual coaches interested in taking it up and for organizations intending to change practice on a large scale (Light et al., 2015). The Positive Pedagogy approach sits upon constructivist epistemology and assumptions about what knowledge is and how it is acquired which can cause tension with coaches' beliefs about good coaching and learning (Light, 2008b).

Research on Game Sense (as an example of Positive Pedagogy) in coaching identifies how coaches can struggle with the different relationships with players that it requires (Evans, 2014). The ways in which the sometimes-chaotic appearance of GBA sessions contrasts with common conceptions of good practice session looking ordered, precise and running smoothly can also present problems for coaches taking up GBA (Light, 2004). This repositioning of the coach and changes in coach–player relationships is tied into issues of power in coaching that have received some attention (Jones, 2007, 2009; Taylor & Garrett, 2010).

According to Foucault (1977, 1979), knowledge is always a form of power and used to establish control. He does not see power as an object that is explicitly wielded but, instead, as something pervasive that is internalized through more subtle strategies such as surveillance. In his highly influential book, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, Friere (1993) contrasts a 'banking' approach, in which the teacher deposits information in the students heads using a narrative with a 'problem posing' approach to education. He focuses on the importance of genuine dialogue, social justice and informal adult education to argue that the teacher's role should be one of negotiating, mediating between learners personal meanings and established cultural meanings of the wider community. He also argues that pedagogy should have emancipatory potential, which we suggest Positive Pedagogy has.

Taking up Positive Pedagogy is also often hindered by adequate understanding of the approach that can lead to the implementation of inauthentic versions of it as is the case with GBA (see Harvey & Jarrett, 2014). For example, rugby coaches in Light and Evans' (2010) study on Game Sense used training games but none of the Game Sense pedagogy. On a larger scale, the Rugby Football Union in England chose to use Game Sense to guide the on-going development of its coaching programmes but research suggests that the dilution of an authentic approach as it passes down to coach educators delivering at the coal face is limiting its potential to make a significant contribution to improving coaching at a national level (Light et al., 2015).

From a practical perspective, there are also issues in regard to the relationship between Positive Pedagogy and coaches' levels of planning. This is related to the degree to which they want to draw on Positive Pedagogy and the extent to which they see their role as being a trainer or educator (Jones, 2006). The training perspective would typically focus more on short-term results on a weekly and seasonal basis while the coach as educator (Jones) would typically be guided by long-term planning and objectives that could even go beyond the sport to include what Dewey (1916/97) refers to as the 'human development' of the players. Given the time it takes for athletes to adapt to Positive Pedagogy and how it can contribute to long-term player development (Light, 2004), it likely needs to be part of longer term development aims.

Despite the challenges involved for coaches to take up Positive Pedagogy and the need to account for them, we suggest that the framework provided in this article can provide a means of making learning more positive across a wide range of sports settings. This approach emphasizes learning through the social interaction that has been strongly linked to joyful experiences (see, for example, Harvey, 2009; Renshaw et al., 2012). Large-scale research in psychology also suggests strong links between happiness, social interaction and social networks (Fowler & Christakis, 2008). The social nature of learning emphasized in Positive Pedagogy and its inclusive nature can also facilitate a sense of belonging and self-esteem (see, for example, Light, 2002). Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) suggests that, along with *autonomy* and *competence*, the similar notion of *relatedness* is a psychological requirement for human growth and the promotion of well-being (Renshaw et al., 2012). This is further emphasized in Seligman's Positive Psychology model as 'relationships', which is a reference to the importance of supportive personal connections for well-being, which are critical factors in learning through Positive Pedagogy.

Conclusion

Positive Pedagogy maintains a focus on the core aim of most coaching, which is the improvement of performance. It can also foster an enjoyment of learning and learning how to learn that can include (but not always) the secondary learning of many of the same positive personal traits that Positive Psychology aims to develop such as compassion, resilience, self-confidence, creativity, or the competence, coping ability, health, resilience, and the well-being that Positive Youth Development through Sport aims at promoting (Holt et al., 2012). It can also facilitate the positive social learning and social skills that participation in sport and physical activity is commonly assumed to deliver but which merely playing games will not necessarily teach (De Martelaer, De Bouw, & Struyven, 2012; Light, 2013b). Although not specifically aimed at developing positive personal and social learning and social skills, the nature of Positive Pedagogy can encourage this development. For children's and youth sport coaches who value this secondary learning, it can be enhanced by an explicit focus on it (Harvey et al., 2014).

Positive Pedagogy emphasizes the holistic, social nature of learning, and the role of experience, the body and its senses in it. It encourages the development of the social skills involved in engaging in purposeful dialogue, a willingness and ability to negotiate and compromise and the understanding of democratic processes involved in making and enacting collective decision-making while making learning enjoyable. Learning to learn and the positive inclinations towards learning it can generate, and some of the social learning that can accompany it, is more likely to transfer into life off the court or sports field than improved sport technique and fitness are. The way in which it can develop a positive inclination towards learning, and the contribution it can make towards well-being would clearly be beneficial for children and young people participating in sport. It would be of benefit for improving performance at any level and could make a contribution towards helping elite-level, professional athletes meet the challenges of developing post-playing careers and enhance their well-being.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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