

Learner-Centered Coach Education: Practical Recommendations for Coach Development Administrators

Kyle Paquette and Pierre Trudel
University of Ottawa

Despite a well-established understanding of the complexity inherent to both learning and sport coaching, programs designed to educate coaches have until recently been guided by pedagogical approaches aligned with rather simplistic views of learning. Thanks to the critical and innovative efforts of coaching scholars to uncover the shortcomings of traditional programs and their guiding epistemic traditions, coach education is becoming increasingly infused with constructivist, *learner-centered* (LC) strategies to help meet the complex needs of coaches. Although many LC informed recommendations have been offered, rarely do they provide coach development administrators (CDAs) with concrete, practical suggestions. Furthermore, the recommendations are scattered throughout the literature, which makes an already arduous task of bridging research and practice even more difficult for CDAs. Guided by the LC literature, a practical *learner-centered teaching* (LCT) framework, and previous recommendations presented in the coach education literature, this Best Practices paper presents a theoretically robust and empirically supported collection of practical recommendations for CDAs to support three critical areas of LC coach education: program design, facilitation, and coach engagement.

Keywords: coach development, constructivism, design, facilitation, learning

The complexities of learning and sport coaching have both been widely accepted notions and central themes to their respective literatures for decades (e.g., Rogers, 1969; Smith, Smoll, & Hunt, 1977). Despite being equipped with these fundamental understandings, programs designed to educate coaches have, until recently, been guided by pedagogical approaches aligned with rather simplistic views of learning (Paquette, Hussain, Trudel, & Camiré, 2014; Trudel & Gilbert, 2006). One possible explanation for why this clear disconnect occurred relates to the traditional instructional paradigm that has dominated Western education (Light, 2008; Tagg, 2003). Sport coaching researchers and practitioners continue to be “for the most part, the products of the instruction paradigm” (Paquette & Trudel, 2016, p. 64). Harris and Cullen (2010, p. 34) aptly described the paradigm, anchored in behaviourism, as our first language: “We don’t remember how we learned it; we may not understand the grammatical structures that underpin it, but we know it and use it with great facility”. Another potential explanation relates to the desire for simplicity and rapid growth in creating standardized curriculums and quality assurance frameworks for program stakeholders (Quehl, Bergquist, & Subbiondo, 1999; Tagg, 2003). When learning is reduced to “a simple linear process based on a conception of learning as a process of internalizing pre-existing external knowledge” (i.e., behaviourism, Light, 2008, p. 29), the focus naturally shifts to instruction and the role of the instructor to teach a curated external knowledge to a mass audience. Given that funding is often a primary catalyst and driven force for education reforms and strategies both in education (Quehl et al., 1999) and sport coaching (Lyle, 2007), simplistic coach education programs allow for an expeditious growth in the population of certified coaches, leading

to greater perceived program effectiveness (Trudel, Gilbert, & Werthner, 2010), and in turn greater levels of funding. Regardless of the rationale for the instruction-centered and largely didactic methods employed by these programs, their limited impact has been well documented and criticized by scholars (Chesterfield, Potrac, & Jones, 2010; Morgan, Jones, Gilbourne, & Llewellyn, 2013a), ultimately leading to a propagated notion that coach education has little value in coaches’ development (Nelson & Cushion, 2006; Trudel et al., 2010).

We must remember that uncovering our guiding paradigm and initiating change is difficult because our “common sense assumptions about how we learn operate, unquestioned, at a subconscious level” (Light, 2008, p. 33). Therefore, it requires challenging assumptions, critical inquiry, and innovative thinking (Harris & Cullen, 2010; Weimer, 2013). Indeed, this is precisely what has taken place within the coach development literature throughout the past decade. Thanks to the critical and innovative efforts of coaching scholars to uncover the shortcomings of traditional coach development initiatives and education programs (e.g., Mallett, Trudel, Lyle, & Rynne, 2009; Werthner & Trudel, 2006), coupled with the collection of targeted critiques that has accumulated as a result of this discourse (see Paquette & Trudel, 2016), our expanded understanding of coach learning has led to both a reconceptualization of coach education and a reconfiguration of programming in many countries around the world (e.g., Callary, Culver, Werthner, & Bales, 2014; Werthner, Trudel, & Culver, 2012). Research approaches and recommendations for practice have finally begun to align with the complexity that has been long recognized with both learning and coaching. As such, coach education is becoming increasingly infused with *learner-centered*

(LC) strategies to help meet the complex needs of coaches as learners (Paquette et al., 2014). Based on the findings from an emerging body of literature, it appears the strategies are indeed increasing the impact of coach education (e.g., Deek, Werthner, Paquette, & Culver, 2013; Morgan, Jones, Gilbourne, Llewellyn, 2013b).

Despite the many critiques and recommendations offered in support of research and the practice of coach development administrators (CDAs), Trudel, Culver, & Werthner (2013, p. 385) noted, “the criticisms received by CDAs regarding the limits of their coach education programs are rarely accompanied with concrete suggestions on what they can do to impact positively the learning of the coaches”. Moreover, the collections of recommendations are scattered throughout the literature, which makes an already arduous task of bridging research and practice even more difficult for CDAs. Weimer (2013) described the learning literature using the following jigsaw puzzle analogy:

This body of knowledge remains largely unassembled. It resembles a giant jigsaw puzzle that has a whole community working on it. A few sections are more or less finished. Collections of related but not yet connected pieces lie close together in other sections. And there are still a lot of individual pieces, definitely part of the puzzle but currently just spread out on the table. (p. 7)

We see many similarities in regards to the coach education literature, specifically when reviewing the complex and dispersed collection of LC themed, constructivist recommendations and practical support offered by scholars to CDAs. Indeed, given the heightened complexity faced by CDAs looking to integrate constructivist learning principles into their programs (Paquette et al., 2014; Trudel et al., 2013), coupled with research advocating for the adoption of LC approaches (Lyle, 2007; Paquette & Trudel, 2016), efforts should be made by scholars to help organize and translate academic recommendations into practical strategies to help bridge the often insurmountable divide between research and practice (Holt et al., 2017). Accordingly, Paquette and Trudel (2016) presented a popular and well-established *learner-centered teaching* (LCT) framework (Blumberg, 2009) to help inform and shape the LC interest in coach education. The authors acknowledged the benefits of using the framework to better organize and address the existing critiques and recommendations according to their LCT underpinnings. Given the concerns that coaching scholars have “yet to provide specific, structured, evidence based suggestions” to enhance coach learning (Stodter & Cushion, 2016, p. 36), the introduction of the LCT framework founded on 14 evidence-based Learner-Centered Psychological Principles (LCPs) that apply to all learners¹ (APA, 1997), appears to be both relevant and timely. As such, the purpose of this Best Practices paper is to present a theoretically robust and empirically supported collection of practical recommendations for CDAs to support the growing interest of LC coach education.

Learner-Centered Alignment

Based on an integrated understanding of the LCPs (APA, 1997), McCombs and Whistler (1997) defined learner-centeredness as a perspective that focuses both on *the learner* (i.e., his/her cognitive structure) and on *learning*, described by the authors as “the best available knowledge about learning and how it occurs and about teaching practices that are most effective in promoting the highest

levels of motivation, learning, and achievement for all learners” (p. 9). The quality of learner-centeredness can never be determined by focusing solely on teacher characteristics, instructional strategies, or course designs in the absence of the learner (McCombs & Miller, 2009). At the heart of learner-centeredness are the learner’s perceptions of the above elements of educational programs and the complex interaction between them (APA, 1997). Consequently, when conceptualizing LC coach education, careful consideration must be devoted to the design of the program, its delivery methods, and strategies to enhance coach engagement and ultimately its impact on learning. We also recognize that for LC coach education to be successful, all the various agents involved, including the CDAs, facilitators and coaches, will need to be aligned in their views and participatory adoption of constructivist learning principles (Paquette et al., 2014; Trudel et al., 2013). If this can be achieved, rather than being a primary source of resistance to the LC initiatives, “many of these stakeholders can become part of [the] strategy for overcoming obstacles” (Blumberg, 2009, p. 247). Below are recommendations based on the coach education and LC literatures to help CDAs address the three critical areas of LC coach education: program design, facilitation, and coach engagement.

Program Design

The bulk of criticism aimed at coach education has historically targeted program design, specifically the common shortcomings related to its low ecological validity (Gilbert & Trudel, 2006) and minimal focus on the learner and learning (e.g., Cassidy, Potrac, & McKenzie, 2006); decontextualized learning environment (e.g., Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003); the use of a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach (e.g., Nelson, Cushion, & Potrac, 2013) or ‘top-down’ approach (e.g., Trudel & Gilbert, 2006); lack of collaboration and social learning opportunities (e.g., Roberts & Rylie, 2014), as well as consideration or integration of reflection (e.g., Knowles, Tyler, Gilbourne, & Eubank, 2006). As potential remedies for these design limitations, coaching scholars have offered numerous recommendations (although not all presented in concrete practical terms), including the integration of *active, interactive, and reflective learning activities* (e.g., Knowles et al., 2006; Nelson et al., 2013), the use of *relevant content to address relevant, real-world coaching issues* (e.g., Lyle, Jolly, & North, 2010; Morgan et al., 2013a), and the focus on *developing learning skills* (e.g., Cushion et al., 2010; Milistetd, Galatti, Collett, Tozetto, & Nascimento, 2017). Here are four recommendations specifically to support the design of LC coach education:

1. Become a LC leader. Despite the limited scholarship focused directly on CDAs (Horgan & Daly, 2015), research has begun to shed light on the importance of the CDA’s role in program design (Hussain, Trudel, Patrick, & Rossi, 2012; McQuade & Nash, 2015). More specifically, CDAs’ cognitive structures, in particular their views of learning, have been found to contribute to the adoption of constructivist-informed, LC program designs (e.g., Hussain et al., 2012). Within the LC literature, significant attention has been placed on the importance of having strong leadership to guide LC initiatives and to manage the challenges and obstacles that can be expected with LC programming (Harris & Cullen, 2010). As a starting point to becoming a LCT leader, we recommend that CDAs invest time developing a deep understanding of the constructivist learning assumptions that guide LCT (e.g., Light, 2008), the benefits and expected challenges of LCT (e.g., McCombs & Miller, 2009), the research evidence that

supports LCT (e.g., Alexander & Murphy, 1998), and how other coach education programs have successfully integrated LCT or other related approaches. Once this is achieved, CDAs will be positioned to better understand the degree of congruence between their cognitive structures and the epistemic traditions of LCT, and in turn how they will need to manage any clear disconnects (McCombs & Miller, 2009). They will also be able to create a clear vision and informed rationale for how they want to systematically integrate LCT approaches into their programs.

2. Use a variety of learning strategies to achieve specified learning outcomes. The achievement of specified learning outcomes is a central element of LC programs (Blumberg, 2009) and more broadly constructivist-informed courses (Moon, 2001). In accordance with LC literature, Moon (2001, p. 24) acknowledged two types of learning outcomes: “those that refer to learning at the end of the course itself and another set that relates to the changed practice in the workplace”. Considering the importance of using well-articulated and reasoned learning outcomes to inform the rest of the LC program design, we encourage CDAs to consult Moon (2001, p. 6), who described her resource as an “overt adoption of learner-centered and constructivist approach[es]”, for support in defining and writing the learning outcomes for the programs. Once learning outcomes are prepared, we recommend that CDAs be mindful of creating a learning environment that accommodates different learning styles by means of incorporating a range of learning strategies that align with their outcomes (Blumberg, 2009; McCombs & Miller, 2009). The use of action-research and problem-based case scenarios and ethno-dramas scenes (e.g., Morgan et al., 2013a) have been presented as innovative strategies for coach education that all employ LCT approaches. More common learning strategies include self-reflections, group activities and discussions, practical training and role-playing activities, and varied uses of multimedia strategies.

3. Deliberately develop learning skills. Recently, coaching scholars have been advised to consider learning how to learn as a ‘basic condition’ for sport coaching and coach development (Milistetd et al., 2017). As mentioned above, developing learning skills in coaches is a recommendation that has previously been made by a number of coaching scholars (e.g., Cushion et al., 2010), and a variety of targeted learning skills have been advocated, such as reflective skills (Knowles et al., 2006; Milistetd et al., 2017), creating networks (Leduc, Culver, & Werthner, 2012; Trudel et al., 2013), and learning to plan (Nash & Sproule, 2012). Blumberg (2009, p. 132) noted that “many instructors either assume their students already have these skills or do not take the time to teach them”. Alternatively, LC instructors explicitly teach appropriate learning skills to their students to help them navigate the accessible abundance of information and to promote lifelong learning (e.g., Blumberg, 2009; McCombs & Miller, 2009). We recommend that CDAs design specific learning activities at the beginning of their courses or programs that help coaches to develop a variety of relevant learning skills, such as reflection, time management, self-monitoring, goal-setting, and how to access and evaluate content and sources of information (APA, 1997).

4. Unite assessment with learning. Central to LC program design is the complex interplay between content, assessment and learning, and the impact of this interplay on the achievement of learning outcomes (Trudel et al., 2013; Werthner et al., 2012). When programs are designed to cover too much material, not only will instructors feel pressured to get through it all, and in doing so move away from LCT approaches (Blumberg, 2009), coaches will be encouraged to adopt a surface/less integrated approach to learning (Trudel et al., 2013).

Furthermore, increased content often results in the need for simplistic and summative evaluation strategies that challenge LCT approaches (Blumberg, 2009). This issue becomes increasingly problematic given that learners will typically adjust their learning strategies based on the anticipated assessment (Moon, 2001), and coaches have been found to adapt their behaviours to pass evaluations when significant emphasis is placed on the ‘right’ way of doing things (Chesterfield et al., 2010). When designing a LC program, assessments “occur earlier and more often, to integrate learning and assessment and to allow students opportunities to improve” (Blumberg, 2009, p. 157). This recommendation has previously been discussed and supported by numerous researchers (e.g., Paquette et al., 2014; Roberts & Ryrie, 2014). We recommend that CDAs design assessment protocols that make use of a variety of LC assessment strategies, including peer and self-assessment, authentic assessment, and debriefing and formative feedback (APA, 1997).

Facilitation

A recurring concern and critique of coach education is of programs or courses not being delivered as designed (Nelson et al., 2013; Werthner et al., 2012). McCullick et al. (2009, p. 333) rightfully pointed out “if the content of a coach education program is good but the means of delivering and learning the content are flawed, the relevancy of the content is minimized”. This recognition is particularly relevant to LC coach education given the paramount and largely unvarying role of the facilitator (Weimer, 2013). Despite only one LCT dimension of Blumberg’s (2009) framework explicitly addressing the facilitator (i.e., the role of the instructor), 25 of the 29 components are directly dependent on the facilitator’s participation. A variety of recommendations have been aimed at enhancing the quality of facilitation, including selecting more *credible and knowledgeable facilitators* (Nelson et al., 2013; Wiersma & Sherman, 2005) who effectively *embrace and adhere to the role of facilitation* (Paquette et al., 2014; Werthner et al., 2012), and who encourage increased *collaboration and interactions within coaches* (Cassidy et al., 2006;) and *between coaches and facilitators* (Roberts & Ryrie, 2014). Here are three recommendations regarding facilitation for LC coach education:

5. Recruit facilitators, not instructors. This recommendation was originally presented by Trudel et al. (2013) who acknowledged the impact of a facilitator’s cognitive structure on his/her engagement with coaches and method of program delivery. Epistemic beliefs about teaching are not only difficult to change (Light, 2008; Weimer, 2013), but they are “an important predictor of the success and long-term viability of changes in teaching” (Blumberg, 2009, p. 247). As such, we recommend that CDAs create a facilitator selection protocol that helps to identify a candidate’s cognitive structure, specifically their beliefs and practices related to learning and teaching. This can be accomplished using a series of interview questions based on the literature that has examined the assessment of LC beliefs and practices in teachers (e.g., McCombs & Lauer, 1997). For example: “Do you believe coaches achieve more in courses in which facilitators encourage them to express their personal beliefs and feelings? Do you believe addressing coaches’ social, emotional, and physical needs is just as important to learning as meeting their intellectual needs? Please explain.” (adapted from McCombs & Lauer, 1997). Alternatively, the five dimensions of LCT could be used to guide interview questions. For example: “Please discuss your view of the function of content; What do you believe is the role of the facilitator?; Where does the responsibility of learning lie in coach education?; How should

assessment be used in coach education?; Please discuss how you view the balance of power in a classroom.”

6. Provide LC facilitator training. Once facilitators have been selected, it will be important to provide deliberate LC training (Paquette et al., 2014; Werthner et al., 2012). Compared to teachers who commonly deliver courses they have carefully designed, this recommendation becomes increasingly important in constructivist coach education because “the delivery of content is usually given to a person who has not been involved in the design of the program” (Trudel et al., 2013, p. 381). Moreover, within facilitator training, facilitators have been found to express greater comfort with the content they are expected to deliver compared to the pedagogical approaches that underpin their facilitative strategies (Leduc & Culver, 2016). Given the complexity of LC facilitation, an important first step in facilitator training could involve the review of seminal LC resources (Paquette & Trudel, 2016). We recommend Barr and Tagg (1995), the Learner-Centered Psychological Principles (APA, 1997), and Weimer (2013). We would like to stress that all LC facilitator training initiatives should be guided by the appropriate integration and modelling of LCT approaches by the trainers. Like LC coach education, facilitator training should begin with the establishment of relevant learning outcomes. It should then involve a series of targeted learning activities using a variety of learning strategies to create an inclusive learning environment that accommodates different learning styles; examples of strategies include case scenarios, peer discussions, role playing, and self-reflections (Blumberg, 2009). Finally, given the impact of both the facilitators’ characteristics and ability to develop meaningful relationships with learners (Cornelius-White, 2007), CDAs are urged not to overlook the deliberate training of timeless facilitator qualities, such as of empathy, genuineness, and unconditional regard (Rogers, 1969).

7. Regularly assess facilitator performance. Questions regarding the ability to maintain consistent LC facilitation have been raised both in education (e.g., McCombs & Lauer, 1997) and coach education (Werthner et al., 2012). It continues to be recognized in education that teachers adopting LC practices must be supported with self-assessment and reflection tools (Blumberg, 2009; McCombs & Miller, 2009). Furthermore, CDAs have also been called to action to provide facilitators with ongoing training and assessment opportunities (Leduc & Culver, 2016; Werthner et al., 2012). Accordingly, it will be important to assess facilitator performance regularly, both to uphold the quality of program delivery and to support the continued learning and development of LCT facilitators. A variety of assessment strategies can be used. From the LC literature, we recommend the Assessment of Learner-Centered Practices (ALCP) surveys and Blumberg’s (2009) rubrics and Planning for Transformation Exercise. Alternatively, a number of documented LC informed practices with coach education can be used to guide facilitator assessment, such as the creation of learning portfolios (Callary et al., 2014) and the use of formal observation or video recording followed by structured peer debriefing (Paquette et al., 2014). Finally, in line with Blumberg’s strategies for overcoming obstacles and resistance, facilitator assessment is recommended to leverage the benefits of working with peers and sharing of personal successes and challenges at regularly scheduled facilitator gatherings.

Coach Engagement

The impact of coaches’ cognitive structures (or biographies) on their learning has been conceptually explored (e.g., Trudel et al.,

2013; Werthner & Trudel, 2006) and empirically supported (e.g., Leduc et al., 2012; Stodter & Cushion, 2017). We know regardless of what information is available or presented to coaches within a learning context, what is learned by coaches is dependent on the ‘filtering’ and ‘guidance’ functions of their cognitive structures (Stodter & Cushion, 2017; Trudel et al., 2013). Moreover, the influence of coaches’ cognitive structures provide explanatory insight into preferred sources of learning (Erickson, Bruner, MacDonald, & Côté, 2008), engagement in coach education programs (Paquette et al., 2014), and the differing impact associated with their participation in coach education (Deek et al., 2013; Leduc et al., 2012). Coaching scholars have made a few broad recommendations to help CDAs deal with improving coach engagement and managing their cognitive structures, such as taking a *coach-centered approach* to programming (McQuade & Nash, 2015; Nelson, Cushion, Potrac, & Groom, 2014), *connecting curriculum to coaches’ existing experiences* (Morgan et al., 2013b; Stodter & Cushion, 2016), encouraging facilitators to be *mindful of coaches’ cognitive structures* (Deek et al., 2013; Leduc et al., 2012), and *regrouping coaches with similar cognitive structures* (Trudel et al., 2013). Here are three specific recommendations to promote coach engagement in LC coach education:

8. Help coaches to recognize their view of learning and to understand LCT. In light of the anticipated resistance of these approaches (Paquette et al., 2014) and “to avoid learners’ rejection of information that could otherwise be highly valuable” (Stodter & Cushion, 2017, p. 335), it will be important for CDAs “to help [coaches] examine their learning preferences and expand or modify them, if necessary (APA, 1997, para. 11). For example, coaches’ views of learning (e.g., constructivist vs. positivist, Paquette et al., 2014), approaches to learning (e.g., individualistic vs. collaborative, Collins, Abraham, & Collins, 2012), and learning dispositions (e.g., intentionality and reciprocity, Griffiths & Armour, 2013) have all been found to influence engagement or impact in coach education. Therefore, we recommend an introductory module or series of activities related to “Learning about learning” that would help to frame the remainder of the program. As a starting point, we suggest using existing “user-friendly” literature to help coaches reflect on differing epistemic traditions and their implications for coach learning and coaching practices (e.g., Paquette & Trudel, 2016; Robert & Potrac, 2014; Werthner & Trudel, 2006). From there, coaches can be guided through a reflection activity on their perceptions of the themes discussed in the articles, with specific attention to having them identify their views of learning, and the resulting habits for learning that drive their engagement in education programs. Finally, to help coaches embrace LCT, they should be explicitly presented with the LCT approaches that underpin the program’s design and facilitation (Harris & Cullen, 2010). Even upon the conclusion of these activities, it will be important for facilitators to continually assess the “interaction between learner differences and curricular and environmental conditions” (APA, 1997, para. 17).

9. Prioritize making content meaningful for coaches. Moon (2001, p. 67) pointed out that “the nature of meaningfulness in the constructivist approach is crucial for the relationship between the process of learning and instruction”. Although what is considered meaningful is entirely dependent on the learner (i.e., coach), trained LC facilitators who take the time to learn about the coaches will be able to enhance their probability of judging what is meaningful for the coaches and in turn presenting material in a meaningful way (Moon, 2001). The key is for facilitators to deliberately examine

the cognitive structures they are attempting to access. Moreover, despite the process of making content meaningful for coaches being, in large part ‘informed guesswork’ on behalf of the facilitators, meaningfulness in coaches can be stimulated through their perceived relevance of the material (APA, 1997; Moon, 2001). Trudel et al. (2013, p. 381) stated, “if coaches have difficulties seeing the links between what will be presented to them and their coaching practice they are less likely to adopt a deep [meaningful] approach to learning”. In line with Trudel et al. and other scholars who have discussed this issue (e.g., Deek et al., 2013; Stodter & Cushion, 2016, 2017), we recommend that facilitators regularly prompt coaches to reflect on any relevant connections between the material and their own practices, interests, and learning outcomes. Although this recommended strategy will take time, it aligns with LCT approaches and will lead to greater learning and outcome achievement (APA, 1997; Blumberg, 2009).

10. Empower coaches with increased autonomy and learning options. Finally, the development of LC coach education will require a reconsideration of the power dynamics between CDAs, facilitators, and most importantly coaches (Blumberg, 2009). The *Intrinsic Motivation to Learn* principle of the LCPs (APA, 1997, para. 14) states: “The learner’s creativity, higher order thinking, and natural curiosity all contribute to motivation to learn. Intrinsic motivation is stimulated by tasks of optimal novelty and difficulty, relevant to personal interests, and providing for personal choice and control”. In short, when programs are designed and delivered according to inflexible guidelines and provide coaches with no opportunity for decisional input, coaches lose the autonomy to “individualize their journey to certification” (Paquette et al., 2014, p. 83). This has been found to decrease intrinsic motivation to learn and the achievement of learning outcomes (Cornelius-White, 2007). In line with the LCT framework, we recommend that CDAs empower coaches with increased autonomy and learning options. Coaches should be encouraged by facilitators to provide input on the course content, course policies and deadlines, and learning and assessment methods; furthermore, they should be given the freedom to both express alternative perspectives during training (Blumberg, 2009) and to make use of a wide range of assessment options built into the program to allow them to meaningfully represent their learning (Moon, 2001).

Additional Consideration

Prior to embarking on their LC journey, we advise CDAs to consider the *length of LC course or program* they are looking to develop or redesign. Coach education programs come in many different “shapes and sizes” (Callary et al., 2014; Trudel et al., 2010). For example, in their review of coach education effectiveness, Trudel et al. (2010) reviewed three categories of programs: small-scale, University-based, and large-scale programs. Although coach education has typically been the responsibility of national coaching accreditation bodies (e.g., Coaching Association of Canada and UK Coaching) in partnership with national sport federations, the movement to professionalize sport coaching has led to increased attention placed on the development of ‘Sport Coaching Bachelor Degrees’ governed by universities (Lara-Bercial et al., 2016). Given that LCT approaches are more complex and often more time-consuming than traditional instructor-centered approaches (Weimer, 2013), the length of a coach education program will invariably influence the breadth and depth of LC integration. However, we believe there are opportunities and challenges that need to be considered with both short courses

and extended programs. For example, although extended programs will be more conducive to implementing the more time-consuming recommendations, such as developing learning skills and helping coaches to recognize their view of learning and to understand LCT (i.e., rather than achieving this through a short learning activity, this could be included as part of an entire course offered within the Bachelor degree), they will require additional effort and resources to ensure both the prolonged interest and engagement of students, as well as the design of an assessment protocol that aligns itself with LCT approaches, while meeting the requirements of the broader academic institution and post-secondary education system (Weimer, 2013). Alternatively, given the time constraints of short courses, CDAs should consider condensed adaptations of certain recommendations, as well as ways to extend the LCT approaches beyond the “in-class” time. For example, reflective activities or learning resources can be sent to coaches prior to short courses to help them become aware of their cognitive structures and to learn about LCT; these resources can also collect information to support the facilitator in knowing the coaches, and making the material more relevant and ultimately the course more impactful.

Conclusion

The purpose of this Best Practices paper was to present a theoretically robust and empirically supported collection of recommendations in support of LC coach education. More specifically, by integrating the LC literature (e.g., APA, 1997; McCombs & Miller, 2009), a practical LCT framework (Blumberg, 2009), and previous recommendations presented in the coach education literature (e.g., Nelson et al., 2013; Trudel et al., 2013), we have offered 10 practical recommendations to help CDAs with LC program design, facilitation and coach engagement. Like learning and sport coaching, the subtleties of constructivist-informed LC approaches are complex. As such, Light and Wallian (2008, p. 402) aptly pointed out, “as a theory of learning, constructivism cannot be reduced to step-by-step, cookbook instructions for teaching”. Indeed, these LCT recommendations are not intended to be offered as a “compilation of one-size-fits-all strategies” (McCombs & Miller, 2009, p. 121) that will invariably lead to effective LC practices and impactful coach education. We encourage CDAs to reflect on how each of the recommendations presented above make sense to their current realities and programming objectives, and more broadly how the LCT framework may be used as an ‘overarching conceptual framework’ to guide their programming vision (Horgan & Daly, 2015). Finally, coaching scholars have recently been accused of “uncritically recycl[ing] learning theories from other domains and present[ing] idealistic representations and prescriptions for practice” (Stodter & Cushion, 2017, p. 322). To return to Weimer’s (2013) analogy presented at the onset of this Best Practices paper, we hope our efforts to gather and organize recommendations using the LC theory have indeed been *critical* and *realistic*, and have helped to assemble together a few additional pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that is the coach education literature.

Notes

1. The summarized research from which the LCPs were constructed can be found in Alexander and Murphy (1998), Cornelius-White (2007), Kanfer and McCombs (2000), Lambert and McCombs (1998), McCombs (2000, 2004), McCombs and Miller (2007), McCombs and Whistler (1997), and Perry and Weinstein (1998).

Author Biographies

Kyle Paquette is with the School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON, Canada. He works as the Mental Performance Consultant for both Curling Canada and Volleyball Canada's National Team Programs. He holds a doctoral degree in human kinetics with a specialization in sport psychology and coach education, and he is a Professional Member of the Canadian Sport Psychology Association. Kyle has supported Canadian athletes at the last three Olympic Games—Sochi 2014 (curling), Rio 2016 (men's volleyball and trampoline) and PyeongChang 2018—as well as at the most recent Paralympic Winter Games (wheelchair curling).

Pierre Trudel is with the School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON, Canada. Pierre Trudel is an Emeritus Professor in the School of Human Kinetic, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON, Canada. His research interests focus on coaching and the training of high performance coaches. Pierre has published over 100 articles, and has been a consultant for many sport organizations, developing programs and supervising coaches. During the last Olympic Games in Rio (2016), he conducted a research project for the Canadian Olympic Committee.

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