Perceptions of coaching success: an exploratory analysis of Czech coaches views on success

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Abstract

A philosophical framework for success in coaching is established, upon which the results of 571 coaches' views of success in coaching is consequently evaluated. The coaches are Czech nationals from seven sports, who coach all age groups from U8 to adult professional teams, with length of experience ranging from 1 to 26 years (mean 7.1). Success definitions were coded and categorized before being analyzed across sport, age group coached, experience and licensing level. Hallowell's success cycle is used as a standard of evaluation. Results were also assessed in terms of modern coaching philosophies. Overall, it was shown that the most common definition of success by coaches fell into the Sport Growth domain (31.7%), by which they primarily meant Player Development (20.6% of these coaches). The second most common domain for defining success was Performance (28.2%), primarily defined in terms of Winning (15.5%). Emotional Growth (21.1%) and Personal Growth (7.6%), though emphasized in modern coaching philosophies, were largely undervalued by Czech coaches. Enjoyment, a key element of success from Aristotle to Seligman, and essential to Hallowell's success cycle was evident in only a small number (5.6%) of the success definitions of coaches.

Keywords: Achievement, Coaching Philosophy, Enjoyment, Player Development, Sport Growth

"When I was named head coach of the Chicago Bulls in 1989, my dream was not just to win championships, but to do it in a way that wove together my two greatest passions: basketball and spiritual exploration... From my years as a member of the championship New York Knicks, I'd already learned that winning is ephemeral In basketball – as in life – true joy comes from being fully present in each and every moment, not just when things are going your way. I knew that the only way to win consistently was to give everybody – from the stars to the number 12 player on the bench – a vital role on the team, and inspire them to be acutely aware of what was happening, even when the spotlight was on somebody else. More than anything, I wanted to build a team that would blend the individual talent with a heightened group consciousness. A team that could win big without becoming small in the process." Phil Jackson, winner of 11 NBA titles (Jackson & Delehanty, 2006, p. 16).

Success rarely comes instantly or overnight, it develops through trial and error, opportunity, personal drive, as a product of the environment. Furthermore, success is not an isolated factor in one's life, but the result of many different human interactions. However the earlier an individual can be placed on a path to success, or as Hallowell, (2002) describes, a repeating life success cycle, the more likely they are to achieve success in life. This cycle begins

with a contact in which the child becomes connected to one or more people, such as parents, relatives, teachers, neighbors, peers, and/or coaches. Once a strong relationship is in place, a sequence of play, practice, mastery, and recognition is formed. This produces a strengthened or new connection, thereby continuing the cycle.

Sport, and the coach's role, provides many such opportunities for success cycles. How a coach implements or influences an athlete's success cycle will depend on their coaching philosophy, coaching role, and views on success. To this end, in this article we examine coaches' views of success in coaching. In order to understand how a coach views success in coaching, we must first examine traditional views of success in life, the importance of a definition of success in a given coaching philosophy, consideration of other stakeholders in achieving success, and external notions (e.g., competitive level, age group, organizational goals) of coaching success.

Success in life

The desire to achieve success is characteristic of mankind from everlasting. A definition of success is shaped by individual beliefs as well as by culture and society, situating it at the worldview level of the psyche. Examining how success is defined in other spheres of life is helpful, as personal definitions of success tend to show remarkable congruence across the quadrants of our lives (Sheldon & Kasser, 1995, 2001). Additionally, how a person defines failure and their own competitive orientation will reflect their conception of success (Eisenbarth & Petlichkoff, 2012; Hassan et al., 2015). A person's definitions of success is related to concepts of achievement, attainment, victory, satisfaction, and happiness, relating to the wider concept of art of life, or meaning of concrete activities.

An individualistic approach may view success as the fact that one has achieved a desired goal, or an object for which one has strived; often stated as achieving wealth or fame, or reaching a high social position. Groups can speak about economic, commercial or electoral success. Though this is an expression of individual success, it is measured in relation to how the individual is perceived by others. Thus we can state from the outset that a significant part of success is its impact the individual's position relative to other people, or other groups of people.

Since antiquity people have tried to define the key to a successful life. The Teacher (Kohelet) in Ecclesiastes of the Old Testament chose a negative approach describing what success isn't by labeling our so-called successes (wisdom, pleasures, advancement, richness, fame, etc) as meaningless. His conclusion of the matter: "Fear God and keep his commandments" (Ecc 12:13) locates success in the realm of obedience, respect and duty. This orientation was strengthened during the period of Protestant ideology from the 16th century (Weber, 2013). The Protestants espoused virtues such as modesty, humility, industriousness, responsibility, perseverance, or diligence as keys to a successful life (Weber, 2013). This is significant in how success in sport is defined, as much of sport was codified under the influence of this Protestant work ethic (Goldbach & Geldbach, 1977; Overman, 2011; Watson & White, 2007).

Drawing again from antiquity, Aristotle's happiness (eudaimonia) denotes a special good kind of life aligning with our modern conception of a successful life. For Aristotle, happiness is made up of activities in which we use the best human capacities to their fullest potential (Aristotle, 2009, EN, I 10, 1099b 24). Happiness thus requires effort and is not coincidental. This Aristotelian view of significant effort in order to achieve maximum potential resonates with sport coaches. Coaches strive to help athletes find their maximum potential. The "Practice with Effort" mantra has been a view held by coaches for decades, however, the recent work of K. Anders Ericsson and colleagues has provided new insights into what has been labeled Deliberate Practice (Beek et al., 2003; Ericsson, 2003, 2007, 2020; Ericsson et al., 2008; Starkes & Ericsson, 2003; Williams & Ericsson, 2005).

In the 19th century, the concept of happiness was elaborated on by British philosophers, especially by Jeremy Bentham. His famous "fundamental axiom" declares: "It is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong" (Bentham, 1996, p. 46). We can extend this to our understanding of success, measuring the scope of success on the degree of its fulfilment of potential and influence on number of people. The quote by coaching legend Phil Jackson at the beginning of this study captures this collective element of true success.

In the 20th century, "success" became a widely discussed topic for psychology, sociology, philosophy of life, sport and the coaching arena. In psychology, Abraham Maslow did not directly address success, but it seems to be a necessary part of his concept of personal growth, especially in the fourth and fifth level of his pyramid of needs. Maslow also inspired Martin Seligman, known as the founder of Positive Psychology. Seligman integrated success into wider concepts of happiness (Seligman, 2004), well-being (Seligman, 2004, 2006), and flourishing (Seligman, 2012). The place of success (described as accomplishment) is clearly visible in his PERMA model of wellbeing where PERMA is an acronym of five core elements:

P – Positive Emotion

E – Engagement

R – Relationships

M – Meaning

A – Accomplishments

To summarize Seligman's thoughts concerning accomplishment (he uses achievement as a synonym elsewhere), we see that having goals and ambition in life can convey a sense of satisfaction when those goals are finally met. Yet the last of Seligman's findings shows the ambivalent face of success where a choice of incorrect means can lead to erosion of the balanced model of PERMA as a whole. The disruption of relationships can be especially dangerous here. Seligman and his concept of Positive Psychology have been applied extensively to sport psychology in order to achieve greater sport success, whether measured as performance (Cziksztentmihalyi, 1990; Swann et al., 2012), engagement (DeFreese & Smith, 2013; Hodge et al., 2009; Martin, 2008), or character development (Gould & Carson, 2008; Park, 2004).

Coaching philosophy

Developing a coaching philosophy is often considered part and parcel to coaching education (Cassidy et al., 2008; Ehrmann et al., 2011; Kidman et al., 2001; Martens, 2012; C. Nash, 2014; Thompson, 2010). The coach's philosophy is the foundation upon which he or she coaches, knowingly or not (Grecic et al., 2013; Grecic & Grundy, 2016). Establishing a coaching philosophy often includes defining success. Parsh (2007) lays out an eight-step approach to developing a coaching philosophy. The fifth step in his approach is answering the question "How do you define success?" (Parsh, 2007, p. 56). Defining success in the context of coaching can be problematic, as coaches are most often considered successful in association with successful performers and records of wins/losses or championships (Cross & Lyle, 1999). Thus we see the influence of society and culture on defining success for the coach. The International Council for Coaching Excellence conducted a research project entitled "Serial Winning Coaches" in which they chose 14 coaches from ten nations whom they deemed successful. They were categorized as such because they had "repeatedly and over a sustained period of time, coached teams and athletes to gold medals at the highest level of competition such as the Olympic Games, the World Championships, or major professional leagues" (Mallett & Lara-Bercial, 2016, p. 294).

Cross and Lyle (1999) state that success in coaching should relate to how the coaching "process is managed and whether this leads to realization of potential performance" while also considering the specific environment and resources available (p. 51). Environment here might include age of athletes being coached, level of other competition, competition system, among other factors. While resources are often thought of in a material context, one must also factor the immaterial resources available to the coach, such as experience and knowledge gained from coaching education.

Relationship of stakeholders

Just as success has a collective component, coaching at every level has a strong relational component. The effectiveness of the coach-athlete relationship is directly connected to the coach's philosophy and ability to create a positive learning environment (Denison & Avner, 2011; Smoll et al., 1993; Solstad et al., 2018). It is important that the coaching philosophy is in alignment with the developmental level and motivations of the athlete. Cronin and Allen (2015) reported that a positive coaching climate supports an athlete's self-esteem, positive attitude and general life satisfaction. These factors, along with personal and emotional growth, should be the primary drivers of a coach's philosophy during the athlete's developmental years. How a coach views success in relation to the athlete's developmental level, the mission of the organization, and the competition level will be reflected in the coach's behavior and practice environment. Gilbert and Trudel (2004), through a case study approach with six model youth sport coaches, identified age and competition level as boundary components, while discipline, fun, personal growth were internal role frame components, and winning guided their coaching approach. It is also important to note the role and importance that the parent-coach relationship, and the parent-athlete relationship, can play on the performance of both the coach and the athlete. At each level coaches, athletes, parents, clubs and organizations are all stakeholders whom both benefit from, and control the achievement of success.

Therefore, successful coaching must take relationship into account. Applying the Hallowell model, the coach-athlete connection is developed when the athlete experiences enjoyment and play, which then creates the basis to engage in Deliberate Practice, leading to competence and mastery, and completing the success cycle by being recognized for their growth. However, it is important to note that the "play" element in sport at the youth level is what Berry and colleagues called "deliberate play" (Berry et al., 2008). Visek et al. (2015) through the development of Fun Integration Theory, stated that "...organized youth sport is coordinated with the objective of optimizing

positive, fun movement experiences through structured skill development and competitive play within Practices and Games” (p. 431). When athletes and coaches both have positive participation experiences, the possibility of successful and sustained coaching, and athlete participation increases. Thus, when there is a positive environment and athletes are fully engaged and committed, the path to coaching success is in sight (Vella et al., 2013). Even though winning is considered an aspect of success, and positive coaching is more likely to lead to winning, the primary ethos for a successful coach, especially at the youth levels, should be development first, winning second.

Current views of coaching success

In the coaching realm, John Wooden’s definition of success is often quoted: “Success is peace of mind that is the direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming” (Wooden & Jamison, 2005, p. 33). Wooden’s definition eliminates other stakeholders in defining success personally, but his Pyramid of Success elaborated on skills and activities which would make his athletes successful individually and in relation to other team members (see <http://www.coachwooden.com/pyramid-of-success>). This famous basketball coach was able to articulate a coherent coaching philosophy and contextualize it for subsequent use in a holistic coaching practice. We will not elaborate on Wooden’s pyramid here, but will point out that while his pyramid is built on skill development, moral growth, emotional growth (including enjoyment and cooperation), at the top lies the reward: competitive greatness. To reach the top of the pyramid means one is ready to perform at your best each day, which is not unlike Aristotle’s previously discussed definition of happiness.

Wooden’s elements are a mix of personal qualities such as virtues, skills, (positive) emotions, and social values (friendship, team spirit). In the end though, Wooden maintains that true success comes to an individual through the self-satisfaction in knowing that he or she gave everything to become the very best of his or her capabilities. Thus, like Phil Jackson, for Wooden it is evident that transcendence into the social and spiritual dimension is required for success. The Wooden journey to success is not applicable only to sports but also to life. He tracks orientation in both performance and personal growth of players. Wooden’s performance and personal growth success orientation has been more recently adapted by others such as: Double-Goal Coaching by the Positive Coaching Alliance (Thompson, 2010); Three Dimensional Coaching delineating body, mind and heart, in a Maslow-like pyramid, by the 3D Institute (Duke & Bonham, 2014); Erhman’s application of Transformational Leadership to coaching (Ehrmann et al., 2011), and What Drives Winning’s emphasis on person over player (Ledbetter, 2015).

The notion of success is flexible and relative. Success can be either the smallest improvement during the process of skill acquisition for an individual, or a disciplined application of skill with results of global importance. We can distinguish “size” of success on a scale: “single peak performance,” the state when achievement of some type of mastery is sustainable for a certain time period, building to “sustainable greatness,” an assessment based on historical records.

The collective, competitive feature of success is heightened when we consider sport at the team/club/organization, national, or global levels. Here the consequences of successful (defined in terms of achievement) activities are most commonly measured. Within this coaching context the means to success can be divided into categories of intensity, duration, proximity, productivity, purity (success for one can be failure for the other; optimal is win-win), and extent (how many people are influenced). Each of these categories measure success from individual and collective worldviews, effects on other stakeholders, and the meaning placed on the activity of sport.

Defining success in life and in sport is an elusive process. Yet each coach enters the season with some view of what success will mean this year. These definitions are espoused in press conferences at the elite level, repeated over and over to developing players until they embrace this view of success as their own, and stated to parents at the start of the youth sport season. A good coach will enter each practice with a notion of what success will look like for that particular day. In defining success, the coach is affected by their worldview, their definition of sport, their knowledge and experience. In any collective endeavor it would be foolhardy to try to define success without taking into account the skills, desires and motivations of the others whose cooperation will be necessary in order to achieve success. It becomes clear that stakeholders in defining success for a coach are not only the players he/she has to work with, but also team management, other teams, and even the other significant relationships of the players being coached. Each of these factors should play into the coach’s definition of success. Regardless of the degree of forethought, or lack thereof, that has gone into defining success, when the final whistle blows on the game and the season, the coach will evaluate based on some criteria whether or not he/she was successful.

In this study, following the recommendation of Parsh (2007), we have asked coaches to define success in coaching, then evaluated these definitions in light of a review of the literature, and the social constructs of the environment.

Methods

Participants

Researchers surveyed 571 coaches from seven team sports with 532 valid responses, representing a total of 474 teams within 288 Czech clubs. All participants were attending coaching licensure courses sponsored by their respective federations, and completed surveys between sessions. Survey participation was voluntary and was not compensated. The coaches were predominately males ($n = 468$) coaching male teams ($n = 458$). The sports females ($n = 64$) coached included basketball ($n = 23$), floorball (13), baseball (12), handball (11), and other ($n = 5$). Coaches averaged 34.7 years of age ($SD = 9.6$), with an average of 7.1 years' experience ($SD = 6.7$).

There was little variance between sports for average age of coach, however, in terms of experience coaching, basketball coaches had a mean of 10.5 ($SD = 9.13$), soccer coaches had 8.3 years' experience ($SD = 6.13$), while all other sports coaches had from 5.8 to 6.2 years' experience. Table 1 below represents distribution by sport, age coached, level of licensure, and experience.

Table 1. Demographic Distribution of Coaches by Sport, Age Coached, License Level and Experience

	N	Age coached				License level				Experience			
		to U8	U9–U14	U15–U19	U20+	A	B	C	D	1–4 years	5–9 years	10–15 years	16+ years
Floorball	119	5	52	42	20	1	17	58	43	63	27	23	6
Ice Hockey	100	15	46	24	15	7	22	71	0	57	26	11	6
Soccer	86	6	22	30	28	51	29	6	0	24	33	16	13
Basketball	85	4	35	36	10	20	25	33	7	30	20	14	21
Hockeyball	53	4	22	12	15	0	13	38	2	31	10	9	3
Baseball	48	10	23	6	9	1	13	16	18	30	9	3	6
Handball	41	0	21	9	11	0	24	17	0	21	13	5	2
Totals	532	44	221	159	108	80	143	239	70	256	138	81	57

Materials

Participants completed an anonymous six-question written survey on values-oriented coaching. The results presented in this article represent the first question of the survey: *What do you consider to be success as a coach?* The construction of the survey, along with results from other questions, have been reported in Crossan, Bednar, Baghurst and Komarc (2021).

Procedure

Surveys were conducted voluntarily at breaks of sport federation coaching licensing seminars. Participants completed the survey in the Czech language, then results were coded into categories based on the literature review and the natural groupings which occurred within the results. Categories are given below with explanations. Interrater reliability was achieved by two researchers categorizing success definitions, comparing their results after 80 (68.4% interrater reliability); re-categorizing and comparing final results (91.3% interrater reliability); then individual discrepancies were discussed until consensus was achieved. As a qualitative study simple descriptive statistics (mean and SD) were only conducted on the demographic data. Pearson's R correlations were also conducted on the demographic data in order to explore potential explanations for the variance in success definitions by sport, license level, experience and level coached.

Results

The responses of 240 coaches were related to two categories such that we received 772 responses from 532 coaches for further interpretation:

Table 2. Success definitions overall

Success Categories			Success sub-categories			
	N	Percent	N	Percent category	Percent total	
Performance	218	28.2%	28	12.8%	3.6%	Individual Player Success
			70	32.1%	9.1%	Team Goal Fulfillment
			120	55.1%	15.5%	Winning
Sport Growth	245	31.7%	159	64.9%	20.6%	Player Development
			86	35.1%	11.1%	Player Engagement
Personal Growth	59	7.6%	38	64.4%	4.9%	Develop People
			21	35.6%	2.7%	Develop Morals
Emotional Growth	163	21.1%	43	26.4%	5.6%	Enjoyment
			120	73.6%	15.5%	Satisfaction/ Deeper Experience
Coach Oriented	87	11.3%	75	86.2%	9.7%	Coach Satisfied
			12	13.8%	1.6%	Coach Recognized

Notes: N = 772

We began by examining the responses of all coaches as one set. It was immediately evident that the definitions encompassing Sport Growth (31.7%) and Performance (28.2%) were the most dominant. Specifically, the sub-categories of Player Development (20.6%), followed by Winning and Satisfaction/Deeper Experience (both 15.5%) were most often used when Czech coaches attempted to define success in coaching. This sub-category of Satisfaction/Deeper Experience carried the category of Emotional Growth (21.1%) into the third position, even though the sub-category of Enjoyment (5.6%) was undervalued by coaches. It should be noted that of the 237 coaches whose success definitions fell into two categories, a full 48.5% of them included Player Development as part of their definition. Most often Player Development was paired with Satisfaction/Deeper Experience ($n = 26$) or Winning ($n = 20$). The other most common sub-category of multiple definition coaches was Enjoyment ($n = 32$, 13.5% of the paired success definitions); however only in two of these cases did the coach pair Enjoyment with a definition from the Performance category. Nineteen coaches paired Enjoyment with Sport Growth.

The category of Personal Growth (7.6%), with its sub-categories of defining success as a means of Developing People (4.9%) or Developing Morals (2.7%), was the least common means of defining success. Based on the findings in this study, this category of Personal Growth is the least affected by sport, age coached, license level, experience, or level coached.

Performance, Sport Growth and Emotional Growth were the clear top three means of defining success amongst all the sports, the results showed minimal variance. The only sport where another category of success entered the top three was football where 16.4% of coaches chose Coach Oriented definitions of success. The fast-growing sport of floorball saw 40.7% of coaches classify success in Sport Growth categories with almost equal percentages choosing Player Development and Player Engagement. Baseball, the sport least integrated in Czech culture relative to the others studied, had the highest percentage of coaches include the sub-category of Enjoyment (10.3%), and the lowest percentage of coaches choosing Winning (10.3%).

The percentage of coaches who defined success in terms of Performance increased as the age of the players coached increased (from 17.2% to 44.1%), while those defining success within the category of Emotional Growth decreased as players grew older (from 31.3% to 11.8%). Within sports, this increasing emphasis on Performance as age group coached increased was most noticeable in the three sports with the most culturally visible professional leagues: Football (20.0%, 34.3%, 26.1%, 48.8%), Ice Hockey (13.0%, 22.4%, 28.6%, 31.8%), and Basketball (16.7%, 27.9%, 46.0%, 63.6%). In terms of Winning, it was evident that this was most important for coaches coaching players over 20 years of age (24.3%); these coaches were also most concerned with Team Goal Fulfillment (17.8%). These coaches of players over 20 years of age were also the most concerned with their own satisfaction (13.8%). While Player Development was the third highest ranked sub-category (17.1%) of success for U20+ coaches, they were still the least concerned with Player Development compared to other age group coaches. Compared to other age group coaches, the U20+ coaches were also the least likely to define success as

Table 3. Success by Age Coached

		Age Group Coached			
		to U8	U9–U14	U15–U19	U20+
	N responses	64	318	238	152
Performance	Total	17.2% (n = 11)	22.3% (n = 71)	29.0% (n = 69)	44.1% (n = 67)
	Individual Player Success	0%	3.8% (n = 12)	5.5% (n = 13)	2.0% (n = 3)
	Team Goal Fulfillment	4.7% (n = 3)	6.0% (n = 19)	8.8% (n = 21)	17.8% (n = 27)
	Winning	12.5% (n = 8)	12.6% (n = 40)	14.7% (n = 35)	24.3% (n = 37)
Sport Growth	Total	31.3% (n = 20)	34.3% (n = 109)	33.2% (n = 79)	24.3% (n = 37)
	Player Development	25.0% (n = 16)	20.1% (n = 64)	22.3% (n = 53)	17.1% (n = 26)
	Player Engagement	6.3% (n = 4)	14.2% (n = 45)	10.9% (n = 26)	7.2% (n = 11)
Personal Growth	Total	7.8% (n = 5)	8.2% (n = 26)	8.8% (n = 21)	4.6% (n = 7)
	Develop People	4.7% (n = 3)	4.4% (n = 14)	7.1% (n = 17)	2.6% (n = 4)
	Develop Morals	3.1% (n = 2)	3.8% (n = 12)	1.7% (n = 4)	2.0% (n = 3)
Emotional Growth	Total	31.3% (n = 20)	27.0% (n = 86)	16.4% (n = 39)	11.8% (n = 18)
	Enjoyment	7.8% (n = 5)	8.2% (n = 26)	3.4% (n = 8)	2.6% (n = 4)
	Satisfaction/Deeper Experience	23.4% (n = 15)	18.9% (n = 60)	13.0% (n = 31)	9.2% (n = 14)
Coach Oriented	Total	12.5% (n = 8)	8.2% (n = 26)	12.6% (n = 30)	15.1% (n = 23)
	Coach Satisfied	10.9% (n = 7)	6.6% (n = 21)	10.9% (n = 26)	13.8% (n = 21)
	Coach Recognized	1.6% (n = 1)	1.6% (n = 5)	1.7% (n = 4)	1.3% (n = 2)

Notes: Percentages and totals are based on responses. Percentages are by columns.

Emotional Growth (11.8%), including both sub-categories Enjoyment (2.6%), and Satisfaction/Deeper Experience (9.2%).

At the other end of the age group coaches, the U8 and below coaches were the most likely to define success as Emotional Growth (31.1%), which was defined most often with the sub-category of Satisfaction/Deeper Experience (23.4%). The U8 and below coaches were also the most likely to define success as Player Development (25.0%), which also decreased as players advanced in age.

Before discussing license level, experience and level coached, it should be stated that while overall correlations within the dataset as a whole were not strong, the strongest correlations were found in the demographic data between years coached and license level (.525, $p < 0.01$), license level and sport (.415, $p < 0.01$), year's coached and age (.390, $p < 0.01$). Age coached was correlated with level coached (.332, $p < 0.05$), license level (.323, $p < 0.05$), and experience (.225, $p < 0.05$). In terms of license level and sport, as is evident from Table 1, football and basketball coaches surveyed had higher levels of licensing, while the newer sports of floorball and baseball had lower levels of licensing. It was observed that as license level, coaching experience and level coached went up, the more likely coaches were to define success in terms of Performance, and the less likely they are to define it in terms of Emotional Growth or Sport Growth. In the Czech sport system, consistent with much of Europe, there exist different levels of competition within each sport and each age group. Each team is divided by age group within a club and has the possibility to move up or fall down using a promotion and relegation system. Consequently, success is often defined for the coach by their club in terms of Performance as moving up a level or not falling down a level.

Discussion

In this section we will examine our results in light of the previous literature on success in life and success in coaching. After a few overarching observations, we will examine the individual success categories. Finally, we will examine a few limitations to this study and recommendations for further research.

The categories Czech coaches used to define success closely parallel Seligman's PERMA model and often resonate with Hallowell's success cycle. However, their definitions of success in coaching lack the balance Seligman proposed and might be more apply expressed as AEPRM which places Achievement and Engagement before Positive emotion.

As stated at the outset, philosophy contributes to behavior. Behavior resulting from Deliberate Practice leads to achievement, enjoyment and engagement. The process by which coaches learn and embrace deliberate practice, thereby developing performers, is dependent on their knowledge, worldview and experience (Nash et al., 2008). Czech coaches who had more knowledge (via coaching licensing) and experience, correlated with higher age groups and levels coached. However, in contrast to the "Serial Winning Coaches" reported on by Mallett and Lara-Bercial (2016), our coaches with experience and knowledge had some of the lowest emphasis on Personal and Emotional Growth when defining success.

Sport growth

With 31.7% of all coaches defining success in terms of Sport Growth, and the highest ranked sub-category of Player Development (20.6%), this is clearly the top priority of Czech coaches. Here Aristotle's notion of happiness coming from activities which use the best human capacities to their fullest human potential can be seen in the sub-category of Player Development, reported as "permanent improvement in skill level", and "maximizing player potential." The second sub-category of Player engagement (11.11%) is in line with Seligman's notion of Engagement from his PERMA model of well-being. This Player Engagement was most evidenced in the two fastest growing sports from our sample, Floorball (19.1%) and Baseball (16.2%). These two sports also ranked the highest in Emotional Growth, the sub-category of Enjoyment (7.5% & 10.3%). This may explain why these sports were the fastest growing in our sample.

Performance

Closely behind Sport Growth was the success category of Performance (28.2%), with the sub-category of Winning (15.5). This emphasis on winning, particularly in the two youngest youth age group categories, is disconcerting. Team Goal Fulfillment (9.1% of coaches) is closely related to Bentham's axiom that the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people is the measuring stick. This requires perhaps the greatest cooperation among stakeholders, and was most evident in coaches of the oldest age group (17.8%). Winning coupled with Player Development was the second most prominent combination used by coaches who chose more than one category to define success. While it was expected that an emphasis on performance would increase as athletes grow older (from 17.2% at to U8, to 44.1% at 20+), this increase is largely a result of the increasing emphasis on Team Goal Fulfillment, not on Winning (which remains relatively constant between 12.5% to 14.7% until increasing to 24.3% for U20+).

Emotional growth

While categories of Emotional Growth come through strongly in the modern philosophies of coaching espoused by such people and organization as Wooden, the Positive Coaching Alliance, 3Dimensional Coaching and Erhman (Duke & Bonham, 2014; Ehrmann et al., 2011; Thompson, 2010; Wooden & Jamison, 2005), only 21.1% of Czech coaches appear to give the emotional dimension priority in defining success. The majority of these coaches were from the youngest age groups coached (to U8 31.3%, and U9–U14 27.0%). The most surprising finding of this research was the lack of emphasis on Enjoyment (only 5.6% overall, and only 8.2% of coaches coaching youth). Of the 15.5% of coaches who used Satisfaction/ Deeper Experience to define success, 26% of them coupled this with Player Development, which again exemplifies Hallowell's success cycle. Nineteen coaches who defined success in terms of Sport Growth combined their definitions with Enjoyment, which expresses success in a manner similar to the theory of Flow (Czikszentmihalyi, 1990) and Fun Integration Theory (Vissek et al., 2015). However, defining success in terms of Emotional Growth declined as age coached increased (31.3% down to 11.8%), with both sub-categories Enjoyment, and Satisfaction/ Deeper Experience also consistently declining with age.

Coach oriented

While the category of Coach Oriented was relatively low overall (11.3%), it was highest among the primary sport of football coaches (16.4%), this element was felt by the researchers as they coded the results to underlie many of the other success definitions given, especially in the sub-categories of Winning, Player Development, and Player Engagement.

Personal growth

Similar to Emotional Growth, Personal Growth is well represented in the literature of modern coaching philosophies (Ehrmann et al., 2011; Thompson, 2010; Wooden & Jamison, 2005), as well as in the origins of sport development from the historical codifications of many sport traditions which were significantly influenced by the Protestant work ethic (Goldbach & Geldbach, 1977; Watson & White, 2007). That said, the Czech coaches surveyed showed very little relationship to success in sport and equivalence with Personal Growth (only 7.6% of coaches). We speculate that the system of sport development during the Communist period of 1948–1989, where international success in sport was used as a means of validating the means of governance, is the primary cause of this deficit. The lack of religious engagement in terms of personal worldviews (according to the most recent 2011 census, only 14% of Czechs expressed any religious affiliation (Czech Statistical Office, 2011), and 66% express no belief in God (Pew Research Center, 2017)) could also be a factor in the low expression of success in coaching as a developer of character. The fact that Personal Growth was underemphasized, particularly in the developmental years (only 7.8% and 8.2% in the first two age categories), makes it difficult for coaches to create a positive coaching climate as defined by Cronin and Allen (2015). This could result in significant effects on athlete retention, a success factor often measured by sport federations and individual clubs.

Limitations

While 45% of coaches gave multiple definitions of success, only one overarching definition was requested in the survey. This methodology reveals the primary expression of success of coaches, but does not leave as much opportunity for full expressions of coaching philosophy such as those expressed by Wooden and others.

Recommendations

This research represents only a starting point in the examination of coaches' expressions of success. Further research should be carried out in other contexts to illuminate cultural differences perhaps arising from the varied systems of sport development around the world. Further, an examination of coaching success definitions and their relation to other measurable results in terms of performance (win/loss records), sport growth (player retention, skill progression), Personal and Emotional Growth (moral development, expressions of enjoyment), across age groups and competition levels, could prove valuable in advancing deliberation among coaches on the meaning of success in coaching. For the purposes of sport growth, player development and engagement in physical activity, it would be helpful to examine the views on success in sport of other stakeholders, primarily athletes and parents, to see if coaches are meeting the demands of athletes. Finally, while this research revealed some level of differentiation in views of coaching success between those coaching primary sports in the culture, those with significance to national identity, and those more on the fringe of the society, further research in this area could be helpful in abating the current win at all costs philosophy too often evident in top sport.

Conclusion

Nash et. al. (2008) warned that an absence of clarity in defining success for the coach makes it difficult to develop a framework for coaching that moves athletes from one level to the next. Sport Growth, primarily defined as Player Development is the clear top priority of Czech coaches. In terms of Performance, Winning and Team Goal Fulfillment increased with age coached and competition level. Even though age and competition levels are important factors, an increased emphasis on performance does not need to be the only criteria for coaching success. Coaching is a social activity and thus relationships between all stakeholders are important in defining and achieving success. Personal Growth, even though well represented in recent coaching philosophy as a primary means to success, was the most under-represented by coaches in this study. The most concerning finding of this research was the lack of emphasis on Enjoyment (only 5.6% of coaches), which has been a key element of success from Aristotle to Seligman, and essential to Halliwell's success cycle.

Ethics approval and informed consent

Prior to data collection, permissions and approval were acquired from all relevant individuals and organizations. The surveys were anonymous and completion was voluntary.

Competing interests

The authors certify that they have NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest, or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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