

# Coaching Positive Youth Development in Brazil: Recommendations for Coach Education Programs

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Coaching positive youth development (PYD) represents a challenge for many participation and high-performance coaches across the globe, including in Brazil. Coach education has been acknowledged as a formal learning context that may help prepare coaches to effectively foster PYD outcomes and provide high-quality developmental experiences for athletes across different sport contexts. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to describe the key concepts and existing guidelines for coaching and coach education in Brazil, and provide context-specific recommendations for coach education to include PYD materials. Coaching in Brazil includes a long preparation period that includes diversified opportunities for coach learning. However, there are some discrepancies between the objectives and outcomes prioritized by governing bodies and sport organizations and how learning contexts are framed. In other words, although PYD is considered to be a necessary endeavor, it is not explicitly included in any coach education program. Moving forward, we provide several recommendations, through a bottom-up approach, in order to embed PYD within the Brazilian sport system.

**Keywords:** coach learning, life skills, reflection

Sport has been considered an important platform for positive youth development (PYD) due to the personal and social skills that may be developed in this context and number of participants involved on a global scale (Gano-Overway et al., 2009). PYD can be defined as an asset-focused approach that highlights the processes through which youth may flourish and become active adults willing to contribute to their communities (Lerner et al., 2005). However, why foster PYD through sport? Several distinctive characteristics have been associated with sport such as fun, enjoyment, and intrinsic motivation, which are conducive to PYD outcomes (Holt, 2016). There is a general consensus that collectively these factors make sport an extremely relevant platform to embed a PYD approach (Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011; Holt, Kingsley, Tink, & Scherer, 2011). Nevertheless, in certain cases, youth seem to have negative experiences in sport reflected in antisocial behaviors, cheating, and ultimately dropout (Hodge & Gucciard, 2015; Potgieter, 2013). This “dark side of sport”, mentioned by Potgieter (2013), has concerned researchers who have attempted to understand how to increase PYD outcomes through the means of sport (Camiré, Trudel, & Fomeris, 2012; Martinek, Schilling, & Hellison, 2006).

While reflecting on the potential inherent to the sport context and how it is used, we should keep in mind the role played by youth sport coaches in enabling PYD (Vella, Oades, & Crowe, 2011). For

example, the International Council for Coaching Excellence (2013) has acknowledged the crucial role played by coaches in deliberately creating a PYD climate that is psychologically and physically safe, resulting in positive coach-athlete relationships. However, coaches face the challenge of having to foster PYD outcomes while developing sport-specific skills which, in some cases, is too great a challenge (Camiré, 2015). Several studies (McCallister, Blinde, & Weiss, 2000; Santos, Camiré, & Campos, 2018) have mentioned that coaches overvalue winning and consider PYD an incompatible objective that is unattainable due to the lack of time and education. This has been a cause for concern for many researchers who have attempted to provide concrete guidelines on how to help coaches learn to implement a PYD mandate (Falcão, Bloom, & Gilbert, 2012; Santos et al., 2019). Many of these guidelines have been connected to how sport organizations frame coach education programs that actively contribute to coach learning, and provide the knowledge base necessary for coaches to foster high-quality developmental experiences (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Nelson, Cushion, & Potrac, 2006; Vella, Crowe, & Oades, 2013).

PYD-focused coach education programs have been implemented mainly in Canada and in the United States of America (Kendellen, Camiré, Bean, Fomeris, & Thompson, 2017), but are starting to spread to sport systems in other countries such as Portugal (Portuguese Hockey Federation, 2016). Nevertheless, despite the evidence-based guidelines and recommendations for practice that have been made the last few years (Coakley, 2016; Holt, Camiré, et al., 2017; Holt, Neely, et al., 2017), there is still the need to bridge the gap between research and practice (i.e., policy and coaching practice). Brazil is one context in which PYD is beginning to spread and gather interest from researchers, coaches, and other stakeholders

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(Rigoni, Belém, & Vieira, 2017). Within the Brazilian context, researchers have recently attempted to understand which contents and materials have been embedded in coach education programs (Milistetd et al., 2016; Milistetd, Trudel, Mesquita & Nascimento, 2014). The purpose of the present paper is to extend this line of research by describing the key concepts and existing guidelines for coaching and coach education in Brazil, and provide context-specific recommendations for including PYD materials in coach education.

## Overview of the Brazilian Sports System

Currently, the Brazilian sport system is managed by the Sports and Education ministries (i.e., governmental body) and the Brazilian Olympic committee (i.e., nongovernmental body) (Meira, Bastos, & Böhme, 2012). The Ministry of Sport is responsible for developing the national sports policy plan that aims to provide context-specific guidelines and oversees how participation sport and high-performance sport are implemented throughout the country (e.g., decisions regarding funding to create more opportunities for youth in participation sport) (Ministry of Sport, 2018). The Ministry of Education manages the contents, courses, and learning experiences that should be included within undergraduate programs that automatically provide certification for coaches to coach (Ministry of Education, 2018). On the other hand, the Brazilian Olympic committee is a private nongovernmental body that autonomously oversees Olympic sport in Brazil and provides coach education opportunities in collaboration with the different sport confederations (e.g., track and field, volleyball) (Brazilian Olympic Committee, 2018). More specifically, the Brazilian Olympic committee aims to help coaches and athletes reach their full potential in high-performance sport. Similarly, the Paralympic committee focuses on parasport and also aims to foster inclusion in society.

The aforementioned governing bodies have strong ties to the different councils and districts, and sport clubs and organizations in Brazil through governmental and nongovernmental agencies. For example, the Ministry of Sport created a program to foster participation sport in areas where sport is still undeveloped (Kravchychyn & Oliveira, 2015; Sousa et al., 2011). Regional councils and/or districts use those guidelines and make the necessary adaptations to implement such programs. Within the Brazilian sports system there are several programs that have differentiated types of objectives (Gilbert, & Trudel, 2006; Pinto & Oliveira, 2017; Reverdito et al., 2016). High-performance-focused programs in Brazil traditionally aim to develop sport-specific skills and game performance with concerns for positive development secondary. Many researchers have highlighted tensions between PD and performance outcomes that lead coaches, policy makers, and other stakeholders to envision positive development as secondary or an impossible endeavor in high-performance sport (Santos, Camiré, et al., 2017; Strachan, Côté, & Deakin, 2011). On the other hand, participation and education-based programs aim to develop sport-specific skills and simultaneously foster PYD outcomes such as personal and social skill development and well-being. These types of programs are more holistic and may be defined as PYD-based programs that use sport-related activities to foster PYD outcomes. Numerous research-based programs have been created in this type of sport context such as the Coaching Club or Project Effort, which are responsibility-focused programs that use a range of sports to attain PD outcomes (Hellison, 2011; Martinek et al., 2006).

In sum, although PYD is not explicitly stated as part of the guidelines for sport in Brazil, there are several similarities that represent an intricate reality for coaches and sport organizations.

Coakley (2016) highlighted the social nature of fostering PYD and acknowledged that embedding PYD in coaches' practices is a complex endeavor. The guidelines provided by Brazilian governing bodies are framed to value and facilitate PYD and specific PYD outcomes such as personal and social skills development on a global scale. Additionally, local sport organizations that exist in each council and/or district also are responsible for developing PYD-focused programs and/or high performance-focused programs in which positive development may or may not be prioritized (Engelman & Oliveira, 2012). In fact, there are some ties to the PD approach in terms of policy, objectives, and overall mandate of these organizations, specifically within participation and education-based programs.

## Overview of Coaching and Coach Education in Brazil

Coaching in Brazil has been formally recognized as a profession since 1998. Accordingly, coaches need to hold a bachelor's degree in physical education to have their professional license to work in any sport context (Brazil, 1998). In 2016, there were 528 regular physical education bachelor programs from public to private universities (Ministry of Education, 2016). It is estimated that between 10,000–15,000 students annually graduate with their physical education license and are formally certified to coach. Within the Brazilian sport system, sports coaching is a path for all physical education teachers who graduate in Brazil. This certification system contrasts with some European countries such as Portugal in which certification can be also attained through sport organizations and federations (Portuguese Hockey Federation, 2016). The rationale behind this structure and the certification system in Brazil is that physical education programs should have a general orientation and prepare professionals to intervene within multiple sport contexts.

Undergraduate programs in Brazil have been analyzed to understand how coaches are prepared to coach for PYD and performance outcomes. For example, Milistetd et al. (2014) investigated undergraduate coach education programs in federal universities in Brazil. They found that of 3,200 hr out of these programs, only one-fifth of the program's workload focused on general notions about sport. For the most part, programs focused on sport-specific content such as teaching technical and tactical skills (e.g., in swimming, soccer, volleyball). Only one-third of the universities had a sport pedagogy course, in which content related to PYD could eventually be taught. There was no evidence that PYD materials were being shared with future coaches. Therefore, undergraduate programs in Brazil appear to be more focused on content knowledge (e.g., rules, tactics, techniques) than coaching competencies such as planning for PYD, communication, leadership, problem-solving, reflection, or implementing PYD strategies. It is fair to assume that coaching competencies might be developed during undergraduate programs through experiential learning strategies. However, the quality of learning depends of many factors, among them the support of mentors, partnerships with clubs, and university regulations (Milistetd, Trudel, Rynne, Mesquita, & Nascimento, 2018).

In Brazil the main pathway for coaches who want to enhance competencies in educational or participation sport contexts is to join a specialization program. Specialization programs in Brazil are formally organized by universities and authorized/approved by the ministry of education and serve the purpose of enhancing knowledge in a specific area/sport. Specialization programs should be a minimum of 360 hr of length in addition to time devoted to developing a thesis. It is common to find specialization programs

in sport pedagogy or sport training methodology. Typically, these programs are offered as weekend modules guided by university professors and focus on specific areas such as motor learning, teaching methods, physiology, or biomechanics. In our review we were not able to find any specialization programs that focus explicitly on PYD. Most specialization programs will include coaches involved in participation sport.

High-performance sport takes in considerable financial resources from public and private organizations due to the fact it involves a significant number of supporters, athletes, coaches, and sport clubs (Galatti, 2017). Short-term outcomes and increases in sport performance take all the attention and focus which may create constraints for a positive development mandate (Fransen et al., 2015). Additionally, high-performance coaches are also exposed to multiple coach education opportunities as sports federations offer coach certification programs across Brazil. Milistetd et al. (2016) showed that, of 30 Olympic sports, sports federations only offered 12 certification programs regularly: track and field, badminton, canoeing, soccer, wrestling, rugby, diving, tennis, table tennis, triathlon, volleyball, and beach volleyball. Each sport federation has different levels of coaching that vary from sport to sport and, in some cases, coaches need to attend such courses to coach specific teams at different competitive levels. Each federation includes up to five certification levels, and course length varies from 40–850 hr. Each certification level is still designed in a traditional view in which levels are defined due to the competitive context in which coaches will be intervening (e.g., level 1, under 14 years of age; level 2, under 18 years of age). Course content is focused on specific sports knowledge (techniques, tactics, physical preparation, training methods).

Another opportunity for coaches who aspire to work in high-performance sport in Brazil is to participate at the Brazilian Coaches' Academy (BCA). BCA was created by the Brazilian Olympic committee to support high-performance coaches' development, especially those involved in sports whose there are no sports federation certification programs, or sports considered likely to win Olympic medals. To date, 360 coaches have participated in the academy in different sports such as track and field, swimming, cycling, martial arts, rowing, gymnastics, and canoeing (Brazilian Basketball Confederation, 2018). The program is separated into two modules: development athletes and performance athletes. The modules require around 400 hr to complete and are organized into different courses, similar to an undergraduate program (Milistetd et al., 2016). Although the BCA is considered a valuable learning opportunity for high-performance coaches, the academic orientation of the program is a strong limitation to develop highly-experienced and effective coaches.

Coaching is recognized as a profession in Brazil and the coach education trajectory combines initial training and continuous training through different contexts, such as universities, federations, and the Brazilian Olympic Committee. The efforts of the International Council for Coaching Excellence (2013) to promote coaching and enhance the quality of coaches' preparation around the world is a valuable template for different organizations (universities, sports federations, national governing bodies) to work together. However, recent research demonstrates that Brazilian programs are still developing coaches from a technocratic reasoning approach, focused on specific aspects of sports whether in contexts of education, participation, or performance (Milistetd et al., 2014, 2016, 2018). To promote quality coaching for youth athletes in Brazil, it is desirable to include PYD elements or specific courses in physical education bachelor programs, specialization programs, sports federations, and Brazilian Olympic committee coach education programs.

## Recommendations for Introducing PYD in Coach Education Programs in Brazil

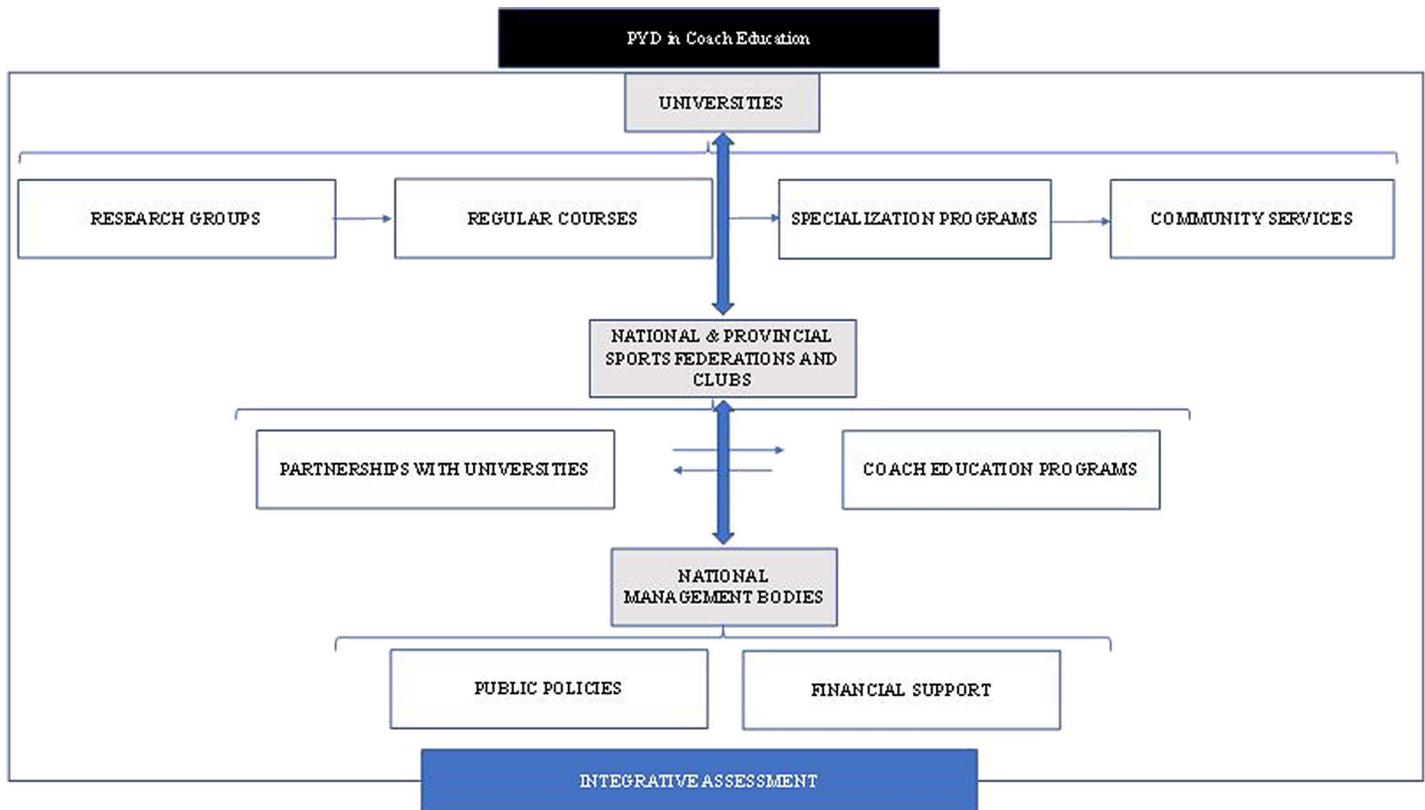
Considering the lack of recognition of PYD in Brazil and the different coach education opportunities, instead of creating guidelines to redesign coach education programs, it is necessary to focus first on the conceptual dissemination of PYD in Brazil. Although the Brazilian sports system is structured vertically, in which national bodies such as the Ministry of Sport & Education, Brazilian Olympic Committee, and national sports federations impact other organizations concerning coach education initiatives, to introduce PYD in formal programs it is fundamental to create value for PYD in society. At this point, universities through different strategies might provide evidence to support the implementation of PYD in coach education programs, and also influence organizations in different contexts. Figure 1 shows suggestions for embedding PYD in coach education in Brazil.

### Universities

**Research groups.** A number of studies in North America and Europe, such as those from Canada, the United States of American, and in some Portuguese-speaking countries have reported the effectiveness of PYD-based sport programs (Barker & Forneris, 2012; Hellison, 2011; Santos, Corte-Real, Regueiras, Dias, & Fonseca, 2017). However, information about PYD in Brazil is still scarce as this is a recent framework in this country. Hence, some researchers who have started to provide insight on how PYD may be embedded within the Brazilian context face multiple challenges while developing “research to practice” initiatives. Stakeholders in Brazil often are not familiar with any findings from PYD-focused research projects, neither do they know any evidenced-based guidelines specific to the Brazilian context. Culture influences how PYD is integrated, perceived, and disseminated, as this variable should be considered while developing guidelines for sport systems across the world (Coakley, 2016). Therefore, research groups that develop programs focused on PYD can encourage discussion and provide guidelines for integrating PYD within different contexts in Brazil such as coach education. Highlighting the findings of PYD-focused coach education conducted in Brazil may help enhance the involvement of national sport governing bodies and facilitate the inclusion of PYD within mainstream coach education programs.

The increase of PYD-focused research programs can support the recognition of PYD (a) as a necessary framework for coach education programs, (b) to convey the need for a PYD mandate to communities and youth sport coaches, and ultimately (c) to increase the number of PYD-focused modules within universities and increase coaches' readiness to foster PYD. In order to promote high-quality PYD-focused research programs within the national context, cooperation with international research centers and sport organizations can further strengthen the knowledge produced in Brazil and also contribute to embed PYD within universities, sports federations, and clubs. A “research to practice” mandate developed by research programs across Brazil may provide the necessary support for organizations to develop evidence-based policies and a PYD curriculum that may better prepare Brazilian coaches.

**Regular courses at the initial training.** Based on the premises of a PYD approach, regular courses such as sport psychology, sport pedagogy, physical education teaching methods, or even specific courses focused on PYD should be explicitly focused on PYD materials. This would help to create the necessary knowledge base



**Figure 1** — Suggestions for embedding positive youth development (PYD) within coach education in Brazil.

for coaches to understand PYD, learn specific PYD strategies, and acknowledge the need to use assessment tools, and apply all of this knowledge in practice. During this stage, it is pivotal that participants involved in such courses understand the pedagogical foundations behind a PYD approach and are provided a strong conceptual background on PYD and how it may be embedded within their coaching philosophy. This should be one of the main objectives in these PYD-focused courses. Additionally, PYD should not be envisioned only as a separate module as coaches should learn to integrate PYD with other types of coaching objectives/skills. As such, the way modules are framed should facilitate this specific outcome and reflect an integrative notion on how to teach coaches to foster PYD. For example, sport pedagogy modules might focus on planning and defining objectives. In this case, university lectures could teach students how a sport skill should be framed in a developmentally-sound manner and simultaneously do the same for a PYD objective. Providing an integrative notion that includes PYD alongside with other coaching skills should also be an important concern at this stage and could be key for coaches to understand PYD as part of an effective coaching mandate.

**Continuing training (specialization program).** Specialization programs focused on PYD should be created in order to (a) deepen knowledge regarding the development of different life skills and values through sport (e.g., cognitive, emotional, moral, and social skills, self-determination, spirituality, resilience, among others), (b) expose coaches to practical strategies to develop PYD across a range of different sport contexts such as recreational sport and/or competitive youth sport, and (c) help coaches assess PYD in sport. Additionally, PYD should be taught with an applied focus that encompasses experiential learning opportunities such as

practical workshops led by lectures and/or coaches and address real-world coaching issues that may help coaches refine the necessary skills to further implement a PYD mandate more effectively. Considering universities provide community services, specialization students could engage in these programs as part of practical modules coaching children and adolescents focusing on PYD.

**Community services.** Offering community services is one of the core principles that supports Brazilian universities and might enable universities to facilitate knowledge transfer and engage coaches with high-quality PYD programs. Thus, we strongly suggest that universities offer PYD-based community sports programs for children, adolescents, and adults. Such programs can serve as training grounds for PYD-focused coaches and help future coaches learn through practice with support from mentors. By offering sports programs to the community, we can show and highlight the importance of PYD-based sports programs and provide important case studies for sport organizations to recognize the effectiveness of PYD (Trudel, Culver, & Werthner, 2013). Once these organizations realize the benefits of a PYD approach, it is easier to increase visibility and awareness—one example being media outlets that can also facilitate the dissemination of PYD to the governing bodies responsible for coach education in Brazil.

### National and Provincial Sports Federations and Sports Clubs

Considering the potential of spreading PYD in universities, it is also crucial that clubs and local and national federations establish partnerships with academic institutions. These partnerships can generate the creation of workshops for coaches and PYD-focused

research projects to address local and/or sport-specific issues and needs. As coaches, clubs, and federations recognize PYD as an important perspective on coaches' development, it is worth considering the inclusion of PYD modules in coach education programs.

PYD contents should be framed according to the different levels of coach certification offered by each sports federation, which can evolve from an explicit approach to PYD at the most basic level in which the focus is the work with youth athletes toward a more implicit approach at higher levels such as high-performance sport and adult athletes. This differentiated approach to PYD across age groups has also been suggested by other researchers (Rathwell & Young, 2018). Coaches need to recognize that PYD and sports performance are not antagonistic and should be combined to nurture athlete development. Such programs should focus on an active learning approach, in which coaches can portray what they already have in their contexts, their difficulties in promoting PYD, and the strategies that have been effective in the process of implementing PYD through the means of sport. Sports clubs can also benefit from partnerships with universities by fostering discussions among coaches, supporting parents in the promotion of PYD through sport, and contributing to the development of PYD strategies in sport. Such partnerships can also contribute to the development of new research in universities, which facilitates the dissemination process of PYD in Brazil.

## National Management Bodies

While spreading PYD across Brazil, we believe that governmental and nongovernmental bodies might start to encourage the implementation of PYD in national and regional policies and within coach education programs. Brazil presents specific sports programs that try to foster human development through sport as PYD can serve as a guiding approach for these sports programs given its effectiveness in different programs around the world. The increase of PYD research within Portuguese-speaking countries, specifically in Portugal, could serve as an example of how PYD has been a successfully used framework to help coaches learn to foster PYD (Santos et al., 2018). Regarding high-performance sport contexts, PYD could help coaches cope with existing tensions between performance and PYD, and the dichotomy of human development and human performance (Coakley, 2016). In fact, PYD might help coaches assure that high-performance sport is a developmentally-sound environment in which great efforts are made to attain game performance and win competitions, while at the same time teaching values and life skills.

## Conclusion

There is a need to better prepare competent coaches to effectively promote PYD through sport in performance and participation contexts. The purpose of the present paper was to describe the key concepts and existing guidelines for coaching and coach education in Brazil, and provide context-specific recommendations for coach education to include PYD materials. Our conjecture is that a bottom-up perspective can influence the Brazilian coach education system and enable inclusion of PYD at coaches' initial and continuous training.

Within the Brazilian sport system, governmental and nongovernmental bodies provide specific guidelines for coach education. Additionally, universities, federations, sport clubs, and, ultimately, coaches also play a role in making PYD feasible. Hence, it is crucial

to create knowledge transfer programs that focus on the value of PYD and share a set of evidence-based recommendations that may be utilized across Brazil. Nevertheless, creating knowledge transfer programs is challenging due to the lack of PYD-based research being conducted. As such, universities should develop PYD-focused research programs that attempt to (a) share findings derived from PYD-based research programs with key stakeholders, (b) include PYD materials within coach training programs, and (c) create sound knowledge transfer programs and connect with communities, federations, sport clubs, and coaches. Additionally, universities could develop partnerships with federations and sport clubs to continuously educate coaches on how to develop a PYD mandate through workshops and seminars. If PYD is to become a reality within the Brazilian context, researchers, policy makers, and other key stakeholders should develop a common PYD-focused coach education program to provide the necessary conditions for coaches to foster PD and change the current status quo.

## Author Biographies

Patricia Gaion, Andressa Contreira, Luciane Arantes, and Nayara Caruzo are part of a research group with the University of Maringá that is interested in understanding positive development through sport within the Brazilian context.

Michel Milistedt is with the Federal University of Santa Catarina and his interests lie in providing coach education for Brazilian coaches and analyzing how sport may foster positive developmental outcomes.

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