A Systematic Observation of Youth Amateur Volleyball Coaches Behaviours

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The purpose of this study was to examine the coaching behaviours of youth amateur volleyball coaches within the practice environment, through the Arizona State University Instrument (ASUOI), making a contribution to the expanding empirical database. Moreover, we intend to compare the instructional profiles between youth amateur coaches and earlier research that was done using ASUOI, particularly with top-level professional coaches. The participants for this study were eleven Portuguese male youth volleyball coaches who coach amateur teams on the club setting from under 14 until under 18. A total of 6401 recorded behaviours were observed from eleven training sessions. The results show a predominance of instructional behaviours like pre-instruction, concurrent instruction and post instruction (35.94 %). However, it seems consistent to assume from the coaches observed, that they show a lower use of instructional and praise behaviours compared with that of top-level professional coaches as verified in earlier studies. Additionally, the findings on the use of first names, questioning and modelling, important strategies to promote active learning and meaningful affective relationships, showed a reduced use. The results highlighted the contextual and specific nature of the coaching process, which emphasized the need for a deeper analysis concerning the coaching behaviours in relation to the substantive content demonstrated by the coach as in relation to the type of practice.

**key words:** Coaching Behaviours, Youth Amateur Sport, Volleyball

Introduction

The coach is a central protagonist in the world of Sport, who also has high social prominence in daily society. Being that the coach’s professional intervention is multifaceted and accomplished in diverse contexts of practice, it demands
extensive knowledge and competences, adjusted to the particular conditionings of

Coaches strongly influence the nature and quality of the sport experience within
the youth sport environment. As Smith et al. (2007) emphasized, the goal priorities
that the coaches promote, the attitudes and values they transmit, and the nature of
their interactions with athletes can strongly influence the effects of sport
participation on children and youth. And Woodman (1993) asserts that it is the
application of knowledge and skill which separates the excellent practitioner from
the average one. Hence, the analysis of the coaching behaviours in sport settings
will provide help to recognize, in particular, how the coach facilitates learning for
the athlete, a central principle of coach’s instructional behaviour (More & Franks,
1996).

From a historic perspective, the studies of the instructional behaviour were firstly
orientated for the school setting, namely in Physical Education lessons, during the
sixties (Metzler, 2000). In the last twenty years, the research agenda has been
centred on observing the instructional behaviours of coaches in the sport club setting
with the objective of understanding how coaches could facilitate the learning
processes.

In agreement with Cushion & Jones (2001), different observation systems have
been developed to analyse the coaching behaviours, namely in the analysis of
behaviour profiles (Jones et al., 1997) where, among other things, we are able to
highlight the Coach Behaviour Assessment System (Smith et al., 1977) and Arizona
State University Observation Instrument (ASUOI, Lacy & Darst, 1989). Knowledge
in sport pedagogy has increased through the insights obtained from such systems.
During approximately the last 25 years, empirical research into coaching, using the
ASUOI, has been done, for instance in Tennis (Claxton, 1988), Volleyball (Lacy &
Martin, 1994), Soccer (Cushion & Jones, 2001; Potrac, Jones & Armour, 2002;
Potrac et al., 2007) and Basketball (Lacy & Goldston, 1990). Indeed the expansion
of the data base has been a result of the widespread use of the ASUOI instrument
in different team sport settings. The ASUOI includes seven categories related
directly to the instructional behaviours (i.e., pre-instruction, concurrent instruction,
postinstruction, questioning, physical assistance, positive modelling, negative
modelling), four categories related with affective interaction (use of first name,
hustles, praise, scolding) and two management behaviours (management and silence).
Using the ASUOI the profile of the coach’s behaviour is thought to possibly have