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"From a Learning Perspective, It's a Better Way for Them to Learn": Impact of an Education Program on Two Youth Soccer Coaches' Perspectives and Practices

Abstract

Purpose: To describe: (a) the impact of a progressive coach education program (CEP) on two grassroots youth soccer coaches' perspectives and practices, and (b) the factors that helped and hindered the CEP's effectiveness.

Method: Occupational socialization theory framed the study. Andros and Christian were observed during the CEP and pre- and post-CEP while coaching practices and games. Data were collected with four qualitative techniques and two systematic observation instruments. Qualitative data were reduced to themes by employing analytic induction and constant comparison. Descriptive statistics were computed for the categories in the systematic observation instruments.

Findings: The CEP had a significant impact on Andros and a negligible one on Christian. The two coaches' occupational socialization helped explain these differential effects.

Conclusions: The study suggests that CEPs should have a greater impact on coaches if they are relatively lengthy, include follow-up support, and coach educators are aware of coaches' acculturation and organizational socialization.

Keywords: Occupational socialization, sport pedagogy, teaching styles, play practice play

"From a Learning Perspective, It's a Better Way for Them to Learn": Impact of an Education Program on Two Youth Soccer Coaches' Perspectives and Practices

In an effort to improve standards of play, enjoyment, and safety, in the last 40 years governing bodies of youth sport have increasingly required coaches to be certified through coach education programs (CEPs; Chapman et al., 2020; McCullick et al., 2009; Søvik et al., 2017). For example, in the United States the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) (McCullick et al., 2005) and the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) (Quinn et al., 2012) have implemented CEPs. To date, the effectiveness of these CEPs has not been widely assessed (Cushion et al., 2010; Trudel et al., 2010; Langan et al., 2013), although the evidence we do have suggests that CEPs have, in general, not been a huge success (Stodter & Cushion, 2014). Specifically, the data indicate that some coaches find it difficult to use content taught in CEPs (Gilbert & Trudel, 1999), that others have little interest in or value for that content in the first place (Chesterfield et al., 2010), and that many coaches perceive their own participation in sport as players and coaches to be more useful than CEPs (Cushion et al., 2003; Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; Erickson et al., 2009; Maclean & Lorimer, 2016).

To counter this state of affairs, governing bodies of youth sport have, in recent years, employed a variety of progressive pedagogical theories and models in an attempt to improve the quality of CEPs. In general, these theories and models have led to CEPs becoming increasingly learner-centered (Araya et al., 2015; Paquette & Trudel, 2018a, 2018b). For example, CEPs have been based on achievement goal theory and self-determination theory (Søvik et al., 2017) and included mentoring (Cushion et al., 2003; Adams et al., 2016), support after CEPs have concluded (Langan et al., 2013), the formation of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Culver & Trudel, 2006), problem-based (Jones & Allison, 2014) and competency-based

learning (Demers et al., 2006), experiential learning (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001), and reflection (Adams et al., 2016; Callary et al., 2014; Søvik et al., 2017).

The small amount of research that has been conducted on this new type of learner-centered CEP has yielded variable results. More positively, data suggest that coach educators can succeed through employing a constructivist approach (i.e., asking coaches to actively construct knowledge as opposed to passively receiving new information) and a variety of direct (i.e., teaching styles in which coach educators make most of the decisions) and indirect (i.e., teaching styles in which student coaches make more of the decisions) teaching styles, completing regular assessments, and linking their evaluations of coaches tightly with objectives (Blumberg & McCann, 2009; Paquette & Trudel, 2018a, 2018b). On the downside, a case study of one youth soccer coach indicated this kind of CEP to be relatively ineffective (Authors, 2022).

The objective of the current study was to partially replicate our previous research (Authors, 2022) (i.e., in the current study we examined a different CEP, taught by a different coach educator, and attended by different coaches) in order to determine whether its negative findings transferred to other coaches and the contexts in which they worked. The purposes of the current study, therefore, were to describe: (a) the impact, if any, of a progressive CEP on grassroots youth soccer coaches' perspectives and practices, and (b) the factors that helped and hindered the CEP's effectiveness.

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective that guided this study was occupational socialization theory (Lawson, 1983a, 1983b; Richards et al., 2014). This perspective has been employed by sport pedagogy scholars to determine why school physical education teachers and university teacher educators believe and act as they do (e.g., Brunsdon & Curtner-Smith, in press, Prior & Curtner-

Smith, 2020). Some researchers have also adapted occupational socialization theory to, for example, study the impact an out-of-school swimming program for children and youth (Susnara et al., 2022), how principals', parents', and students' beliefs about school physical education are shaped (George & Curtner-Smith, 2016, 2017, 2018), and to examine the influence of a university coach development curriculum on preservice coaches (Kuklick et al., 2021). As in our previous research (Authors, 2022), in the current study we also adapted occupational socialization theory in order to assess the influence of a CEP on grassroots soccer coaches.

Specifically, we were interested in discovering the extent to which the coaches' *professional socialization* (i.e., their formal training during the CEP) influenced their perspectives and practices, and how the coaches' *acculturation* (i.e., personal and cultural influences on a coach prior to engaging in a CEP) and *organizational socialization* (i.e., influence of soccer club culture) mediated this influence. As in our original research (Authors, 2022), our goal was to identify components of the CEP that socialized the coaches towards valuing and using more effective pedagogies or made this objective more difficult to realize. Our original research (Authors, 2022) indicated that components of the CEP that helped coach educators were their expertise, the indirect and experiential nature of the CEP, and the new content and organizational methods coach educators espoused. Conversely, components of the CEP that hindered the coach's positive socialization were its short duration and the fact that there was no follow-up support provided post-CEP.

Socialization research has often indicated that the acculturation phase has a greater influence on teachers' practices and perspectives than professional socialization (i.e., Lawson, 1983a, 1983b; Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020). In the current study, we were interested in determining the extent to which the coaches' acculturation was congruent with their professional

socialization and so supported it. In our previous study (Authors, 2022), we found that the coach's acculturation was indeed more powerful than and served to negate the impact of a CEP. Key elements in the coach's acculturation responsible for this finding were his childhood and youth coaches and physical education teachers, and the media which portrayed coaches as "being in control."

Research has also indicated that the organizational socialization phase is often more powerful than a teacher's professional socialization and can "wash out" any positive effects of physical education teacher education (Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020; Richards et al., 2014). In our previous study (Authors, 2022), we also found the soccer coach's organizational socialization to be more powerful than his professional socialization. Since the coach's organizational socialization was conservative, it negated the effectiveness of the CEP. Key socializing agents that facilitated this negative impact were the beliefs and expectations of the head coach, players, and parents that contradicted the perspectives and practices espoused in the CEP.

Method

Design, Participants, and Setting

Following Rink (1989), and working within the interpretive paradigm as we had in our original study (Authors, 2022), we conducted a case study of two grassroots soccer coaches who participated in the CEP. In congruence with many qualitative researchers, we chose to study two coaches, rather than a larger sample, so we could provide an in-depth description and analysis of the influences of the CEP and occupational socialization. Approval from our institutional review board, the USSF, and the state soccer association was gained prior to commencing the study. Both participants and their primary coach educator were given pseudonyms in order to protect their identities.

We purposefully selected Andros and Christian for the study because they were grassroots soccer coaches enrolled in the CEP. Since the CEP was aimed at beginning coaches, we wanted to study participants who were "real beginners" in that they had received no prior training and possessed limited content and pedagogical knowledge. The primary coach educator, who knew the participants, identified them as fitting these criteria. The first author confirmed the two coaches' status as authentic beginning coaches during a short informal interview prior to the study commencing.

Andros identified as male, was White, and 43 years of age. He had played recreational soccer and basketball in his youth and had coached recreational soccer to boys and girls aged 6 to 18 years for the past 10 years. At the time the study was conducted, Andros was coaching a team of 15 under 13 boys for a club situated in a suburban middle class neighborhood within a large city in the midwestern United States. The team practiced twice a week for a total of three hours, and played one 11-a-side match per week against other teams in a regional recreational league. The youth soccer club, of which Andros was also the unpaid director, was well-supported, though not well funded. It was staffed by 26 unpaid volunteer coaches and catered to 600 players ranging in ability and from 4 to 19 years. Club facilities included 10 full-size outdoor pitches and one full-size indoor pitch.

Christian identified as male and Latino, was 41 years of age, and coached at the same club as Andros. He had played high school (American) football but no soccer in his youth. At the time the study began, Christian had coached youth soccer for six years and was working with a team of 16 under 15 boys that practiced two times per week for a total of 180 minutes, and participated in weekly 11-a-side matches against teams in a local recreational league.

A key informant for the study was Wilfred, the primary instructor of the CEP. Wilfred was 35 years old and identified as Black and male. His qualifications included the prestigious USSF A coaching license and USSF Grassroots Instructor License. He worked full-time for his state association training coaches and working with youth teams ranging in experience and ability.

The CEP

Andros and Christian were enrolled in a CEP that led to participants being awarded the USSF Grassroots Coaching License (United States Soccer [USS], 2018). This was the USSF's entry level coaching license for neophyte coaches who worked with inexperienced recreational players. For many youth soccer coaches, this might be the only formal training they received. To improve their effectiveness, the USSF had recently updated their series of coaching qualifications so that they emphasized coach educators' and coaches' use of learner-centered pedagogy and indirect teaching styles. Moreover, the USSF also highlighted the need for CEPs to include "experiential learning" for student coaches working towards their various qualifications (USS, 2018).

The key goals of the CEP were the acquisition of pedagogies and content knowledge that could be used with recreational players learning to play in a 11 vs. 11 game (United States Soccer [USS], 2017). Pedagogically, the objective was to train coaches to use an instructional model termed "play-practice-play" or "P-P-P" that was very similar to and borrowed elements from Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU; Bunker & Thorpe, 1982; Metzler & Colquitt, 2021; Thorpe et al., 1984). In congruence with those who have advocated for an understanding approach to be used for the teaching of games in schools (Metzler & Colquitt, 2021), the implication was that coaches who employed play-practice-play would be superior to those who

used more direct traditional methods. The first phase of this instructional model involves players engaging in small-sided and conditioned games (e.g., a 4 vs. 4 game with no goalkeepers and in which the goals are small so as to promote fast counterattacking) and being asked to solve tactical and skill-related problems prompted by a series of questions asked by their coaches. During the second phase, players engage in practices designed to improve their use and comprehension of the tactics and skills targeted. Finally, the third phase of the model involves returning to small-sided game play and a focus on demonstrating improvement in tactical and skill execution. Content included in the CEP included the skills of passing, dribbling, and shooting and the tactics of building possession in the opponent's half, creating space in attack, and outnumbering opponents.

The CEP was delivered by Wilfred to Andros, Christian, and 10 other beginning coaches. It began with a 20-minute online "introductory module" that outlined the play-practice-play model and described four phases of soccer: attacking, defending, transition from defense to attack, and transition from attack to defense. The main component of the CEP was a two-hour on-field session in which the student coaches took turns in working with a group of 16 under 15 boys using the play-practice-play model and were provided feedback by Wilfred and each other. This on-field session was sandwiched between two hour-long classroom meetings. In the first of these, Wilfred led discussions on and provided further explanation of the play-practice-play model and the phases of soccer matches. In the second, he asked the coaches to reflect on their use of the play-practice-play model and answered any further questions they had about it.

Data Collection

Fidelity Data

The first author completed a task analysis of what occurred during the CEP. Specifically, he recorded the activities in which Wilfred and the student coaches engaged during the CEP's on-field and classroom sessions on a minute-by-minute basis.

Qualitative Data

The first author employed four qualitative data collection techniques. *Formal interviews* were conducted with Andros and Christian prior to and directly following the CEP. During the first interview, the coaches supplied demographic information (example question: What is your race?), described relevant aspects of their acculturation (example question: Did you participate in youth sports?), and explained their perspectives and practices regarding coaching soccer (example question: How would you describe your coaching style?) In the second interview, the coaches described the impact, if any, the CEP had on their perspectives and practices (example question: How has your coaching changed?), and the components of the CEP they found most useful (example question: Which components of the CEP had the most impact on you?). Wilfred also completed formal interviews before and after the CEP. In his first interview, Wilfred supplied demographic information, provided his formal coaching qualifications, relayed his playing and coaching experiences (example prompt: Describe your soccer playing experiences.), and explained the goals he had for the CEP and the methods by which he hoped to realize them (example question: What are the objectives of the CEP?). In his second interview, he commented on the degree to which he perceived the CEP had been effective in terms of influencing Andros' and Christians' perspectives and practices (example question: To what extent, do you think Andros and Christian have changed their perspectives and practices as a result of the CEP?). Formal interviews were conducted by video conference, phone, or in person and were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. They ranged in duration from 20 to 46 minutes.

During *non-participant observations* of the classroom meeting and on-field components of the CEP, the first author made detailed field notes describing the tasks Andros and Christian completed (e.g., coaching the group of under 15 boys), their reactions to these tasks, and their interactions with Wilfred, the other student coaches, the boys they coached, and each other. The first author also completed non-participant observations of Andros and Christian coaching their teams prior to the CEP (Andros: 3 practices and 3 games; Christian: 2 practices and 2 games) and following the CEP (Andros: 3 practices and 3 games; Christian: 3 practices and 3 games). Specifically, the first author made field notes describing the coaches' pedagogies and their players' reactions to them.

Whenever the opportunity arose, *informal interviews* were completed with Andros, Christian, and Wilfred prior to, following, and during the CEP. Specifically, the first author completed 87 informal interviews with Andros and 56 informal interviews with Christian prior to and following the CEP; and 8 informal interviews with Andros and 15 informal interviews with Christian during the CEP. In addition, the first author completed 6 informal interviews with Wilfred. Informal interviews ranged in duration from a few words to approximately 30 minutes. During informal interviews, Andros and Christian relayed their views about the content of the CEP (example question: What have you learned about the tactics used to create space in attack?) and described the pedagogies they employed in practices and games (example prompt: Describe the methods you just used when working with the group of boys.). Wilfred explained the rationale for the content he taught in the CEP and the methods by which he delivered this content. He also shared his views on the effectiveness of the CEP (example question: Do you think that the student coaches are buying into play-practice-play?). Field notes were made on the contents of informal interviews as soon after they had occurred as possible. Lastly, a *document*

analysis was conducted on the CEP materials (e.g., PowerPoint presentations, articles on pedagogy, meeting and on-field plans) supplied by Wilfred during which notes were made on the documents' contents and how Wilfred employed them. In addition, a similar analysis was completed on documents supplied by Andros and Christian (e.g., pre- and post-program practice plans).

Systematic Observation of Practices and Games

The practices and games in which non-participant observations were conducted were also filmed. Specifically, Andros was filmed coaching a total of 548.00 minutes in six practices (275.67 minutes pre-CEP and 272.33 minutes post-CEP) and 491.33 minutes in six games (272.33 minutes pre-CEP and 219.00 minutes post-CEP). Christian was filmed coaching a total of 339.67 minutes in five practices (161.67 minutes pre-CEP and 178.00 minutes post-CEP) and 421.67 minutes in five games (185.00 minutes pre-CEP and 236.67 minutes post-CEP).

Filmed practices and games were coded with two systematic observation instruments. These were a modified version of the Coach Analysis and Intervention System (CAIS; Cushion et al., 2012) and the Instrument for Identifying Teaching Styles (IFITS; Curtner-Smith et al., 2001). Both instruments recorded data pertinent to the goals of the CEP.

The modified version of CAIS is a two-tiered duration and event recording instrument. It includes states, forms of feedback, and types of questioning that are indicative of a more direct coach-centered approach to coaching or a more indirect learner-centered approach to coaching and thus, in the current study, provided data that enabled us to ascertain the degree to which the CEP was effective. The first tier uses time stamping to record the time in which players engage in activities within four states: game state, playing state, practice/training state, and transitional/management state. The second tier records the number of times that a coach employs

different forms of feedback and questioning: specific feedback (positive), specific feedback (negative), general feedback (positive), general feedback (negative), corrective feedback, question (convergent), question (divergent). Definitions of states, feedback, and questioning are provided in Table 1. Both CAIS tiers were used to code practices, while tier 2, only, was used to code games.

IFITS, used to code practices, is an interval recording instrument that estimates the time in which teachers/coaches use the five reproduction (i.e., direct) teaching styles [style A (command), style B (practice), style C (reciprocal), style D (self-check), and style E (inclusion)] and three production (i.e., indirect) teaching styles [style F (guided discovery), style G (divergent), and style H (going beyond)] as originally identified by Mosston (1981). Furthermore, IFITS estimates the amount of time teachers/coaches spend managing players. Definitions of the teaching styles and management are provided in Table 1. A researcher employing IFITS decides which teaching style is being used, or whether the players are being managed, every 20 seconds. If two or more teaching styles are employed within an interval, the most indirect style is given priority and recorded. When a teaching style is being employed and players are also being managed during an interval, the teaching style is given priority and recorded.

Practices and games were coded by the first author. He had been trained to use IFITS in a previous project. Following van der Mars (1989), his CAIS training involved: (a) familiarizing himself with the instrument's coding form, protocol, and the activities and behaviors recorded and (b) 15 hours of practice coding filmed instruction. The process recommended by van der Mars (1989) was used to establish intra-observer reliability for both instruments. Specifically, the first author coded a non-study filmed practice designated as the "reliability practice" and then

recoded the practice again seven days later. The length of this reliability practice was 90 minutes. The second coding was compared to the original using time spent in activities (CAIS first tier), event-by-event (CAIS second tier), and interval-by-interval (IFITS) comparisons. These checks revealed agreement percentages of 93.98% (CAIS first tier) and 90.55% (CAIS second tier), and 90.41% (IFITS), therefore surpassing the 80% threshold suggested by van der Mars (1989). Further reliability checks for "observer drift" were carried out by the first author following the coding of every three practices or games. Each check involved the first author recoding the reliability practice comparing the new coding with the original. On each occasion, the agreement percentage was greater than 80%.

Data Analysis

Fidelity Data

The first author calculated the percentage of time in which the student coaches were engaged in the activities that comprised the CEP. These were active learning; observing each other; interacting with each other; planning, organizing, managing, and setting up equipment; observing videotape of coaches using the play-practice-play model; and engaging in small group, paired, and full group discussions. The first author also computed the percentage of time in which Wilfred lectured student coaches.

Qualitative Data

In Phase 1 of the analysis, the first author sorted data from all sources into sets that pertained to each of the research questions: (a) impact of the CEP on Andros' and Christian's perspectives and practices, and (b) factors that helped and hindered the CEP's effectiveness. Subsets of set 2 were created by further sorting these data into those concerned with professional socialization, acculturation, and organizational socialization. In phase 2, the first author coded

the data in the first set and the three subsets of set 2 by employing analytic induction and constant comparison (Patton, 2015). Data chunks were identified, circled, and given a number and descriptor. Coded data were then grouped to form themes that were given a title. The second author acted as a peer debriefer (Lincoln & Guba (1985) throughout this process and provided the first author with feedback on emerging codes and themes. In phase 3, extracts of data were selected to illustrate the themes in the findings section of this manuscript.

Trustworthiness and credibility were established by three techniques (Patton, 2015). Member checks were conducted within informal interviews and when Andros, Christian, and Wilfred examined an earlier version of this manuscript for factual accuracy. Interpretations of the data were triangulated across data sources. Discrepant cases found in phase 2 were used to modify codes and themes.

Systematic Observation Data

Raw data generated by CAIS and IFITS were collapsed for each coach for: (a) pre-CEP practices and (b) post-CEP practices. Further, raw data generated by CAIS (second tier only) were collapsed for each coach for (c) pre-CEP games and (d) post-CEP games. Percentages of IFITS intervals for each teaching style and management were calculated for pre- and post-CEP practices. Percentages of time in which players engaged in the activities within the CAIS practice states were computed for pre- and post-CEP practices. The percentages for which Andros and Christian used the various types of questioning and feedback coded by CAIS were also calculated for pre- and post-CEP practices and games.

Findings

We begin this section by describing the fidelity of the CEP. Next, we examine the impact of the CEP on Andros' and Christian's perspectives and practices. Finally, we describe the factors within the coaches' socialization that helped and hindered the CEP's effectiveness.

Fidelity of the CEP

The task analysis completed by the first author confirmed that the CEP delivered by Wilfred was congruent with the guidelines for an indirect focus provided by the USSF (USS, 2017, 2018). Specifically, the student coaches spent much of their time in active learning coaching the under 15 boys (13.80%); observing each other in action (12.12%); interacting with each other (15.49%); planning (1.35%); organizing, managing, and setting up equipment (9.09%); observing videotape of coaches using the play-practice-play model (1.01%); and engaging in small group (2.69%), paired (1.68%), and full group (24.24%) discussions. In contrast, Wilfred lectured for only 17.17% of the CEP.

Impact of the CEP on Andros' and Christian's Perspectives and Practices

Perspectives and Practices Before the CEP

Prior to the CEP commencing, both coaches' primary goals were to produce "skilled" players who "enjoyed" the game. A key difference between them, however, was that Andros was product-focused and concerned about "winning and losing," whereas Christian was process-focused, played down game results, and was concerned about providing a "positive learning environment" in which his players got "lots of touches on the ball" so they would "learn and love to play."

Both coaches' pedagogies aligned with their goals and were traditional. Practices included both skill drills and game play and the main mode of teaching was direct in nature. During games, the coaches were also very direct in their interactions with players. Specifically, and as shown in Table 2, during practices players of both coaches spent relatively little time in game state and more time in playing state. Andros' players spent a large proportion of their time in practice/training state, a pattern that would have been matched by Christian's players but for the fact that they spent

a good deal of time in management state. Data in Table 2 also indicate that the predominant teaching style employed by both coaches during practices was the practice style, they did not use any of the other reproductive styles, and rarely used the productive styles. Moreover, the table reveals that the main source of feedback provided by the coaches was general in both practices and games. Finally, data in Table 2 show that in both practices and games the coaches spent little time asking questions of either type, the exception being Andros who spent a reasonable amount of time asking convergent questions in practices.

Perspectives and Practices Following the CEP

Both qualitative and systematic observation data indicated that the CEP influenced Andros' perspectives and practices significantly and positively. Following the CEP, Andros suggested that the "much more tactically based" "P-P-P" indirect method that Wilfred espoused was an improvement on his previously direct pedagogy and explained that "from a learning perspective, it's a better way for them [i.e., his players] to learn." Andros also noted that "looking at [coaching] from a developmental standpoint, it does make a lot more sense to . . . let them [i.e., players] lead themselves through it. We can . . . guide them along the way." Finally, he relayed that he intended play-practice-play to become his main "method" going forward:

> Quite honestly, that's the way I had been doing all my practices . . . in that old format [i.e., skill drills and direct teaching styles]. And this was a lot different. I mean, play-practice-play is a completely different way of approaching the training sessions. (Andros, formal interview 2)

In contrast, while Christian was intrigued and positive about play-practice-play, particularly for "younger children," he indicated that he was not ready to jettison his traditional direct

pedagogy. He also explained that he had tried to incorporate elements of play-practice-play into his coaching and that some of these efforts at doing this had been unsuccessful:

> Games started with three versus three. We tried that, but then we would notice that because of the gaps [i.e., in skill level between players], some of the kids were just really strong and running over everybody. Some of the kids were not getting the right touches [i.e., enough practice], and we . . . added . . .10 minutes of more technical [drills]. (Christian, formal interview 2)

Data in Table 2 indicate that the CEP had more influence on both coaches' pedagogies during practices. Conversely, pedagogical shifts were negligible during games. Specifically, in congruence with play-practice-play, during practices Andros increased the amount of time his players spent in game state and reduced the proportion of time they spent in practice/training state dramatically. Moreover, while Christian's players did not participate in game state at all following the CEP, they spent considerably more time in playing state and the amount of time they spent in practice/training state increased as well, mainly because Christian improved his managerial skills. Table 2 also reveals the degree to which Andros became much more indirect in his teaching following the CEP. Specifically, the amount of time he spent in practice style declined significantly and the time in which he used productive teaching styles, particularly guided discovery, increased substantially. In contrast, Christian's post-CEP pattern of teaching style use was largely unchanged. Finally, data in Table 2 reveal that during practices both coaches increased the number of questions they asked players following the CEP, the most dramatic changes being in Andros' use of convergent questions and Christian's use of divergent questions.

Factors that Helped and Hindered the CEP's Effectiveness

Professional Socialization

Three of the elements that helped the CEP's effectiveness were similar to those we had discovered in our previous study (Authors, 2022). Most importantly, both Andros and Christian enjoyed the indirect and participatory nature of the CEP:

> I just felt like this was more involved, more in-depth. . . . Let's sit in the classroom. Let's talk about this stuff. What's our focus? What's this about? And then going out on the field, and . . . breaking things down and working on it that way. And then kind of coming back for another hour. I think that format is cool. (Andros, formal interview 2)

In addition, the two coaches explained that the feedback they got from Wilfred, the CEP instructor, was key:

> And I remember the feedback I've gotten. A "Hey, but right now you're focusing on defense." Or if we were focusing on creating opportunities, I'm like, "Ah, okay, that's right." That was very helpful for the tactical perspective. . . . I don't have to think of highly tactical concepts. Make sure they get the basic concepts. (Christian, formal interview 2)

Moreover, the fact that the CEP included content and concepts that were "new" to Andros and Christian meant that they found it interesting and it held their attention. For Andros, learning a new pedagogy that gave his players "an opportunity to kind of figure some of this stuff out on their own" was the main attraction. Conversely, Christian was particularly pleased to learn methods through which he could decrease his management time such as "better preparation" and thinking about the "kind of resources" he had at his disposal.

One element that helped make the CEP more effective that we had not encountered in our previous study (Authors, 2022) was the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) Christian, in particular, noted had been formed by the coaches enrolled in the CEP. Specifically, he espoused the value of "talking with other coaches [who] go through what they're going through" and

explained that the group was going to "try to get together again . . . and just have more of a support system and idea sharing."

The two elements that hindered the CEP's effectiveness were congruent with those unearthed in previous research (Authors, 2022; Langan et al., 2013; Søvik et al., 2017). These were the brevity of the CEP and lack of "follow-up" support for coaches after the CEP which Wilfred believed led to "superficial" learning at best: "I think we accomplish that [i.e., teaching new pedagogies] in terms of informing them, and making them aware. Maybe not necessarily a deep understanding of what we're doing."

Acculturation

In congruence with past research (Authors, 2022; Brunsdon & Curtner-Smith, in press; Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020), both coaches' acculturation was shown to be key in determining the degree to which they were influenced by the CEP. Christian's acculturation was more powerful than and contradicted the main message espoused by Wilfred in the CEP regarding the use of indirect pedagogies. Specifically, Christian's key influences in this phase of his socialization were his high school (American) football coaches who "were tough," evidently controlled most aspects of practices and games, and employed direct teaching styles. His admiration of one coach, in particular, who "was very calm, analytical [and] very organized" meant that he aspired to coach in the same way. Of secondary importance in Christian's acculturation were two media influences. First, he admired Tony Dungy, a national (American) football coach, who appeared to be "in control" of his team and promoted traditional values. Second, he was a big fan of "The Karate Kid" martial arts movie (Avildsen, 1984) in which a successful coach is portrayed as "focusing on basic things" including "repetitions" while practicing skills. Collectively, these influences made it difficult for Christian to comprehend how the play-practice-play pedagogy could yield results that

were similar or superior to those produced by traditional direct pedagogy when it came to teaching technical skills. Specifically, he did not realize that within constructivist "understanding approaches" to teaching games like P-P-P, it is perfectly acceptable to teach skills in isolation in situations when instructors think it necessary.

By contrast, Andros' acculturation had not had a significant impact in terms of shaping his beliefs about teaching and coaching. He recalled his own youth sport coaches as being "entertainers" who "made sure [he and other children] were enjoying ourselves" and noted that he did not aspire to be like them. Moreover, he was aware that the media generally "portrays coaches as hard-line and very, very regimented," but rejected this portrayal. Consequently, Andros was much more open to the perspectives and practices on which Wilfred focused during the CEP.

Organizational Socialization

Again, in line with previous research (Authors, 2022; Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020; Richards et al., 2014), Christian's organizational socialization proved to be more powerful than and contradicted the perspectives and practices espoused by Wilfred in the CEP. Specifically, other coaches with whom he interacted at his club rejected the play-practice-play indirect pedagogy Wilfred had championed, instead embracing and reinforcing the traditional direct approach with which Christian was familiar and more comfortable. Moreover, Christian indicated that parents would expect him to employ direct pedagogies when coaching their children, particularly as he had "got some feedback [from] and talked to parents, and a lot of parents' main concern right now is on high school try-outs."

Andros' organizational socialization was similarly conservative, the main socializing agents also being other coaches and parents. The fact that he was the director of his soccer club, however, meant that he was in a more powerful position than Christian and able to reject and fight

back against the negative messages he received from these sources. Rather than acquiesce to the pressure, Andros set about trying to change the views of his fellow coaches and his players' parents:

> That [play-practice-play method] was so cool. And we actually talked about it. Yeah, I talked with several of the coaches . . . about the exact same thing . . . you know. . . . And they're like, this is a lot different than what we were used to. (Andros, formal interview 2)

Summary and Conclusions

The main finding of this case study was that, despite its limitations, the CEP had a significant impact on Andros' perspectives and practices and a negligible impact on those of Christian. The most significant pedagogical changes were seen in practices rather than games. Prior to the CEP, Andros espoused and employed a traditional direct pedagogy focused on skill learning. Following the CEP, he supported and used the indirect method known as play-practice-play that was focused on tactical understanding as well as skill acquisition. Conversely, Christian largely rejected the play-practice-play method presented in the CEP, although he did incorporate elements of it into his traditional and direct approach to coaching. Further, Christian's managerial skill appeared to improve as result of attending the CEP. Occupational socialization theory (Richards et al., 2014) helped explain why the CEP had a different impact on the coaches. Specifically, Andros' acculturation had a minimal impact on his perspectives and practices regarding coaching youth soccer, and the professional socialization provided in the CEP was more powerful than his organizational socialization. In contrast, Christian's professional socialization (i.e., the CEP) was less powerful than his conservative acculturation and organizational socialization.

In congruence with previous research (Authors, 2022), elements of the CEP that helped to make it effective were its indirect and participatory nature, the instructor's expertise, and the inclusion of new content. Also in line with previous research (Authors, 2022; Gilbert & Trudel, 1999; Stodter & Cushion, 2014) were the two elements of the CEP that hindered its effectiveness—its brevity and the lack of follow-up support provided for coaches. We also suspect that the pedagogical improvements made in practices, particularly by Andros, did not transfer to games because the main focus of the CEP was on coaching in practices. One new finding in this study was that the CEP's effectiveness was increased because the coaches enrolled formed a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The main socializing agents within the two coaches' acculturation were their own youth sport coaches and portrayals of coaches in the media. Those in their organizational socialization were other coaches and parents.

As our earlier study (Authors, 2022) had also indicated, the main practical implications of this study are that CEPs need to be relatively long and include follow-up support for coaches after they have concluded. We suggest that this support is best provided by the instructor of the CEP. Further, and as we have argued previously (Authors, 2022), the study indicates that coach educators' and their CEPs' effectiveness might be improved were they to have an understanding of the extent to which their charges' occupational socialization helps or hinders them in teaching new perspectives and practices such as play-practice-play. Moreover, CEPs' potency might be strengthened if student coaches were made aware of how their prior socialization can facilitate or constrain their pedagogical development. Finally, the quality of CEPs might be improved if those who organize them deliberately facilitate the formation of communities of practice among the coaches being trained.

Future research in this line should include the examination of different types of CEP. It should also be aimed at improving the pedagogy of youth sport coaches who possess a range of experience and expertise and work with players of differing abilities. As well as studying coaches with socialization profiles that indicate they are "ready" to change their perspectives and practices (Kern et al., 2019), we think it particularly important that researchers investigate the degree to which lengthy and powerful CEPs can change the perspectives and practices of coaches who have experienced strong, contradictory, and antagonistic acculturation and organizational socialization. Longitudinal research, in which the cumulative impact of successive and increasingly more sophisticated CEPs on coaches is assessed, would also be helpful. For example**,** and in this case, it might be that American youth soccer coaches' professional socialization would be much stronger if they were encouraged or required to enroll in more of the hierarchical series of CEPs designed by the USSF that follow the grassroots CEP described in this study. Finally, we should stress that we think research on youth sport CEPs would be more effective if it were conducted in both the interpretive paradigm, as we have done in this study, and in the positivistic paradigm, within which different questions could be asked and answered. Studies carried out in the critical paradigm that examined CEPs for both positive and negative hidden and unintended effects on coaches would also be helpful.

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Table 1

Definitions of Behaviors and States Coded by the IFITS and CAIS

Instrument	Definitions
IFITS	
Style A (Command):	The coach makes all the decisions. The coach demonstrates or explains a task for the players to emulate, then directs the players' practice by giving commands. The players react only when told to do so by the coach. The coach evaluates players' performances in terms of congruence with the prescribed task.
Style B (Practice):	The coach demonstrates or describes a task and the players practice the task at their own pace. The coach provides players with performance feedback.
Style C (Reciprocal):	The coach demonstrates or describes a task. The players then practice in pairs. One player (the doer) practices while the other player (the observer) evaluates his/her partner's performance and provides feedback based on criteria supplied by the coach. During the practice phase, the coach assists the observer while taking care not to take over the observer's role.
Style D (Self-Check):	The coach presents a task. Players practice at their own pace but are now responsible for analysing their own performances. During practice the coach does not provide performance feedback. Instead, his/her role is to help players hone their self-evaluation skills.
Style E (Inclusion):	The coach models a task with several levels of difficulty. At the beginning of the practice phase the players choose the level of difficulty at which they feel most comfortable. During practice they are encouraged by the coach to evaluate their own performances and decide when to change to a new level of difficulty.
Style F (Guided Discovery):	The coach asks a series of questions or sets a series of physical problems that when answered or solved lead the players to discover a desired skill or concept.
Style G (Divergent):	The coach asks a question or sets a physical problem to which there are many possible answers or solutions. The players then set about finding and evaluating alternative answers and solutions.
Style H (Going Beyond):	The players identify problems and set about finding and evaluating alternative solutions. The coach assumes the role of facilitator. This involves providing help when it is asked for and asking questions for clarification.
Management (M):	The time the coach is engaged in activity not related directly to instruction. This includes time spent beginning and ending the session, managing equipment, organizing, dealing with player behavior, and any other tasks other than instruction or class management.
CAIS	
Game state	Players participate in small-sided games or full-sided games in which they follow regulation rules and scoring.
Playing state	Players participate in conditioned games in which rules are changed to emphasize skills or tactics, games focused on phases of play (e.g., attack vs. defense), and games focused on maintaining possession.
Practice/Training state	Players participate in warm-up and cool-down activities, and individual or group skill drills and practices that can be unopposed or opposed.
Transition/Management state	Players are organized for or transition to new instructional games, practices or drills; move equipment; or engage in other activities not related to instruction
Specific Feedback (positive):	Coach makes positive statements about the quality of players' execution of skills and strategies.
Specific Feedback (negative):	Coach makes negative statements about the quality of players' execution of skills and strategies.
General Feedback (positive):	Coach makes general positive verbal statements or non-verbal gestures about players' performance (e.g., "well done" and thumbs-up gesture)
General Feedback (negative):	Coach makes general positive verbal statements or non-verbal gestures about players' performance (e.g., "poor effort" and thumbs-down gesture)
Corrective Feedback:	Coach makes statements aimed to improve player's performance of skills and strategies.
Question (convergent):	Coach asks a question of players to which there is a limited number of correct answers.
Question (divergent):	Coach asks a question of players to which there are multiple correct answers.

Table 2

IFITS and CAIS Data Pre- and Post-CEP

	Andros				Christian			
	During Practice		During Games		During Practice		During Games	
Instrument	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
IFITS								
Reproductive Styles								
Style A (Command)	0.00%	0.00%			0.00%	0.00%		
Style B (Practice)	75.00%	45.29%			57.11%	69.46%		
Style C (Reciprocal)	0.00%	0.00%			0.00%	0.00%		
Style D (Self-Check)	0.00%	0.00%			0.00%	0.00%		
Style E (Inclusion)	0.00%	0.00%			0.00%	0.00%		
Style F (Guided Discovery)	3.39%	32.93%			0.62%	3.54%		
Style G (Divergent)	0.24%	2.94%			0.21%	1.49%		
Style H (Going Beyond)	0.00%	0.00%			0.00%	0.00%		
Management	22.37%	18.85%			42.06%	25.51%		
CAIS								
States								
Game State	7.05%	44.06%			10.31%	0.00%		
Playing State	22.85%	24.24%			28.04%	45.25%		
Practice/Training State	42.56%	4.28%			19.59%	28.49%		
Transition/Management	27.09%	27.42%			42.06%	26.26%		
Feedback and Questioning								
Specific Feedback (positive)	3.17%	8.12%	11.95%	9.97%	12.74%	7.65%	11.46%	7.22%
Specific Feedback (negative)	14.29%	9.69%	11.78%	11.11%	14.65%	4.89%	2.48%	1.03%
General Feedback (positive)	45.44%	34.03%	34.37%	39.74%	61.46%	61.16%	67.49%	73.40%
General Feedback (negative)	14.09%	6.02%	13.09%	8.83%	6.37%	11.01%	3.72%	8.87%
Corrective Feedback	15.48%	15.45%	23.57%	22.36%	3.18%	3.98%	10.22%	5.36%
Question (convergent)	7.14%	19.63%	4.75%	6.98%	1.27%	7.65%	3.10%	2.47%
Question (divergent)	0.40%	7.07%	0.49%	1.00%	1.59%	11.31%	4.64%	4.12%